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**Author:** Lin, Chin-hui

**Title:** Utterance-final particles in Taiwan Mandarin: contact, context and core functions

**Issue Date:** 2014-10-02

UTTERANCE-FINAL PARTICLES IN TAIWAN MANDARIN:  
CONTACT, CONTEXT AND CORE FUNCTIONS

Published by  
LOT  
Trans 10  
3512 JK Utrecht  
The Netherlands

phone: +31 30 253 6111

e-mail: [lot@uu.nl](mailto:lot@uu.nl)  
<http://www.lotschool.nl>

Cover illustration: A Taiwanese couple in a conversation. Picture taken by Yu-ying Pan.

ISBN: 978-94-6093-149-9  
NUR 616

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UTTERANCE-FINAL PARTICLES IN TAIWAN MANDARIN:  
CONTACT, CONTEXT AND CORE FUNCTIONS

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op donderdag 2 oktober 2014

klokke 15.00 uur

door

CHIN-HUI LIN

geboren te Taipei, Taiwan  
in 1977

**Promotiecommissie**

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## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The transcription conventions in this dissertation basically follows Jefferson (2004), R. Wu (2004) and Tung (2001), but with some modifications.

[	starting point of overlap in a conversation
[ ]	square brackets enclose interpolations into quotations
→	item under discussion
↑	high-pitch (of an utterance-final particle)
↓	low-pitch (of an utterance-final particle)
(.)	a notable micro-pause but of no significant length
(0.0)	length of silence, represented in tenths of a second
@	laughter (the more ampersands, the longer the laughter)
=	follows the previous line without any gap
:	a notable lengthened syllable (the more colons, the longer the syllable)
-	truncated word, for instance, a cut-off or a self-interruption
()	transcriber's description
<S S>	code-switching from Mandarin to Southern Mǐn
<E E>	code-switching from Mandarin to English
<M M>	code-switching from Southern Mǐn to Mandarin
1 <sub>SG</sub>	first person singular
1 <sub>PL</sub>	first person plural
2 <sub>SG</sub>	second person singular
2 <sub>PL</sub>	second person plural
3 <sub>SG</sub>	third person singular
3 <sub>PL</sub>	third person plural
ASP	aspect marker
BA	disposal marker <i>bǎ</i> (把)
BC	backchannel (short, non-lexical utterances, produced by the speaker who plays a listener's role, such as <i>mhm</i> , <i>uh huh</i> in English)

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BEI	passive marker <i>bèi</i> (被)
CL	classifier
DE	structural particles DE (的, 得)
NEG	negation
PN	proper noun
PRT	particle (including interjections and utterance-final particles)
ZAI	progressive marker <i>zài</i> (在)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research for this dissertation started in 2007. It would not have been completed without the help, support, guidance and comments of many people.

First of all, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Lisa Cheng and Prof. Rint Sybesma, who have been supporting me with their knowledge, kindness and long-lasting encouragement. I would also like to thank my PhD committee members: Prof. Walter Bisang, Prof. Hilary Chappell and Dr. Jeroen Wiedenhof, for their expertise and invaluable comments which helped me to improve this dissertation. I also thank the colleagues at the Department of Chinese Studies at Leiden University for making possible my research trip to Taiwan in 2007.

A special thanks is due to Prof. Tseng Shu-Chuan of the Institute of Linguistics at Academia Sinica in Taiwan for making the spoken Taiwan Mandarin corpora available to me. Her kind support and advice during my first research stay in Taiwan was of great help. I would also like to thank Prof. Biq Yung-O and my friend Lin Shu-hui for providing additional Taiwan Mandarin spoken data.

I am truly grateful to the following colleagues and friends who helped me in many ways in the long writing process: Chia-wen, Chien-ju, Chunli, Min-chin, Fan-tso, Fresco, Fu-ju, Hong Yang, Hung-pin, Jeroen, Li Qian, Lisa, Lung-chih, Maghiel, Meiwen, Meng-huan, Mengmeng, Min-shu, Rint, Runsen, Yi-nan, Ying-ting, Yixue, Yiya, Yu-jen, as well as many other who have been involved in the process of my research.

Lastly, my deepest gratitude goes to my family in Taiwan and Germany: Lin Yang Chin-hua, Lin Mei-chao, Pan Shan-chih, Lin Yung-wen, Hsu Hui-mei, Lin Ma-li, and Sigrid Klöter, for their understanding and endless support. I am mostly indebted to my husband Henning. Without his patience, encouragement and humor, I would never have been able to accomplish this dissertation.



## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Below is a conversation between two Taiwan Mandarin native speakers, D and L, who are good friends and were classmates in junior high school. In this excerpt, they are discussing the experience about taking extra tutorial classes when they were in junior high school:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) 1 D      yǐqián zài xiǎng wǒmen qù bǔxí-      hǎoxiàng dōu-  
              before ZAI think 1<sub>PL</sub>      go coach      seem      all
- 2 L      [@@@  
              (laughter)
- 3 D      [yě      bù      zhīdào      zài      gǎnmá      ê.  
              also      NEG      know      ZAI      what.to.do      PRT
- 4 D      hoNn.      nǐ      huì      bú      huì      juéde?  
              PRT      2<sub>SG</sub>      will      NEG      will      think
- 5 L      wàngjì      le.      xiǎoshíhòu      bǔxí-  
              forget      PRT      childhood      coach
- 6 D      hǎoxiàng      nǐ      méi      qù      bǔ      ba?  
              seem      2<sub>SG</sub>      NEG      go      coach      PRT
- 7 L      yǒu      la↓!  
              have      PRT
- 8 D      nǐ      bǔ      shénme?  
              2<sub>SG</sub>      coach      what
- 9 L      guózhōng      duì      bú      duì?  
              junior.high.school      right      NEG      right

---

<sup>1</sup> This excerpt is taken from the *Mandarin Topic-oriented Conversation Corpus* collected by the Academia Sinica in Taiwan.

→ 10 D      nǐ   guózhōng          yǒu   bǔ      o?  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> junior.high.school have coach PRT

→ 11 L      yǒu   a↑.  
                  have PRT

- D1: Before I was thinking, we took the extra tutorial class and it seemed that-
- L2: [(laughter)
- D3-4: [we didn't know what we were doing. Right? Don't you think so?
- L5: I forgot that. The tutorial class in our childhood...
- D6: I don't remember you taking extra tutorial classes.
- L7: Yes, I did!
- D8: What did you take?
- L9: In junior high, right?
- D10: You took the classes in junior high?
- L11: I did!

Example (1) illustrates how common and how frequent utterance-final particles (hereafter: UFPs) occur in Taiwan Mandarin conversations. This 12-second example includes five UFPs: *ê* [ɛ], *ba* [pa], *la* [la], *o* [ɔ] and *a* [a], which are just five of the UFPs used in today's Taiwan Mandarin (for a complete list, see table 1.1). In this thesis, the UFPs correspond to what is referred to as *yǔqìcí* 'mood words' (cf. Zhu 1982: 207), *modal particles* (cf. Chappell 1991: 39) or *sentence-final particles* (cf. Li & Thompson 1981: 239) in previous studies. The reason I choose the term *utterance-final particles* is that some particles in my data do not merely occur at the end of sentences, but also occur at the end of some smaller units such as *wǒ juédé* 'I think', or free-standing words such as *tiān* 'sky, heaven'. Moreover, I prefer not to term these particles as modal particles because, as I will show, they strongly relate to the interaction among the interlocutors. I thus concur with Luke (1990) who writes, "[w]ithin a modal perspective, these interactional and conversation organizational parameters which many utterance particles are sensitive to would be overlooked" (ibid.: 271).

The frequent use of UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin conversation has been noticed by many scholars. R. Wu (2004: 26–28) presents an example in her study on Taiwan Mandarin, showing the recurrent use of UFPs: in a 27-second disagreement sequence, there is a total of 17 instances of UFP usage. Comparing language use in

Taiwan and mainland China, Chen (2008: 116) also points out that the deployment of the UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin has a high frequency. Table 1.1 compares the UFPs in my Taiwan Mandarin conversational data with those listed in “standard” Mandarin dictionaries, textbooks or grammar books.<sup>2</sup> It shows that the number of UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin conversation is actually much higher than that in standard Mandarin. Moreover, some UFPs in this list, such as *hoNn* [hɔŋ̊], *haNn* [haŋ̊], *hioh* [hiɔʔ] or *nê* [nɛ], can be identified as non-Mandarin syllables. For example, [ɛ] in the Mandarin phonological system never forms a final in its own right (cf. Huang 1992, Luo 2005).<sup>3</sup>

<i>UFPs in standard Mandarin</i>	<i>UFPs used in Taiwan Mandarin conversation</i>
<i>ma</i> [ma]	<i>ma</i> [ma]
<i>ba</i> [pa]	<i>ba</i> [pa]
<i>ne</i> [nə]	<i>ne</i> [nə]
<i>a</i> [a]	<i>a</i> [a]
<i>o</i> [ɔ]	<i>o</i> [ɔ]
	<i>la</i> [la]
	<i>hoNn</i> [hɔŋ̊]
	<i>haNn</i> [haŋ̊]
	<i>hioh</i> [hiɔʔ]
	<i>lê</i> [lɛ]
	<i>nê</i> [nɛ]
	<i>ê</i> [ɛ]

Table 1.1 A comparison of UFPs in standard Mandarin and spontaneous Taiwan Mandarin conversation<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The term “standard Mandarin” will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> As Cheng (1973: 10) writes, “[t]raditionally, a Chinese syllable is divided into three parts: the beginning consonant is called the INITIAL; the remainder of the segmental sequence, the FINAL; and the pitch, the TONE.”

<sup>4</sup> This table is based on *Xiàndài Hànyǔ cídiǎn* ‘Contemporary Chinese Dictionary’ (CASS 2010), *Guóyǔ rìbào cídiǎn* ‘Mandarin Daily Dictionary’ (He 1987), *Chóngbiān guóyǔ cídiǎn xiūdìngběn* ‘Revised Mandarin Chinese dictionary’ (MoE 1994), and Tseng (2013).



How can we account for the high number and distinct use of UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin conversation in comparison to standard Mandarin and presumably also to other Mandarin varieties? In light of Taiwan's historical background (to be discussed in chapter 2), the most obvious explanation is language contact.

Most previous studies on language contact in Taiwan focus on phonology (e.g., Kuo 2005 on Taiwan Mandarin retroflex variables, Hsu and Tse 2009 on tonal leveling, etc.), lexicon (e.g. Tang 1999, 2002 on dialect loanwords, Hsieh and Yeh 2009 on Taiwanese loanwords, etc.), or syntax (e.g. Cheng 1994 on syntactic change in the use of *yǒu* structure in Taiwan Mandarin, Tseng 2003 on syntactical structures, etc.), or provide general overviews, such as Kubler (1981, 1985). These studies analyze the influence from the most dominant dialect in Taiwan, Southern Mǐn, onto Taiwan Mandarin. Except for P. Wu (2005), the use of UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin has not yet been explored in depth in the context of language contact. However, since P. Wu (2005) only focuses on the UFPs influenced by Southern Mǐn, there are still many questions waiting to be answered. For example, is Southern Mǐn the only source language contributing to a difference between today's Taiwan Mandarin and standard Mandarin? Are there any other source language(s) involved? What exactly has been "transferred" into Taiwan Mandarin from the source language(s) – a particular UFP and all of its functions? Or just some functions?

Despite of their ubiquity, Taiwan Mandarin UFPs have not received particular attention in previous studies on Mandarin UFPs: Most studies discuss Mandarin UFPs in a general fashion by including data from both mainland China and Taiwan. For instance, R. Wu (2004: 40) clarifies that all the speakers in her 12-hour core data are from Taiwan. However, she added another four hours of mainland Mandarin data in order to "make the results of this study more generalizable to more than one speech community." Some studies only use data from mainland China. Wang (2013), for example, uses 20 hours of mainland Chinese TV drama series. Some studies only mention that the data is collected from Mandarin speakers, and do not indicate clearly the speakers' background. For example, C. C. Chu (2002: 16) writes: "[t]he speakers range from teens to over sixty in age and their education ranges from middle school to graduate school. Mandarin is their family language, though some of them have different dialectal background. The younger speakers (only two in number) have been brought up in the United States but are fluent in Mandarin."

One possible reason why Taiwan Mandarin UFPs have not attracted more attention in previous studies is that most of the authors focus on shared UFPs which are found in all Mandarin varieties, such as *a* [a], *ba* [pa] and *ne* [nə] (cf. B. Li 2006, Han 1995, C. C. Chu 1984) and take it for granted that the results can cover all uses

in all Mandarin varieties. However, the functions of “shared UFPs” may differ across different Mandarin varieties. As I will show in chapter 3, the use of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is not identical with what is generally perceived as acceptable Mandarin in mainland China. I therefore claim that the regional origin of the data needs to be indicated clearly. Otherwise, it is not possible to provide a precise description and analysis of the use of UFPs in different regional Mandarin varieties.

### 1.2 Research questions, data, and methodology

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- (i) In what kind of context(s) do the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs under discussion occur in spontaneous conversation?
- (ii) What are the core functions of these UFPs?
- (iii) How can we explain the “deviated” use of these UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin?
- (iv) How can we explain the “emergence” of these UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin?

In order to answer these research questions, I adopt two different approaches. First, I take a discourse-functional approach to determine the core functions of the three Taiwan Mandarin UFPs in conversation. On the basis of data from the existing literature, I formulate a proposal as to what the core function of each of these UFP is. This proposal is then tested in different types of contexts on the basis of a new set of spontaneous Taiwan Mandarin conversational data. The deployment of a particular UFP is explained with reference to various contextual factors and the proposed functions are contrastively analyzed in identical contexts.

Most of the Taiwan Mandarin spontaneous spoken data in the current study come from the *Mandarin Topic-oriented Conversation Corpus* collected by the Academia Sinica in Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> The MTCC corpus consists of 29 spontaneous dialogues between two speakers who are familiar with each other. The age ranges from 14 to 63. Each pair of speakers was asked to choose a specific topic for the conversation. The total length of recording is ca. 11 hours. I have excluded two dialogues, which are basically carried out in Southern Min. This study is thus based on 27 Taiwan Mandarin dialogues involving 31 female speakers and 23 male

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<sup>5</sup> For details, see <http://mmc.sinica.edu.tw> and Tseng (2005).

speakers. In addition to the MTCC data, some examples come from my own recordings of Taiwan Mandarin made in 2007 and 2008. The settings of my own recordings are similar to those used for the MTCC.<sup>6</sup> I have also used four excerpts from another public Taiwan Mandarin corpus, the *NCCU corpus of spoken Chinese* which is similar to the other two corpora in the relevant respects.<sup>7</sup> The analysis of spoken utterances is to some extent based on judgments from different native speakers. Native speakers have been consulted for the assessment of both corpus examples and constructed utterances. Constructed examples have been used for comparative purposes (for details, see chapter 6) and discussed with ten Taiwan Mandarin native speakers.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, in order to assess the influence of language contact on the use of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs today, I also compare UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin with those in mainland Mandarin<sup>9</sup> and other possible source language(s). My analysis is based on spoken data as well as native speakers' judgments: in the case of Taiwan spoken Southern Mǐn data, I have consulted the spoken Taiwan Southern Mǐn data reported in previous studies (e.g. I. Li 1999), two Taiwan Southern Mǐn dialogues of MTCC and my own recordings (likewise made in 2007 and 2008). For other assumed source languages, for instance, Jiāng-Huái Mandarin, a comparable spoken database is not available. The examples included in this dissertation have been discussed with 13 mainland Chinese native speakers.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> My own recordings made in Taiwan involve 12 female speakers and 4 male speakers. Their age range from 25 to 55.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://140.119.172.200/> and Chui and Lai (2008).

<sup>8</sup> The ten Taiwan Mandarin native speakers include 3 male speakers and 7 female speakers. Their ages range from 25 to 45.

<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, the term *mainland Mandarin* is used in two ways: it refers to mainland Mandarin data used in previous studies and also refers to established Mandarin words or phrases widely accepted as common Mandarin usage by informants from various places except for the Mǐn dialect region.

<sup>10</sup> Following Norman's (1988) classification of Chinese dialects, the dialects used by my mainland Chinese informants can be divided as follows: Northern Mandarin (one male speaker from Běijīng and one male speaker from Shāndōng), Northwestern Mandarin (one female speaker from Shǎnxī), Southwestern Mandarin (one female speaker from Sīchūān), Jiāng-Huái Mandarin (one male speaker from Northern Jiāngsū, two female speakers from Nánjīng, one female speaker from Ānhuī), Wú (one female speaker and one male speaker from Shànghǎi, 1 female speaker from Zhèjiāng), Mǐn (one male speaker from Fújiàn), and Yuè (one female speaker from Hong Kong). Their ages range from 25 to 50.

It must be emphasized that native speakers' judgments play a supplementary role in my analysis when examining the distribution of UFPs in regional terms or comparing the use of UFPs in one particular type of context. Also, intuitive judgments in this study do not solely come from the author, but are rather based on intuitive judgments of different native speakers.

### 1.3 Outline

The study is divided into eight chapters, including the current introductory chapter. Introducing the socio-historical background of Taiwan, chapter 2 identifies various factors that have exerted an influence on the formation of today's Taiwan Mandarin, such as migration from the Chinese mainland and the Mandarin promotion campaign initiated after 1945. This historical background provides the context for the discussion in chapter 7.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 analyze the distribution and the discourse functions of respectively *a*, *la* and *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin. In chapter 3, I demonstrate that Taiwan Mandarin *a* can be divided into two categories according to distinct pitch heights. I suggest that the core function of the Taiwan Mandarin UFP *a* is to mark knowledge activation: The low-pitch *a* marks the activation of the speaker's own knowledge, whereas the high-pitch *a* indicates activation of the addressee's knowledge. I also show that the use of UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is not entirely identical with that in mainland Mandarin. Chapter 4 distinguishes two types of *la* in Mandarin: fused *la* and simplex *la*. The former exists in both mainland Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin, whereas the latter exists in Taiwan Mandarin only. I then propose a core function of the UFP *la*, which is to mark an adjustment, and conclude that the distributional contexts and functions of the UFP *la* in both Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn are identical. In chapter 5, I first examine the use of *ê* and its variant *ye* in Taiwan Mandarin. I suggest that the use of *y[j]*-initial forms in Taiwan Mandarin onsetless UFPs involving syllable lengthening has an "emphatic" connotation. The core function of *ê* is to induce a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which *ê* is attached.

In order to sharpen the contours of the proposed core functions, chapter 6 contrasts the use of *a*, *la* and *ê* in identical contexts. I show how the different core functions lead to different interpretations. Chapter 7 discusses the emergence of the three UFPs under discussion from the perspective of language contact. I suggest that *la* is a result of lexical imposition of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin, whereas the UFP *a* is a relexified particle due to the influence of the Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. I propose that the UFP *ê* is a particle imported by Jiāng-Huái Mandarin

speakers. Except for discussing the influence of various Chinese varieties on Taiwan Mandarin, I also explore the influence of Mandarin on the use of the Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. I then discuss the possible motivation for a speaker when it comes to the choice between a Mandarin UFP and a non-Mandarin one when both are available. Chapter 8 presents the conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Taiwan Mandarin and UFPs

#### 2.1 Language varieties and definitions

“Mandarin” is an ambiguous term. According to P. Chen, it can stand for *guānhuà* ‘speech of officials’ and refer to “the name of a family of Northern Chinese speech forms,” as well as to “the standard language or koine spoken by officials and educated people from the Yuan dynasty up to the early twentieth century, when it was replaced by *guóyǔ* ‘national language’” (1999: 205). The first part of P. Chen’s definition of *guānhuà* includes various regional dialects. According to Norman (1988: 190–191), Mandarin can be classified into four subgroups: northern Mandarin, northwestern Mandarin, southwestern Mandarin, and eastern Mandarin (Jiāng- Huái Mandarin).<sup>1</sup> *Guānhuà* is spoken by the majority of the Chinese population (cf. Norman 1988: 190, P. Chen 1999: 3). Nowadays, the term Mandarin is also used to refer to the official languages (i.e. abstract standards promoted by the governments) on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. These standard varieties are known as respectively *guóyǔ* ‘national language’ in Taiwan and *pǔtōnghuà* ‘common language’ in mainland China.

*Guóyǔ* has been promoted since the early twentieth century; *pǔtōnghuà* since the 1950s. Although both standards are based on the pronunciation of the Mandarin variety spoken in Běijīng<sup>2</sup> (cf. J. Wang 1995: 277, P. Chen 1999: 22), the standard pronunciations of *guóyǔ* in Taiwan and of *pǔtōnghuà* in mainland China are based on different norms.<sup>3</sup> As regards normative grammar, the standards of both varieties

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<sup>1</sup> There are other classifications. For instance, the *Language Atlas of China* (1988: B1-B6) claims eight Mandarin subgroups: Zhongyuan Mandarin, Northern Mandarin, Jiaoliao Mandarin, Jianghuai Mandarin, Northeastern Mandarin, Beijing/Beifang Mandarin, Southernwestern Mandarin, and Lanyin Mandarin. Chappell (2001: 10) proposes five subgroups: Northern Mandarin dialects, Zhongyuan or Central Plains Mandarin dialects, North-western Mandarin dialects, Jiang-Huai or Xiajiang (Lower Yangzi) Mandarin dialects, South-western Mandarin dialects. Since the subgrouping of Mandarin does not affect my analysis, I follow Norman’s (1988) classification for reasons of convenience.

<sup>2</sup> In the previous literature, the Mandarin variety spoken in Běijīng is usually termed as Beijing Mandarin or Peking Mandarin. I use the abbreviation PM to refer to this Mandarin variety.

<sup>3</sup> According to Tung (1992: 3), the norm for pronunciation used in Taiwan is based on the *Guóyīn chángyòng zìhuì* ‘Glossary of frequently used characters in pronunciation’ published in 1932 and the *Guóyǔ cídiǎn* ‘Dictionary of national language’. In mainland China, the norm for pronunciation is based on *pǔtōnghuà*

are not clearly defined. According to SCPRC (1956) and J. Wang (1995), the grammatical norms for *pǔtōnghuà* are “exemplary modern works in *báihuà* ‘vernacular literary language’.” However, as R. Cheng (1985: 354) remarks, what can be regarded as an exemplary modern work “is not clearly stated.” The case of *guóyǔ* is similar. In 1911, it was mentioned in the *Tōngyī guóyǔ bànfǎ àn* ‘Act of approaches to the unification of the national language’ that “the vocabulary and grammar should mainly be based upon *guānhuà*, and meet the criteria of being correct, elegant, and logical” (P. Chen 1999: 15). These criteria, however, appear to be subjective. Zhou and Liu (1996: 366) also point out that “as for the lexicons and grammar, the standard for *guóyǔ* is not quite clear [...]: it has to be based on ‘the common language widely spoken from northeast to Sichuān, Yúnnán and Guizhōu, and from the Great Wall to Yangtze River’, the grammatical norms are based on ‘a literature in the national language’.”<sup>4</sup> Guo (1999: 103) also states that, around 1919, there was no concrete standard for written Chinese, because there were still voices insisting that the classical written language known as *wényán* was the standard. Moreover, advocates of the “vernacular language” could not reach consensus about the norm either. We can thus only point out that the grammar standard of both *guóyǔ* and *pǔtōnghuà* was based on literary works, or more precisely, literature written in the vernacular literary language.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to point out here that in this thesis, *guóyǔ*, *pǔtōnghuà* and *standard Mandarin* all refer to ideal, abstract governmental standards and not to the actual Mandarin varieties spoken by people in either mainland China or in Taiwan. They are not native languages of the people in either mainland China or in Taiwan (even of the Beijing dialect speakers), and need to be “acquired” as second languages, as Tung (1974: 367–8) has pointed out:

*Guóyǔ* is not the Beijing dialect. [...] It is never the case that a country’s standard language is equivalent to one of its local dialects. [...] I would like to say some words to *guóyǔ* learners: you can always learn *guóyǔ* very well. People who grow up in Běijīng also need to study to acquire good *guóyǔ*. These

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*yìdúcí shěnyīnbǎo* ‘List of variants in Putonghua pronunciation’ published in 1985 (first drafted in 1957 and constantly revised in the 1960s).

<sup>4</sup> All translations in this dissertation are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>5</sup> The earliest codification of the grammar of the vernacular literary language was *Xīnzhù guóyǔ wénfǎ* ‘New Chinese grammar’ written by Li Jīnxī, published in 1924 (see J. Li 1924). However, the influence of this book in the *guóyǔ* promotion campaign is unclear.

people have some advantages because their native language is closer to *guóyǔ*. However, if they do not study, what they speak is always the Beijing dialect, and never *guóyǔ*.

Since *guóyǔ* and *pǔtōnghuà* are learned as second languages, interference from the learner's first language (i.e. native language) is inevitable. As Li and Thompson (1981: 1) mention,

both Putonghua [*pǔtōnghuà*] and Guoyu [*guóyǔ*] are far from being “uniform,” for China has a large population spread over a vast geographical area, and consequently numerous other dialects inevitably influence and affect the versions of Putonghua and Guoyu spoken by people from different regions. Thus, a truly uniform language in a country such as China can exist only in theory, not in reality. [...] there will always be some variation between “the Mandarin language” of one person and “the Mandarin language” of another person.

What is referred to as *dìfāng pǔtōnghuà* ‘local variants of the common language’ have thus emerged naturally. Y. Chen (1991: 13) defines *dìfāng pǔtōnghuà* as “the inter-language occurring in the process of which a dialect speaker learns the non-native common language (i.e. *pǔtōnghuà*).” In short, it is important to distinguish a standard form (*pǔtōnghuà*) from actual usage (*dìfāng pǔtōnghuà*).

In this thesis, *Taiwan Mandarin* refers to the Mandarin actually spoken in Taiwan, and not to the abstract Taiwanese governmental standard *guóyǔ*. In a broader sense, Taiwan Mandarin can be regarded as a local Mandarin variety, or a kind of *dìfāng pǔtōnghuà*. However, compared to some *dìfāng pǔtōnghuà* such as *Xiàmén pǔtōnghuà* ‘Xiàmén variety of the common language’, which has one identifiable source language, the formation of Taiwan Mandarin appears to be much more complex owing to the historical background of Taiwan.

## 2.2 Taiwan's linguistic setting from a historical perspective

### 2.2.1 Fújiàn immigrants and colonization by Japan

Taiwan is an island lying in the Pacific Ocean, about 130 kilometers off the coast of China's southeastern Fújiàn province. Many scholars (e.g. Blust 1995, P. Li 2000, etc.) agree that Taiwan's original inhabitants are various non-Chinese aboriginal groups speaking Austronesian languages. Zhou (1996: 174–5) claims that immigration of Chinese people from mainland China to Taiwan started in the tenth century,



but the number of immigrants remained low in the first centuries. After the mid-16th century, more and more southern Fujianese fishermen and merchants settled in Taiwan. Zhou (1996: 177) reports that in 1926, “Fujianese made up some 73.5 percent out of the population in Taiwan.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, Southern Mǐn, the regional variety spoken in the southern part of Fújiàn province, is now widespread all over Taiwan.<sup>7</sup>

From 1895 to 1945, Taiwan was a colony of Japan. The Japanese government launched a Japanese language promotion campaign. Huang (1993: 96) estimates that by 1944, 71 percent of the Taiwanese population had become proficient in Japanese. However, Japanese was only used in public and not in private domains. Huang (1993: 99) concludes that the promotion of Japanese made most Taiwanese people Japanese-Southern Mǐn bilinguals. P. Chen (1999: 31) also claims that by 1944, 71 percent of the local population was proficient in Japanese and Japanese had been successfully established as the standard language. During the Japanese period, Southern Mǐn in Taiwan was strongly influenced by Japanese vocabulary and grammar (cf. S. Wu 1946). The presence of Japanese thus led to contact-induced changes, increasing the distinctiveness between Taiwanese Southern Mǐn and Southern Mǐn dialects in mainland China.

### 2.2.2 Mandarin promotion campaign and mainland immigrants after 1945<sup>8</sup>

In 1945, Taiwan was returned to the government of the Republic of China (ROC). Out of ideological motivations, the ROC government decided to promote the use of *guóyǔ* in Taiwan through the Mandarin Promotion Council (*guóyǔ tuīxíng wěiyuán-huì*) which was established in 1946. Its task was to replace Japanese with Mandarin within a short period of time. According to P. Chen (1999: 31–32):

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<sup>6</sup> Zhou (1996: 177) mentions that in 1926, the total number of Han people (i.e. the major ethnic group of China) was 3,751,600, or 88.4 percent of the total population. Among these Han people, the total number of Fujianese people is 3,120,000, which is about 83.1 percent.

<sup>7</sup> According to DoS (2002), people with a Southern Mǐn language background take up 76.9 percent of Taiwan’s population, Hakka people take up 10.9 percent; 1.4 percent are aboriginal/indigenous people; mainlanders (i.e. mainland immigrants after 1945) and their descendants take up ten percent.

<sup>8</sup> In this thesis, the mainland immigrants after 1945 are equivalent to *first-generation mainlanders*. The term *second-generation mainlander* refers to those who were born in Taiwan around or after 1945 from (one of) mainland parents.

[e]xcept for a brief period after 1945, when local Chinese dialects were needed as a tool to promote *guóyǔ*, all dialects other than *guóyǔ* were strongly discouraged or even prohibited in schools and mass media. [...] Up until 1987, schoolchildren in Taiwan could be penalized for speaking anything other than *guóyǔ*. The local dialects were either banned from mass media, or highly restricted in terms of time and budget allocation until quite recently.

D. Li (1985: 123) concludes that the campaign promoting *guóyǔ* has attained “considerable achievements in converting Mandarin into the lingua franca in Taiwan.”

Although political campaigning led to the successful establishment of *guóyǔ* as a lingua franca, it is important to note two facts here: First, similar to the promotion of Japanese before 1945, ROC language policies did not lead to an extinction of local languages, but created a “diglossia with bilingualism” society (Tsao 2000: 280). That is, Mandarin is used in public domains, whereas the local languages are still used in private domains. Huang estimates that in 1988, except for households of native Mandarin-speaking mainlanders, households in which Mandarin is the only language took up less than one percent of the population (1993: 120). Sandel also points out that despite of the fact that Mandarin Chinese has been promoted as the language of instruction in schools since 1945, “a majority of the island’s inhabitants also speak one of a number of ‘local languages’” (2003: 527).

Second, the target language of this promotion campaign, i.e. *guóyǔ*, has not been acquired successfully. Instead, the language which most local Taiwanese people have learned is a kind of, to use R. Cheng’s term, “non-native Mandarin” (1985: 354). This may be attributable to historical factors: after losing the Chinese civil war to the Communist Party in 1949, the ROC government withdrew to Taiwan. During 1949 and 1950, refugees and immigrants, including many army officers and their family members, moved from mainland China to Taiwan. Citing the 1956 population census (cf. PCO 1959), Huang (1993: 22) estimates that the total population of these mainland immigrants in Taiwan at the end of 1956 was about 1.21 million. However, according to this 1956 census, only less than one percent of these mainland immigrants came from Běijīng, the supposed normative location. Many of the mainland immigrants came from different provinces all over China and spoke non-Mandarin dialects as their mother tongue. Applying the dialect classification in Yuan (1989) and Norman (1988), Kuo (2005: 76–78) points out that these dialects included various Mandarin varieties as well as all other Sinitic dialect groups (Xiāng, Yuè, Wú, Mǐn, Kèjiā (Hakka), Gàn). Furthermore, Kuo’s figures imply that more than 40 percent of these first-generation mainland immigrants came from non-

Mandarin speaking areas. Among the Mandarin speakers, only 20 to 25 percent speak Northern or Northwestern Mandarin; Southwestern and Eastern Mandarin speakers account for ca. 30 percent. Her (2009: 27) also claims that “half of the first-generation mainland immigrants come from southern language areas [i.e. non-Mandarin speaking area], including Wú, Yuè, Hakka and Mǐn, etc.”

In light of the quantitative disparity between PM native speakers and the total population, the shortage of qualified personnel required for the promotion of *guóyǔ* was an obvious problem. As a result, many non-native PM mainland immigrants taught *guóyǔ* at schools. An editorial of the *Zhōnghuá rìbào* ‘China Daily News’ in 1947 identifies the problems: “Some teachers who teach *guóyǔ* cannot speak Mandarin well themselves. Some speak ‘Cantonese Mandarin’, some speak ‘Zhèjiāng Mandarin’, some even teach Mandarin in Shanghainese...” (ZHRB 1947). As mentioned above, for these non-native Mandarin mainland immigrants, Mandarin can be considered their “second language.”<sup>9</sup> LaPolla (2001: 234) likewise writes:

[a]fter 1949, there was a large influx of people from the mainland because of the Communist takeover of the mainland. These people were mostly from Wú dialect areas, and spoke Mandarin as a second language. The Wú speakers attempted to teach the Taiwanese population Mandarin, and forced the Taiwanese to speak it even amongst themselves. The Taiwanese did not generally have access to native speakers [...].<sup>10</sup>

In other words, actual Mandarin language use was to a large extent shaped by the native dialects of teachers.

Moreover, most of the first-generation mainlanders spoke their own dialects in private settings in their daily lives. Since many Sinitic dialects (especially southern dialects) are mutually unintelligible, these people used Mandarin as a *lingua franca* when communicating with people with another linguistic background. H. Chen (2004: 79), a second-generation mainlander, describes his childhood as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> Her (2009: 4) defines the *second language* as “a local language a person learns or acquires in teenagers’ age.”

<sup>10</sup> The Wú speakers, as I will explain in more details later, were more powerful in the realms of politics, economics, cultural, education and communication in Taiwan society after 1949 (cf. Cheng 1985, Tang 1999).

When we lived in the dormitory of teachers, there were only five or six households of mainland immigrants. They came from Sichuān, Fúzhōu, Shāndōng and Húběi. When we met, we normally talked in Mandarin. But when we listened to the other mainlanders speaking with their family members at home, we could not understand a single word. It was a mystery to me...

It must be reiterated here that, except for school education, these non-native Mandarin speakers apparently exercised a huge influence in the mass media. Before the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, the mass media in Taiwan was controlled by the ruling party, i.e. the Kuomintang. According to a survey conducted by *United Daily News* in 1987 (quoted by Chu 1998: 54), 76.28 percent of the employees of the main TV channels were mainlanders. J. Cheng (1988: 99) points out that only 7.7 percent of the employees of the *Broadcasting Corporation of China*, the main radio station in Taiwan, were non-mainlanders. R. Cheng (1985: 354) reports that until around 1975, for broadcasting,

it was not uncommon to have PM speakers read manuscripts written by non-PM speakers from southern China. In written mass media, the writings of non-PM speakers constitute a far larger volume than those of PM speakers....

He further claims that although PM was the designated standard, and supposed to be the common model, “in daily language contact, non-native Md [Mandarin] has been the actual model” (ibid.). He also argues that non-native PM speakers are “more influential in affecting the grammar of spoken TM [Taiwan Mandarin] than those of PM speakers” (ibid.).

Among all the non-Mandarin varieties in Taiwan, Southern Mǐn, due to the large number of speakers, has undoubtedly been the most influential linguistic source of today’s Taiwan Mandarin (the influence of Southern Mǐn will be discussed separately in 2.3). However, as Kubler (1981: 2) notices, there are more sources of Taiwan Mandarin features. His implicit argument that the quantity of speakers is not the sole factor to account for outcomes of language contact situations is in line with Siemund’s (2008: 4) claim:

As far as the social parameters of language contact situations are concerned, it has been observed that the number of speakers in the respective linguistic groups, the relative social status of the groups involved as well as the relative prestige of the language to a great extent determine the linguistic outcome of language contact.

If we take the other social parameters mentioned by Siemund into consideration, the influence of people from Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng provinces comes to our attention. R. Cheng (1985: 354) mentions the special social status of the Wú speakers in Taiwan society:

[A]mong non-Tw [Taiwanese] speakers of Md [Mandarin] on Taiwan, those not originally PM speakers are much more numerous, and are politically and economically more powerful than PM speakers. Especially influential are the Wú speakers—who include the political elite from Zhèjiāng, President Chiang’s [Chiang Kai-shek] home province, and the financial tycoons and textbook writers from Shanghai.

R. Cheng (1990: 17–18) furthermore points out that “when people who speak Taipei Mandarin go abroad and meet people from Běijīng, they are often regarded as Shanghainese. The reason is that Taipei Mandarin has been greatly influenced by the people from Shànghǎi and Zhèjiāng (who speak Wú dialects).”<sup>11</sup>

In a similar vein, on the basis of his investigation of dialect loanwords in Taiwan Mandarin, Tang (2002: 259) claims that 879 out of 1080 dialect loanwords in his data are from Southern Mǐn, 116 are from Wú, and 68 are from Hakka. To be sure, most of the dialect loanwords in Taiwan Mandarin come from Southern Mǐn. Yet it is interesting to see that the loanwords from Wú dialects take up around ten percent of the total number of loanwords. In his previous study, Tang (2001: 375) states that except for Southern Mǐn, Wú is also a very important lexical contributor.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The *Taipei Mandarin* R. Cheng (1990: 17) mentions is a relatively “standard” form of Taiwan Mandarin and mostly used in Taipei. Ang (1985: 97–98, 1992: 98–101) defines the *Taipei Mandarin* as the mother tongue of the second-/third-generation mainlanders and a part of local third-generation non-mainlanders (Taiwanese people). It is different from *Taiwanese-accented Mandarin*, which is the second mother tongue of the local Taiwanese people.

<sup>12</sup> The influence of Wú dialects is not restricted to the formation of Taiwan Mandarin. They have also exerted a considerable influence on Modern standard Chinese, i.e. *guóyǔ*. Quoting Hsü (1979), Davies (1992: 203) indicates that many of the most influential writers in the 1920s and 1930s were native speakers of regional dialects (i.e. non-Northern Mandarin): among the 213 writers who were active in that period of time, more than 80 percent were from non-Northern Mandarin areas, and 40 percent from Wú dialect areas. P. Chen (2001: 56) also writes: “Famous writers such as Lu Xun [Lǚ Xùn], Zhou Zuoren [Zhōu Zuòrén], Yu Dafu [Yù Dáfū], Xu Zhimo [Xú Zhimó], Mao Dun [Máo Dùn] and Ye

Tang (ibid.: 365) argues that the influence from Wú dialects on Taiwan Mandarin is the result of immigration. In Tang (1999) he explains the importance of Wú dialects by pointing to the following political factors: Nánjīng had been the place of the ROC government during the two decades prior to its relocation to Taiwan in 1949. According to Tang (1999) and Ang (1992: 240), people from Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng provinces were not merely powerful and influential in political and economic realms, but also in education. Tang (2001: 366) points out that after the ROC government's relocation to Taiwan, "people speaking Wú dialects or Wú-style Mandarin have a higher status and are more powerful in the realms of politics, economics, cultural, education and communication in Taiwan society." He further argues that "the influence of a language does not always depend on the number of its speakers, but its social status and social value" (ibid.), which is in line with Siemund's (2008) argument quoted above.

I find Tang's (1999, 2001) argument concerning the influence of Wú on the formation of Taiwan Mandarin convincing. It must, however, be pointed out that people from Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng do not only speak Wú. In some regions, such as Nánjīng, eastern Mandarin is spoken (Norman 1988: 191). It is therefore necessary to include the influence of eastern Mandarin when analyzing external influence on today's Taiwan Mandarin. In this thesis, I will propose that *é* [ɛ], one of the frequently used utterance-final particles in Taiwan Mandarin, has possibly originated from Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers, and possibly from the Nánjīng area (see chapter 7 for details).

### 2.3 The influence of Southern Mǐn

In the previous section, I have explained the social context of mainland dialect influence on the formation of Taiwan Mandarin. Southern Mǐn dialects have thus far not been discussed in detail. As mentioned briefly, the Southern Mǐn dialects spoken by the majority of Taiwan's population are regarded as the most influential contributors to Taiwan Mandarin. Teng (2002: 232) claims, "[c]ontributions towards the

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Shengtao [Yè Shèngtáo] were all native speakers of the Wú dialect. In their writings, all of them displayed features characteristic of the grammar and vocabulary of their native tongue. Because of the popularity of these writers, many Wu [Wú] features subsequently became part of established Modern Written Chinese norms." Davies (1992: 205) points out that Wú dialect is the most dominant source while concerning the part of Modern Standard Chinese which derives from non-Northern Mandarin regional dialects. It is thus reasonable to claim that Wú dialects to some extent shaped today's standard Mandarin in both mainland China and Taiwan, i.e. *pǔtōnghuà* and *guóyǔ*.

formation of Taiwanese Mandarin [i.e. Taiwan Mandarin] came mostly, if not entirely, from Southern Mǐn.” Southern Mǐn, together with Taiwan Mandarin, is the most widely spoken variety of Sinitic on Taiwan (cf., for example, Kubler 1981, 1985, Qiu and Van den Berg 1994, Sandel 2003, etc.). It is especially widespread in southern Taiwan where it is used as the main language of communication in private settings, in shops and on the streets (for further details, see Qiu and Van den Berg 1994). Although Taiwan is home to many languages, Southern Mǐn is often referred to as *Táiyǔ* ‘Taiwanese language’, suggesting that it is the linguistic representative of the whole society. As a matter of fact, however, the idea underlying the collective term *Táiyǔ* is misleading, since it conceals that Taiwan Mandarin, the lingua franca, is used all over the island as the main language of media, education, and government administration. In addition, Hakka has regional bases in central and southern Taiwan.

As mentioned previously, during the *guóyǔ* promotion campaign, especially between the 1950s and the 1980s, local languages were prohibited in public domains, and their usage was suppressed systematically. However, they were still used in private domains. In the early 1990s, regulations restricting the use of local languages in public domains, including the mass media, were gradually abolished (cf. Shih and Tiunn 2003: 181–191). As a consequence, the use of local languages, especially Southern Mǐn, has increased in mass media and other public domains. This has been reported by Klöter (2006: 211):

In the media, restrictions against local languages were lifted in November 1987 when the three government-controlled television stations started broadcasting news in Tai-gu [i.e. *táiyǔ*]. Politics followed suit in the 1990s, when Tai-gu became a fully accepted language of the legislature and the dominant language of political campaigning.

Given the frequent exposure to Southern Mǐn and the large proportion of Southern Mǐn speakers, it is not surprising that many scholars claim that Taiwan Mandarin has primarily been influenced by Southern Mǐn. In the next paragraph, I briefly summarize some findings from previous studies in which the influence of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin in phonology, lexicon, and syntax has been analyzed.

Kubler (1985: 160) claims that many native Southern Mǐn speakers substitute [y] with [i] when speaking Taiwan Mandarin because [y] does not exist in Southern Mǐn. For instance, *dàxué* ‘university’ is often pronounced as *dàxié*. He also points out that in Taiwan Mandarin, the verb *yòng* ‘to use’ occurs before another verb

nominalized with the marker *de*, like *Kuài! Yòng pǎo de!* ‘Come on! Run!’. Whereas this structure does not exist in standard Mandarin (i.e. *guóyǔ*), it is attested in Southern Mǐn (for a detailed discussion, see Kubler 1985: 169). Hsieh and Yeh (2009: 101) indicate that many Southern Mǐn loanwords such as *dǎpīn* ‘endeavor’, *yùzú* ‘gloomy’ are popular in Taiwan Mandarin. Discussing syntactical structures in Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn, Tseng (2003: 2) claims that phrases such as *yǒu kàn guò* ‘have seen it’ or *zhīdào shuō* ‘know that’ have been formed through Southern Mǐn influence.

#### 2.4 The “levelling” of Taiwan Mandarin

Linguistic features associated with Southern Mǐn have not only been observed in Taiwan Mandarin spoken by people with a Southern Mǐn background, but also occur in varieties of speakers with other linguistic backgrounds. Many scholars have noticed this. For instance, studying the phonology of Taiwan Mandarin, Hsu (2005) examines four phonological variables including tonal range, neutral tone frequency, diphthong weakening, and syllable-final nasal convergence, and observes that the first three variables have become “cross-ethnic features” in Taiwan Mandarin (ibid.: 87). In other words, the Mandarin spoken by different ethnic groups in Taiwan becomes more and more homogeneous.<sup>13</sup> She thus claims that “[t]o distinguish one’s ethnicity by means of his/her Mandarin accent has become increasingly difficult” (ibid.: 2) and proposes that to a considerable extent, the Mandarin in Taiwan has been levelled.<sup>14</sup>

Why has the linguistic gap among various ethnic groups in Taiwan been narrowed (i.e. levelled)? One explanation is that speakers tend to align with each other. A second-generation mainlander, Tseng (2003: 131), describes her personal experience:

My teachers and friends in high school usually said that I spoke standard *guóyǔ*, now people can hardly tell that I was born into a mainland family. The motivation for the change of my Mandarin is that many of my friends are from a Southern Mǐn-speaking family. I wanted to be the same as the other people.

<sup>13</sup> According to Hsu (2005: 7), the ethnic groups in Taiwan are categorized into four groups: Southern Min, Hakka, mainlanders and aborigines.

<sup>14</sup> Trudgill (2004: 84–85) describes the process known as leveling as follows: “In a dialect mixture situation such as that present in a newly settled colony, large numbers of variants from the different dialects involved in the mixture will abound. As time passes, the variants present in the mixture will begin to be subject to reduction.”



Tseng's experience corresponds closely to what Kerswill and Williams write when analyzing the development of a new, mixed variety following dialect contact: "individual children's use of features presumed to be innovations may be linked to the same children's network characteristics, in particular their integration into a peer group" (2000: 92, also see discussion Trudgill 2008).

Except for social pressure, intermarriage of mainlanders and local people is another social factor contributing to the levelling of Taiwan Mandarin. According to F. Wang (1993: 236, 1994: 52), between 1948 and 1950, around 910,000 mainland immigrants entered Taiwan. Two third of these first-generation mainlanders were males. Due to this imbalance in gender ratio, more than half of the married male first-generation mainlanders had local spouses (F. Wang 1994: 237). Her (2009: 30) estimates that only 40 percent of second-generation mainlanders have two parents with a mainland background.

Other than the first-generation mainlanders, these second-generation mainlanders and local non-mainlanders who were born after 1945 have been exposed to a similar linguistic input. As Her (2009: 15) mentions, they grew up in a complex linguistic environment: the various first languages of those first-generation mainlanders, the non-native Mandarin spoken by first-generation mainlanders and non-mainlanders, the relatively standard Mandarin spoken by the TV or radio broadcasters, etc. The differences between the Mandarins spoken by members of this generation are therefore smaller. Her (*ibid.*: 27) claims that the linguistic gap within the third-generation Taiwanese (who were born after 1970) will gradually disappear. This kind of levelling of Taiwan Mandarin has been discussed by Hsu (2005) from the perspective of phonological development. Hsu (2005: 60) claims that "the mechanism of phonological levelling between the Mandarin of *Waishengren* and *Benshengren* has started as early as in the generation of 1951–1960."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, studying the tonal levelling of Taiwan Mandarin in Taipei, Hsu and Tse (2009: 225) find that the levelling process has only taken around 30 years to complete, which is "one generation earlier than the more general patterns suggested by Trudgill (Trudgill 1986, 2004)." Hsu and Tse (2009: 240) propose that the rapidity of levelling is due to four factors: (i) the intensiveness of *Waishengren* immigration to Taiwan; (ii) the rigorous Mandarin-only language policy; (iii) the pre-established social order

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<sup>15</sup> According to Hsu (2005: 7), the term *Waishengren* refers to the "[m]ainlanders, or the Chinese immigrants to Taiwan after World War II and their descendants." *Benshengren*, on the other hand, generally refers to the Southern Min people of Taiwan. This distinction is basically equivalent to what I term as mainlanders and local non-mainlanders in this thesis.

and infrastructure development in the Japanese colonial period, and (iv) the high frequency of contacts between *Waishengren* and *Benshengren*. According to F. Wang's (2001: 414–415) study on the different ethnic groups and their self-evaluation of language proficiency in Taiwan, 99 percent of the interviewees can speak Mandarin and Southern Mǐn fluently; Hakka people often can even speak three languages fluently.

In a nutshell, most of the Taiwanese people today are bilingual, and some of them are even tri-lingual or multi-lingual. In light of the fact that Taiwan Mandarin has become the new mother tongue of the third-generation Taiwanese, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, Her (2009: 37) characterizes this contact-induced Taiwan Mandarin as *creole*.

### 2.5 Taiwan Mandarin today

As mentioned previously, *guóyǔ* and *pǔtōnghuà* are abstract standards and should be distinguished from language in actual use. Taiwan Mandarin, which is spoken by people in Taiwan in their daily life, is to some extent different from the standard *guóyǔ*, just as various *dīfāng pǔtōnghuà* are different from standard *pǔtōnghuà*. With regard to the differences, Kubler writes (1985: 157):

The official language of Taiwan is a type of Mandarin based on the dialect of Beijing. However, due primarily to language contact with Southern Mǐn, the native language of the majority of the population, the Mandarin commonly spoken in Taiwan differs considerably from that of Beijing in phonology, syntax, and lexicon.

Apart from Kubler (1981, 1985), features of Taiwan Mandarin have also been noticed and studied by other scholars: R. Cheng (1985) compares Taiwan Mandarin, Taiwanese (i.e. Southern Mǐn) and PM, and concludes that the development of Taiwan Mandarin is inclined to “favor those features that are structurally regular in TM [i.e. Taiwan Mandarin] and similar to ones in Tw [i.e. Southern Mǐn].” Tseng (2003) lists ten syntactic structures that specifically exist in Taiwan Mandarin and not in the standard *guóyǔ*. Chang (1998) analyzes eight Taiwan Mandarin vowels and claims that Taiwan Mandarin is different from the *guóyǔ* codified in 1932. Tsao (2000) discusses various phonetic features specific to Taiwan Mandarin. Tang (1999, 2002) and Hsieh and Yeh (2009) both focus on loanwords borrowed from various Sinitic dialects into Taiwan Mandarin.

Taiwan Mandarin not only differs from standard *guóyǔ*. Due to different historical developments and long-term separation, Taiwan Mandarin is also considerably different from *pǔtōnghuà* and other Mandarin varieties. For example, Diao (1998: 387–390) points out that compared to *pǔtōnghuà*, Taiwan Mandarin has strongly been influenced by Japanese and Southern Mǐn. If we look at commonly used expressions which have entered the standard dictionaries on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, significant linguistic differences become obvious. This has been confirmed by Qiu and Van den Berg's (1994) general investigation on language use in Taiwan. With regard to the lexicon, some of the lexical items widely used in Taiwan Mandarin have a different meaning or do not exist in *pǔtōnghuà*. For example, in Taiwan Mandarin, *gōngchē* means 'bus', but in mainland China, the same word means 'official car' (ibid.: 258). In some cases, the pronunciation of a term is also different: *yánjiù* 'research' in Taiwan Mandarin is pronounced as *yánjiū* in *pǔtōnghuà* (Swihart 2003: 110). Shi and Deng (2006) compare the tones in Taiwan Mandarin and *pǔtōnghuà*, and claim that the third tone in Taiwan Mandarin has become a low-falling tone, which is different from the third tone in *pǔtōnghuà*, which is a low-falling plus a slightly rising tone. The length of the tone in Taiwan Mandarin and in *pǔtōnghuà* is also different: in *pǔtōnghuà*, the third tone occupies the first place on a scale of tone length, followed by the second tone, the first tone, and the fourth tone. In Taiwan Mandarin, the sequence is: first tone>second tone>third tone>fourth tone.

## 2.6 UFPs in language contact

In previous studies on language contact, many scholars have proposed a hierarchy of borrowing (e.g. Haugen 1950: 224, Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 74–76, Field 2002: 34–40, etc.). These studies suggest that content words such as nouns are more easily (or freely) borrowed than function words. However, Appel and Muysken point out that “it is clear from a number of cases that words which play a peripheral role in sentence grammar such as interjections, some types of adverbs, discourse markers, and even sentence coordination markers, are borrowed relatively easily” (1987: 171–2). Following Appel and Muysken (1987), Curnow (2001: 428) and Matras (2000: 505) also suggest that discourse markers appear to be easily transferred from language to language. In addition, R. Cheng (1997: 149) argues that the linguistic features from a speaker's mother language such as intonation, modal particles and interjections, which serve to indicate the speaker's emotive feelings, are transferred to the speaker's second language naturally, even when s/he is a proficient second-

language user. An example in case is the English spoken by Chinese people in Singapore, which is mixed with particles and interjections from Hokkien (i.e. Mǐn).

Pointing to the fact that UFPs in Mandarin and in Southern Mǐn usually have no referential meaning and carry pragmatic and discourse functions, R. Wu (1997: 98) writes:

[T]hese particles are essentially discourse-dependent: they often do not have a definite denotative or referential meaning, but are mainly used, among other things, to convey speaker's attitude, feeling, stance, and/or disposition in a discourse context.

The UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin also correspond to the category of discourse marker proposed by Hölker (1991: 77–78), who provides four basic features to describe discourse markers (or pragmatic markers, in Hölker's term):

- (1) they do not affect the truth conditions of an utterance;
  - (2) they do not add anything to the propositional content of an utterance;
  - (3) they are related to the speech situation and not to the situation talked about;
- and
- (4) they have an emotive, expressive function rather than a referential, donative or cognitive function.

(translated by Jucker 1998: 3)

The relevance of the claims by Appel and Muysken (1987), Curnow (2001: 428) and Matras (2000: 505) for our analysis of UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin is obvious: UFPs always occur at the utterance-final position and have no influence on the propositional content of the utterance; in other words, they are “peripheral.”

As stated before, Taiwan Mandarin speakers use UFPs from Southern Mǐn when speaking Mandarin, as in the example below. In lines 2 and 4, speaker M uses two particles *la* and *hoNh*, which do not exist in *guóyǔ*, but can be found in Southern Mǐn.

- (1) 1 D            cóng    zǎoshàng   kāishǐ   guàng   ma?  
                       from    morning    start    stroll    PRT
- 2 M            shì-    dōu    kěyǐ    la.  
                       be     all    can    PRT

3 M	xiǎng	guàng	jiù	guàng	a.		
	want	stroll	just	stroll	PRT		
→ 4 M	xiǎng-	lèi	le	huílái	xiūxi	a	hoNn.
	want	tired	ASP	come.back	rest	PRT	PRT

D1: Does your shopping start in the morning?

M2-4: It- it doesn't matter. If I want to, then I go shopping. If I want- if I am tired, I go home and take a rest.

In some cases, the transfer does not involve all of the functions of a particular UFP, but only one or more discourse functions. An example is the UFP *a*, which is found in both Southern Mǐn and Mandarin, albeit with different functions. It can be observed that single discourse functions of Southern Mǐn *a* have been transferred to Taiwan Mandarin (for a detailed discussion, see chapter 3).

Discussing the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing from a pragmatic perspective, Prince (1988) makes the following statement about the borrowing of discourse functions, based on his analysis of Yiddish data (ibid.: 517):

Given S1, a syntactic construction in one language, L1, and S2, a syntactic construction in another language, L2, the discourse function DF1 associated with S1 may be borrowed into L2 and associated with S2, just in case S1 and S2 can be construed as syntactically 'analogous' in terms of string order.

Although Prince restricts her statement to the string order, I believe that "analogy," or similarity, with regard to form and function, may be an important factor for the transfer of pragmatic functions among UFPs. For instance, the UFP *a* in both Southern Mǐn and Mandarin are not just similar in form and share some functions, but "have a common etymological origin" (Lin 2007: 48) and can thus be seen as cognates. According to Van Hell and De Groot, "[n]oticing the salient similarity of cognates, one may be inclined to think that words that look and sound alike are also similar in meaning. Hence, when learning a cognate in the second language, learners may simply map the to-be learned L2 word onto the existing conceptual representation of its translation in the native language" (1998: 194).

### 2.7 P. Wu's (2005) analysis of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs

As mentioned in the chapter 1, although the use of UFPs is regarded as a salient feature in Taiwan Mandarin, it has not yet been explored in depth in the context of language contact: for example, Kubler (1981: 112, 1985: 172) mentions the UFP *ho*.<sup>16</sup> in his list as an example showing the impact of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin, yet, he does not provide any analysis.

Until now, P. Wu (2005) is probably the only study examining the use of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs in the context of language contact. She focuses on those UFPs which are influenced by Southern Mǐn. She divides the UFPs into two groups: (1) UFPs influenced by Southern Mǐn (including *la* and *lê*); and (2) UFPs borrowed from Southern Mǐn (including *hoNn*, *haNn* and *hioh*). According to her, *hoNn*, *haNn* and *hioh* can be characterized as “borrowed” particles (ibid.: 59).<sup>17</sup> She (ibid.: 93) further claims that the borrowing of these UFPs can be attributed to two possible factors: there is no UFP in standard Mandarin carrying the borrowed discourse function, or, compared to another UFP with similar functions, the borrowed particle is simpler in terms of form or pronunciation. Although these arguments provide a possible explanation for the reasons of transfer, the scope of her analysis remains limited to Southern Mǐn as the sole possible source language of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs.

This, however, merely explains parts of a more complicated story. For example, it cannot explain whether the UFP *ê* (see table 2.1 below), which neither exists in Southern Mǐn nor in standard Mandarin *guóyǔ*, is also a product of contact-induced change. Or take the case when the language resources of a bilingual speaker offer two UFPs for the same or similar functions—do the UFPs mix or compete in concrete usage?

P. Wu's research is partly based on spontaneous spoken data.<sup>18</sup> She writes that “as I am not the participant of the conversation, I can only rely on my native intuition to judge the emotion contained in the utterances when judging some of my data” (P. Wu 2005: 99). As R. Wu criticizes, this kind of “interpretivist” approach may lead to a possible result that “what has been claimed by these researchers may not square with what has indeed been understood and experienced by the partici-

<sup>16</sup> *Ho*: is equivalent to *hoNn*.

<sup>17</sup> Here, I simply quote P. Wu's (2005) term “borrow,” although she does not clearly explain how she defines “borrow” in her thesis.

<sup>18</sup> P. Wu (2005: 16) includes two sorts of data. One is recorded spoken data such as TV drama series, news reports, interviews, dialogues in advertisements, speeches, daily conversations and conversations in classrooms; the other is spoken data in written forms such as talk on MSN messenger, short messages, cards, news and internet forums, etc.

pants” (2004: 32–33). As mentioned in chapter 1, I do not agree that the linguistic intuition of the person analyzing the data is irrelevant. For my analysis, however, I have not only relied on my own bilingual Mandarin/Southern Mǐn native speaker intuition. As pointed out in chapter 1, I have also elicited intuitive judgments from various Mandarin and/or Southern Mǐn native speakers from different regions. To be sure, an analysis relying on intuition alone would be insufficient. Since UFPs are highly relevant for the interaction between conversational participants, they cannot be understood properly without considering their sequential contexts in spontaneous conversation. This study therefore attempts to explore the interactional functions of UFPs and the sequential contexts in which they occur by citing larger portions of conversational discourse and identifying conversational interactions (e.g., listener’s responses, turn-taking, etc.) in spontaneous conversation. I believe that in this way, the function of the UFPs can be explained more accurately.

### 2.8 An overview of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs

Table 2.1 includes all of the UFPs which are attested in conversations carried out in today’s Taiwan Mandarin. Some UFPs, such as *hoNn*, *haNn* and *hioh*, are perceived as Southern Mǐn UFPs. Table 2.1 also compares the distribution of UFPs in standard Mandarin *guóyǔ*, Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn.

I will divide these UFPs into four groups, according to their distribution in these three varieties:

Group I: UFP used in all three varieties;

Group II: UFP used in *guóyǔ* and Taiwan Mandarin only;

Group III: UFP used in Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn only;

Group IV: UFP used in Taiwan Mandarin only.

	<i>UFPs in guóyǔ (i.e. standard Mandarin)</i>	<i>UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin</i>	<i>UFPs in Southern Mǐn</i>
I.	<i>a</i> [a]	<i>a</i> [a]	<i>a</i> [a]
	<i>o</i> [ɔ]	<i>o</i> [ɔ]	<i>o</i> [ɔ]
II.	<i>ma</i> [ma]	<i>ma</i> [ma]	
	<i>ba</i> [pa]	<i>ba</i> [pa]	
	<i>ne</i> [nə]	<i>ne</i> [nə]	
III.		<i>la</i> [la]	<i>la</i> [la]
		<i>hoNn</i> [hɔŋ]	<i>hoNn</i> [hɔŋ]
		<i>haNn</i> [haŋ]	<i>haNn</i> [haŋ]
		<i>hioh</i> [hiɔʔ]	<i>hioh</i> [hiɔʔ]
		<i>lê</i> [lɛ]	<i>lê</i> [lɛ]
		<i>nê</i> [nɛ]	<i>nê</i> [nɛ]
IV.		<i>ê</i> [ɛ]	

Table 2.1 UFPs in standard Mandarin *guóyǔ*, Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn<sup>19</sup>

According to Tseng and Gibbon (2006: 802), the most frequently used Taiwan Mandarin UFPs are *ma*, *la*, *ba*, *a*, *hon* and *e*.<sup>20</sup> As the focus of my investigation is on the possible influence of different source languages upon Taiwan Mandarin, the second group (i.e. *ma* and *ba*) will not be discussed in this thesis. The UFP *hoNn* is not analyzed in this study either, because its association with Southern Mǐn origin is generally recognized. The scope of my research will therefore be limited to the three UFPs *a*, *la* and *ê*, which represent three different types of distribution: *a* is shared by all the three varieties, *la* by Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn, and *ê* occurs only in Taiwan Mandarin.

<sup>19</sup> This table is based on the *Xiàndài Hànyǔ cídiǎn* ‘Contemporary Chinese Dictionary’ (CASS 2010), *Guóyǔ rìbào cídiǎn* ‘Mandarin Daily Dictionary’ (He 1987), *Chóngbiān guóyǔ cídiǎn xiūdìngběn* ‘Revised Mandarin Chinese dictionary’ (MoE 1994), I. Li (1999) and Tseng (2013).

<sup>20</sup> Here, *hon* and *e* are equivalents of respectively *hoNn* and *ê* in table 1.1 and table 2.1.



### 2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented external factors that account for the formation of today's Taiwan Mandarin. Due to external factors such as language planning (the Mandarin Promotion Campaign), massive exposure to Southern Mǐn and inter-marriage between mainland immigrants and local people, Taiwan Mandarin has been levelled and gradually become the new mother tongue of Taiwanese people who were born after 1970. A large number of Taiwanese people nowadays are in fact Taiwan Mandarin-Southern Mǐn bilinguals. When discussing today's Taiwan Mandarin, except for Southern Mǐn, we also have to note the influence from other Mandarin varieties and non-Mandarin varieties, for instance, the southern dialects, the Wú dialects and Jiāng-Huái Mandarin. Also, the Mandarin spoken by Taiwanese people today is not equivalent to what the Mandarin Promotion Council intended to promote after 1946, i.e. *guóyǔ*. Instead, a new Mandarin variety has been formed through language contact.

In the following chapters, I will first discuss the use and function of the three UFPs *a*, *la* and *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin. Referring to the results presented in chapters 3–6, a more detailed discussion of the emergence of the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs from the perspective of language contact will be provided in chapter 7.

## Chapter 3

### The UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin

#### 3.1 Introduction

The particle *a* [a] is one of the most frequently used UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin (Tseng and Gibbon 2006: 802). As Chung (1966: 129–131) writes, this onsetless particle “changes its sound according to the coda of the preceding word” (quoted and translated by Wang and Liu 2010: 2) and generate variants such as [ja], [wa], [na], [ŋa], [z̥a], etc. In other words, [j], [w], [n], [ŋ] and [z̥] are consonants “resulting from the spreading of the final consonant of a syllable to the initial position of an onsetless particle” (Wang and Liu *ibid.*: 1), and are termed as “liaison consonant” (*ibid.*). However, as Wang and Liu (*ibid.*: 2–4) claim, the liaison rule proposed by Chung cannot explain every case they observe in their data. For example, According to the rule, one variant [ja] is supposed to occur after [i], [y] and diphthongs ending in [i]. According to Wang and Liu’s (*ibid.*: 3) observation, it also follows other vowels such as [a], [o], [ɤ], and [ɛ].<sup>1</sup> They suggest that one possible explanation is the collocation: [ja] is collocated with [a], [o], [ɤ], and [ɛ]. However, they also observe that “it is not uncommon for the speakers to depart from such collocation practice.” For example, a considerable amount of occurrence of [ja] occurs after the consonant [ŋ] in their data.<sup>2</sup> They thus claim that the use of variant of *a* is “a matter of preference rather than a rule” (*ibid.*: 4). In this chapter, I use *a* in my transcription of examples. If [ja] does not result from liaison, it is transcribed as *ya*.

In previous research, the UFP *a* is usually analyzed in a broader context of Mandarin (cf. Chao 1968, Li & Thompson 1981, C. Z. Chu 1994 and C. C. Chu 2002, Xiong & Lin 2004, R. Wu 2004, B. Li 2006, Wang 2013, etc.), and is rarely discussed in the context of Taiwan Mandarin alone.<sup>3</sup> A possible explanation why the

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<sup>1</sup> Usually, [ja] does not occur after [u] (cf. Chao 1968: 803, Wang and Liu 2010: 2). However, on the basis of a Google search done in 2007, Wang and Liu (*ibid.*: 3) point out that [ja] is used in the phrase *hǎo ya* [hau ja] ‘okay’ seven times more (5,400,000 hits) than the other variant [wa] (769,000 hits), which results from the liaison.

<sup>2</sup> Searching the Mandarin UFP *ya* [ja] and *a* [a] following *pūlàng* [p<sup>h</sup>u laŋ] ‘plurk’ on Google by inserting the characters 撲浪/撲浪, Wang and Liu (*ibid.*: 4) have found out that although most occurrences still follow the liaison rule (thus [p<sup>h</sup>u laŋ a]), “there are still about one tenth of the time when the [a] form was rendered as [ja]” (thus [p<sup>h</sup>u laŋ ja]).

<sup>3</sup> As already mentioned in chapter 2, most of the studies mentioned above do not indicate whether the data includes utterances from Taiwan Mandarin speakers.

UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin has not attracted more attention is that its use is considered consistent within Mandarin and regional variation.

In general terms, it is true that the conversational contexts of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin are quite similar to those in mainland Mandarin. However, a few cases of *a* in my Taiwan Mandarin data are not accepted by mainland Mandarin speakers. In line 1 of example (1), at the beginning of the conversation, speaker M attaches *a* (with a high, flat pitch) to the time word *qùnián* ‘last year’ in order to direct the hearer’s attention to a certain period of time—the background of the subsequent utterance. My informants from mainland China indicate that they would not use *a* in this way.

(1) → 1 M      qùnián   a↑   nǐ   yǒu   kàn   nà   ge   wǎngqiú   gōngkāi   sài   ma?  
                   last.year   PRT   2<sub>SG</sub>   have   see   that   CL   tennis   open   game   PRT

2 F      qùnián(.)   yǒu   a↑.  
                   last.year   have   PRT

M1: Did you watch the open tennis tournament last year?

F2: Last year, yes I did.

According to my mainland Mandarin informants, in mainland Mandarin, speakers would not use any particle after *qùnián* in line 1 in such a situation. In Taiwan Mandarin, the use of *a* in such a context is not obligatory but very common. As I will argue in the following sections, such a difference results from the influence of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin. However, at this moment it is hard to say whether the use of *a* here is just a kind of code-switching or has already been transferred or “borrowed” from Southern Mǐn to Taiwan Mandarin.

Comparing the prosodic properties of intonation of Mandarin spoken in China and Taiwan, Tseng (2004: 189) finds that the UFP *a* in a question like *Jiějie, nǐ qù nǎr a?* ‘Sister, where are you going?’ has a “distinctive rising intonation” in mainland Mandarin, but not in Taiwan Mandarin. Kuang and Kuo (2011) notice that “obvious lengthening and stress placement on final particles are observed in Taiwan Mandarin, while those particles are reduced in Beijing Mandarin.” Furthermore, from the previous literature one may infer that in some cases, linguists from mainland China and Taiwan have different phonological judgments on the same case (for details, see 3.2.4). In short, there are good reasons to claim that formally and functionally, the Taiwan Mandarin UFP *a* does not fully correspond to its counterpart *a* in mainland China.

In section 3.2, I will review previous studies on *a* in Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin. My hypothesis will be presented in section 3.3. This hypothesis will be tested and discussed in section 3.4, with my Taiwan Mandarin data. Section 3.5 presents the conclusion.

### 3.2 Previous studies

As mentioned above, most of the previous studies on *a* do not specifically include Taiwan Mandarin data. For instance, C. Z. Chu (1994), B. Li (2006), and Wang (2013) use mainland Mandarin as research data. The primary data used by C. C. Chu (2002: 16) come from “recordings of six hours of conversation at family gatherings.” C. C. Chu does not mention whether all the speakers are from mainland China or Taiwan, but mentions that, although some of the speakers have dialectal background, “Mandarin is their family language.” Many other scholars propose one core function that can provide a general account for the various uses and contexts. However, there is some disagreement with regard to the question of what this core function should be. In what follows I will sum up and critically evaluate previous studies.

#### 3.2.1 C. Z. Chu (1994)

In his comparison of sentences with and without the UFP *a*, C. Z. Chu (1994: 47) concludes that *a*-attached sentences always sound softer, which is in line with the claim of Li and Thompson (1981: 313–7) that *a* serves to express “reduced forcefulness.” Examples (2a–d) are adapted from C. Z. Chu.

(2) (C. Z. Chu 1994: 44–5, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- a. nǐ qù bú qù a?  
 2<sub>SG</sub> go NEG go PRT  
 ‘Do you go or not?’
- b. nǐ qù bú qù?  
 2<sub>SG</sub> go NEG go  
 ‘Do you go or not?’
- c. míngtiān zǎodiǎn lái a!  
 tomorrow earlier come PRT  
 ‘Come earlier tomorrow!’

- d. míngtiān zǎodiǎn lái!  
 tomorrow earlier come  
 ‘Come earlier tomorrow!’

According to C. Z. Chu (1994), the *a*-attached question (2a) sounds softer than (2b), and the *a*-attached imperative sentence (2c) sounds more like an advice, rather than a direct command, as (2d). However, C. Z. Chu’s analysis is based on isolated sentences only. He does not provide any conversational context in which the example sentences occur, and does not identify the pitch realization of his *a*-attached sentences. As a result, the above sentences may occur in various contexts, most of which would yield different interpretations or could be judged differently by different native speakers.

### 3.2.2 Shie (1991)

Shie (1991) is one of the few studies which explicitly uses Taiwan Mandarin data. His data was collected from TV talk shows, drama series, radio interviews, and daily conversations. Shie argues that the UFP *a* has two phonological variants: one is with a higher tone; the other is pronounced with “a slightly falling intonation” (ibid.: 6). He further claims that these two variants of *a* occur in different contexts and carry different functions: the high-pitch *a* occurs in responses and serves to respond to “the stimulation of an existing proposition” (ibid.: 19); whereas the low-pitch *a* occurs “only in questions and exclamations” and can be used “to challenge, to condemn, to request hearer confirmation, and to delay the time for reaction when used in echo questions” (ibid.: 199).

Shie’s approach has been criticized by C. C. Chu, who argues that the study “suffers from being largely taxonomic in nature, unable to provide a general characteristic for the particle from which all the interactional functions and structural interpretations can be systematically and reasonably derived” (2002: 10–11). As a matter of fact, as my own analysis below will show, Shie’s study does not cover all of the usages of *a* in my Taiwan Mandarin data.

Shie’s argument about the pitch variation has been supported by many following studies (e.g. C. C. Chu 2002, R. Wu 2004, B. Li 2006, etc.), regardless of the regional origins of the data. The existence of two *a* variants (i.e. high-pitch *a* and low-pitch *a*) in both Mandarin varieties may thus be considered uncontroversial.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Using the *Mandarin Conversational Dialogue Corpus* (MCDC) established by

### 3.2.3 C. C. Chu (2002)

C. C. Chu (2002: 39) defines the UFP *a* as a discourse marker and proposes that its core function is to “indicate ‘speaker involvement’ in the current state of affair.” Combining Shie’s (1991) claim that *a* has two variants with I. Li’s (1999) analysis of Taiwan Southern Mǐn, C. C. Chu suggests that a high pitch on the particle signals “addressee orientation,” meaning that the *a*-attached utterance is “intentionally directed to the addressee” (2002: 26). On the contrary, a low pitch on the particle signals “speaker orientation,” which means that the utterance is “primarily meant for the speaker him-/herself” (ibid.).

### 3.2.4 B. Li (2006)

In line with C. C. Chu (2002), B. Li (2006: 64) argues that UFP *a* is a discourse marker and claims that compared to other Mandarin UFPs such as *ne*, *ba* and *ma*, *a* “displays a greater variation in terms of the contexts in which it may occur and the interpretations that it may evoke” (2006: 37). She distinguishes high and low pitch variations associated with *a*, and follows C. C. Chu’s (2002) analysis that the high pitch marks “addressee orientation” and the low pitch marks “speaker orientation,” as in the following examples (quoted from B. Li (2006: 47). Lines 1 and 2 are cited from R. Wu (2004: 181); line 3 is added by B. Li):<sup>5</sup>

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the Academia Sinica ([http://mmc.sinica.edu.tw/mcdc\\_e.html](http://mmc.sinica.edu.tw/mcdc_e.html)), C. Liu (2005) examines the relationship between nineteen pragmatic functions (sixteen proposed by Shie (1991), three added by C. Liu) and pitch realizations of *a* with the help of computational engineering. He finds that there are four pitch contours of *a*, including mid high-falling, high-level, mid-falling, and mid-rising. However, he claims that owing to the fact that “there is no clear-cut preference for the distributions of pragmatic functions of particle *A* to a certain pitch realizations” (ibid.: 71), these pitch contours do not correlate with the pragmatic functions perfectly. Adapting R. Wu’s (2004) classification of pragmatic functions of *a*, H. Liu (2011) also investigates the relation between pitch realization and pragmatic function of *a*. Her result supports the claim that there are two phonetically distinctive types of *a*, because she finds a “contrastive relationship” (ibid.: 1269) between *a* used in interrogatives and non-interrogatives.

<sup>5</sup> In the original transcription of previous literature, there is no arrow next to the particle *a*. In this thesis, for the reader’s convenience, I will add an upwards arrow (↑) and a downwards arrow (↓) to indicate the high-pitch and low-pitch respectively if the pitch height is indicated by the authors.

(3) (B. Li 2006: 47, some glosses are modified)

- 1 H      ei, wèishénme huì    duō      yì wǎn fàn zài nàbiān?  
           PRT why            can    additional one CL    rice at    there
- 2 X      hái yǒu <E Victor E>    a↑  
           still have      Victor            PRT
- 3 H      ou, hái yǒu <E Victor E> a↓  
           PRT still have      Victor            PRT

H1: Hey, how come there is an additional bowl of rice over there?

X2: There is still Victor.

H3: Oh, there is still Victor.

B. Li (2006: 47) states that in this situation, the utterance in line 2 in (3) indicates that “the speaker X thinks that H should have known the answer, and expects an explanation for his ignorance. In this sense X is saying something like ‘*There is still Victor. — How come you don’t know?*’ In contrast, the speaker of the second *a*-suffix sentence, i.e., H, is expressing his own sudden realization of the situation, claiming that, ‘*There is still Victor. I see the reason now.*’” (B. Li 2006: 47, original italics).

Subscribing to C. C. Chu’s (2002) proposal, B. Li applies the high vs. low pitch dichotomy to the other Mandarin UFPs (such as *ne*, *ba* and *ma*) and claims that sentences attached by a high-pitch particle usually “imply that the speaker is inviting the hearer’s response or expecting further discussion,” whereas utterances attached by a low-pitch particle usually “convey the speaker’s own opinion, sound more definitive and tend to close the conversation” (2006: 47–48). B. Li disagrees with C. C. Chu’s claim that the core function of *a* is to indicate “speaker involvement” in the current state of affair. Instead, she subscribes to R. Wu’s (2004: 33) argument that “so far as a speaker chooses to produce an utterance about, or a response to, a particular matter, he or she can be seen as indicating his or her involvement in that matter” (2006: 51). Arguing that C. C. Chu’s analysis of speaker involvement is “unnecessary,” B. Li (ibid.: 50) suggests that *a* functions to highlight the relevance of the utterance to its discourse context. In other words, *a* is used to show the speaker’s effort to relate his/her own utterance to the conversational environment. B. Li argues that in example (4) (B. Li 2006: 50, citing R. Wu 2004: 155), there is no apparent connection between the content of the question delivered by C and the

conversation that is going on between W and C. She (ibid.) believes that the use of *a* increases the relevance between C's question and its conversational environment. In this case, it serves to call the hearer's attention to what is being asked.

(4) (B. Li 2006: 50, partly modified transcription and glosses)

- |       |                 |       |                |                   |       |      |     |            |
|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|-------|------|-----|------------|
| 1 W   | tā              | hái   | jiānchāi       | ou.               |       |      |     |            |
|       | 3 <sub>SG</sub> | still | work-part-time | PRT               |       |      |     |            |
| 2 C   | zhè             | ge    | zěnme          | kāi?              |       |      |     |            |
|       | this            | CL    | how            | open              |       |      |     |            |
| 3 W   | sān             | tiān  | zài            | táidà,            | sān   | tiān | zuò | jī.        |
|       | three           | day   | at             | Taiwan.University | three | day  | do  | prostitute |
| → 4 C | zhè             | ge    | zěnme          | kāi               | a↓?   |      |     |            |
|       | this            | CL    | how            | open              | PRT   |      |     |            |

W1: She also has a part-time job.

C2: How to open this?

W3: Three days at Taiwan University, and three days as a prostitute.

C4: How to open this?

B. Li further claims that when *a*-attached utterances are relevant to the main conversation topic, as in (5), the *a*-attached utterances show the speaker's high degree of concern with the hearer's reaction. Example (5) is taken from B. Li (2006: 51) citing R. Wu (2004: 206–207). This conversation takes place during a dinner party, involving a group of friends. Prior to this part of the conversation, the topic of the conversation was the upcoming trip of participant L to Taiwan. Just before this excerpt, X has made the suggestion that L should consider taking either China Airlines or Eva Airlines. However, this suggestion is contested by C in line 1, who asserts that these two airlines are quite expensive.



(5) (B. Li 2006: 51, partly modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 C kěshì huánháng gēn chángróng dōu shì bǐjiào guì de.  
but China.airlines and Eva.air all be relatively expensive DE
- 2 X jùshuō huánháng hěn piányí a↑.  
it's.said China.airlines very cheap PRT
- 3 C tāmen gèng piányí.  
3<sub>PL</sub> more cheap
- 4 W bú huì ba. huánháng hái shì hěn guì a↑.  
NEG can PRT China.airlines still be very expensive PRT
- 5 X jùshuō xiànzài yǐjīng bǐjiào piányí le a↑.  
it's.said now already relatively cheap PRT PRT
- 6 X kěshì yào rěnshòu shēngmìng- rěnshòu shēngmìng de wéixiǎn.  
but need bear life bear life DE danger
- C1: But both China Airlines and Eva Airlines are more expensive.  
X2: I heard that China Airlines was very cheap.  
C3: They are cheaper.  
W4: No way. China Airlines is still very expensive.  
X5-6: I heard that it has already become cheaper now, but you need to tolerate- tolerate the risk of life.

Comparing the *a*-attached utterances in example (5) and their counterparts without *a*, B. Li claims that the latter convey a strong force; they sound more abrupt and definitive. On the other hand, with the deployment of *a*, speakers “seem more concerned with the hearers’ reaction” (2006: 41). She suggests that the addition of *a* makes “the speaker’s participation in the conversation more activated.” This effect is induced since *a* “functions to increase the degree of relevance of the utterance to the discourse unit” (ibid: 51).

Although I agree that the use of *a* is to some extent related to the conversational environment, I disagree with B. Li’s analysis of the two examples cited above. Following Norrick’s (1987: 256) argument that a repetition itself can already be

“hearer-oriented in creating cohesion and segmenting the discourse for processing,” I believe that, with the repetition, the speaker can establish coherence with the previous dialogue and it helps the hearer process the information. In these two examples, even without *a*, the two repetitions *zhè ge zěnme kāi?* ‘how to open this?’ in line 4 of example (4) and *jùshuō xiànzài yǐjīng bǐjiào piányi le* ‘I heard that it has already become cheaper now’ in line 5 of example (5) by themselves fulfill the function of calling the hearer’s attention. The claim that *a* functions to “increase the relevance between *a*-attached utterance and discourse contexts” is therefore not convincing.

As for example (5), I basically agree that the deployment of *a* in lines 2, 4, and 5 shows the speaker’s higher degree of concern with the hearer’s reaction than their counterparts without *a*. Yet I disagree with B. Li’s judgment that the cases without *a* convey a strong force. On the contrary, according to my Taiwan Mandarin informants, the *a*-attached utterances actually convey a stronger force, which is also in line with R. Wu’s (2004: 207) judgment.<sup>6</sup>

I also disagree with B. Li’s proposal that *a* serves to highlight the relevance of the preceding utterance to the discourse context. First, as mentioned above, the relevance can be strengthened by various conversational strategies, for instance, repetition. Second, the addition of any UFP generally indicates a higher degree of relevance in comparison to utterances without an UFP. For instance, C. C. Chu (1984: 88–89) compares utterances with and without Mandarin UFP *ne*:

(6) Chu (1984: 88–89, partly modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- |   |                 |         |      |       |          |      |        |         |
|---|-----------------|---------|------|-------|----------|------|--------|---------|
| 1 A   | nǐ              | xiànzài | děng | zhe   | bìyè     | le,  | zhēn   | kāixīn. |
|   | 2 <sub>SG</sub> | now     | wait | ASP   | graduate | PRT  | really | happy   |
| → 2 B   |                 |         |      |       |          |      |        |         |
|   | wǒ              | hái     | děi  | xiě   | yì       | piān | lùnwén | ne.     |
|   | 1 <sub>SG</sub> | still   | must | write | one      | CL   | thesis | PRT     |
| A1: You are now waiting for graduation. What a happy guy! |                 |         |      |       |          |      |        |         |
| B2: I still need to write my thesis.                      |                 |         |      |       |          |      |        |         |

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<sup>6</sup> The different judgments for this case may be due to the fact that B. Li is a mainland Mandarin native speaker, while R. Wu and I are Taiwan Mandarin speakers.

C. C. Chu claims that the UFP *ne* serves to connect the *ne*-attached utterance with the previous discourse, when the *ne*-attached utterance is not in direct response to the previous utterance. In example (6), if *ne* is left out, B's response will sound abrupt and indifferent, as if saying "it's my business, not yours." Here, B's response to A with *ne* increases the relevance, as if saying "this is not what you expected but it is a response relating to what you said."

If we replace the *ne* in line 2 with Mandarin UFP *ou* (as in (7)), which can serve to "register a piece of information as news" (R. Wu 2004: 113), the degree of relevance is still higher than without *ou*.

- (7) 1 A    nǐ    xiànzài    děng    zhe    bìyè    le,    zhēn    kāixīn.  
           2<sub>SG</sub>    now     wait    ASP    graduate    PRT    really    happy
- 2 B    wǒ    hái    děi    xiě    yì    piān    lùnwén    ou.  
           1<sub>SG</sub>    still    must    write    one    CL    thesis    PRT

A1: You are now waiting for graduation. What a happy guy!

B2: (Maybe you still don't know, but) I still need to write my thesis.

Here, the *ou*-attached utterance is something the speaker supposes to be new to the hearer. The deployment of *ou* implies that the hearer should receive this newly-provided information. In addition, the hearer is supposed to comprehend the speaker's indirect response, as if saying "this may not be what you expected but here is some information you probably don't know yet, and it is relevant to what you said."

### 3.2.5 R. Wu (2004)

R. Wu's (2004: 38–40) core corpus comprises seven telephone conversations and four video-taped conversations of altogether some 12 hours. All of the speakers are from Taiwan. Although she supplements her data with another four hours of mainland Mandarin data, it can still be argued that her primary data is Taiwan Mandarin. She proposes that the UFP *a* can be uttered with a "notably low pitch" and a "flat or slightly high pitch," which is basically in line with previous studies such as Shie (1991) and C. C. Chu (2002) (cf. R. Wu 2004: 229). R. Wu claims that these two types of *a* occur in different contexts but share a central property: to mark "the matter being responded to as deviant from how the matter should be, or normally is, from the *a* speaker's perspective" (ibid: 224).

### 3.2.5.1 Low-pitch *a*: *a*-formulated questions and *a*-attached questions

In R. Wu's data, the low-pitch *a* commonly occurs in interrogatives. It can be attached to "a repeat, partial repeat, or a candidate understanding of what another has said or intended in the previous turn, and thereby makes confirmation or disconfirmation a relevant next action" (ibid.: 178). These instances are termed "*a*-formulated questions" (ibid.: 129). For example, in example (8), B's response can be seen as an *a*-formulated question because *míngtiān* 'tomorrow' is not a "grammatically constructed question" by itself.

- (8) 1 A     wǒ    míngtiān   qù    táiběi.  
           1<sub>SG</sub>   tomorrow   go    Taipei
- 2 B     míngtiān   a↓?  
           tomorrow   PRT

A1: I will go to Taipei tomorrow.

B2: Tomorrow?

R. Wu claims that the "deviance" marked by *a* in such "*a*-formulated questions" usually relates to the fact that the adequacy or truth value of what someone else has just said runs counter to the *a* speaker's expectation which is based on prior knowledge or experience. Therefore, questions of this type "regularly serve as understanding checks initiated as a result of problem in hearing or understanding the preceding talk" (2004: 129). Example (9) is adapted from R. Wu (ibid.: 130). In this conversation, L is inquiring about the academic progress of a mutual friend.

(9) (R. Wu 2004: 130, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 L     ei,    nà    jul-    j-    shénme   shíhòu   bìyè?  
           PRT   that   jul-    j-    what    time   graduate
- 2        (.)
- 3 T     <E Julie E> a↓?  
           PN        PRT

4 L    hen.  
      PRT

5       (0.2)

6 T    dàgài    shíyuè   ba.  
      probably October PRT

L1:    By the way, when will Jul- J- ...graduate?

T3:    Julie?

L4:    Yeah.

T6:    Probably October.

R. Wu argues that “in this context, the use of *a* embodies the speaker’s less-than-full grasp of what has just been delivered or intended by another speaker and therefore can be viewed as invoking a contrast in the current knowledge or information state between a speaker and his or her co-participant” (2004: 131). However, as B. Li observes, the contrast reading associated with this context arises anyway, no matter whether *a* is present or not (2006: 38). The very action of posing a question about some content mentioned in the preceding speech already signifies the speaker’s lack of understanding.

Aside from *a*-formulated questions, according to R. Wu (2004: 152), the low-pitch *a* can also be attached to “grammatically-constructed questions, such as question-word questions, disjunctive questions, or A-not-A questions.” For instance, the sentence *nǐ qù bu qù a?* means ‘do you go or not?’. Since *nǐ qù bu qù* ‘do you go or not’ itself is already a question, R. Wu terms these cases “*a*-attached questions.” She states that in the case of “*a*-attached questions,” the “deviance” marked by *a* is circumstantial in nature, and is most commonly associated with what the “*a* speaker” perceives as a problematic and/or unexpected aspect of a situation in the local conversation environment.

The following excerpt is adapted from R. Wu (2004: 169), with slight modifications which do not affect the meaning of the utterances. It is taken from a telephone conversation between a dancer (X) and one of her acquaintances (D). Prior to this excerpt, the dancer has talked about the sports injury she has been suffering from.

(10) (R. Wu 2004: 169, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 D    nà-    kěshì    jiù    xiàng    yùndòngyuán    a↑:, tāmen-  
           that    but    just    like    athlete            PRT 3<sub>PL</sub>
- 2 D    xiàng    yùndòngyuán    de    nà    ge    niánlíng    dōu    bù    cháng    a↑.  
           like    athlete            DE that    CL age            all    NEG long    PRT
- 3 X    duì    ya↑.    [tāmen    yě    shì    yíyàng    [[yùndòng    shānghài.  
           right    PRT    3<sub>PL</sub>    also be    same    sports    injury
- 4 X                            [jiù    shì    yīnwèi-            [[yùndòng    shānghài.  
                                   3<sub>PL</sub>    also be            sports    injury
- 5 D    nà-(.) wǒ    xiǎng-    tiàowǔ    dehuà    yě    huì    bú    huì    zhèyàngzi    a↓?  
           that    1<sub>SG</sub> think    dance if    also will    NEG will this.way    PRT
- 6 X    huì.    tiàowǔ    yě    shì    yíyàng.  
           will    dance    also be    same
- 7            (0.5)
- 8 D    ou::.  
           PRT

D1-2: Then- but just like athletes, they- Like all athletes, the uh career life is not long.

X3: Yeah. They are the same. Sports injuries.

D4-5: Just because of- sports injuries. And- I was wondering- if (you) dance, will (you) also be like this?

X6: Yes. Dancers are the same.

D8: Oh::.

R. Wu argues that D deploys an *a*-attached question in line 5 because the topic of this conversation is a potentially sensitive one, as it is about the short career spans of athletes. Asking such a question may be regarded as insensitive. R. Wu further argues that the lack of *a*-suffixing to the question results from the questioner's treat-

ment of the question being asked as “non-delicate and non-problematic” (2004: 171).

In my data, however, the *a*-attached questions do not necessarily occur in a problematic context. In example (11), M and F are talking about the 2001 Australian Open Tennis Championship.

- (11) 1 M    dōu   shì   yìxiē   bǐjiào   yǒumíng   de   xuǎnshǒu   dōu-  
           all   be   some   relatively famous   DE   player   all
- 2 M    yǒu   jìnjí            bǐsài            zhèyàngzi.  
           have   rise.in.rank   competition   this.way
- 3 F    on.    ei    nà-  
           PRT   PRT   that
- 4 F    qùnián   gēn   <E Hingis E>   zài   duìkàng   nà   ge   shì   shéi   a↓?  
           last.year with   PN            at   confront   that   CL   be   who   PRT
- 5 F    hǎoxiàng   yí   ge   mán   niánqīng   de   ma.  
           seem   one   CL   quite   young   DE   PRT
- 6 M    qùnián   dǎ   dào-            bǐjiào   hǎo   de   shì-   dàwēiliánsī   a↑.  
           last.year play arrive   relatively good   DE   be   PN            PRT

M1-2: All of (them) are those more famous players, all- they all climbed in the ranking. That's it.

F3-5: Oh. Well, then- the one who was competing against Martina Hingis last year...who's that? It seemed quite a young player.

M6: Last year the one who achieved...the better one was...Venus Williams.

Prior to this excerpt, they were exchanging information about the possible candidates for the championship. In lines 3–4, F deploys an *a*-attached question asking M whether he knows the name of the player who competed against Martina Hingis in the year before. It is hard to claim that the topic of this question is in any sense problematic.

### 3.2.5.2 High-pitch *a*: informing and disagreeing sequences

The second type of UFP *a* (i.e. high-pitch *a*) in R. Wu's (2004) analysis only occurs in non-interrogatives. These *a*-attached utterances commonly occur in two sequential contexts: "informing" and "disagreeing."

R. Wu (2004: 224) states that when *a* occurs in informing contexts, it serves to mark "the speaker's stance that the information provided in the *a*-attached utterance is something that the recipient should have known, or has displayed to have known otherwise." This is illustrated in example (12) (adapted from R. Wu *ibid.*: 184–5). In this excerpt, the conversation participants are discussing L's personal baseball playing history. Prior to this part of the conversation, L has confirmed that he had played in the national baseball league in Taiwan. In line 1, speaker R—L's long-term girlfriend—poses a question about when this happened. It is significant that L's responses in line 2 and line 4 are both attached by *a*.

(12) (R. Wu 2004: 184–5, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |  |      |                 |      |         |                |
|-------|--|------|-----------------|------|---------|----------------|
| 1 R   | shénme shíhòu?                         |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | what                                   | time |                 |      |         |                |
| → 2 L | xiǎo shíhòu a↑.                        |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | little                                 | time | PRT             |      |         |                |
| 3 R   | nǐ dǎ guò o.                           |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | 2 <sub>SG</sub>                        | play | ASP             | PRT  |         |                |
| → 4 L | duì a↑. duì a↑.                        |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | right                                  | PRT  | right           | PRT  |         |                |
| 5 T   | <S li m chai ou? S>                    |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | 2 <sub>SG</sub>                        | NEG  | PRT             | PRT  |         |                |
| 6 R   | wǒ zhīdào tā yǒu. lishǐ hái bù zhīdào. |      |                 |      |         |                |
|       | 1 <sub>SG</sub>                        | know | 3 <sub>SG</sub> | have | history | still NEG know |
- R1: When?  
 L2: When I was a kid.  
 R3: You played...



- L4: Yes. Yes.  
 T5: You didn't know? (Southern Mǐn)  
 R6: I know he played but I didn't know about the history yet.

R. Wu claims that “L’s deployment of *a*-suffixing here may be grounded in the presumption that R should have known his baseball-playing history is reinforced by co-participant T’s subsequent reaction in line 5” (2004: 185). T’s question clearly shows that he, too, does not expect R’s knowledge of L’s baseball-playing history.

R. Wu further argues that, when high-pitch *a* occurs in “disagreeing” contexts, it is regularly used to mark a speaker’s “countervailing perspective” (ibid.: 222). Let us again turn to example (5). R. Wu argues that all the *a*-attached utterances in this excerpt are attached to utterances which are launched “either to disagree with a stated position by another, or to reassert one’s own previously stated position which has just undergone an attack” (ibid: 207). In either case, the *a* speaker displays an oppositional stance vis-à-vis his interlocutor. Using *a* in the disagreeing utterance can strengthen a disagreeing stance. Although I agree with R. Wu that the *a*-attached disagreement sounds stronger than its counterpart without *a*, I do not think that the core function of *a* in these contexts is to mark the “deviance.” As mentioned earlier, line 4 in example (11) does not, as R. Wu proposes, occur in a “problematic” context.

Thus far, I have introduced the main arguments of previous studies on the UFP *a* in both Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin. It is generally agreed that the UFP *a* has two variants: high-pitch *a* and low-pitch *a* (cf. Shie 1991, C. C. Chu 2002, R. Wu 2004, B. Li 2006). However, a consensus about the core function of this particle has not been reached. Following Li and Thompson (1981), C. Z. Chu (1994) claims that *a* serves to reduce the forcefulness of the *a*-attached sentences. C. C. Chu (2002) and B. Li (2006) both state that *a* is a discourse marker, and the high pitch marks the “speaker orientation,” whereas the low pitch marks the “hearer orientation.” However, they have different view on the core function of *a*: C. C. Chu (2002) argues that the core function of *a* is to indicate the speaker’s involvement, whereas B. Li (2006) believes that *a* serves to highlight the relevance of the utterance to its discourse context. R. Wu (2004) argues that the core property of *a* is to mark the “deviance.” These different judgments may result from the different regional origins of the Mandarin data used in different studies. In what follows, I will put forth my own proposal of the core function of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin. Following previous studies (e.g. Shie 1991, C. C. Chu 2002, B. Li 2006, etc.), I divide Taiwan Mandarin *a* into two types: low-pitch *a* and high-pitch *a*. I suggest that the two types of *a* share

one core function: to mark knowledge activation. This proposed core function will be tested with my own Taiwan Mandarin data in 3.4.

### 3.3 Core function: marking knowledge activation

My proposal about the UFP *a* builds upon I. Li's (1999) analysis of Taiwan Southern Min, which I extend to Taiwan Mandarin, but with a minor modification. I. Li claims that there are two functional types of UFP *a* in Taiwan Southern Min, type one correlating with *a7/a1/a5* (hereafter: *a7* group), and type two with *a3/a2* (hereafter: *a3* group).<sup>7</sup> She proposes that these two types of *a* share the common characteristic of "indicating activation of prior or accessible knowledge" (ibid: 137) and suggests that the *a7* group signals "activation of the addressee's prior/accessible knowledge" and that the *a3* group signals "activation of the speaker's own knowledge state."<sup>8</sup> Although the contexts of I. Li's data of *a* in Taiwan Southern Min and my Taiwan Mandarin data are not entirely identical, I. Li's proposal for the function of Taiwan Southern Min *a* can be extended to Taiwan Mandarin *a*.

As I. Li does not clearly define what the "accessible knowledge" is,<sup>9</sup> I follow Cook (1990: 409) who proposes that the accessible knowledge includes both *common knowledge* and *shared knowledge*. According to Cook, common knowledge is "what the members of the society or a group are supposed to know," and shared knowledge includes two types of "sharedness": one is "knowledge assumed to be shared among the interlocutors or the members of a group but not necessarily assumed to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance" (ibid.). The other type is "knowledge that is assumed to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance."<sup>10</sup> Cook states that "shared knowledge"

<sup>7</sup> In I. Li (1999: 102-103), the numbers following *a* refer to different pitches. I. Li claims that the *a7* (with a mid-level pitch) and *a3* (with a low-falling pitch) form "two natural classes among the variants" (ibid.: 103). Given the fact that *a1* (high-level pitch) and *a5* (mid-rising pitch) and *a7* are generally interchangeable, I. Li (ibid.) believes that these three variants fall into the same category. The *a2* (with high-falling pitch) and *a3* are also treated as one group.

<sup>8</sup> I. Li (1999: 124) treats *a2* (with high-falling pitch) as a variant of *a3* under modification of intonation. She only discusses the occurrences of *a3* in her study.

<sup>9</sup> According to I. Li (1999: 136-7), *a7/a1/a5* "signals the speaker's attempt to activate the addressee's prior/accessible state of knowledge, i.e. he intends for his current utterance to be taken as having been present in the addressee's old knowledge or at least easily accessible to him from the context." In her study, she does not provide a clear definition of the "accessible knowledge."

<sup>10</sup> Cook (1990: 409) mentions that the first type of shared knowledge is what Prince

in a particular speech situation may not be common in the society, and common knowledge in the society or group may not be shared knowledge among the interlocutors at the time of the speech. [...] [A]ccessible knowledge is ‘a union of common knowledge and shared knowledge’” (Cook 1990: 410).

It is important to note here that the activation states of knowledge, according to Chafe (1994: 53), can be categorized as *active*, *semiactive* or *inactive*, according to “whether some idea is in the focal, peripheral, or unconscious.” Chafe (1994: 54) writes,

Speakers realize, of course, that one or more other minds are involved in the communicative use of language. As they speak, they not only take account of the changing activation states of information in their own minds, but also attempt to appreciate parallel changes that are taking place in the minds of their listeners. Language is very much dependent on a speaker’s beliefs about activation states in other minds.

In this thesis, “knowledge activation” is regarded as bringing some information to the “focal consciousness” (cf. Chafe 1994: 53). I argue that, analogous to Taiwan Southern Mǐn *a*, the use of UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin serves to explicitly mark the activation of knowledge. Following Shie (1991), I divide Taiwan Mandarin *a* into two types: low-pitch *a* and high-pitch *a*. I will argue that the low-pitch *a* signals the activation of the speaker’s own knowledge, whereas the high-pitch *a* marks the activation of the addressee’s common or shared knowledge (i.e. accessible knowledge).

### 3.3.1 Low-pitch *a*: activation of the speaker’s own knowledge

According to Haviland and Clark (1974: 513), “communication is a cooperative effort between the speaker and listener.” They claim that the speaker syntactically identifies the “given information” which he thinks his audience already knows, and the “new information,” which he thinks his audience does not already know. This identification is crucial for the comprehension by the listener. The information marked as “given” leads the listener to search for its “antecedent” in memory, and then “integrate the new information into memory at that point” (ibid.).

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(1978) calls “known information,” whereas the second type is equivalent to the “given information” as defined by Chafe (1976: 30).

Building on this explanation, I propose that the deployment of a low-*a*-attached utterance can be seen as an explicit signal showing the moment of matching the new information with its “antecedent” (i.e. some relevant pre-existing knowledge) in the *a* speaker’s own knowledge state. In other words, by using a low *a*-attached utterance, the *a* speaker shows that some of the old knowledge in his knowledge state has been activated because of some information given in the previous context. In order to test this claim, let us first re-examine example (9), repeated here as example (13):

(13) 1 L    ei,    nà    jul-    j-    shénme    shíhòu    bìyè?  
              PRT    that    jul-    j-    what    time    graduate

2        (.)

→ 3 T    <E Julie E> a↓?  
              PN        PRT

4 L        hen.  
              PRT

5        (0.2)

6 T        dàgài    shíyuè    ba.  
              probably    October    PRT

L1:    By the way, when will Jul- J- ...graduate?

T3:    Julie?

L4:    Yeah.

T6:    Probably October.

I argue that the use of UFP *a* in line 3 does not mark deviance or contrast, as R. Wu (2004: 131) proposes, but indicates the activation of the speaker’s own knowledge. Upon hearing the information L provided by saying *jul- j- shénme shíhòu bìyè* ‘when will Jul- J- graduate’ in line 1, T is searching his memory trying to identify the referent. In this case, the piece of information attached by *a* (i.e. *Julie*) is the “antecedent” which has just been activated. By deploying *a*, T indicates that this piece of

information was hidden until it was activated. In order to make sure that L's utterance *jul-j-* refers to *Julie*, T invites L's confirmation.

In some cases, the activation of the knowledge state can be triggered by non-linguistic, i.e. circumstantial context. This is demonstrated in example (14), adapted from Lin (2003: 81). In this excerpt, speakers H and Y belong to two different drama troupes which happened to reserve the same theater for their rehearsals. Prior to this conversation, the rehearsal of H's troupe has been interrupted by Y, who declared that his troupe had the right of using the theater. In this conversation, Y states that the poster of his play "Arcadia" has been posted outside the theater. H deploys an *a*-attached utterance to indicate that this information was not within her focus of consciousness but is now being activated.

(14) (Lin 2003: 81, modified transcription, glosses and translation )

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1 Y   | wǒmen míngtiān yào zhèngshì gōngyǎn.                       |
|       | 1 <sub>PL</sub> tomorrow will formal perform.in.public     |
| 2 Y   | wàimiàn yǒu yì zhāng hǎibào táohuāyuán=                    |
|       | outside have one CL poster Arcadia                         |
| 3 Y   | =wǒ xiāngxìn nǐmen dōu kàn dào le.                         |
|       | 1 <sub>SG</sub> believe 2 <sub>PL</sub> all see arrive ASP |
| → 4 H | táohuāyuán jiù shì nǐmen a↓!                               |
|       | Arcadia just be 2 <sub>PL</sub> PRT                        |

Y1-3: Tomorrow we will give a formal performance in public. There is a poster "Arcadia" outside, I believe that you all saw it.

H4: "Arcadia"—that's you guys!

Here, having perceived what Y has said in lines 1–3, H's utterance in line 4 shows that she matches the information provided by Y (i.e. there is a poster hanging outside) and its "antecedent" in her memory, since she has seen that poster prior to this conversation. The *a*-attached utterance in line 4 indicates the activation of H's knowledge, as if saying: "now I get it."

It is worth noting that in my data, the low-pitch *a* often occurs in questions. However, the utterances attached by low *a* do not always require confirmation or an

answer. Some of them just serve to indicate that the speaker has received the information, as shown in (14).

So far I have demonstrated how my proposed core function can account for the examples discussed in previous studies. I suggest that the low *a* in these examples serves to mark the activation of the speaker's own knowledge state.

### 3.3.2 High-pitch *a*: activation of addressee's common or shared knowledge

The high *a* in Taiwan Mandarin, in contrast, serves to activate the addressee's common or shared knowledge. It is typically used in the following two situations: (i) the addressee has just displayed his/her lack of knowledge that the speaker supposes the addressee should have had; (ii) the speaker believes that once some old information in the addressee's knowledge has been activated, the addressee can easily comprehend what the speaker intends to say at the time of the utterance.

Representing situation (1), i.e. the occurrence of high *a*, example (15) is part of example (3), cited from R. Wu (2004: 181). Here, H's question displays his lack of knowledge, a knowledge X supposes H should have had.

- (15) 1 H      ei, wèishénme hui    duō      yì wǎn fàn zài nàbiān?  
                  PRT why                    can    additional one CL    rice at    there
- 2 X      hái yǒu <E Victor E>    a↑  
                  still have      Victor                    PRT

H1:    Hey, how come there is an additional bowl of rice over there?

X2:    There is still Victor.

I agree with B. Li's (2006: 47) judgment that in this situation, the utterance in line 2 indicates that "the speaker X thinks that H should have known the answer." Moreover, I believe that X's deployment of a high *a* here displays his intention to activate H's knowledge. In other words, X believes that H should have known the reason why there is an additional bowl of rice over there and wants to remind him (i.e., activate his knowledge) of this.

Example (5), which is repeated here as example (16), demonstrates situation (ii), i.e. the occurrence of high *a*. As mentioned earlier, in this excerpt, speakers X and W have different opinions regarding the ticket prices of China Airlines.

- (16) 1 C kěshì huá háng gēn cháng róng dōu shì bǐjiào guì de.  
 but China.airlines and Eva.air all be relatively expensive DE
- 2 X jùshuō huá háng hěn piányí a↑.  
 it's.said China.airlines very cheap PRT
- 3 C tāmen gèng piányí.  
 3PL more cheap
- 4 W bú huì ba. huá háng hái shì hěn guì a↑.  
 NEG can PRT China.airlines still be very expensive PRT
- 5 X jùshuō xiànzài yǐjīng bǐjiào piányí le a↑.  
 it's.said now already relatively cheap PRT PRT
- 6 X kěshì yào rěnshòu shēngmìng- rěnshòu shēngmìng de wéixiǎn.  
 but need bear life bear life DE danger

C1: But both China Airlines and Eva Airlines are more expensive.

X2: I heard that China Airlines was very cheap.

C3: They are cheaper.

W4: No way. China Airlines is still very expensive.

X5-6: I heard that it has already become cheaper now, but you need to tolerate- tolerate the risk of life.

Here, due to a lack of previous context, it is difficult to judge X's motivation for deploying an *a*-attached utterance in line 2. However, according to the judgments of Mandarin speakers (from both mainland China and Taiwan), the utterance in line 2 carries an overtone of "(why don't you know that/it's strange that you don't know that) China Airlines is very cheap," whereas its counterpart without *a* does not.

W's objection in line 4 to X's argument in line 2 is at the same time the agreement with C's assertion in line 1. This agreement is based on W's shared knowledge with C. In other words, the proposition "China Airlines is (relatively) expensive" is already shared by the conversational participants W and C, but not by X. In such a context, the deployment of *a*-attached utterances functions to activate interlocutor X's knowledge for reaching a consensus. Among the three *a*-attached

utterances in this excerpt, the utterance in line 5 is a rephrased form of line 2, with the addition of some extra information. The information the utterance in line 5 carries can thus be seen as given information in this context. I therefore propose that all the *a*-attached utterances in example (16) carry the information the *a* speaker supposes the hearer should have known.

The utterances in line 2 and line 5 are both initiated by *jùshuō* ‘it’s said’, which may be seen as an indication of X’s own information source. If this is the case, these two utterances do not seem compatible with my argument that *a* serves to activate the addressee’s knowledge which s/he is supposed to know, since what “is said” to the *a* speaker need not be known to the addressee. Following Feng’s (2008: 1701) argument that *jùshuō* in Mandarin “reveals the degree of the speaker’s commitment to the truth of a proposition,” I claim that the use of *jùshuō* here is not an indication of the information source. It merely shows that the speaker is to a certain extent committed to what he said. It therefore does not affect my analysis. If the occurrences of UFP *a* in line 2 and 5 are left out, the utterances in lines 2 and 5 are merely simple assertions without any implication or expectation.

The last example introduced in this section is example (17), which is a repetition of (12). As mentioned earlier, prior to this part of the conversation, L has confirmed that he had played in the National Baseball League in Taiwan, and speaker R, who is L’s long-term girlfriend, asks when this happened.

- (17) 1 R      shénme shíhòu?  
              what    time
- 2 L      xiǎo shíhòu a↑.  
              little time    PRT
- 3 R      nǐ     dǎ     guò    o.  
          2<sub>SG</sub> play ASP    PRT
- 4 L      duì    a↑.    duì    a↑.  
          right PRT right PRT
- 5 T      <S li m     chai    ou? S>  
              2<sub>SG</sub> NEG PRT    PRT



6 R    wǒ    zhīdào tā    yǒu.    lishǐ    hái    bù    zhīdào.  
       1<sub>SG</sub>    know 3<sub>SG</sub>    have    history    still    NEG know

R1:    When?

L2:    When I was a kid.

R3:    You played...

L4:    Yes. Yes.

T5:    You didn't know? (Southern Mǐn)

R6:    I know he had but I didn't know about the history yet.

If line 2 is not followed by *a*, it is just a simple answer without any implication. However, as R is L's long-term girl friend, it is reasonable to suppose that she should have known L's baseball playing history. Quite tellingly, in line 4, L deploys an *a*-attached confirmation *duì a duì a* 'right, right' to R's question *nǐ dǎ guò o* 'have you played before' in line 3. Since the answer has already been given in the prior context, the *a*-attached confirmation implies that the addressee should have known it, as if saying "yes of course." This is further supported by the fact that in line 5, R's lack of knowledge is emphasized by another interlocutor T. His question *li m chai ou* 'you didn't know' implies that L's baseball playing history should be shared knowledge among the interlocutors.

Thus far I have developed my proposal on the basis of examples from the literature. I propose that low *a* serves to indicate the activation of speaker's own knowledge, whereas high *a* serves to activate the addressee's knowledge. In other words, the use of high *a* indicates that the *a*-attached information is something the speaker supposes the addressee should have known. Alternatively, the speaker supposes that a certain piece of knowledge possessed by the addressee needs to be activated so that the addressee and the speaker can easily reach a consensus in conversation. This proposal corresponds closely to C. C. Chu's (2002: 26) proposal according to which low *a* signals "speaker-orientation" that is "primarily meant for the speaker him-/herself" (ibid.), whereas the high *a*, is "addressee-orientation," implying that the *a*-attached utterance is "intentionally directed to the addressee" (ibid.).

### 3.4 UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin

In this section, I will test my hypothesis with my corpus of Taiwan Mandarin data. I will discuss the occurrences of *a* according to their distributional contexts. These are, for the low-pitch *a*: questions, exclamations, and discourse topic-introduction. These distributional contexts are basically the same as in mainland Mandarin.

For the high-pitch *a*, however, the distributional contexts in Taiwan Mandarin and mainland Mandarin are not completely identical. In Taiwan Mandarin, the high-pitch *a* can be found in (i) discourse topic-introduction, (ii) storytelling and reporting, (iii) disagreements and agreements, (iv) answers, and (v) requests. As shown at the beginning of this chapter, according to my preliminary test among mainland Mandarin speakers, some cases of high-pitch *a* in Taiwan Mandarin are different from that in mainland Mandarin. In section 3.4.4, I introduce these cases.

#### 3.4.1 Low-pitch *a* in questions

As in mainland Mandarin, there are two types of low-pitch *a*-attachment in Taiwan Mandarin questions: (i) to a piece of information provided by the previous context, turning this piece of given information into a question, or (ii) directly to a question. Here I use R. Wu's (2004) terms: "*a*-formulated question" and "*a*-attached question" to refer to these two types of question respectively. Low *a*-questions are usually responses to the information provided in a prior context. They are, in other words, triggered by the discourse context. If we compare the following three questions, (18a) and (18b) can be initiated without a prior context. However, (18c) requires a prior context (either linguistically or non-linguistic/circumstantial). For example, (18c) is naturally uttered when the speaker becomes aware that the addressee is going to Taipei.

- (18) a. nǐ qù bú qù táiběi?  
           2<sub>SG</sub> go NEG go Taipei  
           'Do you go to Taipei or not?'
- b. nǐ qù táiběi ma?  
           2<sub>SG</sub> go Taipei PRT  
           'Do you go to Taipei?'
- c. nǐ qù táiběi a↓?  
           2<sub>SG</sub> go Taipei PRT  
           'Do you go to Taipei?'

In everyday conversations, according to Keenan and Schieffelin (1976: 337), “much of the talk that occurs concerns propositions about persons, objects, or ideas.” When these referents are not known to the hearer, “the hearer initiates a series of fairly predictable exchanges directed at clarifying and locating the referent about which some claim is being made” (ibid.). One predictable way for the listener to clarify the referent in Taiwan Mandarin is to pose an *a*-attached question in order to receive the speaker’s confirmation, as in example (19).

Prior to excerpt (19), H and L have been discussing the fact that legislators in Taiwan always “put on a show” when the media is present. In lines 1 and 3–4, H mentions a legislator Lo Fu-chu (Luó Fúzhù) who, after hitting people, used to say that the victims all became famous. In line 5, L interrupts H’s claim and suggests a possible victim Lee Ching-an (Lǐ Qìng’ān) and attaches the low *a* to the suggested name.

- (19) 1 H e Luó Fúzhù bú shì dǎ rén ma?  
uh PN NEG be hit person PRT
- 2 L duì a↑.  
right PRT
- 3 H ránhòu nà ge bèi dǎ de rén bú jiù dōu chūmíng ma?  
then that CL BEI hit DE person just all famous PRT
- 4 H wǒ juéde @@ yě mán-  
1SG think (laughter) also quite
- 5 L Lǐ Qìng’ān a↓?  
PN PRT
- 6 H duì duì nà yě mán jué de.  
right right that also quite unique DE
- H1: Uh, Lo Fu-chu, he hits people, right?  
L2: Right.  
H3-4: Then those who were hit became famous? I think, ha ha, that’s also quite...

- L5: Lee Ching-an?  
 H6: Right. Right. Right. That's quite interesting.

The *a*-formulated question in line 5 is an explicit signal showing the moment of matching the new information and its antecedent in L's memory. In other words, by using an *a*-formulated question, L shows that some of the old knowledge (in this case, the name Lee Ching-an has been activated). In the example above, L's proposed name of a victim is confirmed by H in line 6. However, as mentioned in 3.3.1, in some contexts, the *a*-formulated question does not necessarily require confirmation, but simply marks that the speaker's knowledge state has been activated. In such instances, *a*-attachment can be seen as a signal that the speaker indicates his reception of what the other has just said (as in this example), or of what he has just realized from the non-verbal circumstance (as indicated in (14)).

In example (20), M and F are talking about a tennis player. M says in line 2 that this player is currently the number one in the world ranking. In line 3, F first deploys an *a*-formulated question to show her reception of what M has just said, then immediately poses another *ma*-question (truth-value-seeking) for this information. Here, F's *a*-formulated question in line 3 *diyī míng a* 'first place' is taken by M as a signal of F's reception of the information he provided. Based on this piece of activated knowledge, she poses a relevant question *bú shì Kuerten ma?* 'isn't that Kuerten?'

- (20) 1 M    jiù shì tā de- zǒng jīfēn a↑,  
           just be 3<sub>SG</sub> DE total point PRT
- 2 M    xiànzài shì dēngyú diyī míng. duì.  
           now be equal.to first.place right
- 3 F    diyī míng a↓? bú shì <E Kuerten E> ma?  
           first.place PRT NEG BE PN PRT
- 4 M    <E Kuerten E> yǒushíhòu shì dìyī yǒushíhòu shì dì'èr.  
           PN sometimes be first sometimes be second

M1-2: His total points... now he is the number one, right.

F3: Number one... Isn't that Kuerten?

M4: Kuerten... sometimes he's number one, and sometimes number two.

When *a* is attached to a piece of information which the previous speaker has uttered, as shown in (19) and (20), these *a*-formulated questions indicate that the speaker's own knowledge has been activated due to some information given in the previous context. In what follows, I will demonstrate another two examples of *a*-attached question (i.e. *a* is used directly after a question).

Let us turn to example (10), repeated here as example (21). Prior to this conversation, M and F were exchanging information about the possible candidates for the Australian Open Tennis Championship.

- (21) 1 M    dōu   shì   yìxiē   bǐjiào   yǒuming   de   xuǎnshǒu   dōu-  
          all   be   some   relatively famous   DE   player   all
- 2 M    yǒu   jìnjí            bǐsài            zhèyàngzi.  
          have   rise.in.rank   competition   this.way
- 3 F    on.    ei    nà-  
          PRT   PRT   that
- 4 F    qùnián   gēn   <E Hingis E>   zài   duìkàng   nà   ge   shì   shéi   a↓?  
          last.year with   PN            at   confront   that   CL   be   who   PRT
- 5 F    hǎoxiàng   yí   ge   mán   niánqīng   de   ma.  
          seem   one   CL   quite   young   DE   PRT
- 6 M    qùnián   dǎ   dào-    bǐjiào    hǎo   de   shì-   dǎwēiliánsī   a↑.  
          last.year play arrive   relatively good   DE   be   PN            PRT

M1-2: All of them are those more famous players, all- they all climbed in the ranking. That's it.

F3-5: Oh. Well, then- the one who competed against Martina Hingis last year... who's that? It seemed quite a young player.

M6: Last year the one who achieved...the better one is...Venus Williams.

In lines 1–2, M reports to F that all the famous players climbed in the ranking. In lines 3–4, F deploys an *a*-attached question asking M whether he knows the name of the player who competed against Martina Hingis in the year before. Note that in line

3, F first utters a prolonged *on*, then a turn-initial particle *ei* with a rising contour.<sup>11</sup> I believe that F's deployment of *ei* here is to indicate that a piece of her own knowledge has been activated by the preceding talk, i.e. something has just come to her mind. She then intends to make a turn relating to the activated knowledge. The *a*-attached question is thus a result of this knowledge activation.

Example (22) is another instance of a low *a*-attached question. Prior to this conversation, R has told S that her friend C got married because of premarital pregnancy. This was quite surprising, as C was known for her conservative lifestyle. In order to demonstrate C's conservative attitude, R gives an example that she once went to an open-air hot spring with C and C's boyfriend. According to R, C and her boyfriend were so conservative that they even wore swimming suits.

- (22) 1 R    yīnwèi    tā    bìng    bú    xiàng    shì    nà    zhǒng    rén    a↑,  
           because 3<sub>SG</sub> actually NEG like be that kind person PRT
- 2 R    yǐqián    gēn    tā    chūqù    xǐ-  
           before with 3<sub>SG</sub> go.out wash-
- 3 R    wàimiàn    xǐ    ge    nà    zhǒng    lùtiān    wēnquán    a↑,  
           outside wash CL that kind open-air hot.spring PRT
- 4 R    tā    gēn    tā    nán péngyǒu    qù    xǐ-  
           3<sub>SG</sub> with 3<sub>SG</sub> boy.friend go wash-
- 5 R    e    fǎnzhèng    jiù    shì    xǐ    de    hěn    bǎoshǒu    jiù    duì    le    la↓.  
           uh anyway just be wash DE very conservative just right PRT PRT
- 6 S    chuān    yǒngyī            chuān    yǒngkù.  
           wear swimming.suits wear swimming.trunks
- 7 R    duì    a↑.    @@  
           right PRT (laughter)

<sup>11</sup> Here, the *on* functions as English *oh*, which can be used to display the hearer's understanding of the preceding talk (cf. Heritage 1984: 320). Tsai (2008: 1025) claims that "the *Ei*-prefaced question exhibits close association with the inquiries that build on the preceding talk, yet explores certain previously non-focal part/dimension of what has just been produced."

→ 8 S    en nà    zhèyàng    xǐ    ge shénme a↓?  
           eh that    this.way    wash    CL what    PRT

9 R    xǐ    wēnquán    a↑.  
        wash    hot.spring    PRT

R1-5: Because she is not like that kind of person. I once went out with her to take- we went to take one of those open-air hot springs. She went with her boy friend to take a bath...The way they took the bath was just very conservative.

S6: Wearing swimming suits and swimming trunks.

R7: Right (laughter).

S8: Eh...what kind of bath is that?

R9: Hot spring.

In line 6, S mentions the conservative way of taking bath in a hot spring, that is, to wear swimming suits. Receiving the confirmation by R, in line 8, S attaches *a* to the end of his question *nà zhèyàng xǐ ge shénme?* ‘what kind of bath is that?’. In line 9, R’s response, followed by a high *a*, implies that the answer is obvious (see discussion in 3.4.7).

I argue that the use of low *a* with a question again serves to indicate the activation of the speakers own knowledge: in (22), by using this *a*-attached question, S informs R that the reason why he has posed such a question is because a certain part of his knowledge has been activated from the previous context (in this example, he realizes the fact that C wore swimming suits while taking a bath in hot spring). This concurs with the following explanation by I. Li (1999: 130):

If the preceding discourse has activated the speaker’s old knowledge and prompted him to raise the question, then most likely there must have been something in the discourse that did not agree with his prior conception and has thus caused a change of his knowledge state.

Thus far we have seen cases of low *a* in questions. Compared to other question forms in Mandarin, such as *ma*-attached questions, a low *a*-attached question is usually not self-initiated, but typically triggered by the discourse contexts. The deploy-

ment of *a* after both “*a*-formulated question” and “*a*-attached question” is to signal that the speaker’s own knowledge has been activated by the prior contexts.

### 3.4.2 Low-pitch *a* in exclamations

In my data, there is only one *a*-attached exclamation. In this example, the low-pitch *a* forms a fixed expression *tiān a* ‘my goodness’, as shown in (23). In the context prior to this example, K and W have been talking about a baseball stadium in Taipei and the ticket price for watching a game. In line 1, K, who has been to this stadium, tells W about his experience. In line 2, W deploys an *a*-attached exclamation to show his surprise.

- (23) 1 K    nà   shíhòu   wǒ   kàn   wǔ   bǎi.  
           that time   1<sub>SG</sub>   see five hundred
- 2 W    tiān a!   nà   yǒu   shénme   zhéjiàquàn?  
           sky PRT that have what coupon

K1: At that time I paid five hundred dollars.

W2: My goodness! Did you get any coupons?

Here, the usage is similar to what we have seen in (22): the *a*-attached exclamation is used when something in the prior context has activated the speaker’s own knowledge state. By using this kind of *a*-attached expression, the speaker shows that part of his knowledge has been activated at the time of the utterance. In this example, W makes such an *a*-attached exclamation at the moment when he realizes the fact that K has paid a very low price for a baseball game ticket.

### 3.4.3 Low-pitch *a* in discourse topic-introduction

Except for being attached to questions and exclamations, the low-pitch *a* is also used for the introduction of a discourse topic.<sup>12</sup> Here, the low-pitch *a* likewise serves to indicate the activation of the speaker’s own knowledge state. Concretely speaking, it indicates that during the conversation, the speaker’s knowledge state has been activated due to some information given in the previous context. Consequently, a

<sup>12</sup> Here, I follow Keenan and Schieffelin (1976: 380), who define discourse topic as “not a simple NP but a proposition (about which some claim is made or elicited).”



new topic comes to the speaker's mind. The speaker then introduces this new topic to the ongoing conversation.

Prior to the conversation in example (24), M and K have been talking about earlier flood problems in Taiwan. In lines 1–2, M tells K that he had discussed this problem with some friends a few days ago. In lines 4–5, M introduces a new discourse topic “origin of the name of the city of Xizhǐ” by asking whether K knows about it. Here, before posing the question, M attaches a low-pitch *a* to Xizhǐ, the key referent of this topic in line 4.

- (24) 1 M    qiánjǐtiān    gēn    péngyǒu    yě    shì    zài    liáo    zhè    ge-  
           few.days.ago    with    friend    also    be    at    chat    this    CL
- 2 M    zhè    ge-    yānshuǐ    zhè    ge-    wèntí.  
           this    CL    flood    this    CL    problem
- 3 K    mm.  
           BC
- 4 M    nǐ    zhīdào    yǐqián-    xizhǐ    a↓,  
           2<sub>SG</sub>    know    before    PN    PRT
- 5 M    zhè    ge-    xizhǐ-    zhè    ge-    dìming    zěnmē    yóulái    ma?  
           this    CL    PN    this    CL    place.name    how    origin    PRT

M1-2: Recently I was talking with friends about this... this flood, this problem.

K3: Hmm.

M4-5: Do you know, before, that Xizhǐ ...that Xizhǐ, the name of that place...where does it come from?

In this case, the low-pitch *a* is used to signal the activation of M's knowledge state. As it is well-known in Taiwan that Xizhǐ is a city which frequently suffers from flooding during the typhoon season, the deployment of low-pitch *a* indicates that the *a*-attached information (i.e. Xizhǐ) has just come to speaker M's mind triggered by the previous discussion. However, as this piece of information has just come to the speaker's mind, he is not yet prepared to make an immediate subsequent elaboration about this new topic. This is why sometimes, when the low-pitch *a* occurs in such a

context, it behaves like a pause marker<sup>13</sup>—the speaker uses *a* to prepare his next utterance. This nicely fits the fact that in line 5, the speaker uses the pause marker *zhège* ‘this’ two times to signal that he is still preparing his next utterance.<sup>14</sup> In other words, we can assume that he is not yet prepared to elaborate at the moment when the *a*-attached utterance is made because the piece of information has only just been activated.

Thus far I have introduced three different distributional contexts of low-pitch *a*. These occurrences do not contradict my claim that the low-pitch *a* signals the activation of the speaker’s own knowledge.

#### 3.4.4 High-pitch *a* in discourse topic-introduction

In what follows, I will introduce five types of context of high-pitch *a* in my data: (i) discourse topic-introduction, (ii) storytelling/reporting, (iii) disagreements/agreements, (iv) answers, and (v) requests. As mentioned, my claim is that high-pitch *a* serves to mark activation of the addressee’s knowledge in these contexts. The prerequisite of this kind of *a*-deployment is: the speaker assumes that the addressee already possesses a certain knowledge that can be activated.

Like its low-pitch counterpart, high-pitch *a* can occur in the context of discourse topic introduction. It can be attached directly to a topic, or to some other piece of information in anticipation of the following topic. By using *a*, the speaker intends to activate the addressee’s knowledge and direct the addressee’s focus to the topic in question. Examples (25)–(27) demonstrate this use. In (25), at the very beginning of the conversation, speaker T attaches *a* to *Qú Měifēng shìjiàn* the ‘Chu Mei-feng (Qú Měifēng) affair’<sup>15</sup>, which is the topic she intends to discuss with the interlocutor.

(25) → 1 T      Qú Měifēng shìjiàn a↑ bú shì hěn rèmén ma?  
                   PN            affair    PRT NEG be very hot      PRT

<sup>13</sup> This observation is similar to what I. Li (1999: 126) observes for the Southern Mǐn UFP *a3*.

<sup>14</sup> Huang (1999: 88) refers to *zhège* ‘this’ as a pause marker signaling that “although the speaker takes (or continues to hold) the turn, s/he is not fully prepared.” He claims that “[s]peakers may pause to make a lexical choice or to formulate a syntactic frame or to gather their thought (conceptual planning).”

<sup>15</sup> The “Chu Mei-feng affair” refers to a sexual scandal involving a female politician in 2001 in Taiwan.

- 2 T    wǒ    juéde    zhè- zhè ge shì-    zhè-  
          1<sub>SG</sub>   think    this this CL be    this
- 3 T    zhè ge-        zhè ge- huàtí    hěn    tèshū    a↑,  
          this CL        this CL topic very special PRT
- 4 T    jiù    shì    shuō    yǐqián cónglái    méi    yǒu    fāshēng guò,  
          just be say        before ever    NEG have happen ASP
- 5 T    a    nǐ    rènwéi    zěnmeyàng    lei?  
          PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> think how            PRT

T1-5: The “Chu Mei-feng affair” is quite popular, isn’t it? I think this-  
 this- this- this- this topic is very special. I mean, something like this has  
 never happened before. What do you think about that?

According to Keenan and Schieffelin (1976: 339), in a conversation, “the hearer must know what proposition the speaker is adding new information to or requesting new information about” in order to collaborate on a discourse topic. The listener’s knowledge should be taken into consideration when the speaker selects a discourse topic. In other words, the speaker must “insure that the proposition that constitutes the discourse topic is known to or knowable by the listener” (ibid.). Given that the speakers should make all possible effort to make sure that the listener can identify the referent they are talking about, some conversational devices must be implemented to this end. In this respect, *a*-attachment is one of the devices serving to help the listener identify the referent easily in the process of new-topic-introduction.

Since high *a* serves to activate the addressee’s common or shared knowledge, it is suitable to be used for establishing the referent. Once this knowledge has been activated, the discourse topic will become more accessible. Returning to example (25), T’s high *a*-attached utterances in line 1 and the following lines show her efforts in establishing a clear referent for the listener. The information attached by *a* (i.e. Chu Mei-feng affair) was a very well-known topic in Taiwan, which T supposed that her interlocutor (another Taiwanese) should know about. With the deployment of *a*, speaker T helps the listener to identify the referent by activating the listener’s knowledge state.

As already shown earlier in example (1), repeated here as example (26), *a* is attached to a piece of information related to a new topic, in order to direct the hearer's attention to the following topic. In this excerpt, *a* is attached to the time word *qùnián* 'last year', which is the temporal background of the following discourse topic (the tennis tournament). With the deployment of *a*, the speaker directs the hearer's attention to a certain period of time which is the focus of the following topic. Here, F's repetition *qùnián* 'last year' can be seen as an action to register the receipt of the information (cf. Wong 2000: 411). In other words, it clearly shows that this piece of information has been successfully received by the speaker.

(26) → 1 M      qùnián   a↑   nǐ   yǒu   kàn   nà   ge   wǎngqiú   gōngkāi   sài   ma?  
 last.year   PRT   2<sub>SG</sub>   have   see   that   CL   tennis   open   game   PRT

2 F      qùnián(.)   yǒu   a↑.  
 last.year   have   PRT

M1: Did you watch the tennis tournament last year?

F2: Last year, yes I did.

In example (27), speaker R proposes a new discourse topic to her interlocutor. In this excerpt, R not only attaches *a* to the time word *zuìjìn* 'recently', but also to the following assertion *wǒmen kàn hěn duō zázhi* 'we read lots of magazines'. Similar to the use in (25) and (26), with the deployment of *a*, the speaker intends to activate the interlocutor's knowledge and directs the interlocutor's attention to the following discourse topic.

(27) 1 R      wǒ   xiǎng   gēn   nǐ   tán   jiù   shì-  
 1<sub>SG</sub>   want   with   2<sub>SG</sub>   talk   just   be

→ 2 R      zuìjìn   a↑::  
 recently   PRT

→ 3 R      wǒmen   kàn   hěn   duō   zázhi   a↑  
 1<sub>PL</sub>   see   very   many   magazine   PRT

4 R      yóuqí   shì   shénme   zuì-   qù-   yǒu   yī   ge   xīn   de   zázhi=  
 especially   be   want   most   go   have   one   CL   new   DE   magazine

5 R    =yī zhōukān yǒu-    lái    táiwān    ma.  
          one weekly have    come    Taiwan PRT

R1-5: What I want to say, the- recently, we read lots of magazines,  
 especially last- there is a new magazine “Next Magazine” coming to  
 Taiwan.

In line 3, speaker R uses *wǒmen* ‘we’ as the subject of her assertion, which shows that the assertion made in line 3 is “mutually-experienced-knowledge” in the speaker’s presupposition. Note that in line 2, the UFP *a* is prolonged. In this way, the effect of this kind of knowledge activation appears to be strengthened. By using *a* in lines 2 and 3, speaker R intends to activate a specific part of the addressee’s prior knowledge and help the addressee to access the proposed topic easily.

As mentioned previously, this use is not accepted by my informants from mainland China. However, it is interesting to note that this kind of use can actually be found in the Southern Mǐn spoken in Taiwan. Example (28) is extracted from a longer example provided by I. Li (1999: 107).<sup>16</sup> In this excerpt, F is talking with his family about how difficult it is to serve as a public employee. From line 1 to line 4, F introduces the topic Ong Chhiu-long (Ong5 Chiu1long5), while presenting the story about the topic in line 5. According to I. Li, the topic is a public figure in the speech community; the speaker obviously supposes that his addressees must have had some knowledge of it. I. Li claims that “since this topic is being newly introduced into this discourse, it is thus most likely not within the addressees’ current focus of attention” (ibid.). Therefore, the speaker tries to deploy an *a*-attached topic twice, in order to ensure successful activation of the addressees’ prior knowledge.

(28) (Taiwan Southern Mǐn data, I. Li 1999: 107, modified transcription and glosses)

→ 1 F            ing2kue3 co3    kue3 soo1o3- soo1o3 tin3tionn2 he1 e5 a↑  
                  before    serve ASP    PN            PN            magistrate that CL PRT

<sup>16</sup> In the original expert, the two occurrences of *a* in lines 1 and 2 are marked as *a1* and *a7* respectively. As I. Li (1999: 104) categorizes the *a7*, *a1* and *a5* in her data as “the higher-pitch group” and *a3* “the low-pitch,” I use the upwards arrow (↑) to refer to the first group, and the downwards arrow (↓) for the second group.



support his first assessment in lines 4, 5 and 7, he concludes his comment in line 8, which is attached by UFP *a*.

- (29) 1 M      tā    jīnnián    chuān    de    bǐjiào    bǎoshǒu,  
           3<sub>SG</sub> this.year    wear    DE    relati    conservative
- 2 M      méi    yǒu    xiàng-    e  
           NEG have    like    uh
- 3 F      chuān    ge    lòubèi      de    @@.  
           wear    CL    barebacked    DE    (laughter)
- 4 M      qián    jǐ      nián    dōu    chuān    nà    zhǒng    yǒudiǎn    xiàng    sān-  
           before several    year all    wear    that kind    a.bit    like    three
- 5 M      e    jiù    shì-    lòu    dùqí    zhèyàng    yǒu    méi    yǒu?  
           uh just be    show navel this.way    have NEG have
- 6 F      @@  
           (laughter)
- 7 M      jīnnián    hǎoxiàng    shì    chuān    bǐjiào    liánshēn    de    nà    zhǒng,  
           this.year seem    be wear    relatively one-piece DE    that kind
- 8 M      gǎnjué    bǐjiào      méi    yǒu    nàme    pùlù    a↑.  
           feeling    relatively    NEG    have    that    bare    PRT

M1-2: The way she dressed this year is more conservative. Not like-uh....

F3: Wearing a barebacked dress... (laughter)

M4-5: In the last years she always dressed in that kind of...three...uh...you could see her navel, have you ever seen that?

F6: (laughter)

M7-8: This year, she is apparently wearing something like a one-piece dress. It doesn't make that much of a naked impression...

The reason why the utterance in line 8 is attached by *a* is that this assessment contains information the speaker supposes the hearer knows but is not aware of at the time of the utterance: M's assessment in line 8 is actually a rephrased statement of his first assessment in line 1: *tā jīnnián chuān de bǐjiào bǎoshǒu* 'the way she dressed this year is more conservative', which is given in the previous conversation and can be seen as a sort of "given information."

Note that in line 5, M asks F whether she has seen the dresses the tennis player has been wearing in previous years. However, he does not receive any satisfactory answer from F, but only laughter. This uncooperative response may lead to M's move in line 8, showing M's intention to activate F's prior knowledge and his expectation concerning F's cooperation.

Now let us re-examine example (25) (repeated here as example (30)) and look at the instances of *a* attachment we have not discussed above. As mentioned earlier, speaker T introduces a new discourse topic (i.e. the Chu Mei-feng affair) and makes efforts to get a response from the interlocutor. In line 1, she poses a question to elicit an answer from the addressee but fails. In lines 2–3, T makes a second attempt: an *a*-attached assessment.

Ford and Fox (1996: 161) state that "[a]n assessment allows the speaker to display his/her attitudes towards characters and events in a story and thereby to indicate to the recipients how they should respond to this story." By making an assessment, T gives an indication to her addressee to respond. Note that this assessment contains the information she supposes the interlocutor knows but probably not consciously (the reason why the interlocutor should know may lie in the topicality of this issue, which was widely discussed in Taiwanese society). With the *a*-attached assessment, speaker T intends to activate more of the interlocutor's knowledge of this issue, and expects the interlocutor's response based on the activated knowledge. However, she fails again to receive the expected response, but only silence.

In line 4, T makes her third attempt. She explicitly explains the reason why she makes such an assessment, which can be regarded as a stronger way to activate the interlocutor's knowledge state. In line 5, she directly poses a question requesting the interlocutor's response, which shows her strong intention to receive a collaborative move.

- (30) 1 T      Qú Měifèng shìjiàn a↑    bú shì hěn rèmén ma?  
                  PN                    affair    PRT    NEG be very hot            PRT



- 2 T     wǒ   juéde   zhè- zhè ge shì-   zhè-  
          1<sub>SG</sub>   think   this this CL be   this
- 3 T     zhè ge-         zhè ge- huàtí   hěn   tèshū   a↑,  
          this CL         this CL topic very special PRT
- 4 T     jiù   shì   shuō     yǐqián cónglái méi yǒu   fāshēng guò,  
          just be say     before ever   NEG have happen ASP
- 5 T     a     nǐ   rènwéi   zěnmeyàng   lei?  
          PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> think how                    PRT

T1-5: The “Chu Mei-feng affair” is quite popular, isn’t it? I think this- this- this- this topic is very special. I mean, something like this has never happened before. What do you think about that?

Except for being attached to an assessment, the high-pitch *a* is also used when the speaker makes an exemplification to support a previous claim. I argue that high-pitch *a* in this case can still be considered an attempt to activate the knowledge of the addressee. The following example is extracted from the same conversation (24) and demonstrates this use. Prior to this excerpt, M has told his interlocutor K that the last typhoon has caused economic losses.

- (31) 1 M     xiàng wǒ zuò fángdichǎn a↓,  
          like 1<sub>SG</sub> do real.estate PRT
- 2 M     qíshí   běnnshēn   xiàng xìzhǐ a↑   nèihú a↑,  
          actually itself   like PN   PRT PN   PRT
- 3 M     hoNn zhè yí     dài   bǐjiào     cháng yānshuǐ de dìfāng,  
          PRT this one     area relatively often flood DE place
- 4 M     xiànzài yǒu     xiē   yínháng,  
          now have     some bank

5 M gēnběn dōu bú yuànyì dàikuǎn gěi tāmen.  
 completely all NEG be.willing grant.a.loan give 3PL

M1-5: For example, in my field, real estate, actually places such as Xizhǐ and Nèihú, in those areas where floods occur quite often; nowadays some banks...they just don't want to grant any loans for those regions.

In line 1, M introduces a new (sub-) topic (real estate) to clarify his point about the economic losses. As Taiwanese, M and his interlocutor share the knowledge that the two cities Xizhǐ and Nèihú are well known for suffering from flooding during the typhoon season. In line 2, M provides two examples with high-pitch *a* attachment in line 2 in order to activate the hearer's knowledge. By providing high *a*-attached examples, the speaker eases the information retrieval by the addressee.

This use is comparable to the “enumeration” function mentioned by Chao (1968: 806), i.e. providing examples in support of an upcoming utterance.

(32) (Chao 1968, my transcription, glosses and translation)

shénme tiān a, dì a, rì a, yuè a, fēng a, cǎo a,  
 what heaven PRT earth PRT sun PRT moon PRT wind PRT grass PRT  
 zhè xiē zì a, dōu huì xiě le.  
 this CL character PRT all can write ASP

‘Things like heaven, earth, sun, moon, wind, grass, these words, he can write all of them.’

In such contexts, the high-pitch *a* is used to activate the hearer's prior knowledge about the *a*-attached information; high *a* attachment thus helps the hearer to access the speaker's subsequent utterances on the basis of a piece of activated knowledge.

### 3.4.6 High-pitch *a* in disagreements/agreements

The next distributional contexts for the occurrence of high-pitch *a* are disagreements and agreements. As in the cases analyzed above, when *a* occurs in these contexts, it shows the speaker's assumption concerning the hearer's knowledge state. That is, by

attaching a high *a* to disagreeing or agreeing utterances, the speaker implies that the hearer should have possessed a piece of common or shared knowledge so that the hearer can easily understand the speaker's motive of making such a disagreement or agreement (see 3.3.2, discussion of example (16)).

In example (33), fourteen-years-old F claims that the life of her seventeen-years-old sister J is happier than her own life, because her sister, who is a senior high school student, can have her own mobile phone.

- (33) 1 F    gāozhōng            bǐjiào            xìngfú.  
           senior.high.school    relatively    happy
- 2 F    gāozhōng            yǒu    shǒujī,  
           senior.high.school    have    mobile.phone
- 3 F    ránhòu            kěyǐ    qù    guàngjiē.  
           then            can    go    shopping
- 4 J    nǎ            yǒu    a↓?  
           where            have    PRT
- 5 F    nǐ    yǒu    shǒujī            wǒ    méi    yǒu.  
           2<sub>SG</sub>    have    mobile.phone    1<sub>SG</sub>    NEG    have
- 6 J    guózhōng            yě    yǒu    a↑.  
           junior.high.school    also    have    PRT
- 7 F    guózhōng            wǒ    méi    yǒu.  
           junior.high.school    1<sub>SG</sub>    NEG    have
- 8 F    quán    bān    zhǐ    yǒu    wǒ    gēn    nǚ-  
           whole    only    have    have    1<sub>SG</sub>    with    female
- 9 F    yí    ge    nǚ    de    méi    yǒu.  
           one    CL    female    DE    NEG    have



- 2 R    yǒu    ma?  
       have    PRT
- 3 S    yǒu-    méi    yǒu-    zěnmē    méi    yǒu-  
       have    NEG    have    how    NEG    have
- 4 S    zài    táiběi    huǒchēzhàn    nàbiān    fùjìn,  
       at    Taipei    train.station    there    neighborhood
- 5 S    chángcháng    bèi    rénjiā    zònghuǒ    a↑.  
       often        BEI    others    set.fire    PRT
- 6 S    mótuōchē    bèi    shāo    a↑,    jiù    gōngyù    bèi    shāo    a↑,  
       motorcycle    BEI    burn    PRT    old apartment    BEI    burn    PRT
- 7 R    hmm.  
       BC
- 8 S    duì    a↑,    m-    bù    cháng    kàn    xīnwén    ma?  
       right    PRT    m-    NEG    often    see    news    PRT
- 9 R    cháng    kàn    a↑.  
       often    see    PRT
- 10 S    cháng    kàn    zěnmē    huì    bù    zhīdào?  
       often    see    how    can    NEG    know

S1: There have been lots of fire accidents at the end of the year.

R2: Have there?

S3-6: Yes, no...of course there have...near Taipei train station, there have been frequent cases of arson. Motorcycles and old apartments were burned.

R7: Hmm.

S8: Right, m- don't you watch the news often?

R9: I do.

S10: If so, how come you don't know this?

Note that in line 8, S first utters *duì a* ‘right’, which serves to “affirm the speaker’s own statement” (Wang et al. 2010), and then poses a question *bù cháng kàn xīnwén ma* ‘don’t you watch the news often?’, which explicitly shows his assumption that R should have known the *a*-attached information he gave in the previous context. Confronted with R’s *a*-attached challenge in line 9 (which implies that S may have ignored that fact that she watches TV news often), S poses another rhetorical question *cháng kàn zěnme huì bù zhīdào* ‘if you watch the news often, how come you don’t know this?’ to show his surprise concerning the discrepancy between R’s words and R’s knowledge state.

In (35), M and F are talking about the famous male tennis players Pete Sampras and Marat Safin. In line 5, M asks F whom she will support, and F says that she hopes that Sampras will win because he is her idol. Note that F’s answer in lines 7 and 8 are both attached by high-pitch *a*, indicating that she supposes that M should know this, as the fact that F is a big fan of Pete Sampras has been stated in the contexts prior to this conversation. By using the modal adverb *dāngrán* ‘of course’, she reinforces the obviousness of her statement in line 7.

In line 9, M’s disagreement is initiated by the disagreement token *kěshì* ‘but’, claiming that he thinks another player also plays well. M’s *a*-attached refutation does not indicate clearly who exactly the player is but uses a question pronoun *shéi* ‘who’, indicating that M supposes that F knows whom he is referring to. As F actually does not know to whom M has just referred and does not answer as expected, M provides the *a*-attached answer *shāfēi* ‘Safin’ with an attached UFP *a* to explicitly activate F’s knowledge, as if indicating the obviousness of the answer.

- (35) 1 M    zhè cì    shānpǔlāsī zuì    dà    de    duìshǒu    hǎoxiàng-  
           this CL    PN                    most    big    DE    opponent seem
- 2 M    yě shì nà ge sūlián                    de- nà ge- jiào shāfēi ba.  
           also be that CL the Soviet Union de that CL call PN    PRT
- 3 M    wǒ bù xiǎodé nǐ zhī    bù    zhīdào?  
           1<sub>SG</sub> NEG know 2<sub>SG</sub> know NEG know
- 4 F    o    wǒ zhīdào wǒ    zhīdào.  
           PRT 1<sub>SG</sub> know 1<sub>SG</sub> know

- 5 M    nà   nǐ   juéde   tāmen liǎng   ge   shéi   huì   yíng?  
       that 2<sub>SG</sub> feel    3<sub>PL</sub>   two    CL   who   will   win
- 6 M    rúguǒ zhēnde-  
       if        really
- 7 F    e   wǒ   dāngrán shì   xīwàng   shānpǔlāsī   yíng   a↑. @@  
       uh 1<sub>SG</sub> of.course be   hope    PN            win   PRT (laughter)
- 8 F    tā   shì   wǒ   de   ǒuxiàng   a↑.  
       3<sub>SG</sub> be   1<sub>SG</sub> DE   idol        PRT
- 9 M    kěshì- kěshì-   wǒ juéde   nà   ge   shéi   yě   dǎ   de   búcuò   a↑.  
       but   but        1<sub>SG</sub> feel   that CL who also play DE not.bad PRT
- 10 F    shéi?  
       who
- 11 M    shāfèi   a↑.  
       PN        PRT

M1-3: The most threatening opponent to Sampras seems... also the one from Russia...called Safin. I don't know whether you heard about him or not.

F4: Oh. I know, I know.

M5-6: The two of them, who do you think will win? If it's really...

F7-8: Eh...of course I hope Sampras will win (laughter). He is my idol.

M9: But, but I think ...that one...also plays well.

F10: Who?

M11: Safin!

Taken from the same conversation as (25), example (36) is a representative example showing how a series of *a*-attached utterances is used to activate the hearer's knowledge in the context of disagreement. In this example, J and T are talking about the aforementioned "Chu Mei-feng affair." In line 1, J claims that Kuo Yu-ling (Guō Yùlíng), a suspected blackmailer involved in the affair, has been sentenced. Her

claim is then immediately denied by T with some information attached by *a*, saying that no evidence has been found and Kuo Yu-ling has not admitted anything yet. In line 6, J tries to provide another piece of information to challenge T's claim. This triggers T's deployment of a series of *a*-attached utterances (lines 8–9, 11 and 12). Confronted by J's second challenge in line 14, T deploys another two *a*-attached utterances in lines 15 and 17.

- (36) 1 J xiànzài hǎoxiàng- nà ge shénme Guō Yùlíng yǐjīng bèi pàn-  
now seem that CL what PN already BEI sentence
- 2 T ei hái méi pànxíng, yīnwèi hái zhǎo bú dào zhèngjù,  
uh still NEG sentence because still search NEG arrive evidence
- 3 T tā zìjǐ hái méi chéngrèn a↑.  
3<sub>SG</sub> self still NEG admit PRT
- 4 J tā méi yǒu- tā hái méi yǒu chéngrèn o?  
3<sub>SG</sub> NEG have 3<sub>SG</sub> still NEG have admit PRT
- 5 T tā méi yǒu chéngrèn.  
3<sub>SG</sub> NEG have admit
- 6 J kěshì tā bú shì yǐjīng- zhǎo dào yí bùfèn de zhèngjù?  
but 3<sub>SG</sub> NEG be already search arrive one part DE evidence
- 7 T tā shìxiān hǎoxiàng yǒu-  
3<sub>SG</sub> before seem have
- 8 T tā yǒu jiào tā de nà ge shénme rén=  
3<sub>SG</sub> have call 3<sub>SG</sub> DE that CL what person
- 9 T =bāng tā zuò xiāohuǐ de dòngzuò a↑.  
help 3<sub>SG</sub> do burn DE action PRT
- 10 J ou. suǒyǐ-  
PRT so



- 11 T      suǒyǐ xiànzài yìzhí zhǎo      bú dào zhèngjù a↑,  
so      now      always      search      NEG arrive evidence PRT
- 12 T      suǒyǐ bù néng pàn      tā xíng      a↑,  
so      NEG can      sentence      3<sub>SG</sub>      punishment PRT
- 13 J      ou. méi yǒu bànfǎ zhǎo dào zhèngjù.  
PRT NEG      have method search arrive evidence
- 14 J      kěshì tā nǚ'ér bú shì yǐjīng bèi shōuyā le ma?  
but      3<sub>SG</sub> daughter NEG be      already BEI detain PRT PRT
- 15 T      kěshì tā hái shì bù jiǎng chūlái a↑.  
but      3<sub>SG</sub> still be      NEG say      out      PRT
- 16 J      ou.  
PRT
- 17 T      bù jiǎng chūlái méi yǒu zhèngjù=  
NEG say      out      NEG      have      evidence
- 18 T      =jiù shì bù néng duì tā rúhé a↑.  
just be      NEG can      to      3<sub>SG</sub>      how      PRT

- J1:      Now, it seems that Kuo Yu-ling has already been sentenced....
- T2-3:      Ei, not yet. No piece of evidence has not been found yet. She  
hasn't admitted to anything yet.
- J4:      She hasn't- she hasn't admitted?
- T5:      She hasn't.
- J6:      But haven't they found partial evidence?
- T7-9:      She seems to... She asked someone to help her burn all pieces of  
evidence.
- J10:      Oh, so-
- T11-12:      So until now nothing has been found, so they cannot sentence her.
- J13-14:      Oh. Nothing could be found. But her daughter was detained,  
wasn't she?
- T15:      But she [Kuo Yu-ling] still hasn't said anything.

J16: Oh.

T17-18: If she doesn't say anything and they can find no evidence, then there is nothing they can do against her.

All the information conveyed in the *a*-attached utterances is arguably still a kind of shared or common knowledge that the speaker T supposes the hearer J should possess. Given the fact that the sexual scandal was a widely discussed issue and also widely covered by the mass media every day when this conversation took place, it's reasonable to assume that the relevant information is shared by both speakers. In fact, J's utterances in lines 6 and 14 show her possession of certain knowledge regarding this issue. In this excerpt, T's *a*-attached utterances can all be categorized under either shared knowledge (lines 3, 8–9, 11, 15) or common knowledge (lines 12, 17–18).

It must be added that the deployment of high-pitch *a* in a disagreement is not obligatory, yet quite common in conversational negotiation or argumentation. As in the examples above, the use of high *a* reinforces the refutation or disagreement, by indicating that the addressee should have known the *a*-attached information. In some cases it even implies that the speaker is blaming the addressee for his/her ignorance, as if carrying an overtone that “you should have known that” or “how could you not know it,” thus leading to a stronger effect.

Similar to *a*-attached disagreements, *a*-attached agreements also show the speaker's assumption concerning the hearer's knowledge state. In example (37), L and H are talking about Chu Mei-feng, the politician who was involved in the sexual scandal. Prior to this example, L has told H that she had a good impression of this female politician before, but then she realized that what she did was just to make herself more popular. In line 2, H deploys an *a*-attached agreement token *zhè shì dāngrán* ‘of course it's like that’, which not only shows H's agreement with L's previous statement, but also indicates the obviousness of the statement itself. In other words, H assumes that L should have known that the claim in line 1 has already been part of H's own knowledge, and H would like to point this out. It is evident that in lines 5–6, H explicitly shows her knowledge about L's claim: she knows that all politicians supposedly do things in order to make themselves popular, and this female politician could hardly be an exception.

(37) 1 L      hòulái wǒ fāxiàn tā shì-      tā shì-  
           then 1<sub>SG</sub> discover 3<sub>SG</sub> be      3<sub>SG</sub> be

- 2 L wèile dǎ zìjǐ de zhīmíngdù.  
for strike self DE popularity
- 3 H zhè shì dāngrán a↑.  
this be of.course PRT
- 4 L yào chūfēngtóu.  
want in.the.limelight
- 5 H tā dōu shì zhèyàng hǎo bù hǎo?  
3<sub>SG</sub> all be this.way good NEG good
- 6 H měi ge zhèngzhìrénwù dōu shì zhèyàng.  
every CL politician all be this.way

L1-2: Then I discovered that it was for making herself more popular.

H3: Of course it's like that.

L4: She wants to be in the limelight.

H5-6: It's her way, okay? Every politician is like that.

Lastly, I will introduce interesting cases of *a*-attached disagreement in which the *a*-attached utterance does not contain a clear referent, as in (38).

- (38) →1 Z kěshì táiwān jiù shì bǐjiào- nà ge a↑.  
but Taiwan just be relatively that CL PRT
- 2 Q táiwān- nǐ shì shuō táiwān bǐjiào ruòshì ma?  
Taiwan 2<sub>SG</sub> be say Taiwan relatively weak PRT
- 3 Z duì a↑.  
right PRT
- Z1: But Taiwan is just more- that.
- Q2: Taiwan- you mean Taiwan is weaker?
- Z3: Yeah.

Before this excerpt, the two speakers Z and Q have been talking about an invention of Taiwanese businessmen who are based in mainland China. Q mentioned that in China the law is complicated and sometimes theory does not work out in practice. It is therefore not easy for Taiwanese businessmen to invest in mainland China. In line 1, Z attaches the high-pitch *a* to her disagreeing assessment without a clear referent. In line 2, Q provides a possible referent for Z's assessment according to his knowledge. This answer is immediately confirmed by Z in line 3 with a high *a*-attached agreement *duì a*. I argue that the deployment of the high-pitch *a* can be explained by speaker Z's assumption that Q is able to identify the unidentified referent *nàge* 'that' (in other words, Q is believed to possess some relevant knowledge). With the use of *a*, Z attempts to activate Q's knowledge. We can see that in line 2, Q's move proves that Z's assumption is correct (i.e., Q's knowledge is successfully activated and she identifies the referent successfully).

### 3.4.7 High-pitch *a* in answers

When the high *a* is appended to answers in a question-answer pair, the answer carries an overtone of "obviousness." In other words, by deploying the high *a* to the answer, the speaker implies that the hearer (the question poser) should have already known the answer to his own question, as if saying "don't you know/remember that?" or "can't you see it?"

Excerpt (39) is an extension of example (1). M asks whether F has watched a certain tennis tournament. In line 2, F attaches the UFP *a* to her answer, as if saying "of course I did." Understanding that M still doesn't accept the obvious answer, F explicitly provides a further explanation *dōu zài jiā lǐ kàn* 'we all watched it at home' and adds a tag question *bú shì ma* 'wasn't it'. This use of a tag question is in line with Lakoff's (1973: 55) explanation: "Sometimes we find a tag-question used in cases where the speaker knows as well as the addressee what the answer must be, and doesn't need confirmation." Hu (2002: 54) also points out that the tag *bú shì ma* shows the speaker's confidence about her own statement. I thus argue that this tag question indicates that F already has the obvious answer in mind and she believes that M has too.

- (39) → 1 M      qùnián      a↑      nǐ    yǒu    kàn    nà    ge    wǎngqiú    gōngkāi    sài    ma?  
                   last.year    PRT    2<sub>SG</sub>    have    see    that    CL    tennis    open    game    PRT
- 2 F      qùnián(.)    yǒu    a↑.  
                   last.year    have    PRT

- 3 M yǒu a↓?  
have PRT
- 4 F dōu zài jiā lǐ kàn bú shì ma?  
all at home inside see NEG be PRT
- M1: Did you watch the tennis tournament last year?  
F2: Last year, yes I did.  
M3: Did you?  
F4: We all watched it at home, wasn't it?

Example (40) is another example of an *a*-attached answer. The two speakers D and L are good friends. Prior to this conversation, L, who is an English teacher, has told D that she and her boyfriend plan to run a private tutorial school. In lines 2 and 3, L deploys two *a*-attached utterances to respond to D's question about potential teachers. As D is supposed to know that L is a teacher, the *a*-attached utterances not only reveal L's assumption, but also imply that D's question is redundant. L uses *dāngrán* 'of course' in her response in line 3, illustrating that the fact that she will be the teacher is self-evident.

- (40) 1 D rúguǒ- xiàng yào qǐng lǎoshī nǐmen yào qù nǎbiān qǐng?  
if like want hire teacher 2<sub>PL</sub> must go where hire
- 2 L jiù zìjǐ jiāo le a↑  
just self teach ASP PRT
- 3 L yì kāishǐ dāngrán zìjǐ jiāo a↑  
one START of.course self teach PRT

- D1: If- when you want to hire teachers, how do you hire them?  
L2-3: I will teach! In the beginning, of course I will be the teacher.

### 3.4.8 High-pitch *a* in requests

The last distributional context of *a* are requests. When *a* is used in requests, it retains the same core function, i.e. to activate the addressee's knowledge state. The speaker expects that the addressee should possess a certain shared or common knowledge explaining why such a request or suggestion is being made.

In excerpt (41), Y, S, Z and W are supposed to make a recording of their conversation as a class assignment. Throughout the conversation, S, Z and W have been talking a lot, but Y kept quiet. Prior to this excerpt, Y was asked why he hasn't been talking much. In line 1, Y answers that he does not know what to say. W uses an *a*-attached suggestion in line 3, and explicitly reveals what she has expected in line 4. A few minutes later, the team members realize that Y still does not talk much. W thus uses another *a*-attached suggestion in line 92, in order to force Y to talk more.

- (41) 1 Y      wǒ    bù    zhīdào yào    jiǎng    shénme.  
           1<sub>SG</sub>    NEG    know    want    say    what
- 2 S      nǐ    juéde zhèyàng hěn yǒu    yāpògǎn      ma?  
           2<sub>SG</sub>    think this.way very have    sense.of.pressure PRT
- 3 W      wǒmen liáotiān nǐ    jiù      gēnzhe liáo    a↑  
           1<sub>PL</sub>    chat    2<sub>SG</sub>    just      follow chat    PRT
- 4 W      nǐ dōu bù shuōhuà, zhèyàng lù    bú dào    nǐ jiǎnghuà.  
           2<sub>SG</sub> all    NEG talk      this.way record NEG arrive 2<sub>SG</sub> talk

(85 lines omitted, Z and W said to Y)

- 90 Z      nǐ    jiǎng tài    shǎo    le.  
           2<sub>SG</sub> talk    too    few      PRT
- 91 W      jiù    liǎng    sān    fēnzhōng    éryǐ,  
           just two    three    minute    just
- 92 W      suíbiàn shuō jǐ      jù      huà    a↑.  
           casual say    several sentence word    PRT

93 W      yòu      méi      yǒu      guānxi.  
             again    NEG    have      relationship

Y1:      I don't know what to say.

S2:      Do you feel under stress like this?

W3-4:    When we chat you can join us. You just don't talk. Like this your words will not be recorded.

Z90:     You hardly talk.

W91-93: Just two or three minutes. Just talk a little. It does not matter at all.

In lines 4 and 92, W clearly shows her expectation which can be regarded as a common knowledge (if a person does not talk, her/his words cannot be recorded) or a sort of shared knowledge among the group members (saying some sentences does not matter at all; everybody should contribute to the assignment). In this context, the *a*-attached suggestion has a stronger effect than its counterpart without *a*. It is reasonable to assume that if a speaker makes a suggestion or request and supposes the hearer should know the reason why s/he does so, the suggestion/request itself implies an extra effort, as if saying: "you should have known why I make such a suggestion/request. Why should I bother doing so?" This is in line with previous studies explaining that the *a*-attached requests carry a stronger effect (cf. Chao 1968: 795–796, 804).

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the core function of the UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is knowledge activation, which is in line with what I. Li (1999) proposes for the Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. Low-pitch *a* marks the activation of the speaker's own knowledge, whereas high-pitch *a* indicates activation of the addressee's knowledge. By using low *a*, the speaker signals that part of his/her own knowledge has been activated. By using high *a*, the speaker supposes that the addressee has a certain knowledge of which he is not aware at the time of the utterance and that once that knowledge has been activated, the addressee can understand the speaker's moves and motives in conversation.

I have also demonstrated that the use of UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is not entirely identical with that in mainland Mandarin. In Taiwan Mandarin, high-pitch *a* can be used for introducing a discourse topic. As I will show in chapter 7, there are good reasons to assume that this functional asymmetry is due to the influence of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin.

## Chapter 4

### The UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin

#### 4.1 Introduction

Like *a*, the UFP *la* occurs frequently in Taiwan Mandarin (cf. Shie 1991: 4–5, Tseng 2001: 168, P. Wu 2005: 16, Tseng and Gibbon 2006: 802). Similar to *a*, the UFP *la* can also be produced either with a high pitch or a low pitch, as shown in example (1). Prior to this 17-second conversation, the speaker L, a freelancer, has told her friend D that in contrast to permanent company staff, freelancers are not entitled to any benefits such as labor insurance or maternity leave. L says that once she decides to get married or to have children, she will probably look for a job in a company in order to be entitled to maternity leave. Note that among the four occurrences of *la* within such a short conversation, the one in line 4 is produced with a high pitch, whereas the other three occurrences of *la* in lines 2, 9 and 10 are all pronounced with a low pitch.

- (1) 1 L      zhèyàng jiù hǎo děng fàng              wán zài zǒu. @@  
                 this.way just good wait have.holiday finish then go (laughter)
- 2 D      qíshí bú huì la↓.  
                 actually NEG will PRT
- 3 D      nǐ yě búyòng xiǎng zhème duō,  
                 2<sub>SG</sub> also no.need think so much
- 4 D      wǒ juéde nǐ zhèyàng de gōngzuò jiù hǎo la↑.  
                 1<sub>SG</sub> think 2<sub>SG</sub> this.way DE work just good PRT
- 5 L      nǎ yǒu,  
                 which have
- 6 L      hěn duō rén juéde shuō,  
                 very many people think say
- 7 L      jiéhūn yǐhòu gǎnjué gōngzuò gùding bǐjiào hǎo.  
                 get.married after feel work fixed more good



- 8 L [nǐ bù juéde ma?  
2<sub>SG</sub> NEG think PRT
- 9 D [o shíjiān bǐjiào gùding la↓.  
PRT time more fixed PRT
- 10 L bùzhǐ la↓.  
not.only PRT
- 11 L jiù shì- gōngzuò bǐjiào wěnding gǎn bǐjiào hǎo.  
just be work more stable feeling more good
- L1: It's fine this way. I will quit once I have used these days  
[maternity leave] (laughter).
- D2-4: Actually it won't be like that, you don't need to think so much. I  
think your current job is fine.
- L5-8: No way. Many people think it's better to have a fixed job after  
getting married. Don't you think so?
- D9: Oh, the schedule is more fixed.
- L10-11: Not just that, it's- having a more stable job makes you feel better.

Although *la* is such a frequently-used UFP in Taiwan Mandarin, it has not received the same attention as other Mandarin UFPs in previous literature, such as *a*, *ba* or *ne*. One possible reason is that it is simply regarded as a fusion of perfective marker *le* and *a* (e.g. Chao 1968: 796, see discussion in 4.2) and therefore not treated as a distinct UFP. However, if tested with Taiwan Mandarin conversation speech data, it becomes evident that the “fused-*la* analysis” is insufficient. This chapter therefore aims at providing a more refined examination of the use of the UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin conversations.

One distinction made in this chapter is that between fused *la* and simplex *la*. The former corresponds to the definition provided by previous analyses (cf. Chao *ibid.*, Zhu 1982: 207–8), i.e. that *la* is the fusion of *le* and *a*. It must be distinguished from the simplex *la*, which cannot be analyzed as a fusion of *le* plus *a*. I claim that the distribution of these two *la* is different in mainland Mandarin and in Taiwan Mandarin: the former possesses a fused *la* only, whereas the latter has both. This chapter argues that the occurrence of simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin results from language contact with Southern Mǐn (for a more detailed discussion, see chapter 7).

Section 4.2 elaborates on the distinction of two types of UFP *la*: fused *la* and simplex *la* and their pitch realization. In 4.3, I review previous studies on UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin. In 4.4, I propose a hypothesis concerning the core function of the simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin by arguing that it functions to “mark an explicit or implicit adjustment” in a conversation. This hypothesis will then be tested with my Taiwan Mandarin data as well as Taiwan Southern Mǐn data in 4.5.

#### 4.2 Fused *la* and simplex *la*: pitch and distribution

In previous studies on Mandarin UFPs, which are based on mainland Mandarin, the UFP *la* is often treated as a fused form of the aspect marker *le* and the UFP *a* (cf. Chao 1968: 796, Zhu 1982: 207–8). Chao, for instance, writes that the *la* in (2a) is “a fusion of *le* and *a*” (1968: 796).

(2) (Chao 1968: 796, my transcription and glosses)

- a.       zhèi ge bù néng chī la?  
           this CL NEG can eat PRT  
           ‘This can’t be eaten anymore?’
- b.       zhèi ge bù néng chī le a?  
           this CL NEG can eat ASP PRT  
           ‘This can’t be eaten anymore?’

According to Chao (ibid.), “when a particle is followed by another particle beginning with a vowel, the two will fuse into one syllable, although each will still retain its function.” In other words, the utterance *zhèi ge bù néng chī la* ‘this can’t be eaten anymore’ functions in the same way as (2b) *zhèi ge bù néng chī le a* ‘this can’t be eaten anymore’. Likewise, Zhu (1982: 207–8) claims that the fused *la* “should be analyzed as *le* plus *a*” and not as an individual UFP. However, the fused-*la* analysis cannot explain many occurrences of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin. As Shie (1991) and P. Wu (2005) observe from their Taiwan Mandarin data, except for the fused form, there is another type of *la* which cannot be analyzed as a fusion of *le* plus *a*. According to P. Wu (2005), this type of *la* takes up 73.6 percent out of all the occurrences of UFP *la* in her Taiwan Mandarin data.

Let us turn back to example (1). Of these four utterances of *la*, only the one in line 4, *wǒ juéde nǐ zhèyàng de gōngzuò jiù hǎo la*↑ ‘I think your current job is fine’ can be understood as *wǒ juéde nǐ zhèyàng de gōngzuò jiù hǎo le a*↑ ‘I think your



tinguish them. For example, both the fused *la* and the simplex *la* can be attached to a question, as shown in (4).

- (4)            nǐ qù nǎlǐ    la↓?  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> go    where    PRT
- (i)    ‘Where did you go?’  
 (ii)   ‘Where are you going?!’

Example (4) can be read in two ways: if the *la* is a fused form, the *la*-utterance can be read as *nǐ qù nǎlǐ le a↓?* ‘where did you go?’ and has question semantics (for the use of *a* in questions, see 3.4.1). If the *la* is a simplex form, this *la*-attached question can be interpreted as ‘Where (the hell) are you going?’ and is often used rhetorically (for this use, see the following discussion in 4.5.4.1). The actual interpretation of this utterance can only be inferred from the conversational context.

In order to investigate whether the simplex *la* is used solely in Taiwan Mandarin, I have elicited mainland Mandarin native speaker judgments of Taiwan Mandarin examples. They judged all forms which qualify as fused forms acceptable. By contrast, most occurrences of simplex *la* were judged unacceptable. Interestingly, some of my informants find phrases such as *hái hǎo la↓* ‘that’s okay’ or *búcuò la↓* ‘not bad’ acceptable,<sup>2</sup> although they do not perceive them as part of *pǔtōnghuà*. They gave as a possible explanation that their familiarity with these phrases may be due to influence from popular Taiwanese TV series they had watched in mainland China.<sup>3</sup> In short, the native speaker judgments confirm my claim that the use of the UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin is distinct from that in mainland Mandarin. In a nutshell, the fused *la* and simplex *la* both exist in Taiwan Mandarin, whereas in mainland Mandarin only the fused *la* is used.<sup>4</sup>

What is the reason for the emergence of the simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin? One obvious explanation is the influence from Southern Mǐn. Following P. Wu

<sup>2</sup> The UFP *la* in these two phrases *hái hǎo la↓* ‘that’s okay’ and *búcuò la↓* ‘not bad’ are simplex forms, because they cannot be analyzed as *hái hǎo le-a↓* and *búcuò le-a↓*.

<sup>3</sup> Although the acceptance of some uses of simplex *la* may have resulted from the frequent exposure to Taiwanese TV series, not all of the uses of simplex *la* are accepted by mainland Mandarin speakers. For example, the phrase *tài dà le la↓* ‘(it’s) too big’ are judged unacceptable by my informants.

<sup>4</sup> P. Wu (2005: 33–34) also writes that the use of *la* is different in Taiwan and in mainland China.

(2005: 30), I will demonstrate in 4.5 that there is a considerable overlap in the distribution of the UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn. My analysis also suggests that the properties of the simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin and the UFP *la* in Taiwanese are identical. For example, if we take a look at the use of the Southern Mǐn UFP *la* in (5) and compare this with example (3), the parallels become evident.

- (5)            siunn7 tua7 a    la.  
               too    big PRT PRT  
               ‘(It’s) too big.’

The influence of Southern Mǐn on the use of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin will be discussed in chapter 7. In this chapter, I will focus on discussing the core function of *la* Taiwan Mandarin.

### 4.3 Previous Studies on UFP simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin<sup>5</sup>

In what follows, I will briefly review previous studies on UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin. Since fused *la* is a fusion of the perfective marker *le* and the UFP *a*, the fused *la*-attached utterances retain the same function as *a*-attached utterances (discussed in chapter 3), I will only explore the use of simplex *la* in this chapter.

#### 4.3.1 P. Wu (2005)

P. Wu (2005: 21–23) divides the Taiwan Mandarin UFP *la* into two types: (i) *la* as a fusion of *le* and *a*, and (ii) *la* which is not a fusion of *le* and *a* (i.e. what I refer to as simplex *la*). She proposes that the simplex *la* has three features. Firstly, it is always uttered with a low pitch; secondly, its distribution to a large extent corresponds to that of Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *la*; and lastly, most of the simplex *la*-attached utterances convey impatience, unhappiness or insistence.<sup>6</sup>

According to P. Wu (2005: 30), the distribution of the occurrences of Taiwan Mandarin simplex *la* is identical with that of Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la*. Adopting the framework of I. Li’s (1999) analysis of Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *la*, she proposes that Taiwan Mandarin simplex *la* has the same function as the Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la*, which is to “signal the completion of a discourse unit” (I. Li 1999: 62). Ac-

<sup>5</sup> P. Wu (2005) and Shie (1991) do not use the term *simplex la* in their studies. P. Wu (2005: 22) calls it “unfused,” whereas Shie (1991: 211) calls it “an independent sentence-final particle having nothing to do with *a* in any way.”

<sup>6</sup> P. Wu’s (2005) claim that *la*-attached utterances convey a negative connotation will be discussed in 4.4.

cording to I. Li (1999: 57), the Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *la* functions to mark “finality of a speech unit in discourse.” I. Li explains that the ending of speech units may or may not be overtly marked during the discourse progression, because the unit division can often be signaled by the content, prosody, and other contextual features. She claims the use of *la* is “by no means obligatory” (ibid.).

My observation regarding the distribution of Taiwan Mandarin *la* and Taiwan Southern Mǐn corresponds to P. Wu’s (2005) claim. However, I find I. Li’s (1999) underlying proposal for Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* not convincing. If the ending of speech units “may or may not” be overtly marked by *la*, how can we know that the core function of *la* is to mark the completion of the discourse units? Moreover, Hsieh (2001: 75) has tested I. Li’s (1999) hypothesis with her Taiwan Southern Mǐn data and found that only 5.4 percent of the discourse units end with *la*. She claims that “the ending positions of most of the discourse units are not marked by *la*, and thus, it is impossible for *la* to function as a discourse marker that marks the end of discourse units” (ibid.). She suggests that the core function of Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* is to mark that “the speaker believes the utterance to be true” (ibid.: 108). In section 4.4, I will propose another core function of *la* and justify my proposal in 4.5.

#### 4.3.2 Shie (1991)

Shie (1991: 83) calls simplex *la* a “marker of speaker adjustment,” although he does not clearly define what he refers to as “adjustment.” He claims that simplex *la* functions to mark “a speaker’s modification or evaluation of his/her prior talk,” which is similar to the use of the English phrase *I mean* (cf. Shiffrin 1987: 308). According to Shie (ibid.), *la* “carries speaker’s assessment of some previously- mentioned propositions, realized in the form of an evaluation or a clarification, and by so doing temporarily changes the role of the speaker from that of an information provider/receiver to that of a commentator.” Shie (ibid.: 84) moreover observes that the *la*-attached clarification can be used to modify the previous speaker’s assertion. Clarifications or evaluations attached by *la* are inclined to “accompany negative propositions, whose function is to exclude undesirable information when clarifying, and to deliver unfavorable comment when evaluating” (ibid.). Thus, *la* “almost always appears with some dispreferred remarks.”

The ample examples provided by Shie (1991) are important resources to explore the use of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin. However, they are all cases of *la* attached to clarifications or assessments. In my data, *la* is also found with questions or requests. Shie’s analysis therefore only explains parts of the story. In the following

section, I will refine Shie's analysis and make a proposal for the core function of simplex *la*.

#### 4.4 Core function: marking an explicit or implicit adjustment

As mentioned previously, Shie (1991) does not clearly state how he defines an "adjustment." Here, I define "adjustment" in a broad sense: it can refer to utterances carrying the speaker's modification or correction of previous utterances, or utterances serving to adjust the interlocutor's attitude or move; it can also refer to an adjustment of the speaker's role. For example, the attachment of *la* to a question turns this question into a rhetorical question carrying the speaker's comment. The role of the speaker is then more like a "commentator" (Shie 1991: 83, also see my discussion in 4.5.4), instead of a "questioner."

In my data, the UFP *la* is mostly attached to an utterance which directly adjusts/modifies a previous claim. I call this type of adjustment *explicit adjustment*. In example (1), the utterance to which *la* is attached in line 2 is a modification of L's claim in line 1. In some cases, the content of a *la*-utterance is not a direct adjustment of some previous claim. However, with the attachment of *la*, an adjustment is signaled. I call this type of *la*-utterance *implicit adjustment*. As mentioned previously, with the attachment of *la*, the question *nǐ qù nǎlǐ* 'where are you going' in example (4) becomes a rhetorical question. The speaker's role is adjusted following the attachment of *la*. In brief, the occurrence of *la* marks an explicit or implicit adjustment. When a speaker uses *la*, s/he gives the addressee an indication that something in the conversational context has been adjusted or needs to be adjusted, and this adjustment is given prominence vis-à-vis the listener.

Why is it necessary for an adjustment to be "marked" during the conversation? A conversation, as Clark and Brennan (1991: 127–8) claim, is a "collective activity." The participants cannot communicate smoothly "without assuming a vast amount of shared information or common ground—that is, mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs, and mutual assumptions" (ibid.). The common ground is updated and accumulated moment by moment during the conversation. Clark and Brennan (ibid.) further argue that in a conversation, "the participants try to establish that what has been said has been understood." In other words, the conversation participants try to make what they have understood from the previous conversation part of their common ground. I believe that an adjustment requires perceptibility, since it affects the establishment of the mutual common ground between the speaker and the hearer.

As Mandelbaum (2013: 498) explains "[t]ellers provide recipients with a variety of indications of what is important in the telling and how they should react to

the telling”; it is important for the speaker to ensure that the addressee receives and understands the utterances as expected by the speaker. Attention-getting, as Gumperz (1982) states, is a presupposition of understanding.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the speaker has to make an effort to deploy different pragmatic mechanisms (cf. Trillo 1997) or conversational devices to draw, to keep, to direct, or to check the hearer’s attention to the prominent messages in conversation, such as marking an adjustment. As Trillo (1997: 208) writes,

speakers make use of markers to draw attention to what is being talked about, even though the turn is already in progress. The reason for using attention-getting or attention-maintaining techniques may be a speaker’s feeling that s/he is not being listened to, or the need to emphasize part of an utterance because of its importance for the correct understanding of the message.

I thus claim that *la* indicates that something said by the speaker him/herself “is important” (Mandelbaum) and thus draws the hearer’s attention to the fact that something is being adjusted. As mentioned, this “something” can relate to the propositional content of an utterance, the belief of the speaker and/or the role of the speaker. Let us first turn back to example (1), which is repeated here as example (6), and examine the three occurrences of simplex *la* (in lines 2, 9 and 10). In this example, all the utterances attached by *la* are explicit adjustments.

- (6) 1 L      zhèyàng jiù hǎo děng fàng      wán zài zǒu. @@  
                  this.way just good wait have.holiday finish then go (laughter)
- 2 D      qíshí    bú huì la↓.  
                  actually NEG will PRT
- 3 D      nǐ      yě      búyòng    xiǎng    zhème    duō,  
                  2<sub>SG</sub>    also    no.need    think    so      much
- 4 D      wǒ juéde nǐ zhèyàng de gōngzuò jiù hǎo la↑.  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> think 2<sub>SG</sub> this.way DE work      just good PRT

<sup>7</sup> Gumperz (1982: 4) writes that “understanding presupposes the ability to attract and sustain the other’s attention.”



- 5 L      nǎ    yǒu,  
          which have
- 6 L      hěn   duō   rén    juéde   shuō,  
          very  many  people think say
- 7 L      jiéhūn      yǐhòu gǎnjué gōngzuò gùding bǐjiào hǎo.  
          get.married after feel work fixed more good
- 8 L      [nǐ    bù    juéde ma?  
          2<sub>SG</sub> NEG think PRT
- 9 D    [o    shíjiān bǐjiào gùding la↓.  
          PRT time more fixed PRT
- 10 L    bùzhǐ    la↓,  
          not.only PRT
- 11 L      jiù   shì- gōngzuò bǐjiào wěnding gǎn    bǐjiào hǎo.  
          just be work more stable feeling more good

L1: It's fine this way. I will quit once I have used these days [maternity leave] (laughter).

D2-4: Actually it won't be like that, you don't need to think so much. I think your current job is fine.

L5-8: No way. Many people think it's better to have a fixed job after getting married. Don't you think so?

D9: Oh, the schedule is more fixed.

L10-11: Not just that, it's- having a more stable job makes you feel better.

As mentioned earlier, prior to this example, the freelancer L has told her friend D that compared to those who work in a company, freelancers are not entitled to any benefit such as labor insurance or maternity leave. In line 2, D utters a *la*-attached disagreement *qíshí bú huì la↓* 'actually it won't be like that' to show her contrastive point of view on this claim. In other words, with the deployment of this *la*-attached disagreement, D marks her adjustment of L's claim. Note that in line 4, D's assessment is attached with a high fused *la* (i.e. *le* plus high *a*), which is used to activate



the examples above, the *la* in line 2 of example (1) is a comfort to L's self-pity in the previous conversation and does not necessarily have any negative connotation. In what follows, I will test my hypothesis with more examples.

#### 4.5 UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn

In my Taiwan Mandarin data, simplex *la* occurs in the following types of utterances: (i) storytelling/reporting, (ii) disagreements/partial agreements, (iii) questions, and (iv) requests. Among these different distributional contexts, all the occurrences of *la* function to mark either explicit or implicit adjustment in a conversation. That is, by using *la*, the speaker expresses a direct adjustment or an implied adjustment. Except for examining the Taiwan Mandarin data, I will compare the use of Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* with Taiwan Mandarin *la*, in order to explore the emergence of the Taiwan Mandarin *la* (see discussion in chapter 7).

##### 4.5.1 *la* in storytelling/reporting

###### 4.5.1.1 Taiwan Mandarin *la* in storytelling/reporting

In this use, *la* is usually attached to a piece of information or an assessment, and marks an explicit adjustment ((8) and (9)); or an implicit adjustment ((10) and (11)). In (8), speaker K is telling her addressee a story that happened when water supply was suspended during a typhoon day.

- (8) 1 K           ou. duì nà shíhòu- táifēng hǎoxiàng-  
          PRT right that time    typhoon seem
- 2 K           ei? yǒu- tíng shuǐ yì liǎng tiān shì bú shì?  
          PRT have stop water one two day be NEG be
- 3 K           yǒude dìqū la↓.  
          some area PRT

K1-3: Oh. Yes. At that time, the typhoon seemed...eh... the water supply was suspended for one or two days, right?... For some areas.

In line 2, K attempts to elicit the confirmation of her statement *hǎoxiàng yǒu tíng shuǐ yì liǎng tiān* 'water supply was suspended for one or two days' from the addressee. Directly after the question, she adjusts her own previous statement with *la*-attached information. I believe that the deployment of *la* here is to draw the

addressee's attention to this explicit adjustment, because this *la*-attached utterance provides more precise details concerning her own question.

Sometimes, *la* is attached to a speaker's self-interruption, as shown in (9). The interlocutors C and S are discussing the "Chu Mei-feng (*qúměifèng*) affair." Prior to this conversation, the female speaker C has told S that she believes that this female politician is a complicated woman.

- (9) 1 S      cóng nǐ de nà ge shuōfǎ              dāngzhōng-  
                  from 2<sub>SG</sub> DE that CL way.of.talking in
- 2 S      wǒ juéde la↓,  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> think PRT
- 3 S      shì bú shì nǐ juéde tā yǒu liyòng rén      de qīngxiàng?  
                  be NEG be 2<sub>SG</sub> think 3<sub>SG</sub> have use person DE inclination

S1-3: From what you said- I suppose, you think that she tends to make use of other people?

Note that in line 2, S inserts the *la*-attached phrase *wǒ juéde la↓* 'I think' after interrupting her own talk to indicate that the following question reflects her own point of view. Here, this self-interruption can be seen as a signal of "self-monitoring." As Tang (2010: 105) claims, in a monologue narrative, the speakers tend to "self-monitor their words attentively." Once detecting the error, the inaccurate or incorrect utterance will be "repaired" (in other words, adjusted). Postma (2000: 98) also points out that "[s]elf-repairs imply the existence of specialized control devices or 'monitors' which verify the correctness of ongoing motor activity and response output." I claim that the two *la*-attached utterances in (8) and (9) can be seen as self-clarification; they occur with the speaker's explicit adjustment of his/her own talk resulting from self-monitoring. By making the adjustment prominent, the speaker can increase the chance of successful communication.

Example (10) shows how *la* is used to mark an implicit adjustment. In this conversation, the mother L and the daughter H are talking about the aforementioned "Chu Mei-feng affair." In lines 1–2 and line 4, L reports to H that this female politician has got back to normal life soon after the scandal.

- (10) 1 L yīnwèi tā hěn róngyì-  
because 3<sub>SG</sub> very easy
- 2 L hěn hěn kuài jiù- huīfù tā de nè ge ma.  
very very fast just recover 3<sub>SG</sub> DE that CL PRT
- 3 H hum.  
BC
- 4 L shēnghuó ma.  
life PRT
- 5 L zhè yě shì hěn hǎo la↓,  
this also be very good PRT
- 6 H en.  
BC
- 7 L búguò zhè- kàn zài wǒmen hǎoxiàng kěnéng shì:  
but this see at 1<sub>PL</sub> seem maybe be
- 8 L wǒmen bǐjiào- chuántǒng yìdiǎn ba.  
1<sub>PL</sub> more traditional bit PRT
- 9 H zěnyàng?  
what
- 10 L niánjì dà le kàn qǐlái hǎoxiàng tā- juéde tā hǎoxiàng-  
age big ASP see up seem 3<sub>SG</sub> think 3<sub>SG</sub> seem
- 11 L tài kuài tài shénsù le.  
too fast too rapid ASP
- L1-2: Because she quite easily...quite, quite quickly recovered that...  
H3: Hum...  
L4-5: ...her life. That's also good,

- H6: Hum.  
 L7-8: But, apparently...maybe we are just a bit conservative.  
 H9: What do you mean by that?  
 L10-11: For elder people like us it seems that she...got through this too quickly.

In line 5, L attaches *la* to her first assessment *zhè yě shì hěn hǎo* ‘this is also very good’, which expresses her acceptance and understanding of this female politician’s behavior. However, her following utterances are prefaced by *búguò* ‘but’, which explicitly introduces “a change of information content, frequently modifying previous discourse” (Wang and Tsai 2007: 1784). In other words, the *la*-attached utterance is made when the speaker has the subsequent adjustment (line 5) in her mind. Note that the UFP *la* is not attached to the utterances preceded by *búguò* ‘but’, but the positive assessment *zhè yě shì hěn hǎo* ‘this is also very good’. I argue the use of *la* here is to give the hearer an indication that there will be upcoming utterances which are contrastive to the present *la*-attached utterance (for a comparable argument, see (23)).

Example (11) is another instance of an implicit adjustment—the adjustment of the speaker’s role. Prior to this conversation, F has reported what she had read about the figure skater Michelle Kwan in an English magazine.

- (11) 1 F      ránhòu yòu- yòu bǎ tā de nà ge-  
               then also also BA 3<sub>SG</sub> DE that CL
- 2 F      bǎ liúbīng dāngzuò shì- tā xìngqù de dōngxī.  
                   BA skating as be 3<sub>SG</sub> interest DE thing
- 3 M      humhum.  
                   BC
- 4 F      ránhòu- kōngzhōng yīngyǔ jièshào shì-  
                   then PN introduce be
- 5 F      jiù shì- dàgài- jièshào de hěn jiǎndān la↓.  
                   just be generally introduce DE very simple PRT

6 M humhumhumhum.  
BC

F1-2: And then, also, that...skating, it's like her hobby.

M3: Hum.

F4-5: And then, Studio Classroom says...anyway, they keep it quite simple.

M6: Humhumhumhum.

Here, *la* is attached to the speaker F's own assessment, expressing her attitude towards what she has just said in her own reporting turn. Obviously, this kind of *la*-attached assessment is different from the examples above, because it does not explicitly modify anything in the previous context. Despite this difference, I still argue that *la* in this example marks an implicit adjustment.

I assume following Goodwin and Goodwin's (1987: 21) that "when speaker begins the assessment she is no longer describing events [...], but instead commenting on the description already given." In this vein I argue that making an assessment in a storytelling/reporting turn can be regarded as an adjustment of the speaker's role. That is, the speaker becomes a "commentator" instead of a "describer" while making an assessment in the reporting turn (cf. Shie 1991:83). Moreover, Goodwin and Goodwin (ibid.) also state that "[s]uch a shift from *Description to Assessment of Described Events* in fact constitutes one of the characteristic ways that speakers begin to exit from a story" (original italics). If we accept this, marking an adjustment can be regarded as significant and necessary, since the addressee needs to receive a signal about the "exit from the story."

Thus far I have demonstrated how the simplex *la* is used in a speaker's own storytelling/reporting turn to mark an explicit or implicit adjustment in Taiwan Mandarin. In the following section, I will examine whether *la* can occur in the same contexts in Taiwan Southern Mǐn.

#### 4.5.1.2 Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* in storytelling/reporting

In Taiwan Southern Mǐn, the occurrences of UFP *la* are found in the same contexts as in Taiwan Mandarin. In example (12), K, whose children have succeeded in the entrance exam of a private school in the previous year, informs M about the exam date.

- (12) 1 K    li1    koh4 be1    thak8 koh4 tan1    chit4gneh8-  
           2<sub>SG</sub>    still    want study still    wait    July
- 2 K    chit4gneh8    cap8 kui2    kho2 la.  
           July                    ten    many test    PRT
- 3 K    pueh4gneh8    cap8- pueh4gneh8 chue1    ciah4    u7-  
           August                    ten    August            beginning just    have
- 4 M    heNn.  
           right

K1-3: If you still want to study (in this school), you wait until July-, in mid-July (to take the test). Then on 10th of August- at the beginning of August you will have...

M4: Right.

In line 2, K modifies the information she has provided in line 1 after a self-interruption in order to make her utterance more accurate. This use is comparable to examples (8) and (9), in which *la* is attached to explicit adjustments.

In Taiwan Southern Mǐn, *la* can also be attached to an assessment in the speaker's own turn while telling a story. Prior to the part of conversation in example (13), J has told his friend G that in his company many colleagues above fifty had been dismissed, including one of their mutual friends. In this excerpt, J mentions this friend's current job.

- (13) 1 J    ka1ti7    u7    cit8 e5 <M tǎnwèi M>    hoNn    e7sai2 pai5,  
           self    have one CL            stall            PRT    can    arrange
- 2 J    ia2koh4    bua5 kin2    la,  
           still            NEG matter PRT
- 3 J    chan1chionn7    gun2 <M qīngjiébān M>    cit8kua2-  
           like                    1<sub>PL</sub>    cleaning.department    some



- 4 J    he1    <M tóngrén M>    kun1bun2   loh8-  
       those    colleague    totally    then
- 5 J    loh8-   chut4khi3 loh8 m7   cai1iann2 beh4 chong3 siann2.  
       then   leave    then NEG know    will do    what

J1-5: He has set up a stall. It does not matter in his case. But like some of our colleagues who work as cleaners, they don't know what to do when they have left.

In lines 1–2, J attaches *la* to the assessment *bua5 kin2* ‘it does not matter’ after introducing the current situation of the friend, who has set up a stall after having been dismissed. However, he immediately modifies his assessment in the following utterances, showing his real attitude towards the issue in question. Although the modification is not explicitly prefaced by any contrastive marker, the adjustment can still be observed. This use is thus quite similar to example (10), where I refer to the adjustment as an implicit adjustment.

Prior to conversation (14), the speaker C, who works for a political party, has complained about the management of his party. In line 3, C attaches *la* to the assessment of what he has just said. Similar to example (11), the *la* here is used to mark an adjustment of the speaker's role (i.e. from a describer to a commentator).

- (14) 1 C    i7        kam2kak4 <M hǎoxiàng M>    a    siann2 suan2 tiau5-  
       3<sub>SG</sub>    feeling                    like            PRT who    elect up
- 2 C    hoNn    <M fǎnzhèng M>    suan2 tiau5 tiah4    si7 i7    e3    lang.  
       PRT            any.way            elect up    just    be 3<sub>SG</sub> DE    person
- 3 C    sit8cai7    u7kau3 gong7        e3    la.  
       really    enough stupid        DE    PRT
- 4 C    [li2    suan2ki2 cinn5    hoo7        i7-  
       2<sub>SG</sub>    election    money give            3<sub>SG</sub>
- 5 K    [en.  
       BC

6 C      pang1coo7 i7      suan2ki2-  
           help            3<sub>SG</sub>      election

- C1-4: They feel- like- who won the election. Anyway, if they won, they can do whatever they want. It's really stupid. You give them money-  
 K5:    En.  
 C6:    to help them to enter into an election contest-

The examples shown above support the claim that in the context of storytelling/reporting, Taiwan Southern Min *la* functions in the same way as the Taiwan Mandarin simplex *la*.

#### 4.5.2 *la* in disagreements/partial agreements

In the previous section, we saw how Taiwan Mandarin *la* is used to mark an adjustment in the speaker's own speech. As mentioned earlier, *la* can also occur when a speaker intends to modify the other speaker's talk, as shown in (1). When *la* is used in disagreements, it can be attached directly to explicit adjustments, such as a modified assertion or a modified assessment (see (15) and (16)), or to disagreeing tokens such as *búshì* 'no', *méi yǒu* 'no', *bù yídìng* 'not for sure' (see (17)). It can also be attached to an implicit adjustment, such as a "partial agreement" (see (18)).

##### 4.5.2.1 Taiwan Mandarin *la* in disagreements/partial agreements

As mentioned earlier, the UFP *la* can be attached directly to a modification of the other speaker's utterance. In example (15), H and L are trying to recall the name of a female politician.

- (15) 1 H      shénme Liú Yuèxiá shì bú shì?  
           what    PN                    be NEG be
- 2 L      bú shì ba. [bú shì.  
           NEG be PRT NEG be
- 3 H                    [ba? bú shì.  
                           PRT    NEG be

4 L        bù   zhīdào shénme Xiá wàngjì le.  
              NEG know what    PN forget ASP

(8 lines are omitted here. In these lines, L continues to talk about the background of the female politician discussed.)

13 H        kěshì dàjiā-  
              but everyone

→ 14 L      tā- Yóu Yuèxiá la↓.  
              3<sub>SG</sub> PN            PRT

15 L        nà [shì bú shì Yóu Yuèxiá.  
              that be NEG be PN

16 H                [o. Yóu- Yóu Yuèxiá.  
                       PRT PN    PN

17 L        shì bú shì.  
              be NEG be

18 H        duì    duì    duì    hǎoxiàng shì ba.  
              right right right seem    be PRT

H1:        ...something like Liu Yue-hsia, right?

L2:        No. No.

H3:        No.

L4:        I don't know. It's something with Hsia. I forgot.  
              (8 lines omitted)

H13:      But everybody...

L14-15: She...it's You Yue-hsia! It's You Yue-hsia, right?

H16:      Oh, You Yue-hsia.

L17:      Right?

H18:      Yes, yes, yes, should be correct.

In line 1, H suggests Liu Yue-hsia (Liú Yuèxiá) as the possible name of the politician. This suggestion is rejected by L, although L herself cannot remember the name either. In lines 1–4, both H and L convey their insufficient knowledge by uttering tokens expressing their uncertainty such as *shì bú shì* ‘isn’t it?’, *bù zhīdào* ‘don’t know’ and the particle *ba*.<sup>8</sup> From line 5 to line 12 (omitted), the topic of the discussion shifts to the background of the female politician in question. It is obvious that, while discussing another topic, L is still thinking about the name of the female politician, as H’s utterance on the current topic in line 13 is suddenly interrupted by L by suggesting another name of the female politician. The suggested name You Yue-hsia (line 14) is attached by the UFP *la*, followed by a request of confirmation. Here, the *la*-attached information in line 14 is an explicit adjustment (i.e. a correction of what H suggested in line 1). The use of *la* and the following request show the speaker’s attempt to make the adjusted information prominent and direct the conversation to the adjusted topic.

Except for being attached to a modified piece of information, *la* can also be attached to a modified assessment. In excerpt (16), F and M are talking about Arantxa Sánchez Vicario, one of M’s favorite tennis players.

- (16) 1 F      tā   dào      zuìhòu   hǎoxiàng   yě:=  
         3<sub>SG</sub> arrive   last      seem      also
- 2 F      =bú   shì   dǎ      de   hěn   hǎo   hoNn.  
         NEG   be   play   DE   very   good   PRT
- 3 F      [kěnéng-  
         maybe
- 4 M      [kěshi-   yǐ   tā   de   niánjì   zhè   yàng      dǎ  
         but      as   3<sub>SG</sub>   DE   age   this   way      play
- 5 M      wǒ   juéde   yǐjīng   suàn   shì   búcuò   le   la↓::.  
         1<sub>SG</sub>   think   already   count   be   not   bad   ASP   PRT

<sup>8</sup> B. Li (2006: 64) proposes that *ba* marks a low degree of strength of the assertive or imperative force.

- 6 F humhum.  
BC
- 7 M nàxiē- niánqīng de qiúyuán- dòngzuò dōu xu- nàme de kuài.  
those young DE player action all xu- so DE fast
- F1-3: It seems that she didn't play quite well in the last few rounds, right?  
Maybe...
- M4-5: But, for her age, I think she still did a good job.
- F6: Hum.
- M7: Those young players all move so fast.

After acknowledging F's negative assessment of Sánchez Vicario's performance, M immediately states a different stance towards this assessment. The *la-* marked assessment in lines 4–5 is prefaced with an explicit disagreeing token *kěshì* 'but', which can be seen as an explicit adjustment. He modifies F's assessment by providing "age" as new criterion of the assessment.

Excerpt (17) is an example of *la* used with disagreeing tokens. H and her mother L are discussing the quality of television news in Taiwan.

- (17) 1 H wǒ juéde xiànzài xīnwén dōu hěn xiàng  
1<sub>SG</sub> think now news all very like
- 2 H yúlè jímù ê.  
entertainment program PRT
- 3 L méi yǒu la↓.  
NEG have PRT
- 4 L xīnwén tā shì-  
news 3<sub>SG</sub> be
- 5 H tā xīnwén tōngcháng-  
3<sub>SG</sub> news usually
- 6 L xīnwén zěnme kěnéng qù- chuàntōng hǎo? bàituō!  
news how possible go collude good entrust

- 7 H      ou. bú shì la↓.  
PRT NEG be PRT
- 8 L      nà ge shì-  
that CL be
- 9 H      xīnwén bú shì chuàntōng hǎo dànshì xīnwén-  
news NEG be collude good but news
- 10 H      xiànzài yuèlái yuè xiàng yúlè jiémù.  
now more and more like entertainment program
- H1-2: I think all the news programs nowadays are like entertainment programs.
- L3-4: No, news, it's...
- H5: The news program is usually...
- L6: How could it possible that the news is just a show? Come on!
- H7: Oh, I don't mean that.
- L8: Of course you did.
- H9-10: The news is not collusion but it is more and more like an entertainment program nowadays.

H's assertion that news programs nowadays are like entertainment programs in line 1 is denied by L with a *la*-attached disagreement *méiyǒu la* 'no'. However, L's explanation in lines 3–4 is interrupted by H with a statement uttered at a raised volume in line 5. For taking the floor, L also raises her volume and interrupts H's utterance with a rhetorical question. By using *zěnmé kěnéng* 'how could it be possible' and *bàituō* 'come on', L downgrades the credibility of H's utterance. Being aware that L's assertion is unexpected and incorrect, H first deploys a "new-receipt marker" *ou*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Here, the marker *ou* is uttered in a low pitch. It is thus the unmarked *ou* proposed in R. Wu (2004: 82), which serves to register a news receipt. Wu explains that this type of *ou* is used to "clarify what another has just said or intended in the preceding turn (or turns)," or to "indicate that the prior talk by another contains information previously unknown, unexpected, and hence newsworthy to the *ou* speakers."

and then attaches her disagreement with *la* in line 7. Note that the use of *la* in line 7 implies H's modification of L's claim in line 6.

When the conversation participants do not agree with each other, as in the example above, *la* is often used with the disagreeing tokens *méiyǒu* 'no' and *búshì* 'no', which displays "the speaker's belief or attitudes toward the event," or "to what is being said" (Wang 2008: 679). By marking these disagreeing tokens, the speaker makes his/her own belief prominent. The disagreeing effect is thus reinforced.

In my data, the UFP *la* can co-occur with agreements, ranging from a single agreement token *duì* 'right' to an assertion or an assessment, in "agreement-plus-disagreement" turns. That is, this agreement introduces a following disagreement. According to Pomerantz (1984: 74), this type of turn can be seen as weak disagreement, or, "partial agreements/partial disagreements" (ibid.). The *la*-attached agreements are commonly followed by conjunctions such as *kěshì* 'but', *dànshì* 'but', or *búguò* 'but'. We have seen a case in (10) where *la* is attached to an utterance which is subsequently modified. This case represents an implicit adjustment. Excerpt (18) is another example. The interlocutors W and K are talking about K's parents leisure activities in the evening. In lines 2–4, K has told W that his parents go to bed very soon after coming home. Facing W's question of whether his parents go to bed at ten o'clock, K provides more details in lines 7–9 to support his claim.

- (18) 1 W      nà fùmǔqīn wǎnshàng yǒu shénme xiūxián huódòng a↓?  
                  that parents evening have what leisure activity PRT
- 2 K      yīnwèi wǒ mā tāmen wǎnshàng xiàbān-  
                  because 1<sub>SG</sub> mother 3<sub>PL</sub> evening go.off.work
- 3 K      jiùshì huí jiā jiù shuìjiào a↑.  
                  just return home just sleep PRT
- 4 K      jiùshì- jiùshì nòng yí nòng qíshí hěn wǎn le a↑.  
                  just just do one do actually very late PRT PRT
- 5 W      zuì- zuìduō shídiǎn shuìjiào-  
                  most most ten.o'clock sleep
- 6 W      zuì wǎn shídiǎn shuìjiào- ma?  
                  most late ten.o'clock sleep PRT

- 7 K      kěshì nǐ   xiǎng xiǎng   kàn,  
but   2<sub>SG</sub> think think see
- 8 K      liù   qī diǎn      xiàbān      zhǔ   ge fàn,  
six   seven.o'clock go.work.off cook CL meal
- 9 K      jiālǐ   dǎsǎo yí xià-  
home clean one CL
- 10 W      shì méi cuò   la↓.  
be NEG wrong PRT
- 11 W      kěshì hái shì   yǒu   liǎng ge   xiǎoshí kòngdǎng   ba?  
but still be have two CL hour break PRT

W1: What's the leisure activity of your parents in the evening?

K2-4: Because my mother- they come home from work-as soon as they come home, they go to bed. They just do something and then go to sleep.

W5-6: The most- do they go to bed at ten? Do they go to bed at ten, the latest?

K7-9: Look at it this way, they come home at six or seven, then they cook, clean the house-

W10-11: Fair enough, but they still have about two hours in between, I suppose?

In line 10, W first deploys a *la*-attached agreement *shì méi cuò la* 'that's right'. However, the following question is prefaced by *kěshì* 'but', showing W's doubt about this claim and his belief that K's claim needs to be modified. In other words, W does not fully agree with K's claim. Hence, the *la*-attached agreement can actually be regarded as a "disagreement initiator," and *la* still serves to mark this implicit adjustment.

Thus far we have seen a few examples demonstrating how the UFP *la* is used in disagreements or partial agreements. The proposed core function of *la* (to mark either an explicit or an implicit adjustment) seems to be borne out in these examples.



#### 4.5.2.2 Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* in disagreements/partial agreements

In Taiwan Southern Mǐn, *la* can likewise be attached to a piece of information serving to adjust the other speaker's statement. In example (19), S and P are discussing a corruption scandal involving former president Chen Shui-bian, who claimed fake expenses in order to get reimbursed from the special presidential fund (*kok8bu3 ki7iau3 hui3*).

- (19) 1 S      li1- li1 cit4ma2 king7ce3 hiah4 bai2,  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> 2<sub>SG</sub> now    economy so    bad
- 2 S      li1 na3 kong1 cit4 ciong2 e3 li1 ing2kai7,  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> if    say    this kind    DE 2<sub>SG</sub> should
- 3 S      ka7ti7 sin7sui2 cit8 ko2 gueh8 to3 kui1na3 cap8 ban7      e=  
                  self    salary    one CL    month just several    ten    ten thousand DE
- 4 S      =li1 na2 buai5    iong3 li1 e3 cinn5 khui1,  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> why not want use    2<sub>SG</sub> DE money spend
- 5 S      ce1 na2 it4ting3 ai2 ing3=  
                  this why certainly must use
- 6 S      =kok8bu3    ki7iau3    hui3 lai3 khui1.  
                  country affairs confidential fee    come spend
- 7 S      li1 na3 kong1 cit8 kai2 si- cing2siong5 e hoNn,  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> if    say    this time be normal      DE PRT
- 8 S      [tak8ke7 sing7uah8 cin7 ho1 kue3      king7ce3 cin7 ho1-  
                  everyone life      really good go through economy really good
- 9 P      [ce1 si3- ce1 si3 kok8ka1 hoo7 i7 e3 la.  
                  this be    this be    country    give 3<sub>SG</sub> DE PRT
- 10 P      lan1 bue3 sai1- i7 be1 an1cuann1 khail hoNn,  
                  1<sub>PL</sub> NEG can 3<sub>SG</sub> want how      spend PRT

11 P he1 si3-  
that is

S1-8: The economy is now in such a bad situation. If, this kind of, you should...If you earn hundreds of thousands per month, why can't you spend your own money? Why do you use the special presidential fund? If everything is normal, everybody has a good life, and our economy will boom...

P9-11: He got the money from the country. We can't...the way he spends the money, it's...

In lines 1–8, S says that President Chen should not use the special presidential fund but his own money, as he earns a lot. P interrupts while S is talking and attaches *la* to the piece of information relating to the fact that the fund is given to the President by the country. Here, the *la*-attached utterance can be regarded as an explicit adjustment, which in this case is a direct modification of the claim of S in the previous part of the conversation.

Prior to the conversation in example (20), E and A have been discussing the parliamentary election defeat of the Kuomintang (KMT). E thinks that the KMT has to take the responsibility for the election defeat. In line 1, E complains that the KMT leaders do not criticize themselves. In line 3, A first attaches *la* to the disagreeing token *bue7* 'no', then provides a *la*-attached modification of E's claim. This use is similar to example (17).

(20) 1 E kho2ling5 in1 long1 bo5 leh4 kiam2tho2 a.  
perhaps 3<sub>PL</sub> all NEG ZAI self-criticize PRT

2 E in1 ia2koh4 sionn7 kong1 cit4ma2 si7-  
3<sub>PL</sub> still think say now be

→ 3 A bue7 la,  
NEG PRT

→ 4 A cit4ma2- cit4ma2 in1- in1 u7 la,  
now now 3<sub>PL</sub> 3<sub>PL</sub> have PRT

5 A in1 leh4 kiam2tho2, in1 u7 leh4 kiam2tho2.  
 3<sub>PL</sub> ZAI self-criticize 3<sub>PL</sub> have ZAI self-criticize

E1-2: Perhaps they all haven't criticized themselves. They still thought now it's-

A4-5: No, now- now they- they have. They have criticized themselves, they have.

Similar to example (18), the Taiwan Southern Min UFP *la* can also be attached to agreement tokens (such as *tio7* 'right', *si7* 'yes' or *bo3m3tio8* 'correct', or other agreeing utterances) and initiates an upcoming disagreement towards the prior speaker (i.e. partial agreements). Excerpt (21), taken from the same conversation as (20), demonstrates how the UFP *la* functions in this type of sequence. In this conversation, E and A discuss why the candidate of the KMT was defeated in the parliamentary election. Prior to this excerpt, E has mentioned that one reason may be the bad performance of former President Lee Teng-hui (Li1 Ting7hui1).

(21) 1 A li1 mai2 koh4 kong1 Li1 Ting7hui1,  
 2<sub>SG</sub> NEG again say PN

2 A [Li1 Ting7hui1 ma3 be3 bai2.  
 PN also NEG bad

→ 3 E [m3 si7 la.  
 NEG be PRT

→ 4 E si3 be3 bai2 bo3m3tioh8 la. m7ko1-  
 be NEG bad right PRT but

5 A hen tio7.  
 PRT right

6 A ci2cio1 i7 pi1 lin1 <M Lián Zhàn M> khah4 ho2.  
 at least 3<sub>SG</sub> compare 2<sub>PL</sub> PN more good

- A1-2: Let's not talk about Lee Teng-hui again – he was also not bad.  
 E3-5: No. It's correct that he was not bad, but-  
 A6: Right. At least he was better than that Lien Chan of yours.

In lines 1–2, A asks E not to complain about Lee Teng-hui again because “he was not bad.” E first utters *m3 si7 la* ‘no’ to indicate his different attitude towards A’s assessment is made in line 2.<sup>10</sup> E’s disagreement *m7ko1* ‘but’ in line 4 is prefaced with a *la*-attached agreement *si3 be3bai2 bo3m3tioh8 la* ‘it’s correct that he was not bad’. This partial agreement gives the impression that he has accepted F’s evaluation of Lee Teng-hui. However, the following (interrupted) utterance is introduced by the contrastive token *m7ko1* ‘but’, indicating that he intends to present a different opinion on the issue.

In this section, I have presented the use of *la* in disagreements and partial agreements in both Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn data. The Taiwan Southern Mǐn examples above show that in disagreements and partial agreements, the UFP *la* either marks an explicit or an implicit adjustment. In both Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn, the use of *la*-attached agreement can initiate a subsequent disagreement (i.e. an adjustment). The use of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn are thus the same: they all mark adjustments.

#### 4.5.3 *la* in answers

##### 4.5.3.1 Taiwan Mandarin *la* in answers

In my data, there are several instances of *la* attached to an answer. I maintain that in this type of context, *la* also serves to mark an implicit adjustment. To be more concrete, by attaching *la* to an answer, the speaker implies that the question needs to be modified in a certain respect.

Example (22) is taken from the same conversation as example (3), which is about the aforementioned shopping mall ‘Living Mall’. Here, the *la*-attached answers in lines 3 and 5 are responses to the questions in lines 1 and 4 respectively.

<sup>10</sup> In her study on the negators *búshì* and *méiyǒu* in Taiwan Mandarin, Wang (2008: 685–686) states that *búshì* is a response marker indicating the speaker’s different attitude. It shows the speaker’s disagreement with or rejection of the previous utterance and serves to refute the addressee’s grounds for the previous assertion or assumption, hence leading to an explicit evaluation of the invalidity of the propositional content. According to my observation of Taiwan Southern Mǐn data, the findings can also be applied to the Taiwan Southern Mǐn negative tokens *m3si7* and *bo3*.



Excerpt (23) exemplifies another *la*-attached answer. Through this conversation, we can clearly see how the adjustment is understood by the hearer. In this conversation, W is discussing with her daughter T the way parents educate their children.

(23) 1 W      nǐ bù juéde wǒ xiànzài yǐjīng hěn kāimíng      le ma?  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> NEG think 1<sub>SG</sub> now      already very open-minded PRT PRT

→ 2 T      shì hái kěyǐ la↓.  
                  be still okay PRT

3 W      dànsì kāimíng zhīzhōng,  
                  but open inside

4 W      hái shì huì yǒu nà zhǒng- zěnmē jiǎng-  
                  still be will have that CL how say

5 W      zhè jiù gèxìng      ma duì bú duì? jiù shì shuō-  
                  this just personality PRT right NEG right just be say

6 W      wǒ hái shì bù néng jiēshòu nà zhǒng- jiù shì shuō-  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> still be NEG can accept that CL just be say

7 T      wǎnshàng tài wǎn huí jiā.  
                  evening too late return home

8 W      en duì duì duì.  
                  uh right right right

W1: Don't you think I am already very open-minded now? □

T2: It's okay.

W3-6: But in my openness, there is still that sort of- how to say it- it's my personality, right? I still cannot accept that- that- □

T7: Coming home too late at night.

W8: Uh, right, right, right.

Note that W's question in line 1 contains the proposition "I am an open-minded mother." In line 2, T's *la*-attached answer actually implies that this proposition needs to be modified but she does not provide any following elaboration. In lines 3–6, W explicitly modifies her original claim, which shows that she correctly understands what T implies by her *la*-attached answer in line 2. In line 7, W's modification is supported by T, with providing supplementary information (confirmed by W herself in line 8). In other words, after W understands what T implies by the *la*-attached answer and revises her proposition, the two speakers reach a consensus.

#### 4.5.3.2 Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* in answers

In Taiwan Southern Mǐn, *la* can likewise be attached to answers; it implies that the proposition of the question needs to be modified.

In example (24), F, a mother of two kids, talks about her move to Taipei from Southern Taiwan in order to let her kids study in a better school. In the previous conversation, her friend P has expressed his disagreement with this decision. He claims that moving to Taipei has many disadvantages, such as loss of the mother tongue, having less space for leisure activities, etc.

- (24) 1 P        a    li2 khuann3 an3ne1 <M chùle M> cit8 e7 bun7te5,  
                   PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> see        this.way        except        one CL    problem
- 2 P        li2 e3 gin2a2 lai5 tai5pak4 thak8cu1,  
                   2<sub>SG</sub> DE kid        come Taipei    study
- 3 P        i7 koh4 e7 siu7tio7 siann2mih8 kuann2 e3 <M chōngjí M>?  
                   3<sub>SG</sub> still will receive what        kind    DE        impact
- 4 P        a    i7 i2au7 e3 siann2mih8 kuann2 e3 huan2ing3?  
                   PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> after DE what        kind    DE    reaction
- 5 F        gual e3 kam2kak4 si7 kong1,  
                   1<sub>SG</sub> DE feeling    be say
- 6 F        ce2 tloh8ai2 khuann3 pe7bu2 pun2sin1 an3cuann2 co3huat4 la.  
                   this must    see        parents self        how        do        PRT

- P1-4: In your view, except for this problem, your kids came to study in Taipei, what else will they get? What kind of reaction will they have in the future?
- F5-6: I think it depends on what the parents do.

Note that in line 4, P uses the word *chōngjī* ‘impact’ in his question, showing that he believes that moving to Taipei has a negative impact on the kids. Confronted with P’s question, which expresses his negative attitude towards this topic, the deployment of *la* here signals that F believes the proposition associated with P’s question needs to be adjusted. In other words, she is not willing to provide an affirmative answer to this question. Her attitude towards the question is then conveyed by the use of *la*, which marks an adjustment.

In brief, like in other types of context, Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* used in answers functions in the same way as the Taiwan Mandarin simplex *la*.

#### 4.5.4 *la* in questions

##### 4.5.4.1 Taiwan Mandarin *la* in questions

In the previous sections, it has been mentioned that *la* can be used to mark the adjustment of the speaker’s role (which I call an implicit adjustment). In this section, I argue that when *la* is attached to a question, the question is no longer a question, but a comment, carrying the speaker’s belief and attitude towards the proposition. In other words, the speaker is no longer a questioner, but a “commentator” (cf. Shie 1991:83).

Example (25) is taken from Chui and Lai (2008). Here, F asks H to talk about how she got acquainted with her husband. In line 2, H attaches a *la* to the question *shuō shénme* ‘what to say’.

(25) (my transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1 F   | shuō shuō kàn nǐmen zěnmē rènshì de.   |
|       | say say see 2 <sub>PL</sub> how kow DE |
|       |  |
| → 2 H | shuō shénme la↓?                       |
|       | say what PRT                           |



3 H      bú yào zhèyàngzi.  
NEG want like.this

F1:      Try to say how... how it was that you two first got to know each other?

H2-3:    What (the hell) should I say?! Don't be like this.

It is clear that in line 3 H refuses F's request to talk about her own love story. The *la*-attached question in line 2 does not serve to solicit any information, but functions rhetorically and conveys the speaker's attitude towards F's request.

In excerpt (26), S and B are talking about a stereo system at their university that is always locked so that nobody can use it.

(26) 1 S      jiè    le    jiù kěyǐ yòng le ba?  
borrow ASP just can use ASP PRT

2 B      jiè    le    bù néng yòng,  
borrow ASP NEG can use

3 B      hái shì bù néng yòng.  
still be NEG can use

4 B      zhùjiào shuō jiù shì=  
assistant say just be

5 B      =zui hǎo dōu bú yào pèng dào nà ge dōngxī.  
most good all NEG must touch arrive that CL thing

→ 6 S      wākào! nà dàodǐ shì zuò gěi shéi yòng de la↓?  
shit that the.hell be do give who use DE PRT

S1:      If we borrow it, then we can use it, right?

B2-5:    Even if you borrow it, you still cannot use it. The teaching assistant said we'd better not touch that thing.

S6:      Shit! Who (the hell) is it meant for to use?!

In line 6, upon hearing the information that it is not possible to use the stereo system, S first utters a curse *wākào* ‘shit’, followed by a *la*-attached question. Similar to the previous case, the *la*-attached question here also functions rhetorically and directs the hearer’s attention to what the speaker implies: his dissatisfaction with the situation. In this case, S’s negative assertion implied by the *la*-attached question can be paraphrased as “nobody can use it,” “it’s useless under this situation,” or “it’s ridiculous.”

In brief, the simplex *la* in these cases serves to mark the adjustment of the speaker’s role: s/he is no longer a questioner, but a “commentator” (cf. Shie 1991: 83). The *la*-attached question is no longer a question, but becomes a comment, which conveys the speaker’s attitude towards the situation (thus, the rhetorical question).

#### 4.5.4.2 Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* in questions

Similar to Taiwan Mandarin *la*, *la* can also be attached to Taiwan Southern Mǐn questions. Excerpt (27) is quoted from I. Li (1999: 46–7). In this example, the daughter D is asking her mother M when she will need some money.

(27) (I. Li 1999:46–7, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1 D | li1 tang7si5 be1 iong7?<br>2 <sub>SG</sub> when will use                             |
| 2 M | gua1 tann1 to3 iong7 khi3 a,<br>1 <sub>SG</sub> now just use go ASP                  |
| 3 M | ka3 Ong3 thai2thai3 kiau1 hue7a1 cinn5 e3 si5<br>for PN Mrs. pay co-op money DE time |
| 4 M | ka7 iong7 khi3 a.<br>for use go ASP  |
| 5 D | a li1 tang7si5 be1 ko1 iong7?<br>PRT 2 <sub>SG</sub> when will again use             |
| 6 M | han5?<br>PRT   |

- 7 D      li1 tang7si5 be1 ko1 iong7?  
2<sub>SG</sub> when    will again use
- 8 M      tann1 to3, tann1 to3, Ong3 thai2thai3 to3 kia4 cit8 ban,  
now just now just PN    Mrs.      just put one ten thousand
- 9 M      gua1 to3 ka7 iong7 khi3 a.  
1<sub>SG</sub> just for use go ASP
- 10 D    hen7 la,  
right PRT
- 11 D    a tang7si5 be1 iong7 la?  
PRT when will use PRT
- 12 M      tann1 to3, en: kau2 ji3cap8 la.  
now just uh to twenty PRT
- D1:      When will you need to use it?  
M2-4:    I've already used the money; when I paid the co-op fund for Mrs.  
Ong, I already used it.  
D5:      And when will you need more money?  
M6:      What?  
D7:      When will you need to spend money?  
M8-9:    Now- now- when Mrs. Ong asked me to pay the ten thousand, I  
already used it.  
D10-11: Yes. But when (the hell) will you need to use it?  
M12:     Now, mm...on the twentieth.

As can be seen, M fails to answer D's questions (in lines 1, 5, and 7) three times. It is interesting to note that, although D poses her question four times, she attaches *la* to the last question only. Conversely, the use of *la* creates a shift in the conversation which makes it unnecessary to repeat the same question again. Note that this *la*-attached question is initiated by a *la*-attached agreement, which indicates that the following utterance is an adjustment (such as a disagreement, a modification, etc., see discussion of (21)). In other words, this *la*-attached question here is not merely a

question, but also a noticeable adjustment: the *la*-attached question is no longer used to request the answer, but a comment. The deployment of *la* displays D's dissatisfaction with the hearer's continuous lack of attention to the question, as if saying "when (the hell) will you need to use the money?". In this case, the *la*-attached question can be interpreted as a complaint. Although rhetorical questions are commonly understood as "questions that expect no answer" (Frank 1990: 723), the listener can always provide an answer to a rhetorical question, as in line 12. It is thus complicated to decide whether D's question in line 11 is a rhetorical question because an answer is supplied in line 12. Here, I follow Frank (ibid.: 733), who suggests that the hearer's response to a rhetorical question can be viewed as an "agreement to the propositions implied in the questions" (ibid.), and argue that it is still possible that the question functions rhetorically.

#### 4.5.5 *la* in requests

##### 4.5.5.1 Taiwan Mandarin *la* in requests

The last type of utterance to which *la* can be attached is request. Excerpt (28) is a multi-party conversation. M and F are describing one of their mutual friends H to C, who does not know her.

- (28) 1 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yíxià tā de dǎbàn. tā de jǔzhǐ xíngwéi.  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> first say a.while 3<sub>SG</sub> DE dress up 3<sub>SG</sub> DE behavior behavior
- 2 F      e:: tā jiù shì nà zhǒng en:  
                          uh 3<sub>SG</sub> just be that kind uh
- 3 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yíxià wàimào la↓.  
                          2<sub>SG</sub> first say while appearance PRT
- 4 F      ou. hěn shànyú sànfā mèili de nǚshēng la↓.  
                          PRT very good.in distribute charm DE woman PRT

M1: Let's first talk about how she dresses up, and her behavior.

F2: Uh...she is that kind of...uh...

M3: First about her appearance.

F4: Oh. She is the kind of woman who is good in displaying her charms.

In this excerpt, M launches two requests directed at F. In line 1, M makes her request to F by asking F to introduce H's appearance and behavior. Acknowledging F's hesitation, expressed by prolonged fillers such as *e* and *en*, M launches the second imperative sentence, which is *la*-attached. Here, the request to which *la* is attached is not used to modify any previous claim. However, by uttering this request, the speaker shows her attempt to adjust the addressee's move. This, I argue, can be seen as an implicit adjustment marked by the UFP *la*. As we can see in line 4, F accepts this request and does what M has proposed.

A similar use of *la* occurs in excerpt (29), which is taken from a telephone conversation between Y, a director of travel agency in Taiwan and his niece H, who works in Europe and goes back to Taiwan once a year. Prior to this excerpt, Y has told H about an apartment he plans to buy. H disapproves of this plan because she believes Y has made such a decision without thorough consideration. H then tries to persuade Y not to make such a decision so quickly.

(29) → 1 Y    nà nǐ yuè dǐ huí lái kàn la↓.  
                   that 2<sub>SG</sub> month bottom return com see PRT

2 H    shénme? haNn?  
           what       PRT

3 Y    nà nǐ zìjǐ zuò fēijī huí lái,  
           that 2<sub>SG</sub> self sit flight return come

→ 4 Y    kàn yī kàn zài huí qù la↓.  
           see one see again return go PRT

5 H    shénjīng. @@@  
           nerve (laughter)

6 Y    wǒ gěi nǐ chū qián a↑.  
           1<sub>SG</sub> give 2<sub>SG</sub> pay money PRT

Y1: You come back at the end of this month and take a look.

H2: What?

Y3: You get on the plane, take a look, and then you go back.

- H4: Are you nuts (laughters)?  
 Y5: I will give you the money!

As both Y and H know that H only goes back to Taiwan once a year, Y's request in line 1, which implies that H can go back to Taiwan at the end of the month, is apparently against this common assumption. However, the deployment of *la*, marking an adjustment, signals Y's belief that this general assumption (which is also H's assumption) can be adjusted. This request was subsequently questioned by H with a confirmation requester *haNn*, which expresses doubt concerning Y's proposal. In line 3, Y rephrases his request and deploys the UFP *la* at the end of his utterance again. This manifests Y's insistence on the plausibility of this request. H's second rejection, including the word *shénjīng* 'nerve', short for *shénjīngbìng* literally 'nerve disease' (equaling English 'are you nuts?') and the manner of its delivery, reveal her strong doubts about the credibility of Y's proposal. This triggers Y's explicit production of the following elaboration, which can be paraphrased as "you can come back since I will provide the financial means." This utterance provides evidence of Y's belief towards the previous *la*-attached requests, that he believes as long as he pays for the flight tickets, H can just come back to see the apartment.

The deployment of *la* in this type of context again marks an adjustment. In (28), *la* marks the speaker's adjustment of the addressee's move, whereas in (29), *la* marks the speaker's adjustment of the addressee's assumption. As the request to which *la* is attached is not an explicit modification of a previous claim, but an act implying that the addressee has to make a certain adjustment, they are implicit adjustments. According to my observation, when *la* is attached to a request, it usually occurs when the addressee does not comply with the speaker's previous request (as in (28)), or when the addressee has an opposite attitude (as in (29)). I believe that this is the reason why *la* is used in such situations, because by making the request prominent, the speaker can strengthen this request.

#### 4.5.5.2 Taiwan Southern Mǐn *la* in requests

Excerpt (30) is an example of *la*-attached requests in Taiwan Southern Mǐn. Prior to this part of the conversation, S, who runs her own part-time cosmetic business, has talked about her plan to sell hydrant cream to her colleague C. C has refused S's previous offers since she is allergic to many cosmetic products. S then starts to criticize C for using too much make-up and not knowing how to take good care of her skin. In this conversation, S explains to C how to take care of her skin.

- (30) 1 S <M ránhòu nǐ hái yào mǒ nà ge- M>  
 then 2<sub>SG</sub> still must apply that CL
- 2 S <M ràng tā yǒu bǎoyǎng de M>.  
 let 3<sub>SG</sub> have take.care DE
- 3 S ki5sit8 li2 e7sai2 chi3 kuann3mai7 la.  
 actually 2<sub>SG</sub> can try see PRT
- 4 S ing3gai1 si7 <M hái hǎo M> la.  
 shoule be fairly good PRT

S1-4: Then you have to apply that-, let it protect your... Actually you can give it a try. It should be okay.

S's *la*-attached request in line 3 signals the intention to adjust C's refusal to her previous request in the previous conversation. Her criticism of C's way of using cosmetics and the utterances in lines 1–2 reveal her belief that she knows more about cosmetics. It is interesting to see that right after the *la*-attached request, S deploys an assessment, which is also attached by *la*, conveying her attempt to mark the adjustment of C's statement in the previous conversation.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter distinguishes a fused *la* from a simplex *la*. The former exists in both mainland Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin, whereas the latter exists in Taiwan Mandarin only.

I have proposed a core function of the UFP *la*, which is to mark an explicit or implicit adjustment. An explicit adjustment, as I state, is a direct modification or correction of a previous claim or assessment. An implicit adjustment, on the other hand, is formed or implied by the attachment of *la*.

On the basis of my data, I conclude that the distributional contexts and functions of the UFP *la* in both Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn are identical. I concur with P. Wu's (2005) claim that the use of simplex UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin originates from Taiwan Southern Mǐn. The details of language contact will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 5 The UFP *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin

### 5.1 UFP *ê* [ɛ] and its variant *ye* [jɛ]

Similar to *a*, the onsetless particle *ê* can likewise link with the ending of the preceding word and generate different liaison consonants. For instance, when it occurs after a word ending with [n], a liaison consonant [n] may be produced, so the sentence *tā shì rìběnrén ê* [t<sup>h</sup>a ʃì zì pən zən ɛ] ‘he is Japanese’ is pronounced as [t<sup>h</sup>a ʃì zì pən zən nɛ]. Aside from words ending with consonants, high front unrounded vowels [i] and [y] can generate a liaison consonant [j] with *ê*: the sentence *hěn piányí ê* [xən p<sup>h</sup>iɛn ji ɛ] ‘(it is) very cheap’ is pronounced as [xən p<sup>h</sup>iɛn ji jɛ].

However, similar to the discussion in 3.1, the liaison rule can only explain part of the occurrences of *ye* [jɛ] in my data. Except for [i] and [j], some occurrences of *ye* are preceded by vowels such as [ɤ] and [ɛ], which is hard to account for with the liaison rule (as shown in examples (1a–c)):

- (1) a. Unrounded back vowel [ɤ]:

bù xiǎodé ye!  
NEG know PRT  
‘I don’t know!’

- b. Unrounded high central vowel [i]:

wǒ yě shì ye!  
1<sub>SG</sub> also be PRT  
‘Me too!’

- c. Unrounded low-mid front vowel [ɛ]:

tā shì nǐmen de nà ge xuéjiě ye!  
3<sub>SG</sub> be 2<sub>PL</sub> DE that CL senior.schoolmate PRT  
‘She is an alumna of your department!’

According to my Taiwan Mandarin informants, all the instances of *ye* in examples (1a–c) can be replaced by *ê* without sounding unnatural or even unacceptable. In fact,



examples (2a) and (2b) are found in my data, showing that when *ê* occurs after [ɣ] or [i], it can but does not necessarily have to turn into *ye*.<sup>1</sup>

(2) a. Unrounded back vowel [ɣ]:

bù xiǎodé ê!  
 NEG know PRT  
 ‘I don’t know!’

b. Unrounded high central vowel [i]:

wǒ bú huì xiǎng zài kàn dì'èr cì ê!  
 1<sub>SG</sub> NEG will want again see second CL PRT  
 ‘I don’t want to see it a second time!’

Given the fact that *ê* and *ye* are largely interchangeable and seem to share the same function, it may be reasonable to assume that they are “free variations of the same word,” as Shie (1991: 16) proposes. However, when comparing the examples (1a–b) and (2a–b), some of my Taiwan Mandarin informants feel that the attachment of *ye* sounds more emphatic than the *ê*-attached utterances. For instance, they indicate that (1a) sounds “stronger” than (2a) (*ye* can even be prolonged to strengthen the emphatic effect). If this is the case, I thus hypothesize that the epenthesis of [j] in (1a) and (1b) (which cannot be explained by the liaison rule) may carry an extra pragmatic function, and is not simply a “free variant” of *ê*.

In order to examine my hypothesis, I asked my Taiwan Mandarin informants to compare the following examples involving two other Mandarin onsetless particles *a* [a] and *o* [ɔ] and their counterparts *ya* [ja] and *yo* [jɔ]. Significantly, this emphatic connotation was confirmed with regard to the two *y*[j]-initial forms ((3b) and (3d) vs. (3a) and (3c)).

<sup>1</sup> In my data, there is one instance of *ye* occurring after a low-mid front unrounded vowel [ɛ], but no UFP *ê* in the same position. The non-occurrence of *ê* in this position can be explained in analogy to Lü’s (1992) observation with regard to Mandarin UFP *a*. According to Lü (ibid.: 263), a medial *i* (i.e. [j]) is inserted when the particle *a* occurs after a word ending with [a], in order to “break from the preceding word.” Likewise, [j] may also be inserted to break the UFP *ê* [ɛ] and a preceding word ending with [ɛ], as in *zhè shì wǒ de xié ye* [tʂɛ ʂi ʋɔ tə ɛjɛ jɛ] ‘This is my shoe’.

- (3) a. hěn kù a.  
 very cool PRT  
 ‘It’s very cool.’
- b. hěn kù ya.  
 very cool PRT  
 ‘It’s very cool.’
- c. hěn kù o.  
 very cool PRT  
 ‘It’s very cool.’
- d. hěn kù yo.  
 very cool PRT  
 ‘It’s very cool.’

Following Chen’s (2007: 331) general claim that an “[e]mphatic tone of a speaker is associated with pitch range and longer durations, rather than amplitude,” I believe that the use of *y[j]*-initial forms (i.e. *ya*, *yo* and *ye*) involving syllable lengthening has an “emphatic” connotation. As mentioned in chapter 3, Wang and Liu (2010: 4) claim that the use of any variant of *a* is “a matter of preference rather than a rule.” My proposal may provide an explanation for this “preference”: when a speaker intends to make an emphasis, s/he tends choose to use the *y[j]*-initial forms instead of the onsetless forms, regardless of the ending of the preceding word.

In addition to this extra pragmatic function, according to my informants, *ye* appears to be used more often by female speakers and children. This is similar to Wei’s (1984: 70) observation that *ye* is rarely used by male speakers. Wei suggests that the UFP *ye* is linked with a style of *sājiāo*, which is defined by Yueh (2012: 1) as “persuasive talk that generally means *to talk or behave like a child for persuasive purposes*” (original emphasis). Shie (1991) likewise claims that *ye* “possesses strong feminine connotations” (ibid.: 16), and that male speakers are almost always inclined to use *ê*. This is in line with the attestations of *ê* and *ye* in my data: In the total 150 occurrences of *ê* and *ye*, there are only seven occurrences of *ye*. Among these seven occurrences of *ye*, five are used by female speakers. Since this small figure is quantitatively insignificant, I also checked another public Taiwan Mandarin corpus: the NCCU corpus of spoken Chinese (Chui and Lai 2008). I found that 55 out of 227

utterance-final *ye* are employed by male speakers and the remaining 172 by female speakers. Since *ye* appears to carry some extra connotations and is used by different speakers according to sex or age, I conclude that *ye* and *ê* are not in free variation. In other words, the use of *ye* in Taiwan Mandarin cannot be explained in purely phonetic terms (i.e. liaison rule) and is indeed “a matter of preference” of the speaker (cf. Wang and Liu 2010: 4).<sup>2</sup>

After a review of Shie’s (1991) study on Taiwan Mandarin *ê* in section 5.2, I will propose a new hypothesis concerning the core function of *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin in section 5.3. My hypothesis will be tested in 5.4, followed by a conclusion in 5.5.

### 5.2 Previous study: Shie (1991)

Shie (1991) appears to be the only study providing an analysis of the UFP *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin. As mentioned above, he argues that *ye* and *ê* are free variations of the same word. He uses one written graph 呷 [jɛ] to represent both *ê* and *ye* in his examples. Shie’s original examples are presented in Chinese characters, I use the form *ye* in my transcription of these original examples. The examples in this section are all selected from Shie (1991).<sup>3</sup>

Shie (ibid.: 155) claims that the basic function of *ye* is “marking a piece of information as new and impressive and usually highly relevant to the present situation”; it can be used to “correct other’s false belief by calling their [i.e. the other conversants’] attention to the existence of some conspicuous information which sheds new light into the argumentation” (ibid.). In addition, *ye* can be tagged to negative or vague answers, to show the speaker’s “willingness to comply with the question despite their [i.e. the speaker’s] inability to do so” (ibid.).

In example (4), speaker D uses the *ye*-attached utterance in lines 3-4 to show her surprise since she suddenly realizes that the national flags of Taiwan and mainland China are different, a fact she had not been aware of before.

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<sup>2</sup> The extra pragmatic connotation does not have any significant influence on my analysis; I will use both *ê* and *ye* in the following discussion according to the recorded pronunciation.

<sup>3</sup> In Shie’s data, most of the occurrences of *ye* are followed by an exclamation mark. As I have no access to Shie’s original recordings, I do not add an upward arrow (↑) and a downward arrow (↓) to indicate the high- and low- pitch.

## (4) (Shie 1991: 156, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 D        jiù shì yǒude shíhòu zǒu zài jiē shàng,  
just be some time walk at street on
- 2 D        zǒu zhe zǒu zhe hūrán tái tóu yī kàn,  
walk ASP walk ASP suddenly rise head one look
- 3 D        ei? nǐmen de guóqí zài nǎlǐ=  
PRT 2<sub>PL</sub> DE national.flag at there
- 4 D        =gēn wǒmen bù yíyàng ye!  
with 1<sub>PL</sub> NEG same PRT
- 5 D        wǒ cái juéde, e:  
1<sub>SG</sub> just think uh
- 6 D        wǒ bú shì zài táiwān, wǒ shì zài dàlù.  
1<sub>SG</sub> NEG be at Taiwan 1<sub>SG</sub> be at mainland

D1-6: It's...sometimes I walked on the street, and I look up- "oh, your national flag is different from ours!" And then I realize...uh...I am not in Taiwan, but in mainland China.

Shie argues that in the case above, the new information introduced by *ye* "happens to the speaker unexpectedly and has no obvious connections to its context" (ibid.: 157). In some cases, as Shie further argues, the *ye*-attached utterances can serve to show the "newness of the information" (ibid.: 158).

## (5) (Shie 1991: 158, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 D        shénme jīpísuànmáo de shì dōu yào nǐ tóngyì a?  
what trivial DE matter all must 2<sub>SG</sub> agree PRT
- 2 D        wǒ shì dǎoyǎn ye!  
1<sub>SG</sub> be stage.director PRT

D1-2: Any trivial matter has to be approved by you? It's me who is the stage director!

Here, speaker D is challenging the boss of his film company. Although the information attached by *ye* in (5) is actually nothing new either to the speaker or the hearer, Shie argues that the purpose of using *ye* is to “direct hearer’s attention to the newly-introduced information, and invite the hearer to reconsider some old information.”

Shie (1991: 159) claims that when *ye* is used in a long speech, it is often used to “mark a prominent conclusion or commentation, which is usually in strong contrast to what has been said previously,” as in (6). In line 4, the utterance attached by *ye* is the speaker’s own comment to what she has just said.

(6) (Shie 1991: 159, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1 C   | suǒyǐ wǒ bìng bù jízhè-<br>so 1 <sub>SG</sub> rather NEG hurry   |
| 2 C   | jiù shì shuō xiànzài liúxíng shénme dōngxi,<br>just be say now popular what thing  |
| 3 C   | gǎnkuài gēnzhe cháoliú.<br>hurry follow trend  |
| → 4 C | wǒ juéde yǒude shíhòu xiāngfǎn cháoliú hěn nán jiǎng ye!<br>1 <sub>SG</sub> think some time contrary trend very hard say PRT |
| 5 C   | nǐ zìjǐ hěn yǒu xìnxīn-<br>2 <sub>SG</sub> self very have confidence   |
| 6 C   | hěn yǒu yī ge- hěn yǒu chuàngyì de xiǎngfǎ dehuà,<br>very have one CL very have originality DE idea if                       |
| 7 C   | zhè shuōbùdìng yě shì cháoliú.<br>this maybe also be trend   |

D1-7: So I am not in a rush to...it is, when something is popular now, I go with the tide. In my opinion, sometimes, on the contrary, the trend is hard to define! When you are very confident...you have a very original idea, this idea is perhaps also a trend.

In some cases, *ye*-attached utterances are used to correct the misconception of the previous speaker by introducing some information the speaker believes to be “new or neglected” by the previous speaker (Shie 1991: 160). In (7), J and W are in a restaurant. J, the stingy husband, wants to order a cheap Chinese dish upon the inquiry of the waiter (S). W, the indignant wife, uses a *ye*-attached utterance to remind J that they are now in a western-style restaurant.

(7) (Shie 1991: 160, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |  |                                    |  |
|-------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 S   | xiānsheng nǐ yào diǎn shénme?            |                                    |  |
|       | mister                                   | 2 <sub>SG</sub> want a.little what |  |
|       |  |                                    |  |
| 2 J   | xiārén dàn chǎofàn.                      |                                    |  |
|       | shrimp egg fried.rice                    |                                    |  |
|       |  |                                    |  |
| → 3 W | zhèlǐ shì xīcāntīng                      | ye!                                |  |
|       | here be western-style.restaurant         | PRT                                |  |
|       |  |                                    |  |
| S1:   | What do you want to order, sir?          |                                    |  |
| J2:   | Fried-rice with shrimps and eggs.        |                                    |  |
| W:    | This is a western-style restaurant here! |                                    |  |

In line 3, according to Shie, W uses a *ye*-attached utterance to call J’s attention to the neglected fact that it is not proper to order a cheap dish in such a high-end restaurant. Shie (1991: 164) also argues that when *ye* is used with an answer tagged to a question, it shows “the speaker’s willingness to comply with the request of providing an answer even if he is not able to provide a satisfactory one.” In this case, the *ye*-attached utterances do not contain any substantial new information, as in examples (8) and (9). In example (8), the speaker W responds to H’s question with a positive *ye*-attached answer *huì* ‘will’.

(8) (Shie 1991: 165, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 H      nà nǐ    dài jiǔ le    yǎnjīng huì bú huì hóng ne?  
           that 2<sub>SG</sub> wear long PRT eye    will NEG will red PRT
- 2 W    huì ye!  
           will PRT
- 3 W      shēntǐ bǐjiào lèi    de    shíhòu a,  
           body more tired DE time PRT
- 4 W      yǎnjīng bǐjiào róngyì chōngxiě.  
           eye more easy congested

H1:      When you wear [contact lenses] long, will your eyes become red?  
 W2-4:    Yes! When I am tired, I get red-eyed easily.

Shie (1991: 165) suggests that the deployment of *ye* here shows “W’s realization that H’s inquiry provides some new perspective to the conversation.” In other words, it shows “the speaker’s willingness in catering to the other interlocutor’s mood and in complying with the conversational need.” Shie claims that this function of *ye* is more evident when it is attached to a negative answer, where *ye* seems to “balance the speaker between his willingness to cooperate and his problem in supplying a positive answer” (ibid.: 166), as example (9) shows.

(9) (Shie 1991: 166, my transcription, glosses and translation)

- 1 H      bǎobāo qǐlái le    méi?  
           baby get up ASP NEG
- 2 W    bù zhīdào ye!... nǐ jiào tā qǐlái a!  
           NEG know PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> call 3<sub>SG</sub> get up PRT

H1:      Did our baby get up?  
 W2:      Don’t know...you go and wake him up!

Here, speaker *W* is unable to supply a satisfactory answer to the first speaker's question, and she provides an unsatisfactory answer with *ye*. Shie (1991: 167) argues that the elaboration following *ye* in line 2 supports his claim since the new information is relevant, showing the speaker's "effort to make his response sound less curt and more cooperative." That is why when *ye* is attached to a disagreeing utterance, it can also serve to "mitigate the force of the objection on a participation level" (ibid.).

On the basis of the examples provided above, Shie (1991: 169) concludes that *ye* is a marker "accompanying the discovery of some new information." It can also be used to "correct the interlocutor's misconception by offering some neglected truth treated as new information." It can furthermore "fill the conversational needs by showing the speaker's willingness to cooperate."

Although Shie (1991) provides ample examples of the use of *ye* (i.e. *ê*) in Taiwan Mandarin, most of the examples do not include the interlocutor's responses in the turns following *ye*-attached occurrences. The responses, however, would arguably contribute to a better understanding of the pragmatics of the UFP *ê* in different interactional environments. Moreover, it is problematic to determine the conversational devices and strategies (for example, whether a pause occurs after the *ye*-attached utterances) the speakers use in Shie's description because Shie does not provide this information in his transcription.

Nevertheless, if we examine the examples (4)–(9) provided by Shie (1991), a general conclusion can be drawn: it appears that the use of UFP *ye* is triggered by something in the context that deviates from a previous assumption. In example (4), *ye* occurs with an utterance indicating the speaker's realization that the national flags of Taiwan and China are different, which is different from the speaker's assumption. In the case of examples (5) and (6), due to the lack of previous context it is difficult to confirm this claim. There are two explanations for the occurrence of the *ye*-attached utterance: first, it may be directed to another speaker, who assumes that "everything should be approved by me." Second, it may be used to indicate the situation is counter the speaker's own assumption (i.e. as he is the stage director, he is supposed to have the rights to decide everything without another's approval). In both cases, the *ye*-attached utterance is uttered against a previous assumption. In example (6), *D*'s utterances can also be regarded as a counterview to a previous assumption in lines 1–3 (which is, to go with the tide when something is popular).

In example (7), *ye* occurs with an utterance directed against *J*'s assumption that it is possible to order fried-rice with shrimps and eggs in any restaurant. In example (8), the *ye*-attached answer can be analyzed as indicating that *H*'s question



is counter W's expectation concerning the upcoming utterance: he did not expect this question. Finally, in example (9), W's *ye*-attached answer is an indication that the answer is counter H's assumption (which is, H may expect that W can provide a satisfactory answer, however, W is unable to do so).

Against the backdrop of this analysis, I will make a new proposal regarding the core function of  $\hat{e}$  in the following section. My analysis aims to provide another perspective on the use of  $\hat{e}$ , based on complete conversational sequences, including the interlocutor's responses.

### 5.3 Core function: inviting a collaborative move by foregrounding

Based on Shie's (1991) data, I argue that the use of UFP  $\hat{e}$  may be triggered by a situation in which something deviates from a previous assumption. The occurrences of  $\hat{e}$  in my own data also confirm this preliminary observation. However, some occurrences of  $\hat{e}$  are attached to a piece of new information or assessment, which is not related to a "counter-assumption." I notice that almost every occurrence of  $\hat{e}$  in my data is followed by a response, or, at least, some "evidence of understanding" (Clark and Schaefer 1989: 267) including the following types (here, B is the recipient, and A is the speaker, original italics) (ibid.):

- (i) *Continued attention*. B shows he is continuing to attend and therefore remains satisfied with A's presentation.
- (ii) *Initiation of the relevant next contribution*. B starts in on the next contribution that would be relevant at a level as high as the current one.
- (iii) *Acknowledgement*. B nods or says "uh huh," "yeah," or the like.
- (iv) *Demonstration*. B demonstrates all or part of what he has understood A to mean.
- (v) *Display*. B displays verbatim all or part of A's presentation.

Against this backdrop I argue that the function of  $\hat{e}$  is to invite the hearer to make a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which  $\hat{e}$  is attached. That is, with the deployment of  $\hat{e}$ , the speaker explicitly informs the interlocutor that the  $\hat{e}$ -attached utterance needs to be registered and that s/he expects the interlocutor to respond (i.e. take the turn) or at least provides some evidence of understanding, in order to accomplish a successful interaction. In some cases, the deployment of  $\hat{e}$  also conveys the speaker's own collaborative attitude.

In chapter 4, I argued that the core function of simplex *la* is to elicit the hearer's attention and ensure the hearer has received and understood the adjustment.

This leads to the question of how to distinguish between “inviting a collaborative move” (i.e. providing some evidence of understanding) and “eliciting the hearer’s attention.” Or, to be concrete, what is the difference between the core functions of *la* and  $\hat{e}$ ?

The simplex *la*, as mentioned in chapter 4, is related to the speaker’s belief. The *la*-attached utterance usually serves to make the adjustment prominent and does not aim at an active response from the hearer (although the hearer may give one). Contrastively, the “invitation” implied by  $\hat{e}$ -attached utterances involves space for the hearer to respond. In other words, compared to  $\hat{e}$ , the simplex *la* is “by nature self-centered” (cf. Shie 1991: 84).

Let us turn to example (4). According to my informants, it is not acceptable to replace  $\hat{e}$  with the simplex *la* in this case. Note that the  $\hat{e}$ -attached utterance is prefaced by *ei*, an utterance-initial particle which “projects the upcoming talk to involve in some kind of shift and to be something unanticipatory” (Tsai 2008: 1025). As simplex *la* occurs with utterances conveying the speaker’s belief, it is reasonable that the deployment of the simplex *la* does not fit this situation.

In example (7), if the UFP  $\hat{e}$  is replaced with simplex *la*, the resulting *la*-attached utterance *zhèlǐ shì xīcāntīng la* ‘this is a western-style restaurant here’ leads to a different interpretation: it is an indication that W believes that J’s previous claim in line 2 needs to be adjusted. Compared to the  $\hat{e}$ -attached utterance, which shows W’s intention to create space for J to adjust his claim, the *la*-attached utterance sounds more assertive, like a correction.

In chapter 6, I will discuss the distinction of the three UFPs in detail. In the remainder of the current chapter, I will test my proposal for  $\hat{e}$  with more examples from my Taiwan Mandarin data.

#### 5.4 UFP $\hat{e}$ in Taiwan Mandarin

As mentioned previously, the UFP  $\hat{e}$  is usually attached to a piece of information or to the speaker’s assessment. In some cases, it can also be attached to phrases such as *bù xiǎodé/bù zhīdào* ‘I don’t know’, or *wàngjì le* ‘I forgot’ and the likes, which indicate the speaker’s insufficient knowledge. It occurs in four types of contexts: (i) storytelling/reporting; (ii) topic-introduction/topic-shift; (iii) qualified disagreements/upgraded agreements, and (iv) answers.

### 5.4.1 *ê* in storytelling/reporting

When the UFP *ê* occurs in a story-telling/reporting turn, it serves to foreground a piece of information, or the speaker's assessment in the speaker's own talk and to invite the current hearer to respond to the foregrounded information or assessment. Examples (10)–(13) demonstrate this use. In these four examples, *ê* is attached to a piece of information or an assessment; its use is triggered by something which deviates from the speaker's assumption.

In example (10), G tells his younger sister J that he was very shocked when he heard about the September 11 attacks. G attaches *hoNn* in lines 1, 3 and 5. In her study on UFPs in Southern Mǐn, I. Li (1999: 79) suggests that when UFP *hoNn* is used in reporting turns, it serves to “involve the addressee in his reporting, in order to make sure that what he says will be properly received, and that he has the audience's attention, among other things.” This analysis of *hoNn* in Southern Mǐn can be applied here. J's deployment of two backchannels *mhm* and *en* in line 2 and 4 can be regarded as signals of her reception.

- (10) 1 G e: fāshēng nà ge ei: kējī bèi jiéchí hoNn,  
uh happen that CL uh aircraft BEI hijack PRT
- 2 J mhm.  
BC
- 3 G ránhòu nà ge zhuàng- zhuàngjī de shìjiàn hoNn,  
then that CL hit air.crash DE event PRT
- 4 J en.  
BC
- 5 G en: jiù shì shūo, gāng kāishǐ de shíhòu hoNn,  
uh just be say just start DE time PRT
- 6 G hǎoxiàng túrán tīng dào zhè zhǒng xiāoxí-  
seem suddenly hear arrive this kind news
- 7 G zhēnde shì bù néng xiāngxìn ê.  
really be NEG can believe PRT

8 J     a   nǐ   shì   yòng   tīng   de   o?  
        PRT 2<sub>SG</sub>   be   use   hear   DE   PRT

G1:     The aircraft was hijacked,

J2:     Mhm.

G3:     ...and then that air crash...

J4:     Uh-huh.

G5-7:   ...that is, when all of a sudden I heard this kind of news I just  
           couldn't believe it...

J8:     Oh, so you heard it?

J's two backchannels *mhm* and *en* in lines 2 and 4 not only show her attention to G's reporting, but also indicate that she has no intention of disrupting G's speakership. Significantly, J does not take the floor until G attaches *ê* to his utterance in line 7.

In example (11), speaker F reports to her friend C what she has learned from a book she read several days ago. Prior to this excerpt, F has told C that according to the book she read, entrepreneurs seem to have more time than ordinary people because they always make the whole company work for them. F takes the famous Taiwanese entrepreneur Wang Yung-ching (Wáng Yǒngqìng) as an example to support her argument.

(11) 1 F         nǐ   xiǎng   xiǎng   kàn   o,  
                   2<sub>SG</sub>   think   think   see   PRT

2 F         Wáng Yǒngqìng   tā   yǒu   sì   wàn             de   yuángōng   o,  
                   PN                            3<sub>SG</sub>   have   four   ten.thousand   DE   employee   PRT

3 C         mhm.  
                   BC

→ 4 F         nà   tā   de   shíjiān   jiù   shì   wǒmen   de   jǐ             bèizi   le   ê.  
                   that 3<sub>SG</sub>   DE   time   just   be   1<sub>PL</sub>             DE   several   life   ASP   PRT

5 C         mhmhmhm.  
                   BC

- 6 F      suǒyǐ wèishénme rénjiā zhuàn de qián    bǐ    wǒmen hái duō.  
           so    why            3<sub>SG</sub>   earn   DE money than 1<sub>PL</sub>    still more
- 7 C      mhmhmm.  
           BC
- 8 F      duì    bú    duì?  
           right NEG    right
- 9 C      duì    a↑.  
           right PRT

- F1-2:    Consider Wang Yung-ching; he has forty thousand employees.  
 C3:      Mhm.  
 F4:      The time he has is equal to several of our life times.  
 C5:      Mhmhmm.  
 F6:      So (that's) why he makes much more money than we do.  
 C7:      Mhmhmm.  
 F8:      Right?  
 C9:      Right.

In lines 1–2, F first uses two *o*-attached utterances, to “register a heightened sense of newsworthiness of the event being reported” (P. Wu 2005: 983). In line 4, F attaches the UFP *ê* to her concluding remark. Acknowledging C’s second backchannel *mhmhmm* in line 5, which shows that she is not willing to take the floor at this moment, F continues her turn by making a further elaboration and then makes her second attempt: deploying a question *duì bú duì* ‘right’ to directly invite C to take the floor, i.e. to answer the question. F’s request is then accepted by C, who finally takes the turn and gives a preferred answer *duì a* ‘right’ in line 9.

In contrast to examples (10) and (11), example (12) shows that the UFP *ê* can be attached to a piece of information which is prominent or noticeable. Here, speaker D tells the interlocutor K what he knows about the reaction of Americans to the September 11 attacks.

- (12) 1 D      Měiguó rén      yǒu    yìxiē    mán    búcuò    de    biǎoxiàn,  
           U.S.    person    have some    quite    not.bad    DE performance

- 2 D      xiàng nà ge- nà ge shéi a↓,  
like that CL that CL who PRT
- 3 D      nà ge fènghuángǔ a↓,  
that CL Julia.Roberts PRT
- 4 D      wa tā yī juān hǎoxiàng shì yì bǎi wàn=  
PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> one donate seem be one hundred ten.thousand
- 5 D      =háishì liǎng bǎi wàn měijīn ê.  
or two hundred ten.thousand dollar PRT
- 6 K      mhmhumhum.  
BC
- 7 D      on wǒ juéde zhè- zhè- zhè ge- zhè ge rén de=  
PRT 1<sub>SG</sub> think this this this CL this CL person DE
- 8 D      =biǎoxiàn jiù xiāngdāng búcuò.  
performance then quite not.bad
- D1-5: Americans have done some quite good things. For example,  
that...what's her name again? Julia Roberts. Wow! She apparently  
donated one or two million dollars in one go.
- K6: Huhhuh.
- D7-8: That was really good.

Here, we can see that D's *ê*-attached utterance in lines 4–5 foregrounds a piece of information, which obviously contradicts his expectation.<sup>4</sup> As K rejects D's invitation to take the next turn, D makes a following elaboration containing a piece of information that is relevant to what he has just said. In line 7, D's elaboration contains a series of the “pause markers” *zhè* ‘this’ and *zhège* ‘this’ (cf. Huang 1999: 88). This can be seen as evidence that K's reaction is counter to D's expectation and he is not fully prepared to continue his own turn.

<sup>4</sup> This utterance is prefaced by the interjection *wa*, indicating the speaker's surprise. It is similar to *wow* in English.

Although the use of *ê* in (10)–(12) is a way to create a space for the interlocutor to respond in a long informing turn, the interlocutor always has the possibility to accept or reject the speaker's invitation. A comparison of the three examples presented above reveals the following: in (10), the interlocutor J accepts the invitation and takes the floor by asking a question that is relevant to the *ê*-attached information. However, in (11) and (12), the backchannels of both hearers (line 5 of C in (11) and line 6 of K in (12)) show that they are aware of the invitation but want to pass the opportunity to take the floor at that moment. Acknowledging the rejection, the speakers (F in (11) and D in (12)) take different measures to manage this problem: In (11), the speaker F takes another turn-allocation technique (i.e. asking a question) and invites C again to take the floor. In (12), the speaker D continues his turn by making a further elaboration.

So far I have demonstrated how *ê* is used to foreground a piece of information in a reporting turn and how it is related to the interlocutors' interaction. Example (13) demonstrates how *ê* is attached to the assessment by the speaker when occurring in his/her own reporting turn. Prior to excerpt (13), speaker M has told the interlocutor K about a terrible experience of one of his customers who parked his car in an underground parking garage. During a flood in the summer, the customer's car was submerged in water for seven days.

- (13) 1 M      bāokuò wǒ kèhù      nà      yí      dòng      yě      shì,  
          include 1<sub>SG</sub> customer that      one      CL      also be
- 2 M      a      jī              shuǐ      qī      tiān, yīnwèi      láibují-  
          PRT accumulate water      seven day because      too.late
- 3 K      nà      chēzi yòu      tuō      bù      chūlai, pào zài      lǐmiàn  
          that car      again drag NEG      out      sink at      water
- 4 M      duì a↑, nǐ      xiǎng kànkàn yī      bù      chē pào qī      tiān,  
          right PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> think see      one CL      car soak seven day
- 5 M      wa      nà-      nà      bùdéliǎo      ê.  
          PRT      that      that      terrible      PRT
- 6 M      duì      a↑.      suǒyǐ-      (smack)  
          right      PRT      so

7 M      zhè      yī      bùfèn      wǒ      shì      juédé      shì      bú      shì-  
           this      one      part      I<sub>SG</sub>      be      think      be      NEG      shì

M1-2: And then this building where my customer lives, the water came in for seven days, because it was too late to...

K3: The cars could not be dragged out and drowned.

M4-7: Right. Imagine, a car being soaked for seven days. Wow, that's amazing...right, so, I wonder whether this...

In line 5, M uses a *wa*-prefaced assessment to show his surprise to what he has reported in lines 1–2 and 4. Here, his own assessment is attached by *ê*, as to invite the hearer K to respond (for example, make another assessment). However, K does not respond as hoped by M. M's following turn in line 6 (containing a token of self confirmation *duì a* 'right', an incomplete turn initiated with *suǒyǐ* 'so', a few pauses and then a smack) signals that K's reaction is counter to his expectation and he is not yet prepared to continue his own turn.

The following example demonstrates that sometimes the UFP *ê* can be attached to phrases showing the speaker's insufficient knowledge such as *bù xiǎodé/bù zhīdào* 'I don't know' or *wàngjì le* 'I forgot'. In (14), Y and B are talking about the aforementioned sexual scandal involving a Taiwanese politician. Before this excerpt, B has told her colleague Y that she underwent a surgery when this scandal broke out, so she missed most of the discussions on TV and in the office.

- (14) 1 Y      a      zhīhòu      hěn      duō      xīnwén      bāguà      shènzhì      nà      ge-  
           PRT      after      very      many      news      gossip      even      that      CL
- 2 Y      Lǐ Tāo      nà      jiémù      dōu      zài      jiǎng      a↑.  
           PN      that      program      all      at      say      PRT
- 3 B      duì      a↑.      fǎnzhèng      hǎoxiàng      nà      yí      duàn      shí-  
           right      PRT      anyway      seem      that      one      CL      time
- 4 B      nà      yí      duàn      shíjiān-  
           that      one      CL      time



- 5 B      *bù xiǎodé ê,*  
 NEG know PRT
- 6 B      *tiāntiān hǎoxiàng- tiāntiān de xīnwén dōu shì-*  
 everyday seem everyday DE news all be
- 7 B      *dōu shì tā de xīnwén jiù shì le.*  
 all be 3<sub>SG</sub> DE news just be PRT
- 8 Y      *qíshí tā yǒu ge yánxùxìng,*  
 actually 3<sub>SG</sub> have CL continuity
- Y1-2: Later it was mentioned in many news programs, entertainment news; even the program of Li Tao had it.
- B3-7: Right. Anyway, it seems that at that time, at that time, ... don't know, apparently every day- you can watch news report about her, everyday, (it's) just like that.
- Y8: Actually it had a certain kind of continuity...

Phrases such as *bù xiǎode/bù zhīdào* 'I don't know' usually indicate that the speaker does not have sufficient knowledge to answer a certain question, or, in the words of Baumgarten and House (2010:1194) "the inability to supply information." In her study of *I don't know* in English, Tsui (1991: 621) claims that "in prefacing a statement with a declaration of insufficient knowledge, the speaker signals that s/he is not committed to the truth of the proposition expressed, hence leaving room for him/herself to retreat from the original position, if challenged." I think Tsui's claim can also be applied to the use of similar phrases in Mandarin. Note that B's agreement turns in lines 3–4, which contains *hǎoxiàng* 'seemingly', the restart and the pause after this repeated phrase *nà yí duàn shíjiān* 'at that time', already reveals her uncertainty about what to say. In line 5, B's insertion of the *ê*-attached utterance *bù xiǎode ê* 'I don't know' not only highlights her uncertainty about her assertion, but also shows her intention to offer an opportunity for the hearer Y to contribute, even though this is part of her own informing turn. As the hearer Y does not respond to this invitation immediately, B continues with her turn. However, we can see that in lines 6–7, B's following elaboration contains *hǎoxiàng* 'seemingly', a few restarts and *jiùshì le* 'just like that'. This not only shows that she is still uncertain about this

topic and not prepared for an answer, but also displays her intention to close the current topic.<sup>5</sup>

#### 5.4.2 ê in topic-introduction/topic-shift

Some ê-attached utterances occur in contexts where the speaker intends to introduce a new conversational topic or to shift the current topic to another. In this kind of context, by attaching ê to a piece of newly-introduced information (see (15)–(17)) or to his/her own assessment on what has been talked about in prior context (see (18) and (19)), the speaker expects the interlocutor to make a relevant next turn to this ê-attached utterance (i.e. new topic).

The following excerpt is taken from the same conversation as example (1) in chapter 1. Speakers D and L in example (15) were classmates when they were in junior high school. Before this excerpt, they have exchanged experiences about private tutorial classes. L told D that she joined a mathematic tutorial class when she was in junior high school.

- (15) 1 D      shùxué o?      nǐ yǒu bǔ shùxué o?  
                  math    PRT    2<sub>SG</sub> have coach math    PRT
- 2 L      mhm.  
    BC
- 3 D      wǒ      zěnmē      bú      jìdé?  
                  1<sub>SG</sub>    how        NEG    remember
- 4 D      nǐ      shì guóyī      de      shíhòu?  
                  2<sub>SG</sub>    be    seventh.grade    DE      time
- 5 L      wǒ      bú      jìdé      shénme      shíhòu      bǔ      de.  
                  1<sub>SG</sub>    NEG    remember    what      time      coach    DE
- 6 D      wǒ      kàn      nǐ      guó'èr      hǎoxiàng      yě      méi      yǒu-  
                  1<sub>SG</sub>    see    2<sub>SG</sub>    eighth.grade    seem      also    NEG    have

<sup>5</sup> In her study of the use of *jiùshì* in Taiwan Mandarin, Huang (2010: 62) claims that *jiùshì* can be used to reveal the speaker's intention to "close the current topic," "shift to another topic" or "close the conversation."

- 7 L      wǒ      yě      bǔ      guò      yīngwén      ê.  
                  1<sub>SG</sub>      also      join      ASP      English      PRT
- 8 D      yīngwén(.)      shì      shéi?  
                  English      be      who
- D1:      Math? Have you ever taken math tutorial classes?  
 L2:      Mhm.  
 D3-4:    How could I not remember that? Did you take the class when you  
                  were in seventh grade?  
 L5:      I don't remember when I took the class...  
 D6:      I think when you were in eighth grade, you didn't take-  
 L7:      I also took the English tutorial class!  
 D8:      English? Who was it [the teacher]?

Both speakers are talking about L's personal experience. Obviously, compared to D, L has a better access to this issue. She has a higher "epistemic authority" (Heritage and Raymond 2005, Raymond and Heritage 2006). D's questions in line 1 and line 4, as well as the utterance *wǒ zěnmě bú jìdé* 'how could I not remember that' in line 3 reveal the fact that she does not have the same access to the referent *bù shùxué* 'taking math tutorial class' as L. However, D's following assessment in line 6 implies that she is very familiar with L's personal past, in this case even more than L herself. This in turn can be seen as a challenge to L's epistemic authority, since their conversation is related to L's own experience. D's assertion is soon interrupted by L's *ê*-attached utterance, which introduces a piece of new information about her own personal experience. This shifting of the current topic to another is a "disaffiliative act" signaling the "lack of interest in the current speaker and the topic" (Makri-Tsilipakou 1994: 409). As demonstrated in the previous section, the UFP *ê* serves to invite the interlocutor to respond.

I argue that the deployment of *ê* here not only foregrounds the *ê*-attached information, but also invites a further move of collaboration. That is, by adding *ê*, the speaker creates a space for the interlocutor to respond to this *ê*-attached information. In this way, the speaker L can downgrade the impact of her move in line 7 (i.e. an interruption in combination with a claim of her own epistemic authority). The attachment of *ê* can be regarded as a kind of mitigation strategy: the speaker challenges the hearer and, at the same time, offers space to be re-challenged. D's fol-

lowing turn in line 8 shows that D receives L's invitation by posing a question related to the *ê*-attached information. The current conversation is thus smoothly shifted to the new topic (i.e. English tutorial class).

Note that although the speaker can put his/her offer of space for response on the table with the deployment of *ê*, it is up to the interlocutor to decide whether s/he will accept or reject this offer. In some cases, the *ê*-attached utterance is combined with other turn-allocation techniques in order to make sure that the collaboration is accomplished, as shown in (16). A few minutes prior to this excerpt, speakers H and L had been discussing a video released by a Taiwanese tabloid, then they started another topic about politics. Just before the beginning of this excerpt, H has told L that she has no interest in politics. In line 1, H's explanation is interrupted by L's *ê*-attached utterance, with a piece of new information related to the preceding topic (the video) they have discussed a few minutes ago.

- (16) 1 H            qíshí    zhèngzhì rénwù    dàbùfèn    dōu-  
                         actually politics    figure    mostly    all
- 2 L            wǎnglù shàng hái yǒu fēnxī ê.    nǐ zhīdào ma?  
                         internet up    still have    analyze PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> know    PRT
- 3 H            fēnxī    shéi?  
                         analyze    who
- 4 L            jiù shì fēnxī shénme @@    hěn hǎoxiào.  
                         just be    analyze what    (laughter) very    funny
- H1:    Actually most of the politicians are...
- L2:    There was some analysis on the Internet. Do you know that?
- H3:    Analysis of whom?
- L4:    Analysis of the...(laughter), very funny.

As Sacks et al. claim, "an addressed question selects its addressee to speak next" (1974: 716). The phrase *nǐ zhīdào ma* 'do you know that' in line 2 can be regarded as an additional strategy to ensure that the hearer makes a collaborative move. Here, H's response (i.e. a question related to the *ê*-attached information) in line 3 shows her acceptance of L's invitation to take the floor and discuss the topic L has introduced.

The following dialogue exemplifies a case in which the *ê*-attached utterance is prefaced by a turn-initial particle *ei* with rising contour. Just before this excerpt, the daughter P has reported the contents of her university courses. In lines 1–2, P explains why the study load is heavier in the second semester. Her mother W, however, introduces a new piece of information attached by *ê* and thereby shifts the current conversation topic to the next.

- (17) 1 P      suǒyǐ xià xuéqí huì bǐ shàng xuéqí gèng máng,  
so next semester will compare up semester even busy
- 2 P      yīnwèi wǒmen hái yào jiān- jiān nà zhǒng  
because 1<sub>PL</sub> still must double double that kind
- 3 P      [zhìzuòrén de gōngzuò.  
producer DE work
- 4 W      [ei↑ wǒ kàn dào bào shàng jiǎng shuō hoNn,  
PRT 1<sub>SG</sub> see arrive newspaper up say say PRT
- 5 W      àoměi gōngguān hoNn, yǒu yī ge-  
PN public.relation PRT have one CL
- 6 P      mhm.  
BC
- 7 W      tā bù zhīdào shì dào- dào shénme zhǔguǎn le,  
3<sub>SG</sub> NEG know be arrive arrive what director PRT
- 8 W      tā shì nǐmen de nà ge xuéjiě ye.  
3<sub>SG</sub> be 2<sub>PL</sub> DE that CL senior.schoolmate PRT
- 9 P      xuéjiě? jiào shénme míngzi?  
senior.schoolmate call what name

P1-3: So I will be even busier in the second semester than in the first semester, because we will have to be producers [apart from being a journalist].

- W4-5: Ei, I have read in the newspaper that there is one person in Ogilvy & Mather...
- P6: Mhm.
- W7-8: She...I am not sure what kind of leading position she holds...she is a senior student at your department!
- P9: A senior student? What's her name?

Note that W's turn from lines 4–5 to lines 7–8 is prefaced by a turn-initial particle *ei* (with rising contour). As mentioned earlier, Tsai (2008: 1025) claims that this turn-initial *ei* with a rising contour “projects the upcoming talk to involve in some kind of shift and to be something unanticipated.” As *ê* serves to foreground the information to which it is attached and to invite the interlocutor to respond, the attachment of UFP *ê* is compatible with this kind of *ei*-prefaced utterance, because it can mitigate the impact of this kind of “disaffiliative move.” In other words, it shows the speaker's collaborative intention to ensure a successfully accomplished interaction regardless of the unanticipated information. As we can see in line 8, P accepts the invitation by requiring more information about the new topic provided by W. The conversational topic is thus shifted smoothly.

Examples (15)–(17) again show how the speaker introduces or shifts the conversational topic with an *ê*-attached information. The examples show that the *ê*-attached assessment can also be used to introduce or shift the topic. This use is quite similar to what we have discussed above. It sometimes occurs when the speaker thinks that something in the prior talk deviates from her assumption or expectation. In example (18), the speaker L is an English teacher who works at a private English school. D, her junior schoolmate, asks her about the number of students in her class.<sup>6</sup>

- (18) 1 D            a    tāmen-    yī    ge    dàgài-    zhōngbān-  
                       PRT   3<sub>PL</sub>            one   CL   probably   middle.class
- 2 D            xiàng   zhōngbān            nàme   dà=  
    like   middle.class            that   old
- 3 D            =xiǎopéngyǒu   jǐ            ge-   jǐ            ge   rén   yī   ge   bān?  
    children            how.many   CL   how.many   CL   person   one   CL   class

<sup>6</sup> In this excerpt, *zhōngbān*, lit. ‘middle group’, refers to the second group in kindergarten.

- 4 L        wǒmen   bān     yǒu     shísi     ge.  
              1<sub>PL</sub>    class    have    fourteen CL
- 5 D        ei↓   shísi     ge     hěn     duō     ê.  
              PRT   fourteen   CL    very    many   PRT
- 6 L        hěn     duō     a↑.     duì     a↑.  
              very    many    PRT    right   PRT

D1-3: Eh, they- one- probably- pre-kindergarten...the kids at the age of pre-kindergarten...how many students are there in one class?

L4: There are fourteen students in my class.

D5: Fourteen? That's a lot!

L6: That's a lot, yeah.

In line 5, D first deploys a turn-initial particle *ei* (with falling contour) to get L's attention,<sup>7</sup> then attaches *ê* to foreground her assessment of a part of the information provided by L in line 4, which is to D's surprise. As L takes the floor and makes a relevant next turn, the focus of this conversation is shifted from "the number of students" to "the huge number of student per class." The co-occurrence of *ei* at the beginning of the utterance in line 5 and the deployment of *ê* at its end is therefore by no means coincidental. First the speaker draws the hearer's attention to an upcoming piece of information. This piece of information is then foregrounded with *ê*, which also invites the hearer to respond.

Example (19) is taken from the same example as (18). Here, D asks L about her students' age. After hearing L's response that she also teaches pre-kindergarten kids, D deploys an *ê*-attached assessment to show her surprise and invites L to respond. Since L's response *mhm* shows that she is not willing to take the floor, D explicitly elaborates the contrast between her own expectation and the information given in the preceding talk in lines 6–7. After the failure of her first invitation in line 4, D changes her tactic in line 6–7 by directly requiring L to respond to what has been foregrounded.

<sup>7</sup> I follow Tsai's argument that the particle *ei* with a falling contour can be seen as an "attention getter" (2008: 1023).

- (19) 1 D      ei↓    shì    duō      dà    de    xiǎopéngyǒu?  
                  PRT    be    many    big    DE    kid
- 2 L      wǒ    cóng    zhōngbān      dào    guó'èr      dōu    yǒu.  
                  1<sub>SG</sub>    from    pre-kindergarten    arrive    eighth.class    all    have
- 3 L      duì    a↑.    jiù    shì    bùtóng    de-  
                  right    PRT    just    be    different    DE
- 4 D      zhōngbān      hěn    xiǎo    ê.  
                  pre-kindergarten    very    small    PRT
- 5 L      mhm.  
                  BC
- 6 D      yòuzhiyuán      jiù    yǒu    zài    bǔxí    yīngwén    o?  
                  kindergarten      just    have    at    tutor    English    PRT
- 7 D      bú    shì    xuéxiào    jiù    huì    jiāo?  
                  NEG    be    school      just    will    teach

D1: How old are the kids at school?

L2-3: From pre-kindergarten kids to eighth class. Right, they are in different-

D4: Pre-kindergarten kinds? So young!

L5: Mhm.

D6-7: The kids in kindergarten already have English tutorial classes?  
 Isn't that taught in primary school?

One instance of *ê* usage that is not attested in my data but that, according to my observation, nonetheless exists is the opening of a new conversation without any previous context. A typical situation would be the following: Two persons are watching TV. One person turns the head, looks outside the window and realizes that it is raining. It would be quite natural to inform the other person about this observation with the *ê*-attached utterance: *xià yǔ le ê* 'it's raining'. Compared to its *ê*-less coun-



terpart *xià yǔ le* ‘it’s raining’, the deployment of the *ê*-attached utterance shows the speaker’s expectation to receive a response.

Thus far I have demonstrated how the UFP *ê* is used in storytelling/reporting sequences and topic introduction/shift. I propose that its use is two-fold: on the one hand, it can foreground the information/assessment to which it is attached, i.e. to inform the interlocutor that the *ê*-attached information/assessment needs to be registered; on the other hand, it invites further collaboration, i.e. offers a chance for the hearer to produce a next turn relating to the information/assessment attached by *ê*). In the following sections, I will show the occurrences of *ê* in two other types of contexts in responsive positions.

### 5.4.3 *ê* in qualified disagreement/upgraded agreement

When *ê* is used in a disagreeing responsive turn, it is usually attached to a piece of newly-introduced information (see (20)–(22)) or the speaker’s disagreeing assessment (see (23)). That is, when the speaker thinks that something in the prior conversation may have been misconceived because a piece of information has not been presented or foregrounded, s/he will attach *ê* to this missing information, hoping that the misconception can be reconsidered or corrected. Or s/he will attach *ê* to his/her own assessment, in order to provide another point of view on the issue in question. As *ê* implies an invitation for the interlocutor to respond, the *ê*-attached disagreement is qualified (i.e. less strong) and sounds more negotiable, or even like a reminder, as if saying: “Here is something you may have missed/here is what I think, what is your opinion?”

Prior to the conversation in (20), J and F have been talking about their own experiences when taking exams in junior high school. F tells her elder sister J about her experience that the class next door would discuss the answer of the same test loudly so that students in her class could directly write down the answers. She asks her sister whether she had a similar experience.

- (20) 1 J      nǐ    shuō    zài    gébi      bān    o?  
               2<sub>SG</sub> say    at next.door    class    PRT
- 2 F      duì      a↑.  
                           right    PRT
- 3 J      bù    kěnéng    ba.  
                           NEG possible    PRT

- 4 J      wǒmen bān(.) kǎo de dōu bǐ biérén duō,  
           2<sub>PL</sub>    class test DE all than other.person many
- 5 J      suǒyǐ wǒmen zài kǎo de shíhòu, tāmen-  
           so    2<sub>PL</sub>    at test DE time    3<sub>PL</sub>
- 6 F      wǒmen yǒu fāshēng zhè zhǒng qíngxíng ê.  
           2<sub>PL</sub>    have happen this kind situation PRT
- 7 J      hoNn.  
           BC
- 8 F      jīhū yíban yǐshàng dōu yībǎi.  
           almost half above all hundred
- J1:      You mean the class next door?  
 F2:      Yes.  
 J3-5:    That's impossible. My class always had more tests than others. So  
           when we took our tests, they...  
 F6:      We had this kind of experience!  
 J7:      Oh.  
 F8:      Almost half of the class got 100 points.

In line 3, J's assertion *bù kěnéng ba* 'that's impossible' and the following elaboration are interrupted by F's *ê*-attached information in line 6. Here, by foregrounding the information related to her own experience, F indicates that J's assertion might be wrong and at the same time invites J to make a relevant response (for example, to reconsider her misconception or adjust her assertion). However, J's response *hoNn* in line 7 is only a backchannel<sup>8</sup> and shows that J is not willing to take the floor for the moment. F thus makes a relevant elaboration about the *ê*-attached information herself.

Prior to the dialogue in excerpt (21), the daughter D and her mother M have been discussing a plan to run a restaurant near the famous department store

<sup>8</sup> I. Li (1999: 73) states that the free-standing *hoNn* is used as a backchannel, which shows the speaker's intention to play a listener's role during the other interlocutor's talk.

*jīnghuáchéng* ‘Living Mall’ in Taipei. In line 1, D asks M what she would sell if she runs such a restaurant. M then says that she wants to sell traditional Taiwanese snacks such as thin oyster noodles (*o5a2mi7suann3*) or rice noodle soup (*bi2hun2thng1*), which are easily produced.

- (21) 1 D      nà nǐ xīwàng mài shénme?  
           that 2<sub>SG</sub> hope sell what
- 2 M      a(.) yuè jiǎndān yuè hǎo a↑.  
           PRT more simple more good PRT
- 3 M      [< S o5a2mi7suann3 la bi2hun2thng1 na S> @@  
           oyster.thin.noodles PRT rice.noodle.soup PRT (laughter)
- 4 D      [hoNn.      @@  
           PRT      (laughter)
- 5 M      nà ge zui- zui kuài de zui jiǎndān de la↓.  
           that CL the.most the most fast DE the.most simple DE PRT
- 6 D      zài jīnghuáchéng ê.  
           at PN PRT
- 7 M      duì a↑. nà biān yǒu a↑. yǒu nà zhǒng xiǎodiàn la↓.  
           right PRT that side have PRT have that kind small.shop PRT
- D1:      Then what do you want to sell?  
 M2-3:    Something that is easy to make. For example, thin oyster noodles  
           or rice noodle soup (laughter).  
 D4:      Oh (laughter).  
 M5:      The faster, the easier, the better  
 D6:      In LIVING MALL!  
 M7:      Right. There are many such shops there.

In line 6, D attaches *ê* to her utterance. As both M and D know what kind of big department store “Living Mall” is, the *ê*-attached information is not new. However, by foregrounding this *ê*-attached information (i.e. reiterate the name of the depart-

ment store), D not only shows that M's proposal is not what she expected, but also expresses the hope that M can correct this misconception by herself on the basis of the presented information (i.e. running a restaurant selling cheap food in the neighborhood of a big department store is not appropriate). In other words, with the deployment of *ê*, D creates a space for M to justify her claim. In line 7, M receives D's invitation to make a relevant response (i.e. providing an account for her previous utterances in lines 2–3 and 5).

Example (22) shows how a speaker tries to invite the interlocutor to reconsider his/her misconception by deploying a series of *ye*. Before this segment, the male speaker M has told the female speaker F that he saw many female university students wearing high heels on campus and he found it odd. The female speaker F has told him that there was nothing strange about it.

(22) (Chui and Lai 2008, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |  |                 |              |            |           |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|-------|--|-----------------|--------------|------------|-----------|------|-----|------|-----|--------|------|
| 1 M   |  | hóngsè          | zhènhóngsè   | gāogēnxié= |           |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | red             | bright.red   | high.heels |           |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| 2 M   |  | =nǐ             | shàng kè     | zhèyàng    | chuān ma? |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | 2 <sub>SG</sub> | attend class | this.way   | wear PRT  |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| 3 F   |  | yǒu             | a↑.          |            |           |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | have            | PRT          |            |           |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| → 4 M |  | nà              | ge           | hóngsè     | ye.       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | that            | CL           | red        | PRT       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| 5 F   |  | yǒu             | la↓          | yǒu        | la↓       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | have            | PRT          | have       | PRT       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| → 6 M |  | nà              | ge           | hóngsè     | ye.       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
|       |  | that            | CL           | red        | PRT       |      |     |      |     |        |      |
| 7 F   |  | yǒu             | la↓          | yǒu        | la↓       | yǒu  | la↓ | yǒu  | la↓ | zhēnde | la↓. |
|       |  | have            | PRT          | have       | PRT       | have | PRT | have | PRT | really | PRT  |

- 8 M      chuān qù      shàng kè      ye.  
               wear go      attend class      PRT
- 9 F      méi yǒu      guānxi a↑  
               NEG have      relation PRT
- 10 M      kěshi hěn      guài a↑.  
               but very      strange PRT

- M1-2: Red, bright red high heels...do you wear them in class?  
 F3: Yeah.  
 M4: Those are RED!  
 F5: Yeah, yeah.  
 M6: Those are RED!  
 F7: Yeah, yeah...yeah, yeah...really.  
 M8: In CLASS?  
 F9: That doesn't matter.  
 M10: But it's strange!

Here, M deploys three instances of *ê*-attached information to invite F to re-adjust her position. He first presents the information *hóngsè* 'red' in lines 4 and 6, expecting F to make a collaborative move. Acknowledging that F insists on her own position, and that she even strengthens her stance by producing four times *yǒu la* 'yes' and *zhēnde la* 'really' in line 7, M foregrounds another piece of information "(wearing red high heels) in class," trying to challenge the issue with this piece of newly-introduced information. However, F still refuses to make a collaborative move (i.e. adjust her view). In line 10, M finally makes a strong assessment, to show his disagreement of this behavior.

Example (23) illustrates the use of UFP *ê* attached to a speaker's assessment, signaling a qualified disagreement. Prior to the excerpt, L and H have been talking about a TV hostess. In line 1, L makes a negative assessment by saying that she thinks this hostess looks very artificial. Acknowledging H's question-formulated disagreement *huì ma* 'really', L repeats her assessment in line 3. In line 4, H attaches *ê* to her two disagreeing assessments.

- (23) 1 L    tā    chāo <S ke2 S> de    hǎo    bù    hǎo!  
           3<sub>SG</sub>    super       fake    DE    good    NEG    good
- 2 H    huì    ma?  
           will    PRT
- 3 L    duì    a↑.    tā    chāo    <S ke2 S> de!  
           right    PRT    3<sub>SG</sub>    super       fake    DE
- 4 H    wǒ    juédé    tā    hěn    tiánměi    ê.  
           1<sub>SG</sub>    think    3<sub>SG</sub>    very    sweet    PRT
- 5 H    tā    xiào    qǐlái    hěn    tiánměi    ê.  
           3<sub>SG</sub>    laugh    up    very    sweet    PRT
- 6 L    tā    nǎ    yǒu,    hǎo    chǒu,    érqǐě-  
           3<sub>SG</sub>    where    have    good    ugly    besides

L1: She is super artificial, please!

H2: Really?

L3: Yes, she is super artificial!

H4-5: I think she is sweet. She has a sweet smile.

L6: No way, she is ugly, besides-

Unlike H's disagreement in line 2, which directly questions the credibility of L's assessment, her two *ê*-attached disagreements in lines 4 and 5 on the one hand underscore the assessment; on the other hand, they create a space for possible negotiation. Note that H rephrases her second disagreement in line 5: she adds *xiào qǐlái* 'the way she smiles'. This additional information presents another judgment of the referent. Compared to its "*ê*-less" counterpart, these *ê*-attached disagreeing assessments sound less strong, as if saying: "This is what I think, maybe you would like to consider this and reconsider your assessment?" In other words, this kind of disagreement is qualified and less direct.

The UFP *ê* can also be attached to utterances indicating the speaker's agreement, but there are only three examples in my data. In contrast to a disagreeing sequence, when *ê* is attached to an agreement, it usually strengthens the force of the

agreement. This is not surprising, since the core function of *ê* is to invite a collaborative move, the “invitation” itself also conveys the speaker’s collaborative attitude.

Prior to excerpt (24), the speakers C and F have been talking about environmental protection. In line 1, C tells F that she never leaves any litter on the street. In line 2, F first deploys a low-pitch utterance-initial particle *ei* to call C’s attention, then utters an *ê*-attached agreement *wǒ yě shì ê* ‘me neither’.

- (24) 1 C      wǒ- wǒ juéduì    bú    zài wàimiàn    luàn    diū    lèsè.  
           1<sub>SG</sub> 1<sub>SG</sub> absolute NEG at outside    messy throw rubbish
- 2 F      ei↓    wǒ    yě    shì    ê.  
           PRT    1<sub>SG</sub>    also    be    PRT
- 3 F      [wǒ lián- wǒ lián yī    zhāng <E memo E> zhǐ    o,  
           1<sub>SG</sub> even 1<sub>SG</sub> even one CL            memo    paper PRT
- 4 C      [hèn. zhè    yī    diǎn    wǒ-  
           PRT    this    one    point    1<sub>SG</sub>

C1: I- I never drop my litter on the street.

F2-3: ME NEITHER, even a memo note, I...

C4: Right, about this I-

In this excerpt, the use of *ê* not only highlights the positive response, but also invites a further collaborative move. F’s following supportive move in line 3 (i.e. adding an example to support F’s agreement) overlaps with C’s response in line 4. This can be seen as C’s acceptance of this invitation. Note that in line 3, F upgrades her agreement by adding a topic-related example, which show her strong collaborative attitude.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pomerantz (1984: 66) points out that “[u]pgraded agreements often occur as parts of clusters of agreements, or agreement series.”

#### 5.4.4 ê in answers

The *ê*-attached utterances often occur in responsive position in a question-answer pair. In my data, most of these utterances are attached to a dispreferred response, for example, a “non-answer” such as *bù zhīdào* ‘I don’t know’ or a refusal.<sup>10</sup>

As I have discussed in relation to example (14), *ê* can be attached to phrases indicating the speaker’s insufficient knowledge such as *bù xiǎodé/bù zhīdào* ‘I don’t know’ or *wàngjì le* ‘I forgot’ in the speaker’s own informing turn. When *ê* occurs in a response to a question, it can likewise follow such phrases. This displays the speaker’s inability to supply a satisfactory answer. Example (25) illustrates this kind of use. Prior to this excerpt, L has told D that she plans to make use of her boyfriend’s apartment to run a language school in Xīnzhūāng, a district of New Taipei City. In this example, D asks L where precisely the school is located.

- (25) 1 D        xīnzhūāng shénme lù?  
                  PN            what road
- 2 L        xīnzhūāng.  
                  PN
- 3 D        @@ shénme lù?  
                  (laughter) what road
- 4 L        bù zhīdào ê. kào jìn fūdà.  
                  NEG know PRT near Fujen.University
- 5 L        [kào jìn fūdà.  
                  near Fujen.University
- 6 D        [han tā- o tā jiā yǐqián jiù=  
                  PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> home before just

<sup>10</sup> According to Stivers and Robinson (2006: 371), non-answer responses either “display an orientation to the relevance of an answer but satisfy only the technical two-part structure of a sequence (e.g., *I don’t know*),” or “impede the progress of the sequence (e.g., initiations of repair or counters).” They claim that “although a non-answer response is a normatively viable action in response to a question, it is a dispreferred alternative.”



7 D      [[=zhù    zài    nà    fùjìn                    o?  
          live    at    that neighborhood    PRT

8 L      [[duì    a↑    duì    a↑    duì    a↑  
          right    PRT    right    PRT    right    PRT

D1:      Which street in Xīnzhūāng?

L2:      Xīnzhūāng ...

D3:      (laughter) Which street?

L4-5:    Don't know. Somewhere near Fujen University, near Fujen.

D6-7:    What he- oh, he lived somewhere near (the university) before?'

L8:      Right, right, right.'

In line 4, L uses *ê* to indicate her inability to provide a satisfactory answer. Her subsequent imprecise elaboration *kào jìn Fūdà* 'near Fujen University' also reveals her inability to supply accurate information. Meanwhile, by using *ê*, L also shows her wish to invite D to contribute to the progress of the conversation, for example, by taking the next turn, as if saying: "I don't know, maybe you do?"

Note that in line 4, there are two pauses. One is after the *ê*-attached utterance; the other is after the subsequent elaboration. These two pauses reinforce the speaker's invitation for the hearer's collaboration. In line 8, L's deployment of three agreeing tokens *duì a* 'right' overlaps with part of D's utterance in line 6 (note that L starts to give the positive response before D finishes her statement. This move reveals L's belief that she understands what D intends to say). Following Pomerantz's (1984: 69) claim that "when agreement is invited, strong or upgraded agreements are performed with a minimization of gap (in fact, frequently in slight overlap)," I argue that L's move in line 8 expresses her cooperative attitude and strong agreement with the truth of the proposition of D's utterance.

This brings us back to example (9) (here repeated as (26)), which is quoted from Shie (1991: 166). The wife W attaches *ye* to her answer *bù zhīdào* 'I don't know'. Similar to example (25), with the deployment of *ye*, W not merely shows her inability to supply sufficient information, but also marks her invitation to make some further collaborative moves. W also shows her intention to solicit H's support (for example, take the floor and make a next turn). As H does not respond after the *ê*-attached utterance, W continues her turn and makes a request, showing her efforts to maintain interaction.

- (26) 1 H      bǎobāo      qǐlái      le      méi?  
                  baby            get up    ASP    NEG
- 2 W      bù      zhīdào    ye!... nǐ jiào    tā qǐlái    a!  
                  NEG    know    PRT 2<sub>sg</sub> call    3<sub>sg</sub> get up    PRT

H1: Did our baby get up?

W2: I don't know...you go and wake him up!

Example (27) demonstrates another kind of dispreferred response. Prior to the segment, the daughter P, who studies journalism at the university, has told her mother W that one of her assignments is a candidate for the “best report” competition, which is selected by vote of all the classmates. In this excerpt, W asks P whether she knows the result of this competition.

- (27) 1 W      suǒyǐ nǐ    shuō- hòulái    piàoxuǎn shì    zěnyàng?  
                  so      2<sub>SG</sub> say    after    vote      be      how
- 2 P      piàoxuǎn o,    méi    yǒu- wǒ méi    yǒu    qù kàn ê.  
                  vote            PRT NEG    have 1<sub>SG</sub> NEG    have go see PRT
- 3 P      [wǒ méi    yǒu    qù    kàn    jiéguǒ.  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> NEG    have go    see    result
- 4 W      [mhm.  
                  BC

W1: So you said- how about the competition?

P2-3: The competition? No- I haven't checked it. [I didn't check the result.

W4: Mhm.

Similar to (25) and (26), P's *ê*-attached answer in this example displays her inability to provide the preferred answer: checking the result. With the attachment of *ê*, speaker P shows the imbalance between her intention of making a collaborative move and her own failure, as if saying: “I wanted to give a satisfactory answer, but here is all the information I have, what do you think?” W's immediate backchannel *mhm*

(which overlaps with P's following elaboration) actually can be seen as evidence of understanding of this move.

Example (28) demonstrates a case of *ê*-attached refusal. In this excerpt, the speaker K asks T whether she wants to see an exhibition of Van Gogh paintings. In line 2, T's "lack of commitment" is attached by *ê*. As *ê* indicates the speaker's intention to cooperate, this use makes the "refusal" sound less strong. Note that there is a 1.3 second pause after the *ê*-attached answer, which shows the speaker's attempt to invite K to take the turn.

(28) (Chui and Lai 2008, modified transcription, glosses and translation)

- |       |   |  |                                   |          |      |       |      |          |     |
|-------|---|--|-----------------------------------|----------|------|-------|------|----------|-----|
| 1 K   | um.   | nǐ   | yào                               | qù       | kàn  | nà    | ge   | fāngǔ    | ma? |
|       | Um  | 2 <sub>SG</sub>                                | want                              | go       | see  | that  | CL   | Van.Gogh | PRT |
| → 2 T | (0.8)   | hái  | zài                               | kǎolù    | ê.   | (1.3) |      |          |     |
|       |   | still  | at                                | consider | PRT  |       |      |          |     |
| 3 T   | wǒ  | juédé  | rén                               | kěnéng   | huì  | hěn   | duō. |          |     |
|       | 1 <sub>SG</sub>                               | think  | person                            | perhaps  | will | very  | many |          |     |
| 4 K   | yīnwèi  | cái  | zhǎn                              | jǐ       | tiān | éryǐ. |      |          |     |
|       | because                                       | just   | exhibit                           | several  | day  | just  |      |          |     |
| K1:   | Um...   | do you want to see the exhibition of Van Gogh? |                                   |          |      |       |      |          |     |
| T2-3: | ...   | I am still thinking...                         | I think maybe it will be crowded. |          |      |       |      |          |     |
| K4:   | Because the exhibition only lasts a few days. |  |                                   |          |      |       |      |          |     |

The last examples show that the UFP *ê* can also be attached to the preferred answer to a question. One of the few examples in my data is example (29). J asks L, who has watched a certain movie in the past, whether the movie is nice. In line 2, L attaches *ê* to his assessment on this movie.

(29) (Chui and Lai 2008, transcription, glosses and translation modified)

- |     |     |      |       |      |      |          |    |
|-----|-----|------|-------|------|------|----------|----|
| 1 J | <S  | cit4 | chut4 | kam2 | ho2  | khuann3? | S> |
|     | PRT | this | CL    | PRT  | good | see      |    |

- 2 L      hái bú    cuò ê.    hěn      gǎndòng.  
 still NEG bad PRT very      touching
- 3 J      a    zhǔjiǎo      jiào shénme míngzi?  
 PRT leading.actor call what    name
- J1:      Is this a good movie?  
 L2:      Not bad actually. It's very touching.  
 J3:      What's the name of the main actor?

I argue that L creates an opportunity for a further collaboration (for instance, discussion) by foregrounding his assessment. Note that there is a pause after the *ê*-attached answer. If the speaker does not add *ê* here, the utterance sounds more assertive.

As we have seen in example (8) (here repeated as (30)), quoted from Shie (1991: 165), the speaker W responds to H's question with a positive *ye*-attached answer *hui* 'will'.

- (30) 1 H      nà nǐ    dài    jiǔ    le    yǎnjīng    huì    bú    huì    hóng    ne?  
 that 2<sub>SG</sub> wear long PRT eye    will NEG will red PRT
- 2 W      huì    ye!  
 will PRT
- 3 W      shēntǐ    bǐjiào    lèi    de    shíhòu    a,  
 body more tired DE time PRT
- 4 W      yǎnjīng    bǐjiào    róngyì    chōngxiě.  
 eye more easy congested
- H1:      When you wear [contact lenses] long, will your eyes become red?  
 W2-4:    Yes! When I was tired, I got red-eyed easily.

Shie (1991: 165) suggests that the deployment of *ye* shows W's realization that H's inquiry provides some new perspective to the conversation. Without a prior context, it is hard to judge how this claim is justified. Here, I propose a different explanation: This answer can be seen as an agreement with the proposition carried by the

question. Similar to example (24), the use of *ê* not only highlights the positive response, but also invites a further collaborative move. By adding a supportive elaboration, W upgrades her agreement and shows her strong collaborative attitude.

### 5.5 Conclusion

The core function of *ê* is to induce a collaborative move (either due to the *ê* speaker him/herself or elicited from the interlocutor) by foregrounding the utterance to which it is attached. The use of *ê* is usually triggered when something in the previous context is counter the speaker's assumption, or when the speaker believes something in the previous context has been misconceived because some information is missing.

With the deployment of *ê*, the speaker makes the utterance prominent and offers an opportunity for the interlocutor to respond. Hence, *ê* can mitigate a negative effect when it occurs with dispreferred moves, such as topic-shift, disagreement, or a refusal. When it occurs in a reporting turn or in preferred responses such as agreement, it enhances the interaction and strengthens the positive effect of these moves.

## Chapter 6

### The core functions of *a*, *la* and *ê* in comparison

#### 6.1 An overview of core functions and distributional contexts of the three UFPs

In the previous chapters, I have tested my proposed core functions of the three utterance-final particles *a*, *la* and *ê* with Taiwan Mandarin conversational data. The core function of UFP *a* is “marking the knowledge activation.” That is, by using the high-pitch *a*, the speaker shows his/her intention to activate the addressee’s knowledge; by using the low-pitch *a*, the speaker indicates that his/her own knowledge has been activated by the previous conversation. UFP *la*, serves to mark an explicit or implicit adjustment. UFP *ê* is used to invite a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which it is attached.

The purpose of this chapter is to sharpen the contours of the proposed core functions by taking a contrastive look at the UFPs analyzed in this thesis. In order to maintain comparability, I only compare UFPs in identical distributional contexts. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of the three UFPs in six different contexts. Since it is impossible to find maximally comparable authentic data in the same context, the approach I use here is different from the one in the previous chapters: on the basis of data from the previous chapters, I have constructed minimal pairs and compared the use of UFPs in these pairs (or triplets) by eliciting judgements from ten Taiwan Mandarin native speakers.

	High-pitch <i>a</i>	Low-pitch <i>a</i>	Simplex <i>la</i>	<i>ê</i>
Disagreements/agreements	✓		✓	✓
Storytelling/reporting	✓		✓	✓
Topic-introduction/topic-shift	✓	✓		✓
Answers	✓		✓	✓
Requests	✓		✓	
Questions		✓	✓	

Table 6.1 Overview of distributional contexts of *a*, *la* and *ê*

## 6.2 Comparison

The following sections compare the UFPs in: (i) disagreements/agreements, (ii) storytelling/reporting, (iii) topic-introduction/topic-shift, (iv) answers, (v) requests, and (vi) questions.

### 6.2.1 Disagreements/agreements

As presented in table 6.1, except for the low *a*, the high-pitch *a*, *la* or *ê* can all be attached to disagreements or agreements. This is not surprising since disagreements and agreements are usually directed to the other speakers, which is not compatible with the core function of the low *a*. Consider first the low-pitch *la* (1a) in disagreement contexts. This excerpt is partially repeated from (16) in chapter 4 (cf. 4.5.2.1).

- (1a) 1 F    tā   dào        zuìhòu   hǎoxiàng   yě:=  
          3<sub>SG</sub> arrive   last        seem        also
- 2 F    =bù   shì   dǎ     de   hěn   hǎo   hoNn.  
              NEG   be   play   DE   very   good   PRT
- 3 F    [kěnéng-  
              maybe
- 4 M    [kěshi-   yǐ   tā   de   niánjì   zhè   yàng        dǎ  
              but        as   3<sub>SG</sub> DE   age        this way        play
- 5 M    wǒ   juéde   yǐjīng   suàn   shì   búcuò   le   la↓:::  
          1<sub>SG</sub> think   already   count   be   not bad   ASP   PRT

F1-3: It seems that she didn't play quite well in the last few rounds, right?  
 Maybe...

M4-5: But, for her age, I think she still did a good job.

I have demonstrated in chapter 4 that the use of *la* in (1a) marks an explicit adjustment (i.e. M's direct modification of F's previous assessment), by providing another judging criterion (i.e. age). For the purpose of comparison, in example (1b), the *la* in line 5 is replaced with the high-pitch *a*.

- (1b) 1 F    tā dào    zuìhòu    hǎoxiàng    yě:=  
           3<sub>SG</sub> arrive    last    seem    also
- 2 F    =bù    shì    dǎ    de    hěn    hǎo    hoNn.  
           NEG    be    play    DE    very    good    PRT
- 3 F    [kěnéng-  
           maybe
- 4 M    [kěshi-    yǐ    tā    de    niánjì    zhè    yàng    dǎ  
           but    as    3<sub>SG</sub>    DE    age    this    way    play
- 5 M    wǒ    juéde    yǐjīng    suàn    shì    búcuò    le    a↑::.  
           1<sub>SG</sub>    think    already    count    be    not    bad    ASP    PRT

F1-3: It seems that she didn't play quite well in the last few rounds, right?  
 Maybe...

M4-5: But, for her age, I think she still did a good job.

The interpretation of my informants of this high *a*-attached utterance in (1b) is different from that of (1a): here, the *a*-attached utterance is not a direct modification of the previous assessment. In this excerpt, speaker M supposes that he shares a common knowledge with F. That is, both interlocutors know and agree that the quality of the player's performance can be judged positively when her age is taken into consideration. With the deployment of *a*, M shows his belief that once this piece of knowledge is activated, F will perhaps re-consider his assessment in lines 1–2.

In (1c), *la* has been replaced with *ê*.

- (1c) 1 F    tā dào    zuìhòu    hǎoxiàng    yě:=  
           3<sub>SG</sub> arrive    last    seem    also
- 2 F    =bù    shì    dǎ    de    hěn    hǎo    hoNn.  
           NEG    be    play    DE    very    good    PRT
- 3 F    [kěnéng-  
           maybe



- 4 M [kěshi- yǐ tā de niánjì zhè yàng dǎ  
but as 3<sub>SG</sub> DE age this way play
- 5 M wǒ juéde yǐjīng suàn shì búcuò le ê::.  
1<sub>SG</sub> think already count be not bad ASP PRT

F1-3: It seems that she didn't play quite well in the last few rounds, right?  
Maybe...

M4-5: But, for her age, I think she still did a good job.

According to my informants, line 5 in (1c) sounds softer than the utterances in (1a) and (1b). I believe that this interpretation results from the core function of *ê*, which is to “invite a collaborative move.” By presenting his own assessment with *ê*, M offers F a chance to challenge this foregrounded assessment. Whereas high *a* is used to activate the hearer's knowledge, *ê* indicates that the speaker does not have any presupposition about the hearer's knowledge, but s/he merely presents something s/he finds important for the current conversation. Thus, the *ê*-attached disagreement is the weakest with regard to the speaker's position or belief; it sounds most negotiable, as if saying: “But, for her age, I think she still did a good job—what is your opinion/don't you think so?”

The following examples (2a–c) illustrate the distinct use of the three UFPs in agreements. Example (2a) is taken from example (24) in chapter 5. As mentioned there, prior to this excerpt, speakers C and F have been talking about environmental protection. In line 1, C tells F that she never leaves any litter on the street.

- (2a) 1 C wǒ- wǒ juéduì bú zài wàimiàn luàn diū lèsè.  
1<sub>SG</sub> 1<sub>SG</sub> absolute NEG at outside messy throw rubbish
- 2 F ei↓ wǒ yě shì ê.  
PRT 1<sub>SG</sub> also be PRT
- 3 F [wǒ lián- wǒ lián yī zhāng <E memo E> zhǐ o,  
1<sub>SG</sub> even 1<sub>SG</sub> even one CL memo paper PRT
- 4 C [hen. zhè yī diǎn wǒ-  
PRT this one point 1<sub>SG</sub>

- C1: I- I never drop my litter on the street.  
 F2-3: ME NEITHER, even a memo note, I...  
 C4: Right, about this I-

In chapter 5, I have provided arguments in support of the claim that the use of *ê* not only highlights a positive response, but also indicates a further collaborative move, which in turn implies the speaker's collaborative attitude. Consider now the replacement of *ê* with *la*, as in (2b).

- (2b) 1 C    wǒ- wǒ juéduì    bú    zài wàimiàn luàn diū    lèsè.  
           1<sub>SG</sub> 1<sub>SG</sub> absolute NEG at outside messy throw rubbish
- 2 F    ei↓    wǒ    yě    shì    la↓.  
           PRT    1<sub>SG</sub>    also    be    PRT

- C1: I- I never drop my litter on the street.  
 F2: Me neither.

According to my informants, the most common utterance following line 2 in (2b) would be initiated by *kěshì* 'but' or *búguò* 'but'. In other words, the *la*-attached agreement introduces a following disagreement. This judgment is in line with what I mentioned in 4.5.2.1, i.e. the *la*-attached agreement is mostly followed by a disagreement, and can be seen as a "disagreement initiator."

The informants further point out that if *ê* is replaced with a high-pitch *a*, as in (2c), the information carried in this *a*-attached utterance would sound "obvious," as if saying: "you should know that I am the same."

- (2c) 1 C    wǒ- wǒ juéduì    bú    zài wàimiàn luàn diū    lèsè.  
           1<sub>SG</sub> 1<sub>SG</sub> absolute NEG at outside messy throw rubbish
- 2 F    ei↓    wǒ    yě    shì    a↑.  
           PRT    1<sub>SG</sub>    also    be    PRT

- C1: I- I never drop my litter on the street.  
 F2: Me neither.

### 6.2.2 Storytelling/reporting

The second type of context in which the high-pitch *a*, *la* or *é* occur is storytelling/reporting. The low *a* is rarely observed, except for one example (see (24) in 3.4.3) in which the speaker uses a low *a* to introduce a new topic in his own reporting turn. I categorize this use as another type of context (see discussion in 6.2.3).

In a storytelling/reporting turn, the high-pitch *a*, *la* or *é* can all be attached to an assessment, as shown in example (3a), which is taken from example (25) in chapter 3. In this example, speaker T introduces a new discourse topic (i.e. the Chu Mei-feng affair) and makes efforts to elicit a collaborative move from the interlocutor.

Given the fact that the topic was widely discussed in Taiwanese society when this conversation took place, both interlocutors are supposed to know about it. As the topic has been introduced in line 1, by making a high *a*-attached assessment, speaker T intends to activate more of the interlocutor's knowledge of this issue, and expects the interlocutor to respond according to his activated knowledge.

- (3a) 1 T      Qú Měifèng shìjiàn a↑ bú shì hěn rèmén ma?  
                   PN                    affair PRT NEG be very hot PRT
- 2 T      wǒ juéde zhè- zhè ge shì- zhè-  
                           1<sub>SG</sub> think this this CL be this
- 3 T      zhè ge- zhè ge huàtí hěn tèshū a↑.  
                   this CL this CL topic very special PRT
- 4 T      jiù shì shuō yǐqián cónglái méi yǒu fāshēng guò  
                           just be say before ever NEG have happen ASP
- 5 T      a nǐ rènwéi zěnmeyàng lei?  
                           PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> think how PRT

T1-5: The “Chu Mei-feng affair” is quite popular, isn't it? I think this- this- this- this topic is very special. I mean, something like this has never happened before. What do you think about it?

If the high *a* is replaced with *la*, as in (3b), the utterance in line 3 sounds more “assertive” according to my informants. This assessment is then not related to the speaker’s assumption to the knowledge state, but to the prominence the speaker gives to the issue in question. According to my informants, it is possible for (3b) to occur in a conversation in which the participants are discussing different topics and the question of which topic is more special.

- (3b) 1 T      Qú Měifèng shìjiàn a↑ bú shì hěn rènmén ma?  
                  PN                    affair PRT NEG be very hot PRT
- 2 T      wǒ juéde zhè- zhè ge shì- zhè-  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> think this this CL be this
- 3 T      zhè ge- zhè ge huàtí hěn tèshū la↓.  
                  this CL this CL topic very special PRT

T1-3: The “Chu Mei-feng affair” is quite popular, isn’t it? I think this-  
 this- this- this topic is very special.

If we replace *la* with *ê*, as in (3c), the resulting *ê*-attached assessment sounds softer. This interpretation is linked to the core function of *ê*, which is to invite a collaborative move. The speaker marks his/her own assessment and invites the addressee to respond, or even to challenge, as if saying: “here is my opinion, what do you think about that?”

- (3c) 1 T      Qú Měifèng shìjiàn a↑ bú shì hěn rènmén ma?  
                  PN                    affair PRT NEG be very hot PRT
- 2 T      wǒ juéde zhè- zhè ge shì- zhè-  
                  1<sub>SG</sub> think this this CL be this
- 3 T      zhè ge- zhè ge huàtí hěn tèshū ê.  
                  this CL this CL topic very special PRT

T1-3: The “Chu Mei-feng affair” is quite popular, isn’t it? I think this-  
 this- this- this topic is very special.

### 6.2.3 Topic-introduction/topic-shift

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that the high-pitch *a*, low-pitch *a* and *ê* can all be deployed in a topic-introducing turn (see 3.4.3, 3.4.4 and 5.4.2). The UFP *la* is not found in this type of context.

The following example is taken from example (24) in chapter 3. Here, M introduces a new discourse topic “origin of the name of the city the Xizhǐ” in lines 4–5, by asking whether K knows about it.

(4a) → 4 M      nǐ zhīdào yǐqián- xizhǐ      a↓,  
                          2<sub>SG</sub> know    before    PN            PRT

5 M            zhè ge xizhǐ- zhè ge- dimíng      zěnme yóulái ma?  
                          this CL PN    this CL    place.name    how    origin PRT

M4-5: Do you know, before, that Xizhǐ ...that Xizhǐ, the name of that place...where does it come from?

In chapter 3, I have shown that the low-pitch *a* is used to show the change of M’s knowledge state. That is, it is an indication that the speaker’s knowledge state has been activated due to some information given in the previous context, and a new topic comes to the speaker’s mind. The current speaker then introduces this new topic, which is related to that information, to the ongoing conversation.

Consider (4b), where the low *a* is replaced with a high *a*.

(4b) → 4 M      nǐ zhīdào yǐqián- xizhǐ      a↑,  
                          2<sub>SG</sub> know    before    PN            PRT

5 M            zhè ge xizhǐ- zhè ge- dimíng      zěnme yóulái ma?  
                          this CL PN    this CL    place.name    how    origin PRT

M4-5: Do you know, before, that Xizhǐ ...that Xizhǐ, the name of that place...where does it come from?

According to my informants, if the low-pitch *a* in line 4 is replaced by a high-pitch *a*, as shown in (4b), the utterance in line 4 would sound like reminding the addressee. That is, the speaker directs the addressee’s focus to the topic in question while introducing the new topic by trying to activate the addressee’s knowledge. As men-

tioned in chapter 5, the use of *ê* is usually triggered by something in the context that deviates from the speaker's assumption. Since there is nothing in this context which is against the speaker's assumption, it is not suitable to use *ê* here.

Example (5a) is part of example (16) in chapter 5. Prior to this excerpt, the two speakers H and L have been discussing the Chu Mei-feng scandal. Before the beginning of this excerpt, L has told H that she has no interest in this kind of political news. L's explanation in line 1 is interrupted by H's *ê*-attached utterance, with a piece of new information related to the preceding topic they have discussed several minutes ago.

(5a) 1 L      qíshí    zhèngzhì   rénwù   dàbùfèn   dōu-  
                 actually politics   figure   mostly   all

→ 2 H      wǎnglù   shàng   hái   yǒu   fēnxī   ê.  
                 internet up   still have analyze PRT

L1:    Actually most of the politicians are...

H2:    There is some analysis on the Internet.

Since *ê* has nothing to do with the speaker's presupposition about the knowledge state, but serves to foreground the utterance to which it is attached and to invite the hearer to make a collaborative move, it fits to the core function of *ê* to be attached to a piece of new information which can be unknown to the hearer.

If the *ê* is replaced with a high-pitch *a*, like in (7b), the interpretation would be different.

(5b) 1 L      qíshí    zhèngzhì   rénwù   dàbùfèn   dōu-  
                 actually politics   figure   mostly   all

→ 2 H      wǎnglù   shàng   hái   yǒu   fēnxī   a↑  
                 internet up   still have analyze PRT

L1:    Actually most of the politicians are...

H2:    There is some analysis on the Internet.

Here, according to my informants, the example is understood as follows: speaker H supposes that L should know about the fact that some analysis can be found on the

Internet. This interpretation corresponds to my analysis: with the deployment of the high *a*, H intends to activate L's knowledge. This can be regarded as a kind of "reminding." The low *a* is not compatible with the utterance in line 2, because in this context, the speaker does not need to activate his/her own knowledge.

#### 6.2.4 Answers

In contrast to the low *a*, the high *a*, *la* and *ê* can all be attached to an answer to a question (see 3.4.7, 4.5.3, and 5.4.4). I believe the reason why the low *a* does not appear in this type of context is that an answer is usually directed to the questioner. The low *a*, which indicates the activation of the speaker's own knowledge state, is therefore not compatible with this context.

The following example is part of example (25) in chapter 5. Prior to this excerpt, L has told D that she plans to make use of her boyfriend's apartment to run a language school in Xīnzhūāng, a district of New Taipei city. In this example, D asks L on which street in Xīnzhūāng the school is located.

(6a) 3 D     @@       shénme lù?  
              (laughter) what road

→ 4 L       bù zhīdào ê.  
              NEG know PRT

D3: (laughter) Which street?

L4: Don't know.

In line 4, L uses *ê* to foreground her inability to provide a satisfactory answer and shows her attempt to invite a collaborative move, as if saying: "I don't know, maybe you do?" As mentioned in chapter 5, the use of *ê* can mitigate a negative effect of an unsatisfactory response. In (6b) and (6c), the *ê* in line 4 is replaced by *la* and high *a* respectively.

- (6b) 3 D @@ shénme lù?  
 (laughter) what road
- 4 L bù zhīdào la↓.  
 NEG know PRT
- D3: (laughter) Which street?  
 L4: Don't know.

- (6c) 3 D @@ shénme lù?  
 (laughter) what road
- 4 L bù zhīdào a↑.  
 NEG know PRT
- D3: (laughter) Which street?  
 L4: Don't know.

According to the judgment of my informants, in (3b), the *la*-attached answer sounds strong, like a refusal to answer the question. Some informants think this utterance conveys the speaker's impatience. I argue that this interpretation stills results from its core function—to mark an adjustment. As discussed in chapter 4, the adjustment marked by *la* can be directed to the proposition of the question. Sometimes, as in this case, it can also be used to highlight the inappropriateness of the question itself.

On the other hand, the high *a*-attached answer in (6c) appears to imply L's presupposition: D should have known the fact that L does not know the exact address of this language school (and this piece of information needs to be activated), as if saying: "you should have known that I have no idea about the address—why do you keep asking me such a question?"

(7a) is part of example (28) in chapter 5. J asks L, who has watched a certain movie in the past, whether the movie is nice. In line 2, L attaches *ê* to his assessment on this movie.

- (7a) 1 J <S a cit4 chut4 kam2 ho2 khuann3 S>  
 PRT this CL PRT good see



→ 2 L hái bú cuò ê.  
still NEG bad PRT

J1: Is this a good movie?

L2: Not bad.

I have argued previously that the use of *ê* here creates an opportunity for further collaboration (for instance, to take the following turn and say something relevant) by foregrounding the assessment in line 2. If the speaker does not add *ê* here, the utterance sounds more assertive. If *ê* is replaced by *la* or a high *a*, as in (7b) or (7c), the interpretation will be different.

(7b) 1 J <S a cit4 chut4 kam2 ho2 khuann3 S>  
PRT this CL PRT good see

→ 2 L hái bú cuò la↓.  
still NEG bad PRT

J1: Is this a good movie?

L2: Not bad.

(7c) 1 J <S a cit4 chut4 kam2 ho2 khuann3 S>  
PRT this CL PRT good see

→ 2 L hái bú cuò a↑.  
still NEG bad PRT

J1: Is this a good movie?

L2: Not bad.

My informants feel that although the content of the answer is positive, the *la*-attached utterance in (7b) implies that the speaker is not fully satisfied with that movie. Some said it sounds like a disagreement-initiator, anticipating the speaker's subsequent negative assessment. This is in accordance with the proposed core function of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin: *la*-attachment to an answer indicates that the proposition of the question needs to be adjusted.

According to my informants, the *a*-attached answer in (7c) sounds self-evident. I argue that this overtone of “obviousness” can be attributed to the core function of the high *a*: L presupposes that J should have known his opinion about the movie.

### 6.2.5 Requests

The last type of context I would like to discuss is request. In my data, only *la* and the high *a* can be used with requests. Example (8a) is taken from (28) in chapter 4. M and F are describing one of their mutual friends H to C, who does not know her.

(8a) 1 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yīxià tā de dǎbàn. tā de jūzhǐ xíngwéi.  
2<sub>SG</sub> first say a.while 3<sub>SG</sub> DE dress up 3<sub>SG</sub> DE behavior behavior

2 F      e:: tā jiù shì nà zhǒng en:  
uh 3<sub>SG</sub> just be that kind uh

→ 3 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yīxià wàimào la↓.  
2<sub>SG</sub> first say while appearance PRT

4 F      ou. hěn shànyú sànfā mèili de nǚshēng la↓.  
PRT very good.in distribute charm DE woman PRT

M1: First talk about how she dresses up, and her behavior.

F2: Uh...she is that kind of...uh...

M3: About her appearance.

F4: Oh. She is the kind of woman who is good in displaying her charm.

I have mentioned in chapter 4 that the *la*-attached request in line 3 is to show M’s intention to adjust F’s move and her attempts to draw F’s attention to this adjustment. The high *a* can also be used in the same context, as shown in (8b).

(8b) 1 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yīxià tā de dǎbàn. tā de jūzhǐ xíngwéi.  
2<sub>SG</sub> first say a.while 3<sub>SG</sub> DE dress up 3<sub>SG</sub> DE behavior behavior

2 F      e:: tā jiù shì nà zhǒng en:  
uh 3<sub>SG</sub> just be that kind uh

- 3 M      nǐ xiān jiǎng yīxià wàimào    a↑.  
                  2<sub>SG</sub> first say    while appearance PRT
- 4 F      ou. hěn shànyú sànfā      mèili de nǚshēng la↓.  
                  PRT very good.in distribute charm DE woman PRT
- M1:      Let us first talk about how she dresses up, and her behavior.  
 F2:      Uh...she is that kind of...uh...  
 M3:      About her appearance.  
 F4:      Oh. She is the kind of woman who is good in displaying her  
                  charm.

The *a*-attached request yields a different interpretation than (8a). Compared to (8a), which sounds like a direct command, the *a*-attached request in (8b) sounds like a reminder or a suggestion, telling the hearer where to start her description.

This judgment still fits what I propose for the core function of the high *a*: to activate the addressee's knowledge. As both M and F know the friend F describes, they share knowledge about this friend. With the deployment of *a*, M shows her attempt to activate part of F's knowledge (i.e. the friend's appearance) and displays her expectation that F accepts her request with that piece of activated knowledge.

### 6.2.6 Questions

Among the UFPs discussed in this study, only the low *a* and *la* are attached to questions. As mentioned in chapter 3, *a* can be suffixed to a piece of information concerning what the previous speaker has said and form a question (i.e. the *a*-formulated question, as termed by R. Wu (2004)), or directly to a question (i.e. *a*-attached question, *ibid.*). I argue that a low *a*-attached question is usually triggered by the discourse context. The deployment of *a* in this type of context serves to signal that the speaker's own knowledge has been activated by prior context.

Unlike *a*, which can be attached to a piece of information and form a question; the simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin can only be attached to a question directly. When *la* is used after a question, as mentioned in chapter 4, the question is no longer a question, but a comment, carrying the speaker's belief and attitude towards the proposition. In other words, it functions rhetorically.

Example (9a) is taken from (25) in chapter 4. Here, F asks H to tell her how she got acquainted with her husband. In line 2, H attaches a *la* to the question *shuō*

*shénme* ‘what to say’. However, according the following utterances in line 3, it is clear that H refuses F’s request to tell her own love story. The *la*-attached question in line 2 does not serve to solicit any information, but functions as a rhetorical question and conveys the speaker’s attitude towards F’s request.

(9a) 1 F        *shuō shuō kàn nǐmen zěnmē rènshì de.*  
          say say see 2<sub>PL</sub> how kow DE

→ 2 H        *shuō shénme la↓?!*  
          say what PRT

3 H        *bú yào zhèyàngzi.*  
          NEG want like.this

F1:        Try to say how... how it was that you two first got to know each other?

H2-3:      What (the hell) should I say? Don’t be like this.

If we replace the *la* with a low *a*, as in (9b), according to my informants, the *a*-attached question would very likely be followed by F’s answer. In other words, it would not be a rhetorical question. This judgment is in line with what I discussed in 3.4.1. The *a*-attached question is triggered by the previous context (in this example, F’s request in line 1) and signals that part of the speaker’s own knowledge has been activated by the prior context (in this case, H realizes that she has to say something about her). By raising this question, H indicates that F should clarify what she expects H to say. The *a*-attached question is therefore a result of the activation of H’s knowledge.

(9b) 1 F        *shuō shuō kàn nǐmen zěnmē rènshì de.*  
          say say see 2<sub>PL</sub> how kow DE

→ 2 H        *shuō shénme a↓?*  
          say what PRT

F1:        Try to say how... how it was that you two first got to know each other?

H2:        What to say?

Example (10a) is an excerpt from example (22) in chapter 3. Prior to this conversation, R has told S about her friend C, who is known for her conservative attitude. In order to clarify C's conservative attitude, R gives an example that she once went to an open-air hot spring with C and C's boyfriend. They were so conservative that they even wore swimming suits.

(10a) → 8 S    en nà zhèyàng xǐ    ge shénme a↓?  
                   eh that this.way wash CL what    PRT

9 R    xǐ    wēnquán a↑.  
           wash hot.spring PRT

S8:    Eh...what kind of bath do they take like this?

R9:    Hot spring.

As mentioned in chapter 3, S's *a*-attached question in line 8 is triggered by the activation of his own knowledge during the previous conversation. Compare this example with (10b).

(10b) → 8 S    en nà zhèyàng xǐ    ge shénme la↓?  
                   eh that this.way wash CL what    PRT

S8:    Eh...what kind of bath do they take like this?

My informants confirm that compared to (10a), (10b) sounds like a comment, as if the speaker would say: 'it's ridiculous to take bath the way they do'. In other words, the *la*-attached question becomes a rhetorical question.

### 6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have compared the use of different UFPs in various types of context. The contrastive analysis of the UFP is based on native-speaker judgments of my Taiwanese informants. The result ties in with my proposed core functions of the three UFPs: the high *a* is used to activate the speaker's knowledge; the low *a* indicates the activation of the speaker's own knowledge; the simplex *la* serves to mark an explicit or implicit adjustment, and *ê* is employed to invite a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which it is attached.

## Chapter 7

### UFPs in Taiwan and language contact

#### 7.1 Introduction

In chapters 3–6, I have discussed the functions of the three Taiwan Mandarin UFPs *a*, *la* and *ê* in conversation. In this chapter, I take a closer look at these three UFPs and discuss their emergence in Taiwan Mandarin on the basis of the socio-historical and linguistic background of the formation of today's Taiwan Mandarin introduced in chapter 2. I propose that the UFP *la* is a result of “imposition” (Van Coetsem 1988, Winford 2005) from Southern Mǐn, whereas Mandarin *a* is relexified (Lefebvre 1998, 2001) due to the influence of Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. The UFP *ê*, which neither exists in Mandarin nor in Southern Mǐn, has possibly been imported to Taiwan Mandarin from Jiāng-Huái Mandarin. Besides discussing the influence of different Sinitic varieties on Taiwan Mandarin, I take *a* as an example to illustrate the reverse influence of Mandarin on Taiwan Southern Mǐn. Lastly, I look at the possible motivation for a Taiwan Mandarin speaker when it comes to the choice between a Mandarin UFP and a non-Mandarin one when both are available.

#### 7.2 The emergence of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs *la*, *a* and *ê*

##### 7.2.1 An imposed UFP in Taiwan Mandarin: *la*

When languages are in contact, the transfer of features is unavoidable. Van Coetsem (1988: 3) distinguishes two types of transfer, *borrowing* and *imposition*, which can be explained by “agentivity,” i.e. the agent of transfer:

The role of the speaker is of crucial importance to our definitions of *borrowing* and *imposition*. From the viewpoint of a speaker who comes in active contact with another language, there is a *source language* and a *recipient language*. If the recipient language speaker is the agent, as in the case of an English speaker using French words while speaking English, the transfer of material (and this naturally includes structure) from the source language to the recipient language is *borrowing* (*recipient language agentivity*). If, on the other hand, the source language speaker is the agent, as in the case of a French speaker using his French articulatory habits while speaking English, the transfer of material from the source language to the recipient language is *imposition* (*source language agentivity*). (original italics)

As mentioned in chapter 2, Southern Mǐn is the most influential Sinitic variety in Taiwan. According to DoS (2002), 76.9 percent of Taiwan's population has a Southern Mǐn language background. Many Taiwanese people are Mandarin-Southern Mǐn bilinguals. Nowadays, Southern Mǐn is still widespread in southern Taiwan and is used as the main language of communication in private settings.

It is thus reasonable to assume that, in the 1950s, when Taiwan Southern Mǐn speakers (the agents of the source language) learned Mandarin as a second language, it was natural for them to *impose* features (or, material, in Van Coetsem's (1988) terms) of Taiwan Southern Mǐn, the source language, to Mandarin, the recipient language. Van Coetsem (ibid.) claims that "the transfer of material from the source language to the recipient language primarily concerns less stable domains, particularly vocabulary, in borrowing, and more stable domains, particularly phonological entities, in imposition." Nonetheless lexical imposition can still occur. In his study on the imposition of Cantonese on Mandarin, Chen (2011: 96) claims that Cantonese speakers often impose words from Cantonese to Mandarin while speaking Mandarin.

In chapter 4, I presented an analysis of the use of UFP *la* in Taiwan Mandarin. As mentioned, the use of *la* in Taiwan Mandarin can be divided into two types: fused *la* and simplex *la*. My observation confirms P. Wu's (2005) observation that the use of fused *la* in Taiwan Mandarin corresponds to the use of *la* in mainland Mandarin. The use of simplex *la*, on the other hand, corresponds to the use of *la* in Southern Mǐn. I argue that, analogous to the imposition of Cantonese words reported by Chen's (2011: 96), the use of simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin can be regarded as an example of lexical imposition. That is, while learning (and speaking) Mandarin, Southern Mǐn speakers transfer the property of *la* from Southern Mǐn (the source language) to Mandarin (the recipient language).

At an earlier stage of the contact situation, the imposition of simplex *la* may be regarded as code-switching by speakers with a Southern Mǐn background. Nowadays, however, the use of *la* is no longer code-switching since *la* has been fully incorporated into the Taiwan Mandarin UFP system. Providing criteria for judging whether a language element is a code-switch, Thomason (2001:133) claims that "if monolingual speakers of the receiving language use a source language element in speaking their language, it is probably safe to conclude that that element has become an interference feature: speakers cannot code-switch to or from a language they do not know at all."

Apparently, *la* is not the only item involved in this kind of lexical imposition. It is common to hear people in Taiwan use other Southern Mǐn UFPs such as *hoNn* or *hioh* while speaking Mandarin (for a detailed list, see table 2.1). However, compared to *hoNn* and *hioh*, the use of which is more restricted to speakers with a Southern Mǐn background, *la* is also used by speakers who do not have a Southern Mǐn background, such as Hakka speakers or Mandarin monolinguals.

For these non-Southern Mǐn speakers, the use of *la* may result from “passive familiarity” (Thomason 2001: 139), meaning that “a speaker acquires a feature from a language that s/he understands (at least to some extent) but has never spoken actively at all” (ibid.). A factor accelerating the acquisition of *la* may lie in the phonetic similarity between the Southern Mǐn *la* (i.e. the simplex *la*) and Mandarin *la* (i.e. the fused *la*). As mentioned in chapter 2, I believe that the analogy, or similarity, with regard to form and function, may be an important factor facilitating the transfer (see Van Hell and De Groot’s (1998) discussion about cognates and language contact). On the other hand, Southern Mǐn UFPs lacking a formal counterpart in Mandarin, such as *hoNn* and *hioh*, are not perceived as Mandarin elements. All my Taiwanese informants believe that the deployment of *hoNn* or *hioh* in Mandarin conversation is a salient feature of Southern Mǐn-accented Mandarin. However, they do not associate *la* with Southern Mǐn-accented Mandarin.

### 7.2.2 A relexified UFP in Taiwan Mandarin: *a*

In chapter 3, I showed that the use of UFP *a* in today’s Taiwan Mandarin deviates to some extent from its “normative” use in standard Mandarin. For example, the attachment of high-pitch *a* to a discourse topic is not accepted by mainland Mandarin speakers (for details see 3.4.4). The high *a* can, however, be used in Southern Mǐn to mark a discourse topic. I therefore propose that this use in Taiwan Mandarin results from Southern Mǐn-Mandarin language contact.

In the previous section, I argued that the simplex *la* can be seen as a result of lexical imposition from Southern Mǐn onto Taiwan Mandarin. As simplex *la* does not exist in mainland Mandarin, it is fully imposed: the transfer includes all the features of Southern Mǐn *la*. The UFP *a*, on the other hand, exists in both mainland Mandarin and Southern Mǐn (see table 2.1). Given the fact that *a* has distinct functions in both varieties, the emergence of Taiwan Mandarin *a* is not simple lexical imposition, but has traits of relexification (Lefebvre 1998, 2001). In her discussion of creole genesis, Lefebvre (1998, 2001) proposes that relexification plays a central role in creole genesis:



The lexical entries of the lexicons of the substratum languages are copied, and the phonological representations in these copied lexical entries are replaced with phonological representations derived from the phonetic strings of the superstratum language or by null forms. The second step is referred to as relabelling. The choice of the pertinent phonetic string in the superstratum language to relabel a copied lexical entry is based on their use in specific semantic and pragmatic contexts such that [...] the semantics of the superstratum string must have something in common with the semantics of the substratum lexical entry that is being relabelled. (Lefebvre 2001: 11)

Lien (2010: 195) has extended Lefebvre's relexification to language contact in more general terms. He suggests that

if two languages are in contact, a lexical entry in the target language is selected and relabeled, i.e. this lexical entry receives semantic and syntactical features of the source language (Lefebvre 1988). The lexical entry selected from the target language must have something in common with respect to the semantic and syntactical features of the source language.

If we extend this definition to the pragmatic functions of the UFPs under discussion here, then it seems reasonable to postulate that the high-pitch *a* in Taiwan Mandarin can be accounted for in terms of relexification: Taiwan Mandarin high-pitch *a* and Taiwan Southern M̃n high-pitch *a* are similar with regard to their syntactic positions (both are in utterance-final position), pragmatic functions (as shown in 3.4.4, they can be used in similar contexts), and phonological representations.

Before closing this section, I return to 3.4.3 where I gave an example demonstrating how a low-pitch *a* is used to introduce a discourse topic. In contrast to the high-pitch use, this use is acceptable for mainland Mandarin speakers. In other words, in my Taiwan Mandarin data, the low-pitch and high-pitch *a* are both found to introduce a discourse topic. As Thomason (2001: 85–88) states, when two languages are in contact, the interference may lead to the loss of an existing feature, the addition of a new feature, or a replacement in the recipient language. It seems that in the case of Taiwan Mandarin *a*, the use of high-pitch *a* in discourse-topic introduction is an additional feature. Its emergence has not (or not yet) lead to the loss of the low-pitch *a* in the same context. One possible explanation for the co-existence is that the high-pitch *a* carries a different function (i.e. to activate the ad-

dressee's knowledge state) from low-pitch *a* (i.e. to show the activation of the speaker's own knowledge) when introducing the discourse topic.

### 7.2.3 An imported UFP in Taiwan Mandarin: *ê*

As shown in table 2.1, the UFP *ê*, despite of its frequent use in Taiwan Mandarin, neither exists in standard Mandarin (i.e. *guóyǔ* in Taiwan or *pǔtōnghuà* in mainland China)<sup>1</sup> nor in Southern Mǐn. In both standard Mandarin and Southern Mǐn, the particle *ê* is commonly used at utterance-initial position, and functions as an interjection. The following examples are taken from a normative dictionary published in mainland China, the *Xiàndài Hànyǔ cídiǎn* 'Contemporary Chinese Dictionary' (CASS 2010: 358)<sup>2</sup>:

- (1) a. *ē, nǐ kuài lái!*  
PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> quick come  
'Hey, come here quickly!'
- b. *é, tā zěnmē zǒu le?*  
PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> why go PRT  
'How come he left?'
- c. *ě, nǐ zhè huà kě bù duì ya!*  
PRT 2<sub>SG</sub> this word but NEG right PRT  
'Come on, what you said is not correct!'
- d. *è, wǒ zhè jiù lái!*  
PRT 1<sub>SG</sub> this just come  
'Okay, I will come in a moment!'

Like in standard Mandarin, the Southern Mǐn particle *ê* [ɛ] also occurs in utterance-initial position only and not in utterance-final position. Example (2) is taken from Tung (2001: 318):

<sup>1</sup> Huang et al. (1997: 152) also claim that *ê*, when occurring in utterance-final position, is not used in standard Mandarin.

<sup>2</sup> According to CASS (2010: 358), the utterance-initial *ê* [ɛ] can also be pronounced as *ei* [eɪ]. The normative dictionaries in Taiwan, for example, He (1987) and MoE (1994), likewise write that *ê* is used in utterance-initial position.

- (2) <S e5, i1 kong2 an3ne1 kam2 tioh8? S>  
 PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> say this.way whether right  
 ‘Is it right that he said it this way?’

If the utterance-final *ê* neither exists in standard Mandarin nor in Southern Mǐn, how has it emerged in Taiwan Mandarin? Does it originate from another Sinitic variety?

If it is true that *ê* comes from another Sinitic variety, it is reasonable to assume that *ê* was first used by the first-generation mainland immigrants. If this assumption is correct, then *ê* must be attested in the Mandarin spoken by first-generation migrants from the Mainland. Since no spoken corpora were established at that time, I relied on radio plays. As mentioned in chapter 2, immigrants from the mainland controlled the mass media in Taiwan before the lifting of Martial Law in 1987. As also mentioned in chapter 2, only 7.7 percent of the employees of the *Broadcasting Corporation of China*, the main radio station in Taiwan, were local non-mainlanders (see Cheng: 1988: 99). In order to test my hypothesis, I checked two episodes of a radio play recorded in the 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

I found that the UFP *ê* is used in both episodes. The fact that the almost all of the speakers and authors of these plays are mainlanders supports my hypothesis that *ê* must have been in use in the initial phase of Mandarin-Southern Mǐn language contact. I then interviewed 13 mainland Chinese persons with distinct dialect backgrounds in order to locate the possible source language of *ê* geographically. All these informants confirmed that *ê* is not used in the standard Mandarin in China (i.e. *pǔtōnghuà*).<sup>4</sup> Significantly, among the 13 informants, only Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers coming from Ānhuī, Northern Jiāngsū and Nánjīng city confirm that they use the UFP *ê* when speaking Mandarin.<sup>5</sup> This appears to correspond to what Chao

<sup>3</sup> The titles of these two radio plays are: *Wàn rén bǎotǎ* ‘A precious tower made by ten thousand people’ and *Shēng cái yǒu dào* ‘There’s a way to make fortune’. They were both produced by the *Broadcasting Corporation of China* in the 1960s.

<sup>4</sup> Although some of them admit that they occasionally use short *ê*-attached phrases such as *bù zhīdào ê* ‘I don’t know’ or *méiyǒu ê* ‘no’, they believe that this kind of usage results from the influence of Taiwan TV drama series, which are very popular in mainland China.

<sup>5</sup> Note that although the Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers accept the use of *ê* to some extent, all of my mainland informants do not accept *ye* and judge it “Taiwanese-accented.”

(1926: 905) and R. Li (1995: 107) report about the use of the UFP  $\varepsilon$  in the Nánjīng dialect. Examples (3a) to (3c) are quoted from Chao (ibid.):<sup>6</sup>

- (3) a. pu    ʃi   tsəmə   tsə   də   ɛ!  
       NEG be so       do DE PRT  
       ‘It should not be done in this way!’
- b. t’a   piŋ   mɛ   jə   ki   ɛ!  
       3<sub>SG</sub> at.all NEG have go PRT  
       ‘He didn’t go!’
- c. pu    ʃi   tɛ’i   lə   dʒiu   suan   lə   ɛ!  
       NEG be eat ASP just count ASP PRT  
       ‘Don’t think you can get away with eating it!’

Although Chao (1926) does not provide any conversational contexts for these examples, he mentions that these utterances are used as disagreements, which is similar to what we have discussed in 5.4.3. The examples below are taken from R. Li (1995: 107). He maintains that the UFP  $\varepsilon$  in the Nánjīng dialect can be attached to a declarative sentence (see (4a)), or an imperative sentence (see (4b)).

- (4) a. ni    ʃi   kanpu   ɛ,  
       2<sub>SG</sub> be cadre PRT
- tsəmə   nəŋ   dʒiaŋ   tsə   tsəŋ   pu   futsərən   di   hua?  
       how can say this CL NEG responsible DE saying  
       ‘You are a cadre. How could you say such irresponsible things?’
- b. pu    jau   kuaŋ   dʒiaŋ   hua,   tɛ<sup>h</sup>i   tɛ<sup>h</sup>ai   ɛ!  
       NEG must only say saying eat dish PRT  
       ‘Don’t just talk, eat!’

My informant from Nánjīng confirms that the use of  $\varepsilon$  in examples (3a–c) and (4a) is quite similar to the use of  $\acute{\varepsilon}$  in Taiwan Mandarin:  $\varepsilon$  is also triggered by a situation

<sup>6</sup> The examples in Chao (1926) are written in Chinese characters. I have transcribed the examples in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) without tones according to the pronunciation of my informant from Nánjīng.

which deviates from the speaker's assumption. By using  $\varepsilon$ , the speaker foregrounds the utterance to which it is attached. Although the  $\varepsilon$ -attached utterance in (4a) is followed by a question, my informant said that the following utterance need not be explicitly uttered. I thus argue that example (4a) can still be considered a case similar to the  $\acute{e}$ -attached disagreement discussed in 5.4.3.<sup>7</sup>

Except for Nánjīng, the UFP  $\varepsilon$  also exists in some other Chinese dialects in Ānhuī, Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng provinces, for example, Yángzhōu and Jīnhuá dialects. Examples (5a) and (5b) are taken from R. Li (1996a: 108 and 1996b: 123).

- (5) a.   lii   suo? sən̄mən? o   t'ij̄ pə?   tɕ<sup>h</sup>iŋts<sup>h</sup>u   ɛ!  
           2<sub>SG</sub> say what   1<sub>SG</sub> hear NEG clear   PRT  
           'What did you say? I could not hear it clearly!'
- b.   kə? kə? tifaŋ   kɤsiŋ   ɛ!  
           this CL place clean   PRT  
           'This place is clean!'

The dialect data above provide additional support for my claim that the UFP  $\acute{e}$  was possibly first imposed on Mandarin by people from the Nánjīng and Ānhuī/Jiāngsū/Zhèjiāng area and was then imported to Taiwan by the Mandarin spoken by these first-generation mainland immigrants. As mentioned in chapter 2, people from Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng had high positions in education, politics and economy (cf. Ang 1992: 239–240, Tang 1999). In previous studies, Wú dialects have been mentioned as one important lexical contributor to Taiwan Mandarin (cf. Tang 2002). In addition, Jiāng-Huái Mandarin, spoken “in central Ānhuī, and Jiāngsū north of Yangtze, as well as in the region of Nánjīng” (Norman 1988: 191), has obviously also played a role in the formation of Taiwan Mandarin UFP system.

<sup>7</sup> I have not found the “imperative” use in example (4b) in my Taiwan Mandarin data. It is not easy to explain why only certain functions have been transferred and others not. The partial transfer of functions is in line with Matras and Sakel's (2007: 835–6) claim that the “outcome [of contact-induced change] need not, however, be a one-to-one correspondence between form and function throughout the construction.” For Taiwan Mandarin  $\acute{e}$ , we can merely identify this incongruity. Since Taiwan Mandarin  $\acute{e}$  results from different stages of language contact involving different varieties, more data would be required to ascertain exactly when and under what circumstances a certain function of the source language, i.e. marking imperatives, has been dropped.

### 7.3 Influence of Mandarin on Southern Mǐn: *a*

My discussion in section 7.2 focused on the influence from Southern Mǐn and other Sinitic varieties on the emergence of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs. My conclusion is, in brief, that simplex *la* is the result of lexical imposition from Southern Mǐn, *a* is the result of relexification due to the influence of Southern Mǐn, and *ê* is an UFP imported by the Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers. In this section, I will discuss the influence in a reverse way: Has Mandarin also influenced the use of Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFPs?

In previous literature on language contact, the mutual interference is regarded as a common situation. Thomason (2001:76) states that “it is fairly easy to find examples of mutual interference,[...]” As Heine and Kuteva (2005:4) also mention, “the term model language [i.e. language which provides the model of transfer] and replica language [i.e. language which makes use of that model] are relative notions, in that a given language can be associated with both roles.” Although the degree of mutual influence is not easy to define, instances of interference from Mandarin in Southern Mǐn have been discussed in some previous studies.

Luo (2005: 12), for example, claims that due to Mandarin influence of, sound changes in Southern Mǐn spoken by the younger generation in Taiwan have occurred. One example is the voiced bilabial stop [b] in Southern Mǐn, which is often replaced by the bilabial nasal [m]: the word *paq1baq5* ‘to help’ is pronounced as *paq1maq5*. Luo (ibid.: 16) believes that this phenomenon is a kind of “wrong analogy.” As the voiced bilabial stop [b] only exists in Southern Mǐn and not in Mandarin, speakers who are more proficient in Taiwan Mandarin and less proficient in Southern Mǐn take one bilabial consonant in Mandarin [m] to replace the original consonant [b]. Examining the lexical influence of language policies on Taiwanese novel-writing, C. Li (2008: 65) claims that “Mandarin influence increased due to the KMT’s Mandarin language policy” and “an increase of Mandarin loanwords is evidence of the impact of the Mandarin-only policy even on those who consciously resist its influence” (ibid.: 77).

In his study on Taiwan Southern Mǐn personal pronouns, Tsai (2011: 41) divides his 60 informants into three equal-sized groups: (i) older generation, who are older than 65 and only proficient in Southern Mǐn; (ii) middle-age generation, who are between 36 and 60. Members of this group have been educated in Mandarin, but their daily-used language is Southern Mǐn; in other words, all members in this group are Southern Mǐn-dominant. Group (iii) represents the young generation aged between 20 and 35. Members of this group have also been educated in Mandarin, but

still use Southern Mǐn at home. Tsai assumes that members of this group may be more proficient in Mandarin, or equal-proficient in Mandarin and Southern Mǐn.

Tsai (*ibid.*: 71) found out that the members of the middle-age and young generation cannot distinguish the different meanings of Southern Mǐn personal pronouns. For instance, *guan2* ‘my, our’ in Southern Mǐn can refer to both singular and plural first person pronoun when it has a possessive interpretation before a noun: *guan2 ma1-ma1* ‘my mother, our mother’. However, in Mandarin, there is a clear distinction between singular and plural pronouns. Therefore speakers of these two groups apply the Mandarin distinction when speaking Southern Mǐn and believe that *guan2* only stands for the plural. Tsai (*ibid.*: 72) thus claims that “the Southern Mǐn-Mandarin bilinguals are influenced by Mandarin when they recognize the Southern Mǐn personal pronoun.”

In the case of utterance-final particles, the influence of Mandarin can also be observed. Liang (2004: 90) notes that some younger generation speakers in Taiwan use the Mandarin question UFP *ma* when posing a question in Southern Mǐn.

Chung (2007: 473) also observes that the Mandarin UFP *ma* and *ba* are often used by the younger generation in Taiwan when speaking Southern Mǐn. The following examples in Southern Mǐn are taken from Chung (*ibid.*), with my glosses. Examples (6a) and (6c) are commonly used in Taiwan nowadays, whereas (6b) and (6d) are the ‘pure’ Southern Mǐn equivalents.

- (6) a.      si5kan1 u7      kau3      ma?  
           time    have    enough PRT  
           ‘Do we have enough time?’
- b.      si5kan1 u7      kau3      bo?  
           time    have    enough NEG  
           ‘Do we have enough time?’
- c.      i1    kho2 ling5 e7    lai5      ba.  
           3<sub>SG</sub> possible    will come    PRT  
           ‘Perhaps he will come.’
- d.      i1    kho2 ling5 e7    lai5      hoNn/la.  
           3<sub>SG</sub> possible    will come    PRT  
           ‘Perhaps he will come.’

Of the three UFPs analyzed in this study, *a* is the only one that originally exists in Mandarin. When comparing the use of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin and in Southern Mǐn, it turns out that most if not all usages are attested in both varieties. This leads to the question as how to identify directions of language contact in the use of *a*. In the case of the two Mandarin UFPs *ma* and *ba*, matters are more straightforward: they originally did not exist in Southern Mǐn and they were imposed by younger Taiwan Southern Mǐn speakers who were more proficient in Mandarin. Against this backdrop I assume that a similar process may account for the use of the UFP *a* in Taiwan Southern Mǐn.

In order to test this hypothesis, it is necessary to clarify what the original use of Taiwan Southern Mǐn *a* was, i.e. the use of *a* prior to contact with Mandarin. I have therefore pursued a diachronic comparison by looking at data documented during the period 1930–1950 and data provided by I. Li (1999). Examples (7a)–(7g) are collected from Higashikata (1931), Ogawa (1931) and X. Li (1950).<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of comparison, I divide the examples below according to I. Li's (1999) functional categories. According to my re-categorization, the UFP *a* in Southern Mǐn in the period 1930–1950 can occur in questions, exclamatives, imperatives, vocatives, agreement/disagreement and declaratives:

(7) a. Questions (Higashikata 1931: 1–2)

to2ui7 a?  
 where PRT  
 'Where?'

b. Exclamatives (Ogawa 1931: 1)

sui2 a!  
 beautiful PRT  
 'It's beautiful!'

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<sup>8</sup> The original example sentences and explanations presented by Higashikata (1931), Ogawa (1931) and X. Li (1950) are in Japanese and Chinese. Transcriptions, glosses and English translations are mine.



## c. Imperatives (Ogawa 1931: 1)

khi3 a!  
 go PRT  
 ‘Go!’

## d. Vocatives (Higashikata 1931: 1–2)

a1pa5 a!  
 father PRT  
 ‘Dad!’

## e. Agreement (X. Li 1950: 394)

tioh8 a!  
 right PRT  
 ‘Right!’

## f. Disagreement (X. Li 1950: 394)

an3ne1 be7 sai2leh0 a!  
 this NEG do PRT  
 ‘This will not do!’

## g. Declaratives (X. Li 1950: 394, 406)

co3 lang5 cong2 ai3 u7 chun5 thian1li2 a!  
 do person always must have preserve natural.principle PRT  
 ‘As human beings, people must follow the natural principle!’

ce1 hue1 sit8cai7 ue7 a cin1 sui2 a!  
 this flower really paint DE really beautiful PRT  
 ‘This flower is painted beautifully!’

In comparison to the examples above, I. Li’s (1999) data contain more categories. She (*ibid.*: 134) claims that the low-pitch UFP *a3* can be used in the contexts of “reception of information.” She points out that this particle can be used after *an3ne1*

‘in this way’, to show “the speaker’s reception of what the addressee X just said, and may sometimes be further taken as his request for the addressee’s confirmation on the validity of the message.” Example (8) is taken from I. Li (ibid., my transcription).

- (8) 1 A a in1 kiann2 to7 hoNn, <M bă M> ciong1 in1 tau1=  
 PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> son just PRT BA BA 3<sub>SG</sub> home
- 2 A =soo2u7 e5 cai5san2 long2 khi3 chong3 khui1 cit8 king1,..  
 all DE property all go make open one CL
- 3 A chiau1kip4 chi7tionn5, cin1 toa7 king1 an3ne1.  
 super market really big CL like.this
- 4 B an3ne1 a3?  
 like.this PRT
- 5 A a in1 lau7bu2 to7 huan2tui3 la.  
 PRT 3<sub>SG</sub> mother just OPPOSE PRT

A1-3: And her son just, took, took all the possessions of their family to open, open a, supermarket, a really big one, like this.

B4: Like this?

A5: And their mother just objected to it.

Interestingly, in her study on the discourse functions of *an3ne1* in Taiwan Southern Mĭn, Chang (2002: 106) claims that when *an3ne1* occurs “in a reply to acknowledge the previous speaker’s speech,” it is “followed by a final particle *o/ho<sup>n</sup>/hio* (i.e. *o/hoNn/hioh*).” In other words, when *an3ne1* occurs in the context “reception of information,” it is usually followed by other particles such as *o*, *hoNn*, or *hioh*. My Taiwan Southern Mĭn informants, who are over 50 and fully proficient in Taiwan Southern Mĭn, also find it more natural to use *o/ho<sup>n</sup>/hio* in this context instead of *a3*.

How can we explain the differences between the observations by different scholars concerning the use of UFP in the context of “reception of information”? One obvious explanation is the influence of Mandarin. The use in (8) mentioned by I. Li (1999) is quite similar to what I observed for Mandarin (Lin 2003: 80–81): the low-pitch Mandarin UFP *a* can be used in exactly the same context (i.e. the

reception of information). We may thus assume that this function was imposed on Southern Mǐn by younger speakers who are more proficient in Mandarin.

So far I have demonstrated the mutual influence between Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn in the use of UFPs. In 7.2.2, I have proposed that the “non-normative” use of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is due to influence by Southern Mǐn. However, as discussed in this section, Southern Mǐn has also changed due to constant contact with Mandarin. Southern Mǐn speakers, on the one hand, have transferred Southern Mǐn functions of *a* to Mandarin. On the other hand, they have also transferred the function of Mandarin *a* to Southern Mǐn. It is not possible to tell whether the use of UFP *a* in both Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwan Southern Mǐn will converge in the future. However, it is undeniable that the use of *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is getting closer to Southern Mǐn and not to standard.

#### 7.4 Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP in Taiwan Mandarin: *nê*

As listed in table 2.1, many Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFPs, such as *hoNn*, *lê* or *nê*, are found in my Taiwan Mandarin spoken data, although the degree varies depending on each speaker’s idiolect. In the last section, I will discuss the use of one of these Southern Mǐn UFPs *nê*, and compare its use with Taiwan Mandarin UFP *ê* in the same contexts.

The reason why I make such a comparison is that, while working on my data, I noticed that many instances of *nê* are seemingly replaceable with *ê*.<sup>9</sup> For example, in (9), the daughter D suggests that her mother M, who is in her sixties, should walk to a department store. Here, speaker M attaches *nê* to her assessment in line 2, which is based on the information “it’s far to walk there,” which M thinks may be neglected by D.

- (9) 1 D            qíshí    nǐ    kěyǐ zǒulù qù ê!  
                       actually 2<sub>SG</sub> can walk go PRT
- 2 M            zǒulù mán yuǎn de    nê!  
                       walk quite far    DE    PRT

<sup>9</sup> There are two kinds of *nê* [nɛ] in my data: a high-pitch *nê* and a low-pitch *nê*. In my Taiwan Mandarin data, out of a total of 25 instances of *nê*, 16 instances are low-pitch *nê* and 9 instances are high-pitch *nê*. According to my informants from Taiwan, all the occurrences of low-pitch *nê* and *ê* are interchangeable, whereas the occurrences of high-pitch *nê* cannot be substituted by *ê*. In this section, only the occurrences of the low-pitch *nê* are discussed.

3 D      wǒ- wǒ   shì- dōu   shì   zǒulù de   a↑!  
           1<sub>SG</sub> 1<sub>SG</sub>   be   all   be   walk DE   PRT

D1:      Actually you can go by walking!

M2:      It's far to walk there!

D3:      I...I always go by walking!

My Taiwan Mandarin informants also confirm that the *nê* in line 2 can be replaced by *ê* and that the replacement does not lead to any different interpretation. This judgment leads to a question: if the *nê* and *ê* are interchangeable, what was the motivation for the speaker to use *nê* instead of *ê*?

One reason of such a direct imposition of the Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *nê* may be the speakers' lack of proficiency in Mandarin, as Chen (2011: 93) argues. In the 21-minute conversation preceding and following this excerpt, speaker M, who is in her sixties, switches to Southern Mǐn from time to time. Judging from her age and her behavior in the conversation, it is very likely that she is probably less proficient in Mandarin. However, language proficiency alone cannot explain the choice of languages, as the following examples show.

In (10), the female speaker F, who is in her thirties, attaches *nê* to the phrase *wàngjì le* 'I forgot', which indicates that she does not have sufficient knowledge to answer the question of the male speaker M.

(10) 1 M      nándào      dōu méi   yǒu   yī   chǎng bǐsài,  
           is.it.possible all   NEG   have   one CL   competition

2 M      ràng nǐ   yìxiàng   bǐjiào shēnkè ma?  
           let   2<sub>SG</sub> impression   more deep   PRT

→ 3 F      kěshì hǎoxiàng dōu- wàngjì le nê.  
           but   seem   all   forget   ASP PRT

M1-2:      Don't you recall any competition which makes you impressed?

F3:      but it seems...I forgot.

In the previous discussion during the same conversation, the same speaker F attaches *ê* to the phrase *bù zhīdào* 'I don't know', which similarly indicates her

insufficient knowledge to the issue in question (compare (10)). In other words, speaker F uses alternatively both *nê* and *ê* in a similar context.

- (11) 1 M      ei:      wǒ wàngjì- tā      shì bú      shì      yíng-  
                  uh      1<sub>SG</sub> forget 3<sub>SG</sub>      be NEG      be      win
- 2 M      jiù      shì yín      shānpǔlāsī      háishi      āgéxī?  
                  just      be win      PN      or      PN
- 3 F      bù      zhīdào ê.      wǒ      dōu      wàngjì      le.  
                  NEG      know      PRT      1<sub>SG</sub>      all      forget      ASP

M1-2: ...I forgot- did he win- just beat Sampras or Agassi?

F3: I don't know. I forgot all that.

Compared to speaker M in (9), speaker F, who is younger, does not switch to Southern Mǐn in the 21-minute conversation. We can assume that her proficiency in Mandarin is better than speaker M. If it is the case, what is the reason for F to use both *nê* and *ê*?

Before answering this question, it is important to ascertain whether *ê* and *nê* are really interchangeable. My informants from Taiwan have confirmed that all instances of *ê* presented in chapter 5 can be replaced by *nê*. Significantly, they indicate that the *nê*-attached utterances sound “more Southern Mǐn-accented,” which means, the speakers would sound as if they are more proficient in Southern Mǐn.

Moreover, some of these informants mention that compared to *ê*, the use of *nê* sounds more like a “*sajiao* style of speaking.” *Sajiao* (i.e. *sājiāo*), as mentioned in chapter 5, is defined by Yueh (2012: 1) as “persuasive talk that generally means *to talk or behave like a child for persuasive purposes*” (original italics).<sup>10</sup> As *nê* is regarded as a typical UFP in Taiwan Southern Mǐn (cf. Chen 1989, I. Li 1999, etc.), my informants’ judgment that “the *nê*-attached utterances sound more Southern-Mǐn accented” is not surprising. In contrast to *ê*, the UFP *nê* is initialed with a nasal sound. The “nasal style,” according to Farris (1995: 16), is one of the very typical characteristics of *sajiao* in Taiwan. It is thus natural for Taiwan Mandarin speakers to associate this nasal-prefaced particle with connotations of *sajiao*.

<sup>10</sup> Yueh (2012: 185) indicates a typical feature for *sajiao*: the *wáwayīn* ‘baby’s voice’. She points out that this feature refers to specifically “a high-pitched, sharp, sweet, nasal way of talking.”

As I did not find other instances of *nê* in the speech of speaker M in example (9), it is not easy to judge whether the language proficiency is the only reason that motivates her to use *nê*. However, from examples (10) and (11) we see that *ê* and *nê* are deployed interchangeably by the same speaker in the same type of context. Now let us go back to the question whether *ê* and *nê* are interchangeable for the speaker. What makes her/him decide which one to deploy when speaking Taiwan Mandarin? A possible answer can be found in the “markedness model” proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993). As she writes (1993: 75),

[S]peakers have a sense of markedness regarding available linguistic codes for any interaction but choose their codes based on the persona and/or relation with others which they wish to have in place. This markedness has a normative basis within the community, and speakers also know the consequences of making marked or unexpected choices. Because the unmarked choice is ‘safer’ (i.e. it conveys no surprises because it indexes an expected interpersonal relationship), speakers generally make this choice. But not always. Speakers assess the potential costs and rewards of all alternative choices, and make their decisions, typically unconsciously.

As mentioned above, *nê* is generally regarded a typical Southern Mǐn UFP. It is also agreed that *nê* has a connotation of *sajiao*. The deployment of *nê* in Taiwan Mandarin can thus be regarded as a “marked choice,” according to the general convention within the Taiwan Mandarin speech community. The deployment of *ê*, on the other hand, is an “unmarked” use in Taiwan Mandarin conversation. As Myers-Scotton (1999: 1270) claims, “speakers selecting marked choices are attempting to construct a new norm for the exchange—possibly with the hope that this new norm also will hold for future exchanges with the same participants and situational features.” I thus argue that, by using *nê* in Taiwan Mandarin conversation, a speaker chooses an unexpected way to convey his/her communicative intention (consciously or unconsciously), for example, to express intimacy, or to show group solidarity/ethnic identity (for example, to strengthen the identity of being a Taiwanese).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding the Mandarin influence on Southern Mǐn, I have not found any instances of *ê* in Taiwan Southern Mǐn conversation.

### 7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first discussed the possible reasons for the emergence of the three Taiwan Mandarin UFPs *la*, *a* and *ê* from the perspective of language contact. I posit that *la* is a result of lexical imposition (Chen 2011, Van Coetsem 1988) of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin, whereas the UFP *a* is a relexified particle due to the influence of the Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. The UFP *ê* has possibly been imported to Taiwan by Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers.

In addition to discussing the influence of Southern Mǐn and Jiāng-Huái Mandarin on Taiwan Mandarin, I have also explored the reverse influence, particularly, the influence of Mandarin on the use of the Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. Lastly, using *nê* as an example, I investigated the choice between two UFPs that are functionally identical in one type of context in a Taiwan Mandarin conversation.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Revisiting the research questions

This concluding chapter first recapitulates the four research questions formulated in chapter 1 and briefly presents my answers to these questions:

- (i) In what kind of context(s) do the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs under discussion occur in spontaneous conversation?
- (ii) What are the core functions of these Taiwan Mandarin UFPs?
- (iii) How can we explain the “deviated” use of these UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin?
- (iv) How can we explain the “emergence” of these UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin?

The answers to my first and second research questions are based on the analysis in chapters 3 to 6. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, my hypotheses about the core functions of the three Taiwan UFPs in question have been deduced from previous studies. Each hypothesis has subsequently been tested on examples selected from corpora of spoken Taiwan Mandarin. I propose that the core function of Taiwan Mandarin *a* is to mark knowledge activation; (simplex) *la* marks an explicit or implicit adjustment; and *ê* invites a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterances to which it is attached. Chapter 6 distinguishes the proposed core functions by contrasting their use in otherwise identical conversational strings.

The differences between Taiwan Mandarin and mainland Mandarin lead to the question as to how these differences have emerged in Taiwan Mandarin. As discussed in chapter 2, Mandarin, the official language in Taiwan today, was introduced to Taiwan in the 1950s. The promotion of Mandarin in education, its wide use in the media, and the use of Mandarin as a lingua franca among different population groups contributed to language contact. With regard to my third research question it can thus generally be said that language contact is the reason for the “emergence” of new linguistic features, including the “deviated” use of UFPs in today’s Taiwan Mandarin.

My fourth research question is addressed in chapter 7, in which I discuss the emergence of the three Taiwan Mandarin UFPs from the perspective of language contact in more detail. I suggest that (1) simplex *la* is an “imposed” UFP from Southern Mǐn (cf. Van Coetsem 1988), (2) *a* is the result of “relexification” (Lefebvre 1998, 2001, Lien 2010) due to the influence of Southern Mǐn, and (3) *ê*



has been “imported” to Taiwan by Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers who moved to Taiwan in the 1940s and 1950s.

Except for the influence of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin UFPs, I have also discussed the reverse direction: the influence of Mandarin on the use of the Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. It is argued that the functional scope of Southern Mǐn *a* has been modified due to contact with Mandarin. Lastly, taking the example of *nê* in Taiwan Mandarin, I suggest that the choice of UFP reveals the speaker’s communicative intention such as expressing intimacy or group solidarity/ethnic identity in a conversation.

## 8.2 Significance of this study

A central claim underlying my analysis is that Mandarin is a heterogeneous linguistic entity. To quote Lien (2011): “Mandarin in the ever-growing global sense should not be monolithic. Rather it should be able to encompass regional sinophoric variants and manifest its rich and mosaic character.” Supporting Lien’s claim, I maintain that the features of a living spoken language cannot be captured in general terms, but require regional contextualization. Otherwise it is not possible to provide a precise description and analysis of the use of UFPs in different regional Mandarin varieties. As mentioned in chapter 1, most of the previous studies on Mandarin UFPs focus on “shared UFPs” (such as *a*, *ba* and *ne*), which occur in both mainland Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin. Without clearly distinguishing the regional origin of the data, most of these studies posit “common” functions of UFPs and claim that the result pertain to all Mandarin varieties. However, as I have demonstrated in this study, the functions of “shared UFPs” may differ across different Mandarin varieties (see the discussion of *a* in chapter 3). UFP *la*, which is widely regarded as a fusion of aspect marker *le* and UFP *a*, also displays different functions in mainland China and in Taiwan (see chapter 4).

Secondly, using a large amount of spontaneous spoken data, this study analyzes the core functions of UFPs on the basis of conversational participants’ interaction and various types of context in which the UFPs occur. As mentioned in chapter 2, UFPs are highly relevant for the interaction between conversational participants and can rightly be considered a particularly characteristic feature of spoken language use.

For my analysis I first take a close look at where exactly a certain UFP occurs in a conversational string and what kind of effect the deployment of this UFP has on the interlocutor(s). In other words, claims about core functions are primarily based on correlations of UFP deployment with recurrent patterns of interlocutor reactions

in different conversational contexts. Second, instances of ambiguity have been discussed with Mandarin native-speakers of different regional backgrounds. Native speaker intuition, therefore, plays a supplementary role for my analysis. It is, however, not solely the author's intuition, but rather intuitive judgments of different native speakers that helped me to assess the distribution of UFPs in regional terms.

One significance of this thesis arguably lies in its careful distinction of regional differences in UFP use. Another significance is the combination of UFP core function analysis with language contact. In chapter 2, I mentioned that most previous studies in the intersection of Taiwan Mandarin and language contact focus on the transfer of syntactic structures, lexical items and phonological features (cf. Kubler 1981, 1985; Tseng 2003 for syntactic structures, Hsieh and Yeh 2009 for loanwords; Hsu 2005 on tone, vowel and nasal; Kuo 2005 on retroflex initials, etc.). With the exception of P. Wu (2005), the "transfer" of UFPs, or other discourse markers, has received much less attention.

By discussing three Taiwan Mandarin UFPs that are distributed unevenly across various Sinitic varieties (see table 2.1), this study provides a multidirectional perspective on language contact. Moreover, claims about possible directions of influence not only rely on language data, but also include relevant aspects of the social history of the speakers of different Sinitic varieties and social mechanisms of language contact.

### 8.3 Limitations of this study

This study compares the UFPs of different Sinitic varieties from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. As regards the former, as pointed out in chapter 2, my comparison of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs with UFPs in mainland Mandarin faces some limitations. Mainland Mandarin, as I have explained, in very general terms refers to usages commonly accepted by informants from various places except for the Mǐn dialect region. Ideally, however, the comparison should have been complemented by Mandarin data from spoken language corpora of different regions. Since such corpora do not exist or are not accessible, this expansion remains a desideratum for future research.

In chapter 7, it is claimed that the UFP *ê* originates from Jiāng-Huái Mandarin. Although the occurrences of *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin are judged acceptable by the Jiāng-Huái Mandarin speakers, I am aware that the use of *ê* in Jiāng-Huái Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin are not fully identical. It appears that the *ê* in Jiāng-Huái Mandarin can occur with commands (i.e. imperatives), whereas Taiwan Mandarin *ê*

cannot. Due to time limitations and a lack of an accessible database, it is hard to explain the “loss” of this function during the process of transfer.

Whereas a lack of comparable data must be acknowledged for the synchronic comparison, the diachronic comparison faces even greater limitations. In chapter 7, I propose that *é* has been brought to Taiwan by the first-generation mainland immigrants. The earliest spoken data I have been able to find in support of my assumption is a radio play recorded in the 1960s; even earlier data (e.g. recording in 1950s) could not be found. The same is true for Taiwan Southern Mǐn spoken prior to contact with Mandarin. Therefore, written sources like early dictionaries were consulted. To be sure, whereas meaningful insights can be gained from these sources, the results of my diachronic comparisons would have been more significant if a richer historical database had been available.

#### 8.4 Implications for future research

To conclude, I briefly discuss some implications of my findings for future research. First, conversational interaction is, to use Luke’s words, the “natural habitat” (Luke 1990: 15) of the UFPs. The approach taken in many other studies on UFP is likewise based on conversational interaction analysis, e.g. Luke (1990) for Cantonese, I. Li (1999) for Southern Mǐn, Tanaka (2000), and Morita (2005, 2012a, 2012b) for Japanese, etc.).

As regards Mandarin, to the best of my knowledge, R. Wu (2004) is the first comprehensive study using conversation analysis to explore the two Mandarin UFPs *ou* and *a*. This dissertation has revised the proposed core function of *a* and also examined the core functions of the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs *la* and *é*. This analysis is by no means exhaustive. As shown in table 2.1, there are still a number of other UFPs used in Taiwan Mandarin, which have not yet been examined from the perspective of conversational interaction. It is therefore hoped that future research will draw more attention to UFPs in their natural habitat.

Secondly, the findings of this study can be applied to research in the related fields of typological comparison and language contact. As mentioned in chapter 2, UFPs are among the categories which are easily transferred from one language to another (cf. Appel and Muysken 1987, Curnow 2001 and Matras 2000). It has been shown that the UFPs of one Sinitic variety have not only been transferred to other Sinitic varieties (for example, Southern Mǐn UFPs to Taiwan Mandarin or Mandarin UFPs to Southern Mǐn), but that transfer can also take place between Sinitic and non-Sinitic varieties (for example, Cantonese and Hokkien UFPs in Singapore English, cf. Ler Soon Lay 2005).

A systematic comparative analysis of UFPs in various contact situations deserves more attention in future research. For instance, a comparison between UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin and other Mandarin varieties involving contact with Southern Mǐn, notably Xiàmén Mandarin and Singapore Mandarin (cf. Chua 2003), would shed more light on the development of different Mandarin varieties.

Thirdly, as a teacher of Mandarin as a foreign language, I hope that the findings of this study will be applied in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In language textbooks and classrooms, the use of UFPs is rarely systematically introduced. The analysis of core functions will enable language teachers to illustrate the use of UFPs in the contexts of actual conversations. If a learner wants to achieve solid communicative competences, s/he has to be aware of functions and regional differences in the use of Mandarin UFPs.



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## SUMMARY

The use of utterance-final particles (UFPs) is a salient feature of Taiwan Mandarin, a Mandarin variety spoken in Taiwan. Despite of their ubiquity, most of the previous studies focus on UFPs shared by various Mandarin varieties, such as *a*, *ba* and *ne*, and discuss these UFPs in a general fashion by including data from both mainland China and Taiwan, or solely from mainland China. Distribution-wise and function-wise, however, some Taiwan Mandarin UFPs are different from mainland Mandarin UFPs. This study, then, provides a precise description and analysis of the use of three such Taiwan Mandarin UFPs, viz. *a*, *la* and *ê*. On the basis of a large corpus of spontaneous spoken data, the core functions of these three UFPs in the conversational contexts are examined. In addition, I aim to provide possible accounts for the emergence of these three UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin from the perspective of language contact.

The study is divided into eight chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces my four research questions: (1) In what kind of context(s) do the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs under discussion occur in spontaneous conversation? (2) What are the core functions of these UFPs? (3) How can we explain the use of these UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin which “deviates” from their use in mainland varieties? and (4) How can we explain the “emergence” of these UFPs, or their typical use, in Taiwan Mandarin?

Chapter 1 also outlines the methodological approach taken in the rest of the study: I adopt a discourse-functional approach to explore the core functions of these UFPs in conversational contexts and, in order to identify the possible source language(s), I compare the core functions of the UFPs in Taiwan Mandarin with possible counterparts in Southern Mǐn and other (mainland) varieties. The comparison is based on spoken data and judgments of native speakers of different varieties of Mandarin.

In **Chapter 2**, in order to draw a clear picture of the formation of today’s Taiwan Mandarin, I first introduce the socio-historical background to the language situation in Taiwan, with a focus on language contact, such as the influence of Southern Mǐn and the process of “leveling”. The chapter also reviews previous literature on UFPs and language contact. The literature review provides the context for the discussion in chapter 7, where I take a closer look at the Taiwan Mandarin UFPs as a contact-induced phenomenon. I finally provide an overview of Taiwan Mandarin UFPs and their counterparts in standard Mandarin and Southern Mǐn and explain why I selected the three UFPs *a*, *la* and *ê* as my research object.

**Chapters 3, 4 and 5** analyze the distribution and the discourse functions of the UFPs *a*, *la* and *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin. Different core functions are proposed for

each UFP and then tested with spoken data. In **chapter 3**, I first review the previous literature on Mandarin UFP *a* (Shie 1991, C. Z. Chu 1994, C. C. Chu 2002, R. Wu 2004, and B. Li 2006). Following these studies, I divide Taiwan Mandarin *a* into two categories according to distinct pitch heights: high-pitch *a* and low-pitch *a*. I propose that the core function of the Taiwan Mandarin UFP *a* is to mark knowledge activation: The low-pitch *a* marks the activation of the speaker's own knowledge, whereas the high-pitch *a* indicates activation of the addressee's knowledge. I also show that the use of UFP *a* in Taiwan Mandarin is not entirely identical with that in mainland Mandarin. In Taiwan Mandarin, the high-pitch *a* can be used to introduce a discourse topic. This function is not attested in mainland Mandarin. I argue that this "deviated" use results from contact with Southern Mǐn.

**Chapter 4** distinguishes two types of *la* in Mandarin: the fused *la* and the simplex *la*. The fused *la*, which exists in both mainland Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin, is the fusion of Mandarin perfective marker *le* and UFP *a*. The simplex *la*, on the other hand, stands in its own right, and exists in both Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn, but not in mainland Mandarin. I propose that the core function of the simplex *la* is to mark an adjustment. I define "adjustment" in a broad sense: it can refer to utterances which carry the speaker's modification or correction of previous utterances, or utterances which serve to adjust the interlocutor's attitude or move; it can also refer to an adjustment of the speaker's role. I then compare the use of simplex *la* in Taiwan Mandarin and Southern Mǐn and conclude that the distributional contexts and functions of the UFP *la* are identical in both languages.

In **chapter 5**, I first examine the differences between *ê* and its variant *ye*. I suggest that the use of *y[j]*-initial forms in Taiwan Mandarin onsetless UFPs involving syllable lengthening has an "emphatic" connotation and argue that the core function of *ê* is to induce a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which *ê* is attached.

In order to sharpen the contours of the proposed core functions, **chapter 6** provides a contrastive analysis of the use of *a*, *la* and *ê* in identical contexts. Since it is impossible to find contextually and otherwise maximally comparable authentic data, the approach I use in this chapter is to construct minimal pairs/triplets on the basis of data from the previous chapters, and compared the use of the UFPs in these pairs/triplets by eliciting judgments from Taiwan Mandarin native speakers.

**Chapter 7** discusses the emergence of the aforementioned UFPs and their functions in Taiwan Mandarin from the perspective of language contact. I suggest that the simplex *la* is a result of lexical imposition of Southern Mǐn on Taiwan Mandarin, that is, the transfer includes all the features of *la*. Moreover, the use of *la*

is no longer a case of code-switching only associated with speakers with a Southern Mǐn background: it is also used by people with a Hakka background and Mandarin monolinguals.

In contrast to the simplex *la*, which was fully imposed from Southern Mǐn, the emergence of the Taiwan Mandarin *a* involves a more complex process of function transfer. This process can be accounted for by what Lefebvre (1998, 2001) calls “relexification”. The UFP *a* is a particle which was relexified under the influence of the Taiwan Southern Mǐn UFP *a*.

On the basis the socio-historical background introduced in chapter 2, I propose that the UFP *ê* was imported by first-generation mainland immigrants. I propose that the source language of *ê* is Jiāng-Huái Mandarin, which is spoken in Northern Jiāngsū, Nánjīng, and central Ānhuī. The reason why this UFP has spread to Taiwan Mandarin is related to the fact that mainland immigrants from those areas occupied high positions in education, politics and economy after they relocated to Taiwan. This claim implies that except for Southern Mǐn, other Sinitic varieties also played a role in the formation of the Taiwan Mandarin UFP system.

In the same chapter, I also examine the reverse direction of language contact, i.e. the influence of Mandarin on the use of the Southern Mǐn UFP *a*. In addition, I look at possible motivations for a speaker in Taiwan when it comes to the choice between a Mandarin UFP and a non-Mandarin one when both are available. This language choice situation is illustrated by the use of *nê* by bilingual Taiwanese speakers.

**Chapter 8** presents the conclusion, revisits my research questions and elaborates on the significance of my study. I also discuss the limitations of it and provide suggestions for future research.



## SAMENVATTING

Het frequente gebruik van uitingsfinale partikels (UFPs) is een opvallend kenmerk van het Taiwanees Mandarijn, de variant van het Mandarijn die gesproken wordt op Taiwan. In de meeste eerdere studies wordt alleen aandacht besteed aan UFPs die in de Mandarijnse varianten op het vasteland van China alsmede die op Taiwan voorkomen, zoals *a*, *ba* en *ne*: kenmerken, dus, die de verschillende varianten gemeenschappelijk hebben. In tegenstelling hiermee zijn specifiek regionale kenmerken in het gebruik van Mandarijnse UFPs nauwelijks onderzocht. Wat betreft distributie en functie zijn er echter duidelijke verschillen tussen UFPs in het Taiwanees Mandarijn en die in andere varianten van het Mandarijn. Om in deze lacune te voorzien, richt ik mij in dit proefschrift op drie UFPs die onder meer qua functie kenmerkend zijn voor het Taiwanees Mandarijn: *a*, *la* en *ê*.

Een algemene stelling van deze dissertatie is dat de onderscheidende functies van deze drie UFPs in het Taiwanees Mandarijn door contact met andere (Sinitische) talen en/of varianten van het Mandarijn ontstaan zijn, met name met het Zuid-Mĭn (dat ook wel als ‘Taiwanees’ bekend staat). Op basis van een groot corpus van gesproken Taiwanees Mandarijn probeer ik te bepalen wat de kernfuncties van de UFPs *a*, *la* en *ê* zijn. Bovendien ga ik na uit welke taalcontactsituaties het gebruik van deze UFPs in het Taiwanees Mandarijn mogelijk is voortgekomen.

**Hoofdstuk 1** introduceert vier onderzoeksvragen: (1) In welke (spontane) gesprekscontexten worden de Taiwanees Mandarijnse UFPs *a*, *la* en *ê* gebruikt? (2) Wat zijn de kernfuncties van de drie UFPs? (3) Hoe kunnen we de onderscheidende (dat wil zeggen: van het vastelandse gebruik afwijkende) functies van deze UFPs in Taiwanees Mandarijn verklaren? (4) Wat is de herkomst van deze UFPs en/of hun onderscheidende functie in Taiwanees Mandarijn?

Hoofdstuk 1 schetst tevens de methodologische aanpak die in de rest van het werk gevolgd wordt: een discourse-functionele analyse waarmee de kernfuncties van de UFPs bepaald worden, en een systematische taalvergelijking aan de hand waarvan de verschillen met UFPs uit andere Mandarijn sprekende regio's beschreven en geanalyseerd worden. De taalvergelijkingen zijn onder meer gebaseerd op oordelen van moedertaalsprekers van verschillende varianten van het Mandarijn.

In **hoofdstuk 2** wordt de ontwikkeling van het Taiwanees Mandarijn geschetst, in het bijzonder de sociaal-historische achtergrond van de taalsituatie op het eiland, met een focus op taalcontact, de invloed van het Zuid-Mĭn (een variant van het Chinees die de eerste taal van de meerderheid van de inwoners van Taiwan) op het Mandarijn en het verschijnsel dat in taalcontactstudies als ‘leveling’ bekend staat. Ter voorbereiding op de analyse in hoofdstuk 7 wordt de huidige stand van het



onderzoek naar Taiwanees Mandarijnse UFPs en taalcontact in het algemeen uit de doeken gedaan. Tenslotte biedt het hoofdstuk een overzicht van UFPs die in het Taiwanees Mandarijn, het standaard Mandarijn en het Zuid-Mǐn voorkomen. Op basis van dit overzicht wordt bovendien de keuze van *a*, *la* en *ê* als onderzoeksobject van deze dissertatie verantwoord.

De **hoofdstukken 3, 4 en 5** analyseren de distributie en de discourse-functies van de UFPs *a*, *la* en *ê* in het Taiwanees Mandarijn. Voor elk UFP wordt een kernfunctie voorgesteld, welk voorstel vervolgens aan de hand van een groter corpus van gesproken data wordt getoetst.

In **hoofdstuk 3** bespreek ik eerst eerdere literatuur over het Mandarijnse UFP *a* (Shie 1991, CZ Chu 1994, CC Chu 2002, R. Wu 2004, en B. Li 2006). Op basis hiervan verdeel ik, gezien de toonhoogte waarop ze gerealiseerd worden, het Taiwanees Mandarijnse *a* in twee categorieën: *a* met een hoge toonhoogte en *a* met een lage toonhoogte. Ik stel dat de kernfunctie van het UFP *a* de aanduiding van kennisactivering is. Met de lage toonhoogte markeert de spreker de activering van de eigen kennis, terwijl hij/zij met de hoge toonhoogte de intentie weergeeft de kennis van de geadresseerde te activeren. In het vervolg hiervan wordt aangetoond dat het gebruik van het UFP *a* in het Taiwanees Mandarijn niet geheel identiek is aan het gebruik van *a* in het Mandarijn op het vasteland. In het Taiwanees Mandarijn kan *a* worden gebruikt om een onderwerp te introduceren. Deze functie bestaat in het Mandarijn op het vasteland niet. Ik laat zien dat dit verschil uit contact met het Zuid-Mǐn is ontstaan.

**Hoofdstuk 4** onderscheidt twee soorten *la*: het zgn. “gefuseerde *la*” en het “simplexe *la*”. Het gefuseerde *la* bestaat zowel in het Mandarijn van het vasteland als in het Taiwanees Mandarijn. Het is een fusie van de Mandarijnse perfectief-markeerder *le* met het UFP *a*. Het simplexe *la*, aan de andere kant, bestaat in het Taiwan Mandarijn en in het Zuid-Mǐn, maar niet in het Mandarijn van het vasteland. Mijn hypothese is dat de kernfunctie van het simplexe *la* de markering van een “aanpassing” is. Ik gebruik een brede definitie van “aanpassing”: het kan verwijzen naar uitingen waarmee de spreker zijn eigen uitingen aanpast of corrigeert of naar uitingen waarmee een poging gedaan wordt de houding, het spreekgedrag of de rol van de gespreksdeelnemer aan te passen. Uit een vergelijking van het gebruik van het simplexe *la* in het Taiwanees Mandarijn en Zuid-Mǐn blijkt dat de distributionele contexten en functies ervan in deze twee talen identiek zijn.

In **hoofdstuk 5** leg ik eerst de verschillen tussen het UFP *ê* en de variant *ye* uit. Ik stel dat het gebruik van *y[j]* voor (anders) onsetloze UFPs in combinatie met syllabische prolongatie in het Taiwanees Mandarijn een betekenis-effect van nadruk

heeft. Tevens betoog ik dat het de kernfunctie van  $\acute{e}$  is om een aanzet te geven tot “collaboratie” door de met  $\acute{e}$  getooide uiting op de voorgrond te plaatsen.

Om de contouren van de voorgestelde kernfuncties aan te scherpen, biedt **hoofdstuk 6** een contrasterende analyse van het gebruik van  $a$ ,  $la$  en  $\acute{e}$  in identieke gespreksituaties. Aangezien het onmogelijk is om vergelijkbare authentieke voorbeelden in exact dezelfde context vinden, worden in dit hoofdstuk op basis van de voorbeelden uit de voorgaande hoofdstukken minimale paren/trio’s geconstrueerd. De pragmatische verschillen tussen de uitingen worden aan de hand van oordelen van moedertaalsprekers in kaart gebracht en vervolgens verklaard.

**Hoofdstuk 7** bespreekt de ontwikkeling van de genoemde UFPs en hun al dan niet onderscheidende functies vanuit het perspectief van taalcontact. Ik beweer dat het simplexe  $la$  een gevolg is van wat in de literatuur bekend staat als ‘imposition’: het partikel is in z’n geheel, dat wil zeggen, als vorm-functie combinatie, uit het Zuid-Mĭn in het Taiwanees Mandarijn opgenomen. Het is van belang op te merken dat het gebruik van  $la$  niet langer verklaard kan worden als een geval van code-switching, dat uitsluitend geassocieerd wordt met sprekers met een Zuid-Mĭn achtergrond: het wordt ook gebruikt door mensen met een Hakka-achtergrond en sprekers die als eentalig Mandarijn te kenschetsen zijn.

In tegenstelling tot het simplexe  $la$ , dat qua vorm-functie-combinatie uit het het Zuid-Mĭn afkomstig is (imposition), wordt het Taiwanees Mandarijn  $a$  met een complexer proces van functieoverdracht geassocieerd. Dit proces kan worden verklaard met wat Lefebvre (1998, 2001) “relexification” noemt. Ik concludeer dat het UFP  $a$  een *relexified* partikel is dat door invloed van het Zuid-Mĭn UFP  $a$  is ontstaan.

Op basis van de sociaal-historische achtergrond die geïntroduceerd is in hoofdstuk 2 stel ik verder dat het UFP  $\acute{e}$  door de eerste generatie immigranten van het vasteland geïmporteerd werd. De mogelijke brontaal van  $\acute{e}$  is het Jiāng-Huái-Mandarijn dat in het Noord-Jiāngsū, Nánjīng, and Centraal-Ānhuī wordt gesproken. De reden waarom taalgebruik uit deze regio is verspreid naar Taiwan heeft te maken met het feit dat veel immigranten uit die gebieden na hun vlucht naar Taiwan in 1949 hoge posities in het onderwijs, de politiek en de economie bekleedden. Deze claim impliceert dat behalve het Zuid-Mĭn ook andere Sinitische talen een rol hebben gespeeld in de vorming van het systeem van de Taiwanees Mandarijnse UFPs.

In hetzelfde hoofdstuk wordt tevens aandacht besteed aan taalcontact in de omgekeerde richting, dat wil zeggen de invloed van het Mandarijn op functie en gebruik van het UFP  $a$  in het Zuid-Mĭn. Daarnaast onderzoek ik wat de keuze

bepaalt voor een Mandarijns UFP of een niet-Mandarijns UFP als beide beschikbaar zijn. Deze taalkeuze wordt geïllustreerd door het gebruik van *nè* door tweetalige sprekers.

**Hoofdstuk 8** presenteert de conclusie, waarbij ik terugkeer naar de onderzoeksvragen van hoofdstuk 1 en inga op de implicaties van mijn studie. Tot slot bespreek ik de beperkingen van deze studie en doe suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Chin-hui Lin was born in 1977, in Taipei, Taiwan. She holds a BA degree (1999) in Chinese linguistics and literature from National Tsinghua University, and a MA degree (2003) in teaching Chinese as a foreign language from National Taiwan Normal University. She was a lecturer in Mandarin at the Department of Chinese Studies of Leiden University from 2001 to 2012. Since 2013, she is a lecturer in Mandarin at the Department of East Asian Studies at Göttingen University.