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# 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:[1]

(1) 1 D yǐqián zài xiǎng wǒmen qù bǔxí- hǎoxiàng dōu-
before ZAI think $1_{PL}$ go coach seem all

2 L [@@
(laughter)

→ 3 D [yě bù zhīdào zài gànmá ê.
also NEG know ZAI what.to.do PRT

4 D hoNn. nǐ huì bú huì juéde?
PRT $2_{SG}$ will NEG will think

5 L wàngjì le. xiǎoshíhòu bǔxí-
forget PRT childhood coach

→ 6 D hǎoxiàng nǐ méi qù bǔ ba?
seem $2_{SG}$ NEG go coach PRT

→ 7 L yǒu la↓!
have PRT

8 D nǐ bǔ shénme?
$2_{SG}$ coach what

9 L guózhōng duì bú duì?
junior.high.school right NEG right

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[1] 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? |
| | | $2_{SG}$ | 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.[2] 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* [hɔn̊], *haNn* [hɑn̊], *hioh* [hɪɔʔ] 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).[3]

| *UFPs in standard Mandarin* | *UFPs used in Taiwan Mandarin conversation* |
|---|---|
| *ma* [ma] | *ma* [ma] |
| *ba* [pa] | *ba* [pa] |
| *ne* [nə] | *ne* [nə] |
| *a* [a] | *a* [a] |
| *o* [ɔ] | *o* [ɔ] |
| | *la* [la] |
| | *hoNn* [hɔn̊] |
| | *haNn* [hɑn̊] |
| | *hioh* [hɪɔʔ] |
| | *lê* [lɛ] |
| | *nê* [nɛ] |
| | *ê* [ɛ] |

Table 1.1 A comparison of UFPs in standard Mandarin and spontaneous Taiwan Mandarin conversation[4]

[2] The term "standard Mandarin" will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

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

[4] 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.[5] 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 Mǐn. This study is thus based on 27 Taiwan Mandarin dialogues involving 31 female speakers and 23 male

[5] 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.[6] 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.[7] 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.[8]

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[9] 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.[10]

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

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

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

9 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.

10 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 Sìchuān), 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.