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- 8 L [nǐ bù juéde ma?
2_{SG} 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_{SG} 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,² 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.³ 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.⁴

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

² 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↓*.

³ 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.

⁴ 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 Mandarin⁵

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.⁶

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-

⁵ 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.”

⁶ 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.⁷ 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_{SG} also no.need think so much
- 4 D wǒ juéde nǐ zhèyàng de gōngzuò jiù hǎo la↑.
 1_{SG} think 2_{SG} this.way DE work just good PRT

⁷ 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_{SG} 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_{SG} DE that CL way.of.talking in
- 2 S wǒ juéde la↓,
 1_{SG} think PRT
- 3 S shì bú shì nǐ juéde tā yǒu liyòng rén de qīngxiàng?
 be NEG be 2_{SG} think 3_{SG} 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_{SG} very easy
- 2 L hěn hěn kuài jiù- huīfù tā de nè ge ma.
very very fast just recover 3_{SG} 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_{PL} seem maybe be
- 8 L wǒmen bǐjiào- chuántǒng yìdiǎn ba.
1_{PL} 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_{SG} think 3_{SG} 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_{SG} DE that CL
- 2 F bǎ liúbīng dāngzuò shì- tā xìngqù de dōngxī.
 BA skating as be 3_{SG} 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_{SG} 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_{PL} 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_{SG} 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_{SG} DE person
- 3 C sit8cai7 u7kau3 gong7 e3 la.
 really enough stupid DE PRT
- 4 C [li2 suan2ki2 cinn5 hoo7 i7-
 2_{SG} election money give 3_{SG}
- 5 K [en.
 BC

6 C pang1coo7 i7 suan2ki2-
 help 3_{SG} 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_{SG} 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*.⁸ 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_{SG} 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_{SG} DE age this way play
- 5 M wǒ juéde yǐjīng suàn shì búcuò le la↓::.
 1_{SG} think already count be not bad ASP PRT

⁸ 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_{SG} 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_{SG} be
- 5 H tā xīnwén tōngcháng-
3_{SG} 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*⁹

⁹ 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_{SG} mother 3_{PL} 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- zuìdō 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_{SG} 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_{SG} 2_{SG} now economy so bad
- 2 S li1 na3 kong1 cit4 ciong2 e3 li1 ing2kai7,
 2_{SG} if say this kind DE 2_{SG} 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_{SG} why not want use 2_{SG} 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_{SG} 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_{SG} DE PRT
- 10 P lan1 bue3 sai1- i7 be1 an1cuann1 khail hoNn,
 1_{PL} NEG can 3_{SG} 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_{PL} all NEG ZAI self-criticize PRT

2 E in1 ia2koh4 sionn7 kong1 cit4ma2 si7-
3_{PL} still think say now be

→ 3 A bue7 la,
NEG PRT

→ 4 A cit4ma2- cit4ma2 in1- in1 u7 la,
now now 3_{PL} 3_{PL} have PRT

5 A in1 leh4 kiam2tho2, in1 u7 leh4 kiam2tho2.
 3_{PL} ZAI self-criticize 3_{PL} 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_{SG} 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_{SG} compare 2_{PL} 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 2.¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ 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_{SG} NEG think 1_{SG} now already very open-minded PRT PRT

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

3 W dànshì 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_{SG} 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_{SG} see this.way except one CL problem
- 2 P li2 e3 gin2a2 lai5 tai5pak4 thak8cu1,
 2_{SG} DE kid come Taipei study
- 3 P i7 koh4 e7 siu7tio7 siann2mih8 kuann2 e3 <M chōngjí M>?
 3_{SG} still will receive what kind DE impact
- 4 P a i7 i2au7 e3 siann2mih8 kuann2 e3 huan2ing3?
 PRT 3_{SG} after DE what kind DE reaction
- 5 F gual e3 kam2kak4 si7 kong1,
 1_{SG} DE feeling be say
- 6 F ce2 tioh8ai2 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 _{PL} 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?
2 _{SG} when will use |
| 2 M | gua1 tann1 to3 iong7 khi3 a,
1 _{SG} now just use go ASP |
| 3 M | ka3 Ong3 thai2thai3 kiau1 hue7a1 cinn5 e3 si5
for PN Mrs. pay co-op money DE time |
| 4 M | ka7 iong7 khi3 a.
for use go ASP |
| 5 D | a li1 tang7si5 be1 ko1 iong7?
PRT 2 _{SG} when will again use |
| 6 M | han5?
PRT |

- 7 D li1 tang7si5 be1 ko1 iong7?
2_{SG} 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_{SG} 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_{SG} first say a.while 3_{SG} DE dress up 3_{SG} DE behavior behavior
- 2 F e:: tā jiù shì nà zhǒng en:
 uh 3_{SG} just be that kind uh
- 3 M nǐ xiān jiǎng yíxià wàimào la↓.
 2_{SG} 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_{SG} month bottom return com see PRT

2 H shénme? haNn?
 what PRT

3 Y nà nǐ zìjǐ zuò fēijī huí lái,
 that 2_{SG} 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_{SG} give 2_{SG} 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_{SG} still must apply that CL
- 2 S <M ràng tā yǒu bǎoyǎng de M>.
 let 3_{SG} have take.care DE
- 3 S ki5sit8 li2 e7sai2 chi3 kuann3mai7 la.
 actually 2_{SG} 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.