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## Universiteit Leiden

**Author**: Lin, Chin-hui
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# 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* [tʰa ʂɨ ʐɨ pən ʐən ɛ] 'he is Japanese' is pronounced as [tʰa ʂɨ ʐɨ pən ʐən 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 pʰiɛn ji ɛ] '(it is) very cheap' is pronounced as [xən pʰiɛn 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 [ɨ]:

         wǒ yě    shì     ye!
         1SG also  be      PRT
         'Me too!'

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

         tā    shì   nǐmen de   nà     ge xuéjiě             ye!
         3SG be    2PL    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 [ɤ] or
[ɨ], it can but does not necessarily have to turn into *ye*.[1]

(2)   a. Unrounded back vowel [ɤ]:

      bù      xiǎodé   ê!
      NEG   know      PRT
      'I don't know!'

    b. Unrounded high central vowel [ɨ]:

      wǒ bú   huì  xiǎng zài    kàn dì'èr    cì    ê!
      1SG 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 em-
phatic 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 pragma-
tic 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)).

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[1]   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* [tʂɤ ʂi uɔ tə ɕiɛ
    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).[2]

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 吔 [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).[3]

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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[2]   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.

[3]   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 nàlǐ=
       PRT 2PL  DE national.flag at   there

→ 4 D  =gēn wǒmen bù   yíyàng ye!
       with  1PL  NEG same  PRT

  5 D  wǒ cái juéde, e:
       1SG just think  uh

  6 D  wǒ bú   shì zài táiwān, wǒ shì zài dàlù.
       1SG NEG be at  Taiwan 1SG 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 2SG agree  PRT

→ 2 D  wǒ shì dǎoyǎn   ye!
       1SG 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 informa-
tion 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 informa-
tion."

   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 con-
trast 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   jízhe-
            so     1SG rather NEG hurry

   2 C      jiù  shì shuō xiànzài liúxíng  shénme dōngxi,
            just be  say  now     popular what    thing

   3 C      gǎnkuài gēnzhe cháoliú.
            hurry    follow trend

→  4 C      wǒ juéde yǒude shíhòu xiāngfǎn cháoliú hěn  nán  jiǎng ye!
            1SG think some  time   contrary  trend   very hard say  PRT

   5 C      nǐ  zìjǐ hěn yǒu xìnxīn-
            2SG self very have confidence

   6 C      hěn   yǒu yī ge- hěn yǒu chuàngyì de xiǎngfǎ dehuà,
            very  have one CL very have originality DE idea    if

   7 C      zhè shuōbúdìng yě   shì cháoliú.
            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 res-
taurant. 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       $2_{SG}$ 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 ques-
tion, 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 futhermore "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 *ê* in the following section. My analysis aims to provide another perspective on the use of *ê*, 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 *ê* may be triggered by a situation in which something deviates from a previous assumption. The occurrences of *ê* in my own data also confirm this preliminary observation. However, some occurrences of *ê* 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 *ê* 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 *ê* is to invite the hearer to make a collaborative move by foregrounding the utterance to which *ê* is attached. That is, with the deployment of *ê*, the speaker explicitly informs the interlocutor that the *ê*-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 *ê* 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 *ê*?

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 *ê*-attached utterances involves space for the hearer to respond. In other words, compared to *ê*, 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 *ê* with the simplex *la* in this case. Note that the *ê*-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 *ê* 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 *ê*-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 *ê* with more examples from my Taiwan Mandarin data.

### 5.4 UFP *ê* in Taiwan Mandarin

As mentioned previously, the UFP *ê* 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: kèjī    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       mhmhmhm.
          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:     Mhmhmhm.
F6:     So (that's) why he makes much more money than we do.
C7:     Mhmhmhm.
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 *mhmhmhm* 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    fènghuángnǚ   a↓,
        that   CL   Julia.Roberts    PRT

→ 4 D    wa  tā  yī   juān  hǎoxiàng shì yì  bǎi    wàn=
          PRT  3SG  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   juédé  zhè- zhè-  zhè ge-  zhè ge  rén    de=
        PRT  1SG  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.[4] 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.

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4   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 interlocu-
tor 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 invita-
tion and takes the floor by asking a question that is relevant to the *ê*-attached infor-
mation. 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 un-
derground 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  1SG  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  2SG   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 | 1SG | be | think | be | NEG | shi |

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 UPF *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   3SG DE   news    just  be   PRT

   8 Y       qíshí     tā   yǒu    ge    yánxùxìng,
             actually  3SG  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.[5]

### 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  2SG   have  coach  math    PRT

      2 L      mhm.
               BC

      3 D      wǒ    zěnme   bú    jìdé?
               1SG   how     NEG   remember

      4 D      nǐ    shì   guóyī         de    shíhòu?
               2SG   be    seventh.grade  DE    time

      5 L      wǒ    bú    jìdé      shénme   shíhòu  bǔ     de.
               1SG   NEG   remember  what     time    coach  DE

      6 D      wǒ    kàn  nǐ    guó'èr         hǎoxiàng  yě    méi   yǒu-
               1SG   see  2SG   eighth.grade   seem      also  NEG   have

---

5   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.
           1SG     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 zěnme 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 *bǔ 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-Tsili-pakou 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 re-
lated 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  2SG  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 1PL        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  1SG 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,
               3SG NEG  know    be   arrive arrive what           director PRT

→    8 W      tā  shì  nǐmen  de   nà    ge   xuéjiě                ye.
               3SG be   2PL    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 unanticipatory." 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.[6]

(18)  1 D    a      tāmen-   yī   ge   dàgài-     zhōngbān-
             PRT    3PL          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

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6   In this excerpt, *zhōngbān*, lit. 'middle group', refers to the second group in kindergarten.

|       | 4 L   | wǒmen | bān   | yǒu   | shísì     | ge.  |      |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|------|------|
|       |       | 1PL   | class | have  | fourteen  | CL   |      |

| → 5 D | ei↓ | shísì    | 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,[7] 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.

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7    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.
               1SG   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      yòuzhìyuán        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 ob-
servation, nonetheless exists is the opening of a new conversation without any pre-
vious 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 gébì      bān    o?
                   2SG   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,
           2PL      class  test   DE      all than other.person   many

5 J        suǒyǐ  wǒmen  zài  kǎo de  shíhòu,  tāmen-
           so     2PL    at   test DE  time     3PL

→ 6 F      wǒmen   yǒu   fāshēng zhè zhǒng qíngxíng   ê.
           2PL     have  happen  this kind  situation   PRT

7 J        hoNn.
           BC

8 F        jīhū     yíbàn  yǐshàng dōu  yìbǎi.
           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 elabora-
tion 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 re-
consider her misconception or adjust her assertion). However, J's response *hoNn* in
line 7 is only a backchannel[8] 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

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8   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$_{SG}$    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   zuì-     zuì       kuài de   zuì       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_SG | 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      kěshì   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!
             3SG    super    fake        DE   good  NEG   good

      2 H    huì       ma?
             will      PRT

      3 L    duì    a↑.    tā     chāo      \<S ke2 S\>   de!
             right  PRT    3SG    super        fake       DE

→     4 H    wǒ    juédé   tā    hěn    tiánměi   ê.
             1SG   think   3SG   very    sweet    PRT

→     5 H    tā     xiào   qǐlái   hěn    tiánměi   ê.
             3SG    laugh   up     very    sweet    PRT

      6 L    tā     nǎ      yǒu,    hǎo   chǒu,   érqiě-
             3SG    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 collabora-
tive move, the "invitation" itself also conveys the speaker's collaborative attitude.

　　　Prior to excerpt (24), the speakers C and F have been talking about environ-
mental 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.
　　　　　　1SG 1SG absolute NEG at outside　messy throw rubbish

→ 2 F　　ei↓　wǒ　yě　shì　ê.
　　　　　PRT　1SG　also　be　　PRT

　　　3 F　　[wǒ lián- wǒ lián yī　zhāng <E memo E> zhǐ　o,
　　　　　　1SG even 1SG even one　CL　　　memo　　paper PRT

　　　4 C　　[hen.　zhè　yī　diǎn　wǒ-
　　　　　　PRT　this　one　point　1SG

　　　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 agree-
ment by adding a topic-related example, which show her strong collaborative
attitude.[9]

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9　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.[10]

      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 boy-
friend's apartment to run a language school in Xīnzhuāng, a district of New Taipei
City. In this example, D asks L where precisely the school is located.

(25)   1 D       xīnzhuāng    shénme   lù?
                 PN            what     road

       2 L       xīnzhuāng.
                 PN

       3 D       @@           shénme   lù?
                 (laughter)   what     road

  → 4 L          bù    zhīdào ê.    kàojìn  fǔdà.
                 NEG   know   PRT   near    Fujen.University

       5 L       [kàojìn      fǔdà.
                 near         Fujen.University

       6 D       [han   tā-  o    tā    jiā      yǐqián  jiù=
                 PRT    3SG  PRT  3SG   home     before  just

---

```
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 Xīnzhuāng?
   L2:    Xīnzhuāng …
   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 *kàojìn Fǔdà* '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    2sg call 3SG 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 seg-
ment, 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    2SG  say   after  vote     be     how

  → 2 P       piàoxuǎn o,   méi   yǒu- wǒ méi  yǒu qù kàn ê.
              vote     PRT  NEG   have 1SG NEG  have go see PRT

      3 P     [wǒ méi   yǒu   qù    kàn   jiéguǒ.
              1SG 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, spea-
ker 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 | fàngǔ | ma? |
| | | Um | 2SG | want | go | see | that | CL | Van.Gogh | PRT |

| → | 2 T | (0.8) | hái | zài | kǎolǜ | ê. | (1.3) |
| | | | still | at | consider | PRT | |

| | 3 T | wǒ | juédé | rén | kěnéng | huì | hěn | duō. |
| | | 1SG | 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$_{SG}$ 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.