



TAIWANESE GRAMMAR

PHILIP T LIN

A CONCISE REFERENCE

Taiwanese Grammar

a concise reference

Philip T. Lin



First published 2015
by Greenhorn Media

To find out more about all of our publications or mobile apps, please visit:
www.gogreenhorn.com

© 2015 Philip T. Lin

Publisher font in Tinos in accordance with the terms of the Apache License, version 2.0.
Publisher font in Noto Sans SJK published under the SIL Open Font License, version 1.1.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN13: 978-0-9963982-0-6 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-9963982-1-3 (ebk)

20150704

v2.1

Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Preface](#)

[Usage Notes](#)

[1 Introduction](#)

[1.1 Defining the Taiwanese language](#)

[1.1.1 Other names](#)

[1.1.2 Within the Sinitic language family](#)

[1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan](#)

[1.2 Comparing Taiwanese and Mandarin](#)

[1.2.1 Origins and development of Chinese languages](#)

[1.2.1.1 Min language development](#)

[1.2.1.2 Literary and colloquial register](#)

[1.2.2 Distinguishing linguistic features](#)

[1.2.2.1 Pronunciation differences with Mandarin](#)

[1.2.2.2 Vocabulary](#)

[1.2.2.3 Grammar](#)

[1.3 Taiwan linguistic history](#)

[1.3.1 Brief linguistic history of Taiwan](#)

[1.3.2 Mandarin as an official language](#)

[1.4 Standardization of Taiwanese](#)

[1.4.1 Characters](#)

[1.4.1.1 Special Taiwanese characters](#)

[1.4.1.2 Taiwanese Ministry of Education characters](#)

[1.4.2 Romanization schemes](#)

[1.4.2.1 白話字 Pêh-ōe-jī \(POJ\)](#)

[1.4.2.2 Taiwanese Language Phonetic Alphabet \(TLPA\)](#)

[1.4.2.3 台羅 Tâi-lô \(TL\)](#)

[1.4.2.4 Differences between POJ and TL](#)

[1.4.3 Contemporary approaches to reading Taiwanese](#)

[2 Pronunciation](#)

[2.1 Initials](#)

[2.1.1 Aspiration](#)

[2.1.2 Voicing](#)

[2.1.3 Palatalization](#)

[2.1.4 Comparisons to Mandarin initials](#)

[2.2 Finals](#)

[2.2.1 Nasals](#)

[2.2.1.1 Nasal vowels](#)

[2.2.1.2 Nasal consonants](#)

[2.2.1.3 Syllabic nasal consonants](#)

[2.2.2 Stops](#)

[2.2.3 Letters o and o'](#)

[2.2.4 Finals -ek, -eng](#)

[2.2.5 Comparison to Mandarin finals](#)

[2.3 Sound changes](#)

[2.3.1 Contractions](#)

[2.3.2 Liaison with suffix 仔 -á](#)

[2.3.3 Other sound changes](#)

[2.4 Regional variation](#)

[2.5 Tones](#)

[2.5.1 Original tones](#)

[2.5.2 Placement of tone diacritics](#)

[2.5.3 Tone changes](#)

[2.6 Tone change rules](#)

[2.6.1 The guiding principle of tone changes](#)

[2.6.2 The neutral tone and tone changes](#)

[2.6.3 Part of speech based rules](#)

[2.6.3.1 Nouns](#)

[2.6.3.2 Pronouns](#)

[2.6.3.3 Verbs](#)

[2.6.3.4 Aspect markers](#)

[2.6.3.5 Verb complements](#)

[2.6.3.6 Adverbs](#)

[2.6.3.7 Question words](#)

[2.6.3.8 Location participles](#)

[2.6.3.9 Numbers](#)

[2.6.3.10 Other parts of speech](#)

[2.6.4 Word-specific rules](#)

[2.6.4.1 Suffix 仔 -á](#)

[2.6.4.2 Names and titles](#)

[2.6.4.3 遮 chia 'here' and 遐 hia 'there'](#)

[3 Numbers](#)

[3.1 Counting numbers](#)

[3.1.1 Numbers 0-10](#)

[3.1.2 Literary reading for numbers](#)

[3.1.3 Numbers 11-99](#)

[3.1.4 Numbers 100 and greater](#)

[3.1.5 Interior zeroes](#)

[3.2 Ordinal numbers](#)

[3.3 Partial numbers](#)

[3.3.1 Fractions](#)

[3.3.2 Rates](#)

[3.3.3 Percentages](#)

[3.3.4 Discounts](#)

[3.3.5 Decimals](#)

[3.3.6 Multiples](#)

[3.3.7 Arithmetic](#)

[3.4 Approximations](#)

[3.4.1 Range](#)

[3.4.2 Estimates](#)

[3.4.3 More than](#)

[3.4.4 Less than](#)

[3.5 Money](#)

4 Nouns

4.1 Noun suffix 仔 -á

4.2 Plural and singular

4.3 Measure words

4.3.1 Numbers with measure word forms

4.3.2 Cognates between Taiwanese and Mandarin measure words

4.3.3 Differences between Taiwanese and Mandarin measure words

4.4 Plural marked by group measure words

4.5 Plural marked by 幾 kúi ‘several’

4.6 Demonstratives

4.6.1 Demonstrative adjectives – singular

4.6.2 Demonstrative adjectives – plural specified number

4.6.3 Demonstrative adjectives – plural unspecified number

4.7 Omitting the noun

4.8 Possessive

4.8.1 Using the possessive marker 的 ê

4.8.2 Implied possession with close personal relations or titles

4.8.3 Implied possession before demonstrative adjectives

4.9 Definite and indefinite nouns

5 Pronouns

5.1 Personal pronouns

5.1.1 Subject and object personal pronouns

5.1.2 Exclusive and inclusive ‘we’

5.1.3 Plural personal pronouns

5.1.4 Gender in personal pronouns

5.1.5 Honorific personal pronouns

5.2 Reflexive pronouns

5.2.1 Subject receives the action

5.2.2 Subject performs action alone

5.3 Possessive pronouns

5.3.1 Using the possessive marker 的 ê

5.3.2 Plural personal pronouns marking possession

5.3.3 Possession by using demonstrative adjectives

5.4 Demonstrative pronouns

5.4.1 Singular demonstrative pronouns

5.4.2 Plural demonstrative pronouns

5.4.3 Unspecified demonstrative pronouns

5.5 Indefinite pronouns

5.5.1 Expressing ‘any-’, ‘every-’, or ‘-ever’

5.5.2 Expressing ‘no-’ or ‘not any’

5.5.3 Expressing ‘some-’

6 Adjectives

6.1 Intensifiers

6.1.1 Common intensifiers

6.1.2 Placeholder intensifier

6.2 Absolute adjectives

6.3 Comparisons

6.3.1 Comparisons using 比 pí ... 較 khah ‘compared with...more than’

6.3.2 Comparisons using 比較 pí-kàu ‘to compare’

[6.3.3 Implicit comparisons](#)[6.3.4 Specifying how much difference in a comparison](#)[6.3.5 Comparing actions](#)[6.3.6 Negating a comparison](#)[6.3.7 Comparisons expressing inferiority](#)[6.3.8 Comparisons expressing equality](#)[6.3.9 Comparative degree](#)[6.3.10 Superlative degree](#)[6.4 Desirable and undesirable adjectives](#)[6.4.1 Adjective structure based on desirability](#)[6.4.2 Verb choice based on adjective desirability](#)[6.4.3 Negation based on adjective desirability](#)[6.5 Adjectives with verb characteristics](#)[6.5.1 Change-of-state particle 矣 --ah](#)[6.5.2 Describing conditions that have worsened 去 --khì](#)[6.6 Noun phrases and the modifying particle 的 ê](#)[6.6.1 Adjectives with modifying particle 的 ê](#)[6.6.2 Nouns, verbs, and phrases that modify with 的 ê](#)[6.6.3 Nouns that modify without 的 ê](#)[6.6.4 Omitting the head noun \(nominalization\)](#)[6.6.5 Multiple modifiers in sequence](#)[6.6.5.1 Modifiers \(background\)](#)[6.6.5.2 Modifiers \(properties\)](#)[6.6.5.3 Co-occurring modifiers](#)[6.7 Repetition](#)[6.7.1 Reduplication with single-syllable adjectives](#)[6.7.2 Reduplication with two-syllable adjectives](#)[6.7.3 Exceeding suffix](#)[6.8 Expressions with adjectives describing change](#)[6.8.1 Changes over time](#)[6.8.2 Changes that cause other changes](#)[7 Action verbs](#)[7.1 Open-ended action verbs](#)[7.1.1 Specifying the duration](#)[7.1.2 Specifying the frequency](#)[7.1.3 Specifying the endpoint](#)[7.1.4 Default objects](#)[7.1.5 Including both objects and duration](#)[7.1.6 Including both objects and frequency](#)[7.2 Change-of-state action verbs](#)[7.2.1 Change-of-state verbs in the continuous aspect](#)[7.2.2 Change-of-state verbs doubling as stative verbs](#)[8 Aspect](#)[8.1 Perfective aspect](#)[8.1.1 Perfective aspect with 有 ū](#)[8.1.2 Perfective aspect with phase complements](#)[8.2 Continuous aspect](#)[8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect](#)[8.2.1.1 Dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 teh](#)

8.2.1.2 Emphasizing the immediacy of an action

8.2.2 Static continuous aspect

8.2.2.1 Describing a manner of existence

8.2.2.2 Describing a continued posture

8.2.2.3 Describing repetitive movements

8.2.3 Verbs exhibiting both dynamic and static aspects

8.3 Experiential aspect

8.3.1 Experiential aspect with 捌 bat

8.3.2 Experiential aspect with 過 -kòe

8.3.3 Experiential aspect with both 捌 bat and 過 -kòe

8.4 Anterior aspect

8.4.1 Anterior aspect particle 矣 --ah

8.4.2 Anterior with other aspects

8.5 Habitual aspect

8.5.1 Habitual actions in the present

8.5.2 Habitual actions in the past

8.6 Tentative aspect

8.6.1 Reduplicating the verb

8.6.2 Adding the phrase 一下 --chit-ē

8.6.3 Adding the phrase 看覓 khòaⁿ-māi

8.6.4 Attaching verbs to 試 chhì

8.7 Summary of aspect

9 Stative Verbs

9.1 Common stative verbs

9.2 Stative verbs and intensifiers

9.3 Stative verbs and continuous aspect

9.4 Stative verbs in the past

10 Special verbs

10.1 是 sī

10.1.1 是 sī as a linking verb

10.1.2 是 sī in the focusing construction

10.1.3 是 sī marking the passive voice

10.1.4 是 sī expressing existence

10.2 有 ū

10.2.1 有 ū expressing possession

10.2.2 有 ū expressing existence

10.2.3 有 ū as a perfective aspect maker

10.2.4 有 ū as an emphasis marker

10.2.5 有 ū as a habitual aspect marker

10.2.6 有 ū with verb complements

10.2.6.1 Phase complements with 有 ū

10.2.6.2 Potential complements with 有 ū

10.2.7 有 ū with desirable adjectives

10.3 佇 tī

10.3.1 佇 tī expressing existence at a specific location

10.3.2 佇 tī as a preposition

10.3.3 佇咧 tī-leh as a continuous aspect marker

11 Verb complements

11.1 Phase complements

[11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#)[11.1.2 Phase complements indicating achievement](#)[11.1.3 Phase complements indicating potential](#)[11.1.4 Phase complements and objects](#)[11.1.4.1 Phase complements indicating completion with objects](#)[11.1.4.2 Phase complements indicating achievement and potential with objects](#)[11.2 Resultative complements](#)[11.2.1 Resultative complements from adjectives](#)[11.2.2 Resultative complements with objects](#)[11.2.2.1 Indefinite objects](#)[11.2.2.2 Definite objects](#)[11.3 Directional complements](#)[11.3.1 Directional complements indicating speaker perspective](#)[11.3.2 Double-directional complements](#)[11.3.3 Directional complements and objects](#)[11.3.3.1 Object comes before the verb compound](#)[11.3.3.2 Object comes after the verb compound](#)[11.3.3.3 Object comes in the middle of the verb compound](#)[11.4 Potential complements](#)[11.4.1 Actualized potential complements](#)[11.4.2 Unrealized potential complements](#)[11.4.3 Potential complement with suffix 得 -tit](#)[11.4.4 Potential complements and objects](#)[11.5 Complements with question marker 敢 kám](#)[11.6 Manner complements](#)[11.6.1 Manner complements describing habitual actions](#)[11.6.2 Manner complements describing specific instances](#)[11.6.3 Manner complements with objects](#)[11.7 Extent complements](#)[11.7.1 Extent complements with 甲 kah](#)[11.7.2 Extent complements with 予 hō](#)[11.7.3 Extent complements with objects](#)[11.8 Duration and absolute frequency complements](#)[11.8.1 Duration and absolute frequency complement placement](#)[11.8.2 Duration and absolute frequency complements with objects](#)[11.8.3 Duration and absolute frequency complements with negated verbs](#)[11.9 Summary for object placement](#)[11.10 Summary of verb complements](#)[12 Modal verbs](#)[12.1 Possibility](#)[12.1.1 Modal verb 會 ē ‘will’](#)[12.1.2 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to be going to’](#)[12.1.3 Emphasizing that an action is ‘going to happen soon’](#)[12.2 Desire](#)[12.2.1 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to want’](#)[12.2.2 Modal verb 愛 ài ‘to want’](#)[12.2.3 Modal verbs 想欲 siūⁿ-beh and 想愛 siūⁿ-ài ‘would like, thinking of’](#)[12.2.4 Expressing desire for nouns](#)[12.3 Ability](#)

[12.3.1 Modal verb 會曉 ē-hiáu ‘can’](#)

[12.3.2 Modal verb 會當 ē-tàng ‘can’](#)

[12.4 Permission](#)

[12.4.1 Modal verb 會使\(得\) ē-sái\(-tit\) ‘may’](#)

[12.4.2 Modal verb 通\(好\) thang\(-hó\) ‘may’](#)

[12.5 Obligation](#)

[12.5.1 Modal verb 愛 ài ‘to need’](#)

[12.5.2 Degree of obligation](#)

[12.6 Prohibition](#)

[12.6.1 Modal verb 莫 mài ‘do not’](#)

[12.6.2 Modal verb 毋通 m̄-thang ‘do not’](#)

[12.6.3 Modal verb 毋好 m̄-hó ‘do not’](#)

[12.7 Summary of modal verbs](#)

[13 Negation](#)

[13.1 Negative 毋 m̄](#)

[13.1.1 Pure negative 毋 m̄ ‘not’](#)

[13.1.2 Volitional 毋 m̄ ‘not want’](#)

[13.1.3 毋 m̄ in questions](#)

[13.1.3.1 Affirmative-negative questions \(X-not-X format\)](#)

[13.1.3.2 Tag questions with negatives](#)

[13.1.4 毋 m̄ in prohibitions](#)

[13.1.5 Negating the experiential aspect marker 捌 bat](#)

[13.2 Negative 無 bô](#)

[13.2.1 無 bô negating possession and existence](#)

[13.2.2 無 bô in the perfective aspect](#)

[13.2.3 無 bô negating the experiential aspect suffix 過 -kòe](#)

[13.2.4 無 bô in the habitual aspect](#)

[13.2.5 無 bô as an emphasis marker](#)

[13.2.6 無 bô in verb complements](#)

[13.2.7 無 --bô in questions](#)

[13.2.7.1 無 --bô as a general-purpose question tag](#)

[13.2.7.2 無 --bô as perfective aspect question particle](#)

[13.2.7.3 無 --bô as a universal question particle](#)

[13.2.8 無 bô negating desirable adjectives](#)

[13.3 Negative 袂 bē](#)

[13.3.1 袂 bē as a modal verb](#)

[13.3.1.1 袂 bē negating possibility](#)

[13.3.1.2 袂 bē negating ability](#)

[13.3.1.3 袂 bē negating permission](#)

[13.3.2 袂 bē as question particle](#)

[13.3.3 袂 bē in verb complements](#)

[13.3.4 袂 bē negating undesirable adjectives](#)

[13.4 Negative 未 bōe](#)

[13.4.1 未 bōe in the anterior aspect](#)

[13.4.2 未 bōe as question particle](#)

[13.5 Negative 免 bián](#)

[13.5.1 免 bián negating obligation](#)

[13.5.2 免 bián as question particle](#)

[13.6 Summary of negation](#)

14 Adverbs

14.1 Sentence-level adverbs

14.1.1 Attitude adverbs

14.1.2 Time adverbs

14.1.3 Confidence adverbs

14.1.4 Co-occurring sentence-level adverbs

14.2 Verb-level adverbs

14.2.1 Reference adverbs

14.2.1.1 Inclusion

14.2.1.1.1 All, both

14.2.1.1.2 Also

14.2.1.1.3 Sentences with both 嘛 mā and 攞 lóng

14.2.1.2 Repetition

14.2.1.3 Continuation

14.2.1.4 Exclusivity

14.2.1.5 Promptness

14.2.1.5.1 Only, only after

14.2.1.5.2 Precisely, just

14.2.1.5.3 Following time expressions

14.2.1.5.4 Two clauses (sequence)

14.2.2 Relative frequency adverbs

14.2.3 Manner adverbs

14.2.3.1 Short one-syllable adjectives

14.2.3.2 Multi-syllable adverbs

14.2.3.3 Manner adverbs in commands

14.2.4 Co-occurring verb-level adverbs

14.3 Adverbs with other grammatical elements

14.3.1 Negation and adverbs

14.3.2 Modal verbs and adverbs

14.3.3 Prepositional phrases and adverbs

14.4 Summary of word order for adverbs

15 Prepositions

15.1 Prepositions of movement

15.2 Prepositions of orientation

15.3 Prepositions of location

15.4 Prepositions of time

15.5 Prepositions of accompaniment and interaction

15.6 Prepositions of manner

15.7 Prepositions for benefactives

15.8 Prepositions with grammatical function

15.8.1 予 hō marking indirect objects

15.8.2 共 kā marking direct objects

15.8.3 予 hō marking passive voice constructions

15.9 Prepositions doubling as verbs

16 Location and directional expressions

16.1 Prepositions for location expressions

16.2 Location participles

16.2.1 Common location participles

16.2.2 Location participles with noun suffixes 面 -bīn and 頭 -thâu

[16.2.3 Cardinal directions](#)[16.3 Placement of location expressions](#)[16.3.1 Placement between the subject and verb](#)[16.3.1.1 Single prepositional phrase](#)[16.3.1.2 Location expressions with other prepositional phrases](#)[16.3.2 Placement before the subject](#)[16.3.3 Placement after the verb](#)[16.3.3.1 Displacement verbs](#)[16.3.3.2 Placement verbs](#)[16.3.3.3 Appearance verbs](#)[16.3.3.4 Posture verbs](#)[16.4 Directional expressions](#)[16.4.1 Destination verbs](#)[16.4.2 Speaker perspective with directional expressions](#)[17 Direct objects](#)[17.1 Pre-posed objects](#)[17.2 Topicalized objects](#)[17.3 Verb copying](#)[17.4 共 kā construction](#)[17.4.1 Setting up the 共 kā construction](#)[17.4.2 Comparisons to the Mandarin 把 bǎ construction](#)[17.4.3 Traditional usage of 共 kā and 將 chiong](#)[17.4.4 Placement with other grammatical elements](#)[17.4.5 共 kā construction in commands](#)[18 Indirect objects](#)[18.1 Using 予 hō to mark indirect objects](#)[18.2 Dative verbs](#)[18.2.1 Dative verbs that require 予 hō](#)[18.2.2 Dative verbs that optionally use 予 hō](#)[18.2.3 Dative verbs that cannot use 予 hō](#)[18.2.4 Dual-direction dative verbs](#)[18.3 Benefactives](#)[18.3.1 Prepositions marking benefactives](#)[18.3.2 Benefactive and indirect object phrases](#)[19 Passive voice](#)[19.1 Passive marker 予 hō](#)[19.2 Stating the agent](#)[19.3 The use of 共 kā in the passive voice](#)[19.4 Causative verbs](#)[20 Questions](#)[20.1 敢 kám question marker](#)[20.1.1 敢 kám placement restrictions](#)[20.1.2 敢 kám in verb compounds](#)[20.1.3 Responding to 敢 kám questions](#)[20.2 Tag questions](#)[20.2.1 General-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô 'is that right?'](#)[20.2.2 Responding to the general-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô?](#)[20.2.3 Affirmative tags](#)[20.2.4 Pure negative 毋 m̄ tags](#)

[20.3 Particle questions](#)[20.3.1 Negative question particles](#)[20.3.2 無 --bô as a universal question particle](#)[20.4 Disjunctive questions](#)[20.4.1 The conjunction 抑是 iáh-sī ‘or’](#)[20.4.2 Affirmative-negative disjunctive question \(X-or-not-X\)](#)[20.4.3 Affirmative-negative questions \(X-not-X\)](#)[20.5 Question words](#)[20.5.1 What](#)[20.5.2 Who](#)[20.5.3 Where](#)[20.5.4 When](#)[20.5.5 Which](#)[20.5.6 Why](#)[20.5.7 How](#)[20.5.8 How much / how many](#)[20.5.9 How long / how big](#)[20.5.10 Whose](#)[20.5.11 Summary of question words](#)[21 Requests and commands](#)[21.1 Particle 咧 --leh](#)[21.2 Using 去 khi ‘to go’ in commands](#)[21.3 Using the tentative aspect](#)[21.3.1 Verb reduplication](#)[21.3.2 Adding the phrase 一下 --chit-ē ‘a little bit’](#)[21.4 Polite words and phrases](#)[21.4.1 請 chhiáⁿ ‘please’](#)[21.4.2 麻煩你 Mâ-hôan lí ‘May I trouble you’](#)[21.4.3 拜託 pài-thok ‘please’](#)[21.4.4 歹勢 pháiⁿ-sè ‘apologies’](#)[21.5 Modal verbs in requests](#)[21.6 Group proposals](#)[21.7 Negative commands](#)[21.8 Using causative verbs in commands](#)[21.9 Using the 共 kâ construction in commands](#)[22 Particles](#)[22.1 End-of-sentence particles](#)[22.1.1 Single particles](#)[22.1.2 Double particles](#)[22.2 Exclamatory particles](#)[23 Terms of address](#)[23.1 Social niceties](#)[23.1.1 Greetings](#)[23.1.2 Giving thanks](#)[23.1.3 Apologies](#)[23.1.4 Salutations](#)[23.2 Introductions](#)[23.2.1 Surnames](#)[23.2.2 Given names](#)

[23.2.3 Titles](#)[23.2.4 Adding the suffix 姓 --sèⁿ to a surname](#)[23.2.5 Adding the suffix 的 --ê to a surname](#)[23.2.6 Adding the suffix 仔 --a to a surname](#)[23.2.7 Adding the prefix 阿 A- to mark endearment](#)[23.2.8 Referencing a family with the suffix 家 --ka](#)[23.3 Kinship terms](#)[23.3.1 Immediate family](#)[23.3.2 Paternal side](#)[23.3.3 Maternal side](#)[23.3.4 In-laws](#)[23.3.5 Children of relatives](#)[23.3.6 Multiple siblings](#)[23.3.7 Group kinship terms](#)[23.3.8 Friends and colleagues within the same generation](#)[24 Time](#)[24.1 Duration](#)[24.1.1 Exact duration](#)[24.1.2 Approximate duration](#)[24.1.2.1 More than](#)[24.1.2.2 Less than](#)[24.1.2.3 Within and between](#)[24.2 Clock time](#)[24.2.1 Telling time](#)[24.2.2 Clock-time expressions](#)[24.2.2.1 Half-hour increments](#)[24.2.2.2 Past the hour](#)[24.2.2.3 Before the hour](#)[24.3 Parts of the day](#)[24.3.1 Period of the day](#)[24.3.2 Parts of the day relative to the present](#)[24.3.3 Referring to habitual occurrences](#)[25 Calendar](#)[25.1 Years](#)[25.1.1 Relative references to a year](#)[25.1.2 Specifying a year](#)[25.2 Months](#)[25.2.1 Relative references to a month](#)[25.2.2 Approximate duration](#)[25.2.3 Months of the year](#)[25.3 Weeks](#)[25.4 Days](#)[25.4.1 Relative references to a day](#)[25.4.2 Days of the week](#)[25.4.3 Days of the month](#)[25.5 Specifying dates](#)[25.6 Seasons](#)[26 Present](#)[26.1 Present tense from context](#)

[26.2 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the present](#)[26.3 Ongoing actions](#)[26.3.1 Emphasizing that an action is in progress using 咧 teh](#)[26.3.2 Emphasizing the immediacy of an action in progress](#)[26.3.3 Including manner with ongoing actions](#)[26.3.4 Describing an ongoing state using verb suffix 咧 --leh](#)[26.4 Habitual actions in the present](#)[26.4.1 Expressing habitual actions with 有 ū](#)[26.4.2 Using time adverbs to indicate habitual actions](#)[26.4.3 Using relative frequency adverbs to indicate habitual actions](#)[26.5 Indicating past events relevant to the present using 矣 --ah](#)[27 Past](#)[27.1 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the past](#)[27.2 Completed actions in the past](#)[27.2.1 Expressing a completed action with 有 ū](#)[27.2.2 Expressing a completed action with a phase complement](#)[27.2.3 Emphasizing a completed action in the past with 有 ū](#)[27.2.4 Expressing an action that did not occur](#)[27.2.5 Expressing actions that have not yet occurred using 猶未 iáu-bōe](#)[27.3 Habitual actions in the past](#)[27.4 Expressing a repeated event in the past with 閣\(再\) koh\(-chài\)](#)[27.5 Expressing the recent past with 頭拌仔 thâu-tú-á](#)[27.6 Past experiences](#)[27.6.1 Expressing past experiences using 捌 bat and 過 -kòe](#)[27.6.2 Expressing not having had an experience](#)[28 Future](#)[28.1 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the future](#)[28.2 Indicating the future with possibility modal verbs](#)[28.2.1 Expressing possibility using 會 ē](#)[28.2.2 Expressing possibility using 欲 beh](#)[28.3 Describing events that are just about to happen](#)[28.4 Indicating the future with desire modal verbs](#)[28.4.1 'Wanting to' perform an action](#)[28.4.2 'Would like to' perform an action](#)[29 Changes](#)[29.1 Words expressing change](#)[29.1.1 Changes that occur with no object](#)[29.1.1.1 Changes in characteristics](#)[29.1.1.2 To transform](#)[29.1.1.3 To become something](#)[29.1.2 Changing an object](#)[29.1.2.1 To correct, edit, or fix](#)[29.1.2.2 To exchange, switch](#)[29.1.2.3 To improve](#)[29.1.3 Unchanging](#)[29.2 Resultative complements indicating change](#)[29.2.1 Changing into with resultative 做 -chò](#)[29.2.2 Successfully achieving with resultative 成 -sêng](#)[29.3 Expressing a new situation with end-of-sentence particles](#)

[29.3.1 Indicating a change of state with adjectives and particle 矣 --ah](#)

[29.3.2 Emphasizing a new situation with the end-of-sentence particle --啦 lah](#)

[29.4 Describing a condition that has gotten worse using 去 --khì](#)

[29.5 Emphasizing a change in the immediate future](#)

[29.6 Expressing changes over time](#)

[29.6.1 Changes over time ‘more and more’](#)

[29.6.2 Changes over time ‘less and less’](#)

[29.6.3 Changes caused by another action](#)

[30 Additions](#)

[30.1 Expanding the subject or object](#)

[30.2 Providing additional information about the subject](#)

[30.2.1 Adding descriptions in a subsequent sentence](#)

[30.2.2 Describing two qualities within a sentence](#)

[30.2.3 Expressing surprise at having two qualities](#)

[30.3 Describing a subject performing multiple actions](#)

[30.3.1 Multiple actions of equal standing](#)

[30.3.2 Multiple actions contrary to expectation](#)

[30.4 Introducing related information to the previous statement](#)

[30.4.1 Moreover, furthermore](#)

[30.4.2 In addition, also, one other thing](#)

[30.4.3 Besides, except for](#)

[30.4.3.1 Inclusive 除了 tû-liáu](#)

[30.4.3.2 Exclusive 除了 tû-liáu](#)

[31 Contrasts](#)

[31.1 Conjunctions indicating contrast](#)

[31.1.1 Simple contrasts](#)

[31.1.2 Emphasizing contrasts](#)

[31.2 Offering a concession in an argument](#)

[31.2.1 Concessions with simple contrasts](#)

[31.2.2 Emphasizing contrasts between clauses with a concession](#)

[32 Sequence](#)

[32.1 Chronological sequence](#)

[32.1.1 Expressing sequence through consecutive verbs](#)

[32.1.2 Adverbs in sequences](#)

[32.1.2.1 Describing an event occurring prior to another event](#)

[32.1.2.2 Describing an event occurring after another event](#)

[32.1.3 Reference adverbs 就 tō and 才 chiah](#)

[32.1.3.1 就 tō ‘then’](#)

[32.1.3.2 才 chiah ‘then’](#)

[32.1.3.3 才 chiah ‘only then’](#)

[32.1.4 Describing an event occurring as soon as another event occurs](#)

[32.2 Cause and effect](#)

[32.2.1 Using 因為 in-ūi ‘because’ and 所以 só-í ‘therefore’ for cause and effect](#)

[32.2.2 Using 既然 kî-jîan ‘since’ to express cause](#)

[32.2.3 Using 毋才 m̄-chiah ‘therefore’ to express effect](#)

[33 Purpose](#)

[33.1 Expressing purpose through consecutive verbs](#)

[33.2 Using 來 lâi ‘come’ and 去 khì ‘go’ to indicate purpose](#)

[33.3 Expressing a goal or purpose of action with 為著 ūi-tiōh](#)

[33.4 Expressing actions taken to avoid an outcome](#)

[33.5 Expressing for whom an action is performed](#)

[34 Simultaneous actions](#)

[34.1 Describing two actions occurring at the same time](#)

[34.1.1 When each activity receives attention independently](#)

[34.1.2 When two activities are performed at once 像時 siāng-sî](#)

[34.1.3 When multiple subjects perform an activity together at once](#)

[34.1.4 Performing actions together](#)

[34.2 Giving priority to one action over another](#)

[34.2.1 Indicating a constant state with verb suffix 咧 --leh](#)

[34.2.2 Indicating a state or action already occurring in the background](#)

[34.2.3 Habitual occurrences](#)

[35 Conditionals](#)

[35.1 Conditionals without special conjunctions](#)

[35.2 If-then clauses](#)

[35.3 Other types of conditional clauses](#)

[35.3.1 In the event, just in case](#)

[35.3.2 Unless, only if](#)

[35.3.3 Even if](#)

[35.3.4 If not for, if it weren't for](#)

[35.3.5 As long as, provided that, if only](#)

[35.3.6 Regardless, no matter, whether or not, in any case](#)

[35.4 Implying possible consequences 'otherwise, or else, if not'](#)

[References](#)

[Index](#)

Preface

The inspiration for this text arose from the marked lack of reference and study materials available in English for Taiwanese (or other Southern Min languages). In particular, resources providing clear and comprehensive treatments of Taiwanese grammar were practically non-existent or inaccessible to learners residing outside of Taiwan.

Given the resurgence of Taiwanese usage in the public sphere and the nascent programs in native language education (Taiwanese, Hakka, and aboriginal languages) in elementary schools, the opportunity to use the Taiwanese language is ever more imaginable in contemporary Taiwan. Nevertheless, the expansion of this language's usage occurs at a unique stage in Taiwan's demographic development. Currently, the oldest generations, educated in Japanese or only partially in Mandarin, prefer to communicate in Taiwanese. In contrast, the younger generations tend to prefer communication with peers in Mandarin reserving Taiwanese only for older family members. As such, today Taiwanese functions as a lingua franca across generations but will soon face challenges as a viable language if younger generations no longer continue to share this legacy with future generations.

Along with the growing public presence of spoken Taiwanese, the past decade has given rise to a wave of new scholarship within the field of Chinese linguistics focusing on previously neglected Chinese 'dialects'. While attention to phonology and lexicon has been the traditional domain of Chinese dialectology, recent research has investigated topics in grammar, unveiling a new understanding of the linguistic complexity found in non-Mandarin Chinese languages.

For the student of Taiwanese many challenges exist not the least of which are the lack of recognition as an official language and its consideration by many as only a spoken language. Without official status, independent efforts to standardize the language often go unheeded by the majority of speakers resulting in a wide variety of pronunciations and usages. Indeed the lack of official recognition extends to a perception by many that the language is merely a patois without a grammatical structure and spoken only informally among family and friends. In actuality, if taken in comparison with Mandarin, the Taiwanese language is imbued with a great deal of grammatical complexity, a sizable phonological structure with an elaborate tonal system, and a vocabulary rich with ancient Chinese and foreign origins.

The aim of this text is to provide a grammatical framework on which the student of Taiwanese can affix the vocabulary and sayings gathered from everyday conversations and other contexts. For many native speakers of Taiwanese, grammar of the language has never been learned formally or even considered as part of the language. As such, this text was conceived as a reference for those seeking a deeper grammatical understanding of the language and as part of a broader program of study. To be sure, this text focuses on grammar and students of Taiwanese would likely benefit from supplementing their studies with other materials covering topics such as vocabulary acquisition, refining pronunciation, and listening comprehension.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this text would not be possible without the assistance and support of many people to whom I am deeply indebted for their tremendous amount of patience and enthusiasm.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents who provided my first exposure to this fascinating language and have always offered unwavering support in all my endeavors.

I am also extremely grateful to Casey Alt for his extensive assistance in proofreading, design consultation, and technical expertise. I have benefited immeasurably by his continued encouragement and enthusiasm for this project.

Special thanks must also be extended to Wenjun Lin for her tireless help in proofreading examples and consulting on local usages.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to the many native Taiwanese speakers with whom I have consulted on this work. Their knowledge and experience have revealed to me the breadth of which Taiwanese has continued to evolve and develop. And, without their assistance the realization of this text would not be possible. I offer my sincerest gratitude to Renton Hu, Chiting Huang, Luke Cheng, Jimmy Cheng, Mars Chen, Knut Huang, Edwin Hsieh, Chien-yu Yu, Chien-ying Lee, Rainbow Liu, Agnes Yen, and Ching-wei Liu. To all of them I am enormously grateful.

I alone am responsible for all errors made in this text.

Philip T. Lin, 2015

About the author

Philip T. Lin currently resides in Taiwan and has a broad background in the areas of education, design, and finance. He is a graduate of Stanford University and additionally holds advanced degrees from Columbia University and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Usage notes

This text is primarily organized by parts of speech, grammatical topics, and special topics. It should be noted that traditional Chinese grammar categories and terms do not always map easily onto English grammatical structures. However, with the ease of learning for the English speaker in mind, this text utilizes English grammatical concepts whenever possible and only introduces less familiar terms (e.g. aspect, stative verbs, directional expressions, etc.) when necessary to fully understand the overall structure of Taiwanese grammar.

The inclusion of Mandarin

The inclusion of Mandarin as a supplementary language in this text is an acknowledgement that many students of Taiwanese will have had some level of exposure to Mandarin Chinese. While Taiwanese and Mandarin can be considered distinct languages due to their non-mutual intelligibility, they do share enough similarities in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to allow students of Taiwanese to take advantage of any prior knowledge of Mandarin.

The Mandarin glosses in this book are based on the Standard Mandarin (國語 **Guóyǔ** ‘the national language’) as spoken and taught in Taiwan. While there is a degree of variance in vocabulary between this standard and that of China (普通話 **Pǔtōnghuà** ‘the common speech’), the difference in grammar is minimal and pointed out in the text when necessary. At the same time, many speakers of Mandarin in Taiwan use a more informal style of Mandarin that sometimes borrows grammatical structures from Taiwanese. In this text, the term Taiwan Mandarin will be used to refer to this more colloquial form of spoken Mandarin. In contrast, the term Standard Mandarin will be used to refer to that which is considered the official standard in Taiwan, China, and other Mandarin-speaking areas.

Additionally, in all example sentences, the Mandarin glosses (note that if unmarked in this text, Mandarin glosses are rendered in gray) seek to capture both a similar overall tone and grammatical structure to those found in the Taiwanese sentences. In some instances, accomplishing both objectives is not so easily achieved. When this is the case, the Mandarin glosses in this text favor a closer correspondence to the Taiwanese grammatical structure. While these Mandarin translations may not necessarily be the most common way to express an idea in Mandarin, they are still considered acceptable to the Mandarin ear, as there is generally more than one way to express an idea within the confines of a language. By prioritizing likeness in grammar over tone and popular usage, the hope is to facilitate the learning process for those who already have some command of Mandarin.

Furthermore, the English glosses provided in this text are by no means exhaustive and for reference only. While Taiwanese words can have multiple meanings especially when read in isolation, the

English glosses given provide the most common meaning or one that is relevant to the particular chapter.

Conventions used in this text

Character spacing

While Chinese written in characters generally does not contain spaces between words, this text leaves spaces in example sentences as a visual aid, allowing students to more easily see the correspondence between characters and the Romanization. Moreover, particles and the overall grammatical structure may become more visible when spaces help to isolate these elements. That being said, the notion of what constitutes a word is less clearly defined in Chinese than in English (e.g. verbs and their default objects), and the reader may come across a differing demarcation of words used in this text compared to others. The spacing convention used has been chosen to be consistent with how grammatical structures are explained in this text.

Location names

Names of geographic locations in example sentences such as cities and countries are rendered in Taiwanese pronunciations. However, note that the usage of Taiwanese pronunciations for locations often depends on the speaker's own familiarity with the Taiwanese reading. For many, particularly younger speakers, Mandarin readings are used instead for locations and proper nouns.

Use of characters

While written Taiwanese does not have an official standard, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) has put forth a selection of Chinese characters in an effort to standardize the content used in educational materials (see [4.1 Characters](#)). Although it remains to be seen if the MOE promulgated set of characters for Taiwanese takes hold among a large number of users, the characters (as an internally consistent set of characters) remain useful for instructional purposes. This text uses both this set of Taiwanese characters and Romanized text because the combination is particularly helpful for students

who might need help disambiguating the many homophones (or at least similar sounding words) in Taiwanese. Even for students that cannot necessarily read characters, the difference in pictorial representation may help to reduce ambiguity.

Note that a few MOE characters fall outside the character set of the fonts used in the digital and print versions of this text. For example, the third person plural pronoun ‘they’ should be rendered with a character composed of 亻 + 因. In these cases, this text makes use of alternate characters that have been recognized by the MOE, such as 僇 for ‘they’.

Below are some example sentences with common, frequent, and similar sounding words. To the ear still unfamiliar with tones and proper context, differentiating among the sounds can be a challenge.

TAIWANESE MEANING

一 chit one

這 chit this

二个無夠，你看，這個已經破去矣。

Chit ê bô kàu, lí khòaⁿ, chit ê í-keng phò--khì--ah.

一個不夠，你看，這個已經破了。

Yī gè bù gòu, nǐ kàn, zhègè yǐjīng pòle.

One of them is not enough. Look! This one is already broken.

TAIWANESE MEANING

的 ê *modifying particle*

个 ê *general measure word*

會 ē *will*

伊的佢彼个濫做伙敢會予插雜？

I--ê kah hit--ê lām chò-hóe kám ē hō' chhap-cháp?

他的和那個混一起會不會被雜亂無章？

Tā de hé nàgè hùn yīqǐ huìbùhuì bèi záluànwúzhāng?

Will mixing his together with that one cause confusion?

TAIWANESE MEANING

阿 a- *endearment prefix*

矣 --ah *anterior aspect marker*

仔 -á *noun suffix*

阿姨共狗仔洗了矣，所以伊這馬較芳矣。

A-î kā káu-á sé liáu--ah, só-í i chit-má khah phang--ah.

阿姨把狗洗完了，所以牠現在變香了。

Āyí bǎ gǒu xǐwán le, suǒyǐ tā xiànzài biàn xiāng le.

Auntie has washed the dog, so it smells better now.

Aside from the combined use of characters and Romanized text to help early students of Taiwanese disambiguate among the many homophones, the use of characters helps to tie together the range in pronunciations that might appear among the local and generational variation occurring among Taiwanese speakers.

For example, both 欲 **beh** / **boeh** ‘going to, to want’ and 買 **bé** / **bóe** ‘to buy’ have alternate pronunciations that vary by local and individual preferences. While both words can be differentiated by context and pronunciation (tone and glottal stop), for the beginner student these distinctions can be difficult to discern.

伊 欲 買 菜。

I beh bé chhài.

I beh bóe chhài.

I boeh bé chhài.

I boeh bóe chhài.

他 要 買 菜。

Tā yāo mǎi cài.

He is going to buy vegetables.

Because the origins of the Taiwanese language stem from different regions in southern China with distinct accents, both the vocabulary and pronunciation of words vary significantly throughout different localities in Taiwan. Without standardization, many differences in pronunciation persist. This text uses the more common pronunciations while also providing frequently heard alternate pronunciations.

Use of Romanization

This text uses the Pêh-ōe-jī (POJ) Romanization system for transcribing Taiwanese. While the Taiwanese Ministry of Education currently promotes a revised version of POJ called Tâi-lô (TL) for usage in its educational materials, this text has chosen to use the POJ Romanization system. Because the bulk of Taiwanese literature has been written in POJ, familiarity with this Romanization system offers access to a corpus of literature dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. This legacy has allowed POJ to persist amid a large number of Romanization systems that have been proposed over the years. Today it remains the most popular system among online users and among those who remain unsure of the viability of other Romanization systems. As many current Romanization schemes are based off of POJ, learning POJ and then making adjustments to learn another POJ-based system such as TL is fairly manageable (see [4.2.4 Differences between POJ and TL](#)).

This text uses the Hànyǔ Pīnyīn Romanization system for transcribing Mandarin. It should be noted that tone changes have not been transcribed. This includes changes made to two consecutive syllables

with the third tone, the negative 不 **bù** ‘no, not’ before syllables in the fourth tone, and the number 一 **yī** ‘one’ before any syllable when used to describe a quantity.

WRITTEN IN TEXT	ACTUAL PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
<i>THIRD TONES</i>		
Nǐ hǎo	Ní hǎo	你好 ‘Hello’
shuǐjiǎo	shuíjiǎo	水餃 ‘dumpling’

BÙ 不 ‘NO, NOT’

bù duì	bú duì	不對 ‘incorrect’
bù chòu	bú chòu	不臭 ‘not stinky’

Yī 一 ‘ONE’

yī kuài	yí kuài	一塊 ‘one piece’
yī běn shū	yì běn shū	一本書 ‘one book’
yī tiáo lù	yì tiáo lù	一條路 ‘one road’
yī fēng xìn	yì fēng xìn	一封信 ‘one letter’

The neutral tone is left unmarked in this text.

Context for example sentences

Taiwanese is much more contextually based than English. As a result, example sentences in isolation face the challenge of not being understood in their full context. In example sentences where differentiating between two interpretations of a sentence is necessary, additional context has been provided in parentheses. However, note that most example sentences have not been provided the full context in which the sentence could occur. The reader is encouraged to broadly consider all possible contexts for each example sentence. Moreover, because the goal of this text is to showcase the full possibilities of what Taiwanese grammar can accomplish, in some instances it may be necessary to consider contexts beyond the most common situation to highlight a less used grammatical structure.

A few caveats to the student

While consulting and practicing with native speakers of Taiwanese will likely provide a significant resource in the student’s language studies, one should be aware of some potential challenges when studying Taiwanese. Because Taiwanese remains an unofficial language and has not undergone

standardization, this consequently produces conflicting views among native speakers of what should be deemed acceptable speech.

Varying usage of the language

With regards to choice in vocabulary and pronunciation, differences may occur due to a speaker's locality, generation, and/or individual preference. In addition, because the language in the past has been restricted to particular domains (i.e. not in education, government, or in most public settings), each native speaker has a different scope of what sounds acceptable depending on his or her accustomed environment for using the language. For example, some of the language informants for this text used Taiwanese exclusively with grandparents, while others had a more diverse engagement that included peers, neighbors, and colleagues. In general, the language is most commonly used with family members or close friends, which in turn tends to bias a speaker's exposure to the Taiwanese spoken in a certain locality.

The hope of this text is to capture what is grammatically possible and acceptable for some speakers (and not necessarily all speakers). As a result, some grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciations presented in this book may not always be familiar to a particular native speaker.

Notions of grammar

Aside from the challenges of conflicting and differing usages of a non-standardized language, the student of Taiwanese may encounter difficulties when inquiring of native speakers about grammatical usage.

Because grammar for Mandarin is generally not explicitly taught within the education system in Taiwan, most native speakers are not even aware that Chinese languages have any grammar. It is not uncommon in Taiwan to hear in response to a question about Mandarin grammar, 'Chinese has grammar?' For many in Taiwan, grammar is equated to verb inflections or noun gender agreement found in other languages.

For the Taiwanese language, the perception is exacerbated by the fact that many consider Taiwanese only to be a 'spoken language' and thereby informal and incapable of having a systematized grammar. The lack of standardization, the great degree of local variation, and restriction of its usage to less formal contexts in the past century have contributed to this overall sense among many that Taiwanese is not a full, complex language imbued with a complex grammar.

Aside from the Taiwan-specific issue of little to no formal grammar instruction in the education system, the student of Taiwanese should also be aware that a native speaker's individual awareness of his or her mother tongue's grammar and usage can vary significantly. For example, for many native speakers of English, the correct usage of tense or case is not always used in accordance with English grammar

standards. However, due to an individual's language experience and environment, the ungrammatical usage may actually sound more natural.

UNGRAMMATICAL USAGE

I wish I was rich.

Who are you calling?

GRAMMATICAL USAGE

I wish I were rich.

Whom are you calling?

In the examples above, the ungrammatical versions are widely used among many native speakers of English.

That being said, grammar itself is less a prescriptive set of rules than a description of how a living and constantly evolving language is used by the majority of its speakers. For languages that have not undergone standardization or a major overhaul, this is even more so the case. In fact, the Southern Min language had already accumulated four distinct layers of vocabulary from various migrations of people in China before arriving in Taiwan where additional influences by aboriginal languages, Japanese, and Mandarin continued to change the language (see [1.2.2 Min language development](#)). Even among the many language informants for this text, acceptability of some grammatical structures varied quite widely, reflecting not only differences in local, generational, and individual usage but also a language that is continually in flux.

1 Introduction

Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China) is an island nation of 23 million inhabitants off the southeastern coast of China (officially known as the People's Republic of China). While the official language on Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese, approximately 70% of the population speak Taiwanese, 12% Hakka, and 2% aboriginal (Austronesian) languages¹. 'Taiwanese' (台灣話 **Tâi-ôan-ōe** or 台語 **Tâi-gí**) refers to the most commonly used term by locals when designating this variant of Southern Min Chinese².

While acknowledging there is some controversy over the term 'Taiwanese' due to the implication that other languages spoken on the island are not considered 'Taiwanese' languages, this text uses 'Taiwanese' in deference to the most recognizable term in English by both locals and those abroad when referring to Taiwanese Southern Min.

1.1 Defining the Taiwanese language

1.1.1 Other names

Taiwanese is one among many Chinese languages and originates from the modern southern Chinese province of Fujian. Due to famine and conflicts throughout the period spanning from the 17th to the mid-20th century, waves of emigrants from this region of China spread the language to Taiwan and various parts of Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and overseas Chinese communities on other continents throughout the world.

Because speakers live across many regions, the language has evolved over time into several variants as well as taken on a number of different names.

ENGLISH	CHARACTERS	TAIWANESE (<i>Pêh-ōe-jī</i>)	MANDARIN (<i>Hànyǔ Pīnyīn</i>)	MEANING
Taiwanese	台灣話 台語	Tâi-ôan-ōe Tâi-gí	Táiwān huà Táiyǔ	Taiwan speech Taiwan language
Hokkien (Fookien, Fukien)	福建	Hok-kiàn	Fújiàn	Fujian province
Hokkienese (Fukienese, Fujianese)	福建話	Hok-kiàn-ōe	Fújiàn huà	Fujian speech
Hoklo	福佬	Hok-ló	Fúlǎo	Fujian folk
Holo	河洛	Hô-lòk	Héluò	Yellow and Luo Rivers

	鶴佬	Hóh-ló	Hèlǎo	Crane folk
Amoy	廈門	Ē-m̄ng	Xiàmén	Xiamen
Lang-nang-oe	咱人話	Lán-lâng-ōe	Zán rén huà	Our people's speech
Min Nan (Minnanyu)	閩南語	Bân-lâm-gí	Mǐnnán yǔ	Southern Min language

The names given to the language generally stem from geographic references to areas from which the language originated or is spoken. Usage of terms varies according to region. For example, the term Lang-nang-oe (咱人話 **Zán rén huà**) ‘our people’s speech’ originates from the minority ethnic Chinese population in the Philippines where the majority of this group speaks a variant of Southern Min.

1.1.2 Within the Sinitic language family

Taiwanese comes from a larger Chinese linguistic grouping called Southern Min, which in turn belongs to even larger groupings of Chinese languages. Most linguists classify Chinese languages as part of the Sino-Tibetan language family, a large category comprising more than 400 separate languages spoken by about one-fifth of the world population.

Below is a chart outlining the classification of Taiwanese as a variant within the broader Sino-Tibetan language family³.

LANGUAGE FAMILY								
Sino-Tibetan	Indo-European	Niger-Congo	Afroasiatic	Austronesian	Dravidian	Altaic	Austroasiatic	Tai-Kadai
BRANCH								
Sinitic	Tibetan							
DIALECTS								
Min	Mandarin	Wu	Yue	Hakka	Gan	Xiang		
SUB-DIALECTS								
Southern Min	Northern Min	Central Min	Puxian Min					
VERNACULAR								
Hokkien	Teochew	Hainanese						
ACCENT								
Zhangzhou	Quanzhou							
VARIANT								
Taiwanese	Amoy	Singaporean Hokkien	Penang Hokkien	Medan Hokkien	Philippine Hokkien			

Recent estimates place the total population of Southern Min speakers close to 47 million people⁴. Within the Southern Min dialect family there are a few distant vernacular cousins to Hokkien including Teochew (潮州 **Cháozhōu**) and Hainanese (海南話 **Hǎinán huà**). Teochew has limited mutual

intelligibility with Hokkien, while Hainanese generally has little to none.

Hokkien can further be subdivided into accents from Quanzhou (泉州 **Quánzhōu**) and Zhangzhou (漳州 **Zhāngzhōu**), two neighboring regions within Fujian province with distinct pronunciations and vocabulary. All Hokkien variants (including Taiwanese) are derived from a mixture of these two regional accents.

VARIANT	LOCATION	COMPOSITION OF REGIONAL ACCENT
Taiwanese	Taiwan	generally equal mix
Amoy	China	generally equal mix
Singaporean Hokkien	Singapore	slightly more Quanzhou
Penang Hokkien	Indonesia	more Zhangzhou
Medan Hokkien	Indonesia	more Zhangzhou
Philippine Hokkien	the Philippines	more Quanzhou

Amoy (廈門 **Xiàmén**) is the port city nestled in between the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou regions. As a result of commerce and geography, the Amoy variant emerged as a mixture of both Quanzhou and Zhangzhou accents. The importance of Amoy as a trading port in the late nineteenth century made the Amoy variant one of the most popular Chinese languages to learn during that period.

Because Taiwan was settled by migrants from both Zhangzhou and Quanzhou regions, a mixture of both accents also developed on the island. Without standardization many local differences arose within Taiwanese from continued internal migrations resulting in the patchwork of accents that exist today (see [1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan](#)).

1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan

As both Quanzhou and Zhangzhou sit along the Taiwan Strait, migrants from both regions traveled to Taiwan beginning in the 17th century. Because of this, the Taiwanese language has evolved from a mixture of both Quanzhou and Zhangzhou accents. While migrants from each region initially settled in a particular locality in Taiwan, four hundred years of internal movement as well as a lack of standardization of the language has resulted in local accents in Taiwan that are less attributed to the Quanzhou/Zhangzhou divide than to the geographic differences within the island of Taiwan. Recent scholarship within the field of Taiwanese sociolinguistics has found distinctions to classify Taiwanese into five local accents: seaport (海口 **hǎikǒu**), coastal (篇海 **piānhǎi**), inner plains (內埔 **nèibù**), interior (偏內 **piānnèi**), and the common (通行 **tōngxíng**), which represents most of the the larger urban centers⁵. The common accent is further subdivided into North (Taipei, Hsinchu) and South (Tainan, Kaoshiung, Taitung).



FIGURE 1 Map of local accents

City names are listed per official Taiwanese spelling. Distribution data provided by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE)⁶

LOCAL ACCENT	REPRESENTATIVE CITIES	EXAMPLE WORDS							
		卵 'egg'	二 'two'	毛 'hair'	姊 'sister'	水雞 'frog'	先生 'sir, Mr.'	生 'to be born'	好 'good'
	<i>Quanzhou</i>								
Seaport	Lukang	n̄ng	lī	m̄ng	chí	súi-koe	sian-si ⁿ	si ⁿ	hó
Coastal	Penghu, Nanliao, Taihsi	n̄ng	lī	m̄ng	ché	súi-koe	sian-si ⁿ	si ⁿ	hó
Common (North)	Taipei, Hsinchu	n̄ng	lī	m̄ng	ché / chí	chúi- koe /súi-koe	sian-si ⁿ	si ⁿ	hó
Common (South)	Tainan, Kaoshiung, Taitung	n̄ng	jī	mo / m̄ng	ché / chí	chúi-ke / súi-ke	sian-si ⁿ / sian- se ⁿ	se ⁿ	hór
Interior	Taichung, Chiayi, Changhua	n̄ng	jī	m̄ng	ché	chúi-ke	sin-se ⁿ	se ⁿ	hó

Inner Plains	Yilan	nūi	jī	moˊ	chí	chúi-ke	sin-se ⁿ	se ⁿ	hó
<i>Zhangzhou</i>									

As can be seen from this table, the variation in pronunciation by local accent is not entirely consistent with the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou division. Some words such as 卵 **nāng** ‘egg’ have been adopted by most Taiwanese speakers using the Quanzhou accent. In contrast, other words such as those for ‘two’ 二 **li/jī** and ‘hair’ 毛 **māng/moˊ** are more evenly distributed between Quanzhou and Zhangzhou accents across all localities in Taiwan.

Moreover, given the degree of mobility in contemporary Taiwanese society and the influence of Taiwanese language media, the accents of the larger urban centers, as represented by the Common dialects, appear to be gravitating towards one another. For example, the word for 水雞 ‘frog’, which is pronounced **súi-koe** in the Quanzhou accent and **chúi-ke** in the Zhangzhou accent, appears to be currently unstable within the Common dialects in which alternate pronunciations **chúi-koe** and **súi-ke** have also emerged. With all four permutations of the two-syllable word present in the Common dialects, this instability suggests an additional axis of division resulting from the urban/rural divide.

Additionally, in some cases, a new pronunciation is emerging from urban centers irrespective of the traditional Quanzhou and Zhangzhou division. The pronunciation of the ‘o’ in **hó** 好 ‘good’ similar to the ‘a’ in the English word ‘sofa’ is found primarily only in the larger southern cities of Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Taitung. Currently in other localities, the ‘o’ in **hó** 好 ‘good’ is similar to the ‘o’ in the English word ‘woke’.

Nonetheless, a few words are difficult to align with either the Quanzhou/Zhangzhou or urban/rural axes. The word for ‘older sister’ 姊 appears to have the pronunciation of both **ché** and **chí** in defiance of these orientations. In Taiwan’s bilingual society, it is possible that there is interference from the Mandarin term for ‘older sister’ 姐 **jiě**. The Mandarin term itself 姐 **jiě** appears to be now used almost interchangeably in Taiwan with the character 姊, which in other Mandarin-speaking areas has the pronunciation 姊 **zǐ**.

Despite the complexity of how local accents differ in Taiwan, many local Taiwanese prefer to use a simplified north/south division to explain the variation in their speech.

1.2 Comparing Taiwanese and Mandarin

While the term ‘Chinese’ often refers to Mandarin Chinese in common parlance, Chinese is actually a large family of languages. For many, Mandarin is regarded as the ‘standard language’, while other Chinese languages are simply considered ‘dialects’.

However, the degree of linguistic difference found among Chinese languages can roughly be compared to that found among Romance languages (i.e. Portuguese and French vs. Mandarin and Cantonese). The distinction between ‘language’ and ‘dialect’ is more often made for political reasons than linguistic ones. Within traditional Chinese linguistics, 方言 **fāngyán** ‘regional speech’ is a broader and more inclusive term than the more common English translation ‘dialect’. For this reason, many prefer to use the term ‘variety’ or ‘language’ instead of ‘dialect’.

1.2.1 Origins and development of Chinese languages

The origins of the various Chinese languages that exist today are difficult to pinpoint. Some scholars suggest that differentiation among Chinese languages began around the end of the Zhou Dynasty (~250 BC)⁷. For comparison purposes, Latin began to evolve into the Romance languages beginning in the sixth century after the fall of the Roman Empire in AD 476.

Despite centuries of independent evolution among the different Chinese languages, a writing system that was divorced from pronunciation and spoken grammar provided a unifying element for the disparate Chinese languages. The origin of the pictorial-based Chinese character writing system dates back to artifacts from 1200 BC documenting Old Chinese written in ‘oracle bone script’.

More than half a millennium later, Classical Chinese literature emerged during the beginning of the Spring and Autumn period of the Zhou Dynasty (~500 BC) documenting the teachings of Confucius, Mencius and Laozi. By the end of the Han Dynasty (AD 220), a revised writing style based on Classical Chinese called Literary Chinese became the primary form of written Chinese. This style of writing would continue on until the early twentieth century. Over the centuries, the grammar and vocabulary of written Chinese diverged significantly with all varieties of spoken Chinese. However, as the primary visual representation of the language, written Literary Chinese bound the spoken languages together under the rubric of Chinese.

1.2.1.1 Min language development

With regards to the Min languages, most scholars describe their development in four distinct linguistic layers. The oldest layer is from the non-Sinitic Min-Yue (閩越 **Mǐn Yuè**) people who occupied the Fujian region since before the arrival of the Han Chinese around 110 BC. Some scholars suggest that the language spoken by these people belonged to the Austronesian or Tai-Kadai language family⁸.

The first Han Chinese imperial armies came into southern China during the Qin-Han Dynasty (221 BC-AD 220). The language from this influx of people is thought to have contributed significantly to the colloquial base of Southern Min.

About half a millennia later, more arrivals from northern China came during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (AD 420-550) period. As those that came during this period were part of the aristocracy, more elevated language was introduced into Southern Min.

The final layer was introduced during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) when the bulk of the literary register was added to the Southern Min vocabulary.

Below is a comparison of how the word for ‘stone’ entered the Southern Min language at three distinct moments, occupying different layers within the language.

QIN-HAN	NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN	TANG
(221 BC-AD 220)	(AD 420-550)	(AD 618-907)

chiòh	siàh	sèk
石頭 <u>chiòh</u> -thâu	石榴 <u>siàh</u> -liû	藥石 iòk- <u>sèk</u>
‘stone’	‘pomegranate’	‘stone acupuncture’

These three layers in addition to the pre-Sinitic layer constituted the base of the Southern Min language before subsequent influences from colonial and neighboring powers in the 19th and 20th centuries introduced additional vocabulary to the variants of Hokkien (see [1.2.2.2 Vocabulary](#)).

1.2.1.2 Literary and colloquial register

Like most Chinese languages, Taiwanese has both literary and colloquial readings for characters. *Literary readings* arose from the Middle Chinese pronunciation of words used in formal settings during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). These newer pronunciations allowed officials from all regions of China to more easily understand each other when conducting official business in the capital city of Chang'an (Xi'an). As a result, the contemporary reader will find that the Taiwanese in the literary register bears a closer resemblance phonetically to Mandarin. For Taiwanese and other Min languages, *colloquial readings* are older pronunciations originating from Old Chinese during the Qin-Han Dynasties (221 BC - AD 220) and the time of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (AD 420-550).

In general, literary readings are more commonly found in place names, proverbs, surnames, literature, and higher-level concepts. In contrast, colloquial readings tend to be used for terms found in everyday speech. However, for Taiwanese this distinction between literary and colloquial readings is less severe than this bifurcation may suggest. Many Taiwanese words used in everyday speech actually incorporate literary readings. Even so, these literary readings tend to be in *bound form*, only appearing in combination with another syllable. Colloquial readings, in contrast, are more likely to function as stand-alone syllables.

LITERARY			COLLOQUIAL	
西 ‘west’	se	西裝 <u>se</u> -chong ‘suit’	sai	西片 <u>sai</u> -pêng ‘west side’
轉 ‘turn’	chóan	運轉 ün- <u>chóan</u> ‘to revolve’	tng	轉 tng ‘to return’
人 ‘people’	jîn	人事 jîn-sū ‘personnel’	lâng	人客 <u>lâng</u> -kheh ‘guest’
學 ‘learn’	hák	學生 <u>hák</u> -seng ‘student’	oh	學 oh ‘to learn’

Mandarin does have some words with both colloquial and literary readings as well. However, there are far fewer of these since the Mandarin dialects have historically shared a closer pronunciation to the language used in official settings, 官話 **guānhuà** ‘official speech’.

LITERARY			COLLOQUIAL	
薄 ‘thin’	bó	薄膜 <u>bó</u> mó ‘membrane’	báo	薄餅 <u>báo</u> bǐng ‘pancake’

血 ‘blood’	xiě	血緣 <u>xiě</u> yuán ‘bloodline’	xuè	流血 <u>liú</u> <u>xuè</u> ‘to bleed’
露 ‘drop’	lù	露點 <u>lù</u> diǎn ‘dewpoint’	lòu	露底 <u>lòu</u> dǐ ‘to leak secrets’
削 ‘peel’	xuē	削減 <u>xuē</u> jiǎn ‘to reduce’	xiāo	削尖 <u>xiāo</u> jiān ‘to sharpen’

Furthermore, the use of colloquial and literary registers within Hokkien dialects varies as well. In some regions, the colloquial terms are used while in others the literary ones. For example, the term 大學 ‘university’ follows a literary reading **tāi-hák** in Taiwanese but a colloquial reading **tōa-òh** in Penang Hokkien. Taiwanese appears to use more literary readings in its vocabulary than other variants of Hokkien⁹.

	LITERARY	COLLOQUIAL
大 ‘big’	tāi	tōa
學 ‘learn’	hák	òh

	TAIWANESE	PENANG HOKKIEN
大學 ‘university’	tāi-hák	tōa-òh

In some cases, the choice in pronunciation between literary and colloquial registers is still in flux. For example, the multi-syllabic expression 放假 ‘to go on vacation, holiday’ has not settled on a reading within the Taiwanese and the Penang Hokkien dialects. In fact, a mixed-register reading **pàng-ká** appears in both dialects.

	LITERARY	COLLOQUIAL
放 ‘release’	hòng	pàng
假 ‘vacation, holiday’	kà	ké

	TAIWANESE	PENANG HOKKIEN
放假 ‘to go on vacation’	hòng-ká	pàng-ké
	pàng-ká	pàng-ká

1.2.2 Distinguishing linguistic features

In comparison to Mandarin, many distinctions exist with Taiwanese pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. This section briefly highlights some of the more salient differences between these two languages. For more detail exploring these differences, see the specified chapters.

1.2.2.1 Pronunciation differences with Mandarin

Taiwanese maintains many sounds and tones that were used in Middle Chinese but no longer exist in Standard Mandarin. Some of these include nasal sounds, stopped endings, and additional tones (see [2 Pronunciation](#)). At the same time, Mandarin possesses a few phonological features that are not present in Taiwanese such as rounded vowels and retroflex sounds.

Nasal sounds

Taiwanese has a larger catalog of nasal sounds including nasal vowels, nasal consonants, and syllabic nasal consonants (see [2.2.1 Nasal sounds](#)). Mandarin does not have nasal vowels, although vowels followed by nasal consonants can take on a nasal quality. Nor does Mandarin have syllabic nasal consonants.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
NASAL VOWELS		
sa ⁿ	sān	三 ‘three’
pê ⁿ	píng	平 ‘flat’
NASAL CONSONANTS		
lâ ^m	nân	南 ‘south’
nî ^g	liǎng	兩 ‘two’
SYLLABIC NASAL CONSONANTS		
ṁ	--	毋 ‘no, not’
ṅ	huáng	黃 ‘yellow’

Stops

Taiwanese possesses stopped endings, which occur when the flow of air is halted by a glottal stop or consonant ending ‘-p’, ‘-t’, or ‘-k’. While still part of Middle Chinese, this trait has since disappeared from Mandarin (see [2.2.2 Stops](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
sek	sè	色 ‘color’
chiap	jiē	接 ‘to receive’

Rounded vowels

Taiwanese lacks the rounded vowels ü [y] and üe [yɛ] that occur in Mandarin (see [2.2.5 Comparison to Mandarin finals](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
lú	nǚ	女 ‘female’
seh	xuě	雪 ‘snow’

Retroflex consonants

Taiwanese lacks retroflex consonants, which are formed by the upward curl of the tongue (see [2.1.4 Comparisons to Mandarin initials](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
sī	<u>sh</u> ì	是 ‘to be’
chí	<u>zh</u> ǐ	只 ‘only’

Additional tones

Taiwanese retains seven of the original eight Middle Chinese tones. The sixth tone has merged with the second tone. Additionally, the fourth and eighth tones are only used for syllables with stopped endings (see [2.5.1 Original tones](#)).

TONE	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
1	high flat	high flat
2	high falling	rising
3	low falling	dipping
4	low stopped	high falling
5	rising	--
6	--	--
7	low flat	--
8	high stopped	--

Extensive tone changes

While Mandarin undergoes tone changes with consecutive syllables in the third tone or in different combinations with 一 **yī** ‘one’ and 不 **bù** ‘no, not’, Taiwanese has an extensive system of changing tones. Every tone maps to a different tone under circumstances dependent on phrasing, grammar, and vocabulary (see [2.5.3 Tone changes](#), [2.6 Tone change rules](#)).

ORIGINAL TONE		CHANGED TONE	
1	high flat	7	low flat
2	high falling	1	high flat
3	low falling	2	high falling
4 (-h)	low stopped	2	high falling
4 (-p, -t, -k)	low stopped	8	high stopped
5	rising	7	low flat (<i>South</i>)
		3	low falling (<i>North</i>)
6	--	--	--
7	low flat	3	low falling
8 (-h)	high stopped	3	low falling
8 (-p, -t, -k)	high stopped	4	low stopped

1.2.2.2 Vocabulary

Only about 85% of the lexicon, or vocabulary, of Taiwanese have cognates with Mandarin¹⁰. The remaining vocabulary appears to have originated from the oldest non-Sinitic layer of Southern Min or come from more recent loanwords such as from Japanese.

Pre-sinitic words

Some words only found in Min dialects are thought to have originated from this pre-Sinitic layer, which some scholars hypothesize was an Austronesian language¹¹.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
囡 kiá ⁿ	孩子 hái ^{zi}	child
糜 mōe	粥 zhōu	rice porridge
𠵼 thài	殺 shā	to kill
睏 khùn	睡 shuì	to sleep

Archaic Sinitic words

A number of archaic Chinese words are still preserved within Taiwanese. Many scholars believe this resulted from Min languages splitting from Old Chinese (1200-220 BC) earlier than other Chinese varieties.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
鼎 tiá ⁿ	鍋 guō	pot
目𦉳 bák-chiu	眼睛 yǎnjīng	eye
箸 tī	筷子 kuàizi	chopsticks
冊 chheh	書 shū	book

Loanwords from Japanese

During the fifty-year Japanese colonial period, many words related to technology, medicine, and western cultural products were imported from Japanese into Taiwanese. A good number of these terms had previously been borrowed into Japanese from English.

At least 172 loanwords with foreign or native Japanese origin have been incorporated into the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) official Taiwanese language dictionary loanword appendix¹². The MOE has not suggested replacement characters but leaves them as Romanized loanwords with the original Japanese kana script annotating its origin.

TAIWANESE	JAPANESE		MEANING
<i>POJ</i>	<i>KANA</i>	<i>RŌMAJI</i>	
chiō·ko·lé·to	チョコレート	chokorēto	chocolate
pháng	パン	pan	bread

ō-to-bái	オートバイ	ōtobai	motorcycle
siàt-chuh	シャツ	shatsu	dress shirt
bí-lu	ビール	bīru	beer
ō-ba-sáng	おばさん	obasan	auntie, older woman
ō-ji-sáng	おじさん	ojisan	uncle, older man
khā-la-o-khe	カラオケ	karaoke	karaoke

However, Taiwanese additionally has many Japanese loanwords with Sinitic origins that are not included in this appendix. Instead, they are included in the dictionary and listed according to their respective Chinese characters.

TAIWANESE CHARACTERS	POJ	JAPANESE KANA	RÔMAJI	MEANING
便所	piān-só̍	べんじょ	benjo	lavatory, toilet
病院	pē̍-ī̍n	びょういん	byōin	hospital
注射	chù-siā	ちゅうしゃ	chūsha	shot, syringe
郵便局	iû-piān-kiók	ゆうびんきょく	yūbin kyoku	post office
都合	to-háp	つごう	tsugō	circumstances
紺色	khóng-sek	こんいろ	kon-iro	blue

1.2.2.3 Grammar

While the bulk of grammar between Taiwanese and Mandarin is similar, there are several areas where significant differences exist.

Extensive negation

Negation in Mandarin is generally split between the two negative particles 沒 **méi** and 不 **bù** according to mood and aspect. In contrast, Taiwanese negation involves five negative particles with usage determined by a more complex combination of these two factors (see [13 Negation](#)).

TAIWANESE	MOOD	ASPECT
無 bô	—	Perfective, Experiential, Habitual
毋 m̄	Desire, Prohibition	Experiential
袂 bē	Possibility, Ability, Permission	—
未 bōe	—	Anterior
免 bián	Obligation	—

With adjectives, the use of negative particles 無 **bô** or 袂 **bē** depends on whether an adjective is considered desirable or undesirable by the speaker (see [6.4 Desirable and undesirable adjectives](#)).

DESIRABLE 無 BŌ

西瓜 無 甜。

Si-koe bô tiⁿ.

西瓜 不 甜。

Xīguā bù tián.

The watermelon is not sweet (*sweetness is desirable*).**UNDESIRABLE 袂 BĒ**

茶 袂 甜。

Tê bē tiⁿ.

茶 不 甜。

Chá bù tián.

The tea is not sweet (*sweetness is undesirable*).**Additional particles for potential, manner, and extent complements**

With additional grammatical particles, Taiwanese offers more specificity in the use of verbal complements (see [11.4 Potential complements](#), [11.6 Manner complements](#), [11.7 Extent complements](#)).

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
-----------	----------	---------

ACTUALIZED

看有完 khò ⁿ -ū-ôan	看得完 kàndewán	was able to finish seeing
-----------------------------	--------------	---------------------------

UNREALIZED

看會完 khò ⁿ -ē-ôan	看得完 kàndewán	is/will be able to finish seeing
-----------------------------	--------------	----------------------------------

MANNER COMPLEMENTS

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
-----------	----------	---------

HABITUAL

寫著真嬌	寫得很漂亮	
siá-tiòh chin súi	xiě de hěn piàoliang	writes beautifully

SINGLE OCCASION

寫了真嬌	寫得很漂亮	
siá liáu chin súi	xiě de hěn piàoliang	wrote beautifully

EXTENT COMPLEMENTS

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
-----------	----------	---------

哭甲目睭紅紅	哭得眼睛紅紅	
khàu kah bàk-chiu âng-âng	kū de yǎnjīng hóngóng	cried until eyes are red

哭予目睭紅紅	哭得眼睛紅紅	
khàu hō' bàk-chiu âng-âng	kū de yǎnjīng hóngóng	cry until eyes are red

Preference for pre-verbal objects

Because of restrictions on object placement after verb compounds, Taiwanese tends to place objects before the verb more often than Mandarin does.

阿爸 這張報紙 看了矣。

A-pa chit tiuⁿ pò-chóa khóaⁿ liáu--ah.

爸爸 看完 這張報紙 了。

Bàba kànwán zhè zhāng bàozhǐ le.

Dad has read this newspaper.

Pre-verbal aspect markers

Taiwanese has markers for the experiential and perfective aspects that can occur before the verb. Most other Chinese languages including Mandarin mark aspect through the use of suffixes or particles that can only be placed after the verb. That being said, Taiwanese also has markers for experiential and perfective aspects that can occur after the verb. This may be an indication of an area of linguistic change (see [8.1.1 Perfective aspect with 有 ū](#), [8.3 Experiential aspect](#)).

EXPERIENTIAL ASPECT WITH PRE-VERBAL 捌 BAT

伊 捌 去 美國。

I bat khì Bí-kok.

他 去過 美國。

Tā qùguò Měiguó.

He has gone to America before.

PERFECTIVE ASPECT WITH PRE-VERBAL 有 ū

伊 有 買 牛仔褲。

I ū bé gû-á-khò:

她 買了 牛仔褲。

Tā mǎile niúzǎikù.

She bought jeans.

Question marker 敢 kám

While the additional negative particles in Taiwanese allows for an increased number of end-of-sentence question particles, the question marker 敢 **kám** is quite distinct without a direct equivalent in Mandarin (see [20.1 敢 kám question marker](#)). The question marker 敢 **kám** is positioned immediately before any word under question as long as placement occurs before the main verb.

FOCUS ON WITH WHOM

你 昨昏 敢 和 朋友 去 看 電影？

Lí cha-hng kám hām pêng-iú khì khòaⁿ tiān-iaⁿ?

你 昨天 是 和 朋友 去 看 電影 嗎？

Nǐ zuótiān shì hé péngyǒu qù kàn diànyǐng ma?

Did you go with a friend to see a movie yesterday?

FOCUS ON WHEN

你 敢 昨昏 和 朋友 去 看 電影？

Lí kám cha-hng hām pêng-iú khì khòaⁿ tiān-iaⁿ?

你是昨天和朋友去看電影嗎？

Nǐ shì zuótiān hé péngyǒu qù kàn diànyǐng ma?

Was it yesterday that you went with a friend to see a movie?

1.3 Taiwan linguistic history

1.3.1 Brief linguistic history of Taiwan

First inhabited by aborigines around 8000 years ago, the island of Taiwan once supported 24 aboriginal languages (only 14 are still spoken), which belong to the Austronesian language family¹³. Due to the rich linguistic diversity found among the aboriginal languages on the island, many scholars believe that Taiwan was indeed the birthplace of the Austronesian language family, which has modern-day descendants from Madagascar to Easter Island and includes languages such as Malay, Hawaiian, and Tagalog¹⁴.

It was not until the 17th century that European explorers came to the island to establish trading posts. In 1622 Dutch merchants began forming settlements in the southern part of the island near Tainan (台南 **Táinán**) while Spanish traders occupied the northern ports of Tamshui (淡水 **Dànshuǐ**) and Keelung (基隆 **Jīlóng**) beginning in 1626. Seventeen years later in 1642, Dutch forces took over the small Spanish settlements and gained full control of the island. During this period, agricultural laborers from Fujian province were brought over in large numbers to develop the land. These workers brought with them the Hokkien and Hakka languages.

After 38 years of ruling the island, the Dutch were defeated in 1662 by a renegade Ming Dynasty commander, Koxinga (國姓爺 **Guóxìngyē**), who established a base on Taiwan from which to retake the throne from the Qing Dynasty. In addition to the military forces that had arrived on the island, waves of Han Chinese continued to arrive from southeastern China, primarily from Fujian and eastern Guangdong provinces. Eventually in 1683, Qing Dynasty military forces landed on Taiwan and took control. The new administrators instituted a ban on migration to Taiwan until 1874.

In 1895, the defeat of the Qing Dynasty by Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War led to the ceding of Taiwan to Japan. The Japanese occupied Taiwan as a colony for fifty years until 1945. Initially, the Japanese allowed the use of the Taiwanese language as part of a gradual process of assimilation into Japanese culture. However, by 1912 the Japanese administrators switched to a Japanese-only education policy. By 1944, approximately 70% of the local population had attained proficiency in Japanese¹⁵. During this colonial period, many Japanese loanwords were imported into the Taiwanese vocabulary particularly those in areas concerning medicine, technology, and foreign goods.

Following Japan's surrender at the end of World War II in 1945, the Allied Forces allowed the

Republic of China to administer Taiwan. For a brief period, usage of Taiwanese by the local population was encouraged by the Nationalist government as a means to ease the linguistic transition to Mandarin. Once defeated by Communists, the Nationalists fled China in 1949 and established their government in Taiwan. Language policies as well as other aspects of life during this period grew more oppressive. From 1950-1980, laws were passed that restricted the usage of Taiwanese or any other non-Mandarin language in the government, schools, and media.

With the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Taiwanese language reappeared in the public realm. The Taiwanese language movement grew rapidly in the 1990s and 2000s, giving rise to language revival groups, popular media, and literature. At the same time, experimentation with local languages classes in various school districts began. In 2001, local language education (Taiwanese, Hakka, or aboriginal languages) became a compulsory subject in elementary schools. Given that language policy is a charged political issue in Taiwan, further legislation promoting language equality has not progressed beyond draft resolutions within the legislature in recent years.

1.3.2 Mandarin as an official language

Seeking a single standardized language that could be spoken by all Han Chinese would not become a central concern until the twentieth century when newly formed nation-states used standardized languages as tools for nation-building. Before then, only civil servants who were part of the Chinese empire and officials serving in the imperial court had the need to speak a common tongue. This lingua franca was referred to as 官話 **guānhuà** ‘official speech’ beginning in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Around this time, the Portuguese term *mandarin* for ‘official’, which arrived via Malay for the Sanskrit term for ‘counselor’ *mantrin*, was imported into English as ‘Mandarin’ to refer to this ‘official speech’. However, it would be a few centuries later before a more formalized form of this language took shape.

Not until the fall of the Qing Dynasty and the birth of the Republic of China in 1912 did a strong desire arise for a shared standardized language to be spoken by all common people. A commission of linguists representing all regions and dialects spoken in China was assembled to go about the task of developing a standardized language in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Ultimately, the result was 國語 **Guóyǔ** ‘national language’, which was based heavily on the pronunciation and grammar of the Beijing dialect. Dialect-specific traits such as syllables rarely found in other dialects, the retroflex ‘r’, and the preponderance of weak stress (neutral tones) were either diminished or removed. Attempts at promoting this new standardized language in China continued over the next three decades intermittently until the invasion of Japanese forces in 1937.

After the end of World War II, the civil war between Communist and Nationalist forces prevented any further national efforts at promotion of a standard language. Once the Nationalists fled to Taiwan in 1949, they gradually began enforcing 國語 **Guóyǔ** as the official and only language acceptable in the public sphere.

Meanwhile in China, after two conferences for language reform were held in 1955, the communist government changed the name of 國語 **Guóyǔ** ‘national language’ to 普通話 **Pǔtōnghuà** ‘common speech’ and refined what constituted this new standardized language with regards to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Additionally efforts continued to promote 普通話 **Pǔtōnghuà** as the

language of education, media, and government across the land. Moreover, in 1956 simplified characters were introduced as a tool to increase literacy among adults. Two years later, 漢語拼音 **Hànyǔ Pīnyīn** was introduced both in schools and to the general public to replace 注音符號 **Zhùyīn Fúhào**, a character-based phonetic alphabet, as a means to teach pronunciation. 注音符號 **Zhùyīn Fúhào** continues to be used as a means of notating pronunciation in Taiwan.

In both Taiwan and China, Mandarin has now become a language that is understood and used by a sizeable majority. In China, Mandarin usage has now reached about 70% of the population, which is about 840 million people. In Taiwan, the percentage is higher at 80%, covering about 19 million people¹⁶.

1.4 Standardization of Taiwanese

Because Southern Min does not have status as an official language in any country, standardization has been a challenging task. Only in Taiwan with the recent semi-official status as a ‘local language’ to be taught in public primary schools has a government become more involved with the standardization of the language. Aside from the usual challenges of educating a user population with new practices, Taiwanese poses some particular linguistic issues.

With regards to pronunciation, within Taiwan there is still quite a wide variety of pronunciation differences as a result of the original emigrants from China hailing from different regions in Fujian province, each having its own regional accent, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou. After hundreds of years of internal migration and mixing of populations within Taiwan, a new patchwork of accents has arisen (see [1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan](#)).

In addition to variation within pronunciation, the writing of Taiwanese faces a number of challenges in standardization. Approximately 15% of Taiwanese words do not have a readily apparent cognate with Mandarin characters (see [1.4.1.1 Special Taiwanese characters](#)). In addition, many polysyllabic loanwords from Japanese and English lack character representation. While not insurmountable, additional challenges to a character-based system for Taiwanese are the large number of contractions and words with colloquial and literary readings¹⁷.

1.4.1 Characters

Until the early 20th century, all written Chinese (regardless of the spoken variety) since the end of the Han Dynasty (AD 220) used the grammar and vocabulary of Literary Chinese, a reformed writing style of Classical Chinese (see [1.2.1 Origins and development of Chinese languages](#)).

Spoken Chinese, which scholars believe already began to evolve into a variety of ‘dialects’ beginning in the late Zhou Dynasty (~250 BC), had long not been written down in the way people actually spoke

it. Only after the fall of Imperial China and the beginning of the Republic of China in 1912 more than two thousand years later did significant efforts take place to form a written standard based on the vernacular speech. Most of these efforts went towards the reform and promotion of Mandarin as a standard language by virtue of its status as the language spoken in the capital and by a majority of Han Chinese (see [1.3.2 Mandarin as an official language](#)). The selection of and focus on Mandarin as the standard language limited developments in the vernacular writing of non-Mandarin varieties such as Southern Min, Cantonese, Hakka, or Wu.

All varieties of Chinese face challenges of representing grammatical particles that are not included in the writing of Literary Chinese. Some varieties such as Cantonese, Wu, and Southern Min took on this issue through the creation of new characters or the borrowing of archaic characters.

1.4.1.1 Special Taiwanese characters

While the movement to promote a written Chinese script representing spoken Chinese did not fully take hold until the early twentieth century, there had been earlier attempts in the past by individuals and private groups to write in the vernacular speech.

For Southern Min, a Ming Dynasty play published in 1566 by the name of 荔鏡記 **Lìjìng jì** ‘Romance of the Litchi mirror’ marks the earliest surviving document written in the vernacular speech of Southern Min. Aside from plays, other written materials in the form of rime books, songbooks, and Christian missionary texts also made use of characters to transcribe the Southern Min language.

Many of these early authors borrowed obsolete or rarely used archaic characters from Classical Chinese or invented new characters. Because there was no standardization in these practices, a great number of special Taiwanese characters arose.

Archaic character borrowing

For many words an etymological root can be traced back to archaic characters found in Classical Chinese. Some of these have been resurrected to write Taiwanese. In a few cases, the characters have taken on a slightly different meaning in modern Mandarin.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
走 cháu ‘run’	走 zǒu ‘walk’
喙 chhùi ‘mouth’	喙 huì ‘beak’
食 chiáh ‘to eat’	食 shí ‘food’
懸 kôan ‘tall’	懸 xuán ‘to hang’

Sometimes it is not possible to determine a direct etymological link to a Classical Chinese character. When this is the case, one option is to borrow an obsolete or rarely used archaic character with a similar meaning.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
佇 tī	在 zài	at

园 khng	放 fàng	to place, to put
吼 háu	哭 kū	to cry
娟 súi	美 měi	pretty

Newly created characters

Some special Taiwanese characters were inventions that arose from two traditional methods of character creation: meaning aggregation and phonetic borrowing.

Meaning aggregation

Characters constructed from meaning aggregation are an assembly of *radicals*, which are the semantic components of a character. The new combination of individual meanings represented by each radical forms a composite idea that matches the Taiwanese word.

RADICAL COMPONENTS			TAIWANESE SPECIAL CHARACTER	
走	+	坐	=	趔 sô
‘walk’	+	‘sit’	=	‘crawl’

The new character for the verb 趔 **sô** ‘crawl’ clearly stems from an action somewhat in between 坐 ‘sitting’ and 走 ‘walking’.

RADICAL COMPONENTS			TAIWANESE SPECIAL CHARACTER	
毛	+	灺	=	𦍋 chhōa
‘feather’	+	‘fire’	=	‘to guide, take care’

However, the new character 𦍋 **chhōa** ‘to guide’ perhaps requires an additional degree of interpretation. The 毛 ‘feather’ represents a mother hen, while the 灺 ‘fire’ radical depicts four baby chicks. Together the pictorial combination of a mother hen with four chicks below her suggest ‘to guide’ or ‘to take care of’.

RADICAL COMPONENTS			TAIWANESE SPECIAL CHARACTER	
𨓈	+	日	=	𨓈 chhit
‘road’		‘day’		
𨓈	+	月	=	𨓈 thō
‘road’		‘moon’		
𨓈 chhit	+	𨓈 thō	=	𨓈𨓈 chhit-thō
‘--’	+	‘--’	=	‘to play’

The new characters for 𨓈𨓈 **chhit-thō** ‘to play’ only exist bound together. One possible interpretation is the combination of radicals for 𨓈 ‘road’, 日 ‘day’, and 月 ‘moon’ suggests the idea of being outside both day and night to ‘play’.

Phonetic borrowing

Another method of character creation involves combining one semantic component with one phonetic component. The phonetic component is borrowed from another character of which the meaning is discarded but the sound preserved. Note that in some cases the phonetic component does not share the same pronunciation but merely rhymes or possesses a similar initial sound.

SEMANTIC		PHONETIC		NEW CHARACTER
刂	+	台	=	刌
‘blade’	+	tâi ‘pedestal’	=	thâi ‘to kill’

In the preceding example, the character 刌 **thâi** ‘to kill’ is composed of the semantic component ‘blade’ and the phonetic component of the character for ‘pedestal’. The meaning of phonetic component is disregarded and only borrowed for its approximate pronunciation.

SEMANTIC		PHONETIC		NEW CHARACTER
口	+	舍	=	啥
‘mouth’		siá ‘residence’		siá ⁿ ‘what’

In the preceding example, the character 啥 **siáⁿ** ‘what’ combines the semantic component ‘mouth’ with the phonetic component ‘siá’. Note that the actual pronunciation of 啥 **siáⁿ** ‘what’ is slightly different. Additionally, the semantic component 口 ‘mouth’ radical is used to signal that the character is purely a phonetic borrowing. This practice of using the 口 ‘mouth’ radical to denote a phonetically borrowed character is also commonly found in special characters for Cantonese.

1.4.1.2 Taiwanese Ministry of Education characters

While in the past there have been a variety of approaches to represent Taiwanese through Chinese characters, the lack of standardization has limited the use of a consistent writing system among a large number of users.

The passage of a local languages education act in 2001 required primary schools to begin offering language courses in Taiwanese, Hakka, and aboriginal languages. This move created a need to have some degree of language standardization for consistent teacher training and textbook production.

During the years 2007-2009, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) took another step towards standardization of Taiwanese by promulgating the use of 700 characters to be used for unique Taiwanese words without an immediate cognate in Mandarin. Some of these chosen characters include special Taiwanese characters (both archaic borrowings and newly created characters) that have already gained some degree of familiarity among the general population (see [1.4.1.1 Special Taiwanese characters](#)). A few words that have historical roots to archaic characters but are not easily recognizable or overly complex were instead assigned a Mandarin character with a similar meaning despite the lack of an etymological relation. Additionally, some words that did not have a clear candidate were assigned a character by the MOE as a pure phonetic borrowing.

Note that because the lack of standardization often generated multiple characters to represent Taiwanese words, not all contemporary readers of Taiwanese will be familiar with the newly selected set of standardized characters.

The characters used in this text to write Taiwanese are based on those put forth by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education. However, due to font restrictions, some characters have been replaced by alternate characters that are still recognized by the MOE.

1.4.2 Romanization schemes

Aside from a character-based orthography for Taiwanese, there is an established history of writing Southern Min with the Latin script. Initially devised by missionaries to transcribe the speech of local populations, several Romanization schemes for Taiwanese have been developed both for use as full-fledged orthographies and as transcription systems for reading characters.

The earliest documented attempts at Romanizing the Southern Min language appear to have occurred in the late sixteenth century by Dominican missionaries in the Philippines¹⁸. However, it was not until the late 1800s before Presbyterian missionaries began using the Latin script for the Southern Min variant in Taiwan.

1.4.2.1 白話字 Peh-ōe-jī (POJ)

白話字 **Peh-ōe-jī** (POJ) ‘vernacular writing’ is the oldest and most commonly used Romanization system for transcribing variants of Southern Min. Its origins can be traced to Presbyterian missionaries working in Fujian province and Southeast Asia in the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, this system is sometimes referred to as Missionary Romanization or Church Romanization.

In the late nineteenth century, missionaries brought the system to Taiwan where it flourished as a method to spread church teachings as well as document the locally spoken language in letters, newspapers, and books. As a result, POJ currently enjoys the largest body of historical documents and literature of all the Romanization systems put forth for Southern Min.

After martial law was lifted in Taiwan in 1987, a revival of Taiwanese gradually took place in the 1990s. Some promoters of the language not affiliated with any religious organizations adopted this Romanization scheme as orthography for Taiwanese. Conversely, during this period the Presbyterian Church began to use Chinese characters to represent Taiwanese.

Today, POJ still appears to be the most popular Romanization scheme for rendering Southern Min in the English-language media. Despite its popularity, other systems based on POJ have been devised to deal with some perceived shortcomings including the need for special characters (**o'**, **"**), diacritics for tone markings (**ó**, **ò**, **ô**, **õ**, **ô'**), and initial confusion or difficulty in reading some letter combinations

(**chh-**, **-oe**, **-oa**, **-ek**, **-eng**).

EXAMPLE IN POJ

遮的衫褲，你閣愛捏無？

Chiah-ê saⁿ-khò, lí koh ài tih--bô?

這些衣服，你還要嗎？

Zhè xiē yīfú, nǐ hái yào ma?

Do you still want these clothes?

1.4.2.2 Taiwanese Language Phonetic Alphabet (TLPA)

The Taiwanese Language Phonetic Alphabet (TLPA) is a Romanization scheme devised in the late 1990s by the Linguistic Society of Taiwan and briefly adopted by the Taiwan Ministry of Education as an official Romanization scheme for Taiwanese from 1998 until 2006. The advantages of this scheme include not requiring any special characters (**o'**, **''**) or tone marks, allowing all sounds to be represented without the need for a special font. Instead, the 'o dot above right' or '**-o'**' is represented with the combination of letters '**oo**' while the superscript '**-n**' for nasal sounds is similarly replaced by a doubled '**nn**'. Tones are also denoted using numbers instead of diacritics. In addition, some letter combinations have been altered to help reflect more accurately the proper pronunciation (such as **tsh-**, **-ue**, **-ua**, **-ik**, **-ing**). As a result of these modifications, this scheme has the benefit of being an efficient way of quickly typing Romanized Taiwanese.

EXAMPLE IN TLPA

遮的衫褲，你閣愛捏無？

Tsiah4-e5 sann1-khoo3, li2 koh4 ai3 tih8 bo5?

這些衣服，你還要嗎？

Zhè xiē yīfú, nǐ hái yào ma?

Do you still want these clothes?

1.4.2.3 台羅 Tâi-lô (TL)

Tâi-uân Lô-má-jī Phing-im or *Tâi-lô* (TL) for short is a combination of the POJ and TLPA Romanization schemes and was put forth by the MOE in 2006.

Because of the ongoing popularity of POJ, *Tâi-lô* was created as a compromise between TLPA and POJ. The result is essentially a scheme that does not use any special characters (**o'**, **''**) but does retain tone marks (although diacritic placement differs). In addition, changes in letter combinations for TLPA were retained as well. Since 2006, all official Taiwanese educational materials use this Romanization

scheme.

EXAMPLE IN TL

遮的衫褲，你閣愛捏無？

Tsiah-ê sann-khòo, lí koh ài tih--bô?

這些衣服，你還要嗎？

Zhè xiē yīfú, nǐ hái yào ma?

Do you still want these clothes?

1.4.2.4 Differences between POJ and TL

Because *Tâi-lô* (TL) is based on the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization scheme, the two systems are fairly similar. Below is a table highlighting key differences.

INITIALS

<i>PEH-ŌE-JĪ (POJ)</i>		<i>TÂI-LÔ (TL)</i>		<i>MEANING</i>
ch-	chú	ts-	tsú	煮 ‘to cook’
chh-	chheh	tsh-	tsheh	冊 ‘book’

FINALS

<i>PEH-ŌE-JĪ (POJ)</i>		<i>TÂI-LÔ (TL)</i>		<i>MEANING</i>
-aⁿ	sa ⁿ	-ann	sann	衫 ‘clothes’
-aiⁿ	phái ⁿ	-ainn	pháinn	歹 ‘bad’
-ek	sek	-ik	sik	色 ‘color’
-eⁿ	pê ⁿ	-enn	pênn	平 ‘flat’
-eng	bêng	-ing	bîng	明 ‘bright, clear’
-iaⁿ	thia ⁿ	-iann	thiann	聽 ‘to listen, hear’
-iⁿ	chî ⁿ	-inn	tsînn	錢 ‘money’
-iuⁿ	siū ⁿ	-iunn	siūnn	想 ‘to think’
-o^ˊ	hō ^ˊ	-oo	hōo	予 ‘to give’
-oa	tōa	-ua	tuā	大 ‘big’
-oah	jóah	-uah	juáh	熱 ‘hot’
-oai	koai	-uai	kuai	乖 ‘well-behaved’
-oiⁿ	koai ⁿ	-uainn	kuainn	關 ‘to close’
-oaⁿ	pò ^a	-uann	puànn	半 ‘half’
-oan	chóan	-uan	tsuán	賺 ‘to earn’
-oat	hoat	-uat	huat	發 ‘to emit, send out’
-oe	poe	-ue	pue	飛 ‘to fly’

-oeh	boeh	-ueh	bueh	欲 ‘to want, going to’
-o ⁿ	ho ⁿ	-onn	honn	齁 ‘to snore’

1.4.3 Contemporary approaches to reading Taiwanese

Outside of certain social circles of language enthusiasts, writers, poets, and religious groups, most contemporary Taiwanese speakers are not familiar or able to employ many of the different Romanization systems developed to write Taiwanese. Because the recent standardization of characters for Taiwanese has only just begun for learners in primary school, the current approaches for most casual readers or writers of Taiwanese involve writing in Mandarin but reading in Taiwanese, borrowing Mandarin characters purely for their phonetic value, or using a hybrid of characters and Latin script.

Real-time translation

As the majority of native speakers of Taiwanese are fully bilingual in Mandarin, many are able to rely on their understanding of the meaning of Chinese characters written in Mandarin sentences and directly translate in real time the appropriate Taiwanese word.

MANDARIN-BASED CHARACTERS

你在吃什麼？我肚子餓了。

TAIWANESE PRONUNCIATION

Lí teh chiáh siáⁿ-mih? Góa pak-tó`teh iau.

MANDARIN PRONUNCIATION

Nǐ zài chī shénme? Wǒ dùzi è le.

What are you eating? I’m hungry.

Phonetic borrowing

Another common method is to borrow a character for its phonetic value regardless of the character’s meaning. By seeing that a character does not fit semantically with its neighbors, the reader can immediately detect that the sentence is not written in Mandarin but in Taiwanese. Despite only having a phonetic cue, context and familiarity with the language generally allows the reader to figure out the meaning.

TAIWANESE WRITTEN WITH BORROWED MANDARIN CHARACTERS

哩賀！挖系台南郎。

Lí hó ! Góa sī Tâi-lâm lâng.

MANDARIN PRONUNCIATIONS AND MEANINGS OF BORROWED CHARACTERS

哩	賀	挖	系	台南	郎
lī	hè	wā	xì	Táinán	láng
‘mile’	‘congratulate’	‘dig’	‘system’	‘Tainan’	‘youth’

MANDARIN TRANSLATION

你好！我是台南人。

Nǐ hǎo! Wǒ shì Táinán rén

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Hello! I’m from Tainan.

Hybrid script 漢羅 *Hàn-lô*

Another popular method used to write Taiwanese is a mixed script method known as 漢羅 *Hàn-lô*. This approach was developed in the 1960s and uses characters for those words with immediate Mandarin cognates and Latin script for the remaining 15% of Taiwanese words which do not have easily recognizable characters.

HYBRID SCRIPT

聽--leh！我 kā你 ê 錢 khng tī hia。

MOE TAIWANESE CHARACTERS

聽咧！我共你的錢園佇遐。

POJ

Thiaⁿ--leh！Góa kā lí ê chi̍t khng tī hia.

MANDARIN

聽著！我把你的錢放在那裡。

Tīngzhě! Wǒ bǎ nǐ de qián fàng zài nàlǐ.

Listen! I put your money over there.

2 Pronunciation

Taiwanese syllables are made up of three components: initial, final, and tone. The *initial* is a consonant sound, though not always present. The *final*, which is required, is generally a vowel sound that can have nasal, glottal stops, or consonant endings. Finally, the *tone*, or pitch contour, is also a required component that impacts the entire syllable.

[(*initial*) + *final*]

 TONE

The following chapter describes the Taiwanese sound system by using the *Pèh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization system (see [1.4.2.1 白話字 Pèh-ōe-jī \(POJ\)](#)). English approximations and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions are also provided for reference in some sections.

2.1 Initials

Initials are consonant sounds that form the beginning of Taiwanese syllables. Note that some syllables begin with a vowel and do not have an initial consonant or consist only of a syllabic consonant. In all, there are 17 initials in Taiwanese represented by the following letters or letter combinations:

b ch chh g h j k kh l m n ng p ph s t th

Most initials are quite similar to their English counterparts. However, a few differences do exist and will be explored more in the following sections.

2.1.1 Aspiration

Several letter combinations include the letter ‘**h**’ (**chh-**, **kh-**, **ph-**, **th-**). The ‘**h**’ indicates aspiration and is considered part of the ‘letter’ or sound. *Aspiration* is the puff of air that comes from the mouth when pronouncing certain letters. Note that in the *Pèh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization system, the letter ‘**ch-**’ is a non-aspirated sound, but ‘**chh-**’ is the aspirated version. In English, aspiration can be felt by placing the hand in front of the mouth and noticing the difference between the following pairings:

	ASPIRATED	NON-ASPIRATED
p	<u>p</u> ark	sp <u>p</u> ell
t	<u>t</u> ime	st <u>t</u> op
k	<u>k</u> iss	sk <u>k</u> y
ts	<u>ts</u> unami	eat <u>ts</u>

As the English examples indicate, the non-aspirated versions of the letters ‘**p**’, ‘**t**’, and ‘**k**’ only appear in English words when following a consonant. In Taiwanese, these non-aspirated versions can begin words and (to the English ear) may appear to sound like ‘softer’ or ‘quieter’ versions of their aspirated counterparts.

	ASPIRATED		NON-ASPIRATED
ph	膨 <u>ph</u> òng ‘swollen’	p	碰 <u>p</u> ōng ‘bump into’
th	討 <u>th</u> ó ‘to beg’	t	倒 <u>t</u> ò ‘to topple over’
kh	看 <u>kh</u> òa ⁿ ‘to see’	k	寒 <u>k</u> ôa ⁿ ‘cold’
chh	請 <u>chh</u> hiá ⁿ ‘please’	ch	正 <u>ch</u> ia ⁿ ‘right’

While some English speakers may be tempted to equate non-aspirated ‘**p**’, ‘**t**’, ‘**k**’ to their voiced counterparts ‘**b**’, ‘**d**’, ‘**g**’, respectively, Taiwanese also has separate letters for the voiced letters ‘**b**’, ‘**d**’, ‘**g**’ (see [2.1.2 Voicing](#)). Perhaps it can be helpful to think of the non-aspirated letters as a sound in between their aspirated and voiced counterparts.

2.1.2 Voicing

Voiced letters create sounds that vibrate the vocal chords when spoken. If the hand is placed on the throat covering the vocal chords, a light vibration can be felt when pronouncing the sound. In English, there are several consonants that are voiced. Below are just a few pairings that indicate this contrast:

	VOICED		NON-VOICED
z	<u>z</u> ap	s	s <u>s</u> ap
v	<u>v</u> ery	f	f <u>f</u> airy
th	<u>th</u> ough	th	<u>th</u> ought
b	<u>b</u> ell	p	sp <u>p</u> ell
d	<u>d</u> ock	t	st <u>t</u> ock
g	<u>g</u> irl	k	sk <u>k</u> id

Taiwanese has several voiced initials ‘**b-**’, ‘**g-**’, ‘**j-**’, ‘**l-**’, ‘**m-**’, ‘**n-**’, ‘**ng-**’. Four of them have direct non-voiced counterparts.

VOICED		NON-VOICED	
b	欲 <u>b</u> eh ‘to want’	p	白 <u>p</u> éh ‘white’
g	牛 <u>g</u> û ‘cow’	k	舊 <u>k</u> û ‘old’
j	如 <u>j</u> û ‘if’	ch	煮 <u>ch</u> ú ‘to cook’
ji	日 <u>ji</u> t ‘day’	chi	一 <u>chi</u> t ‘one’
l	淋 <u>l</u> im ‘to drink’	--	
m	罵 <u>m</u> ê ‘to scold’	--	
n	藍 <u>n</u> â ‘blue’	--	
ng	夾 <u>ng</u> eh ‘to pinch’	--	

The letter combination ‘**ng**’ can be both an initial (扭 ngiú ‘to twist’) and a final (冷 léng ‘cold’). In English, words cannot begin with the ‘**ng**’ sound. A close approximation is the sound from the ‘**n**’ in the English word ‘uncle’. The hard ‘**c**’ sound influences the ending of the ‘**n**’ creating a ‘**ng**’ nasal sound that is close to the Taiwanese initial ‘**ng**-’.

The initial ‘**j**-’ also does not have a precise equivalent in English. A close approximation is the ‘**ds**’ found at the end of the English word ‘kids’. When the Taiwanese ‘**j**-’ is followed by the letter ‘**i**’ (二 ji ‘two’) there is a slight adjustment in the sound that pushes the tongue farther back in the mouth called palatalization (see [2.1.3 Palatalization](#)). The ‘**j**-’ sound is relatively rare within Taiwanese, and for many speakers the sound is replaced by the ‘**l**-’ sound.

2.1.3 Palatalization

Palatalization is the backward shift in the placement of the tongue to the palate, which is the roof of the mouth. In Taiwanese, this adjustment impacts the initials ‘**ch**-’, ‘**chh**-’, ‘**s**-’ and ‘**j**-’ whenever these initials are followed by ‘**i**-’, ‘**ek**’, or ‘**eng**’. Technically, ‘**chi**-’, ‘**chhi**-’, ‘**si**-’, ‘**ji**-’ are phonetically different consonant sounds, but the POJ Romanization system treats them only as a special case of the initials ‘**ch**-’, ‘**chh**-’, ‘**s**-’ and ‘**j**-’.

Below is a comparison between palatalized and non-palatalized sounds within English words.

NON-PALATALIZED		PALATALIZED	
-ts	e <u>ts</u>	g-	<u>g</u> ym
ts-	<u>t</u> sunami	ch-	<u>ch</u> eam
s-	<u>s</u> oap	sh-	<u>sh</u> eeep
g-	beige	j-	<u>j</u> eam

Below is a comparison between palatalized and non-palatalized initials within Taiwanese.

NON-PALATALIZED		PALATALIZED	
ch-	<u>ch</u> á 早 ‘early’	chi-	<u>chi</u> ⁿ 錢 ‘money’

chh-	<u>chh</u> ù 厝 ‘house’	chhi-	<u>chhi</u> ú 手 ‘hand’
s-	<u>s</u> é 洗 ‘to wash’	si-	<u>s</u> ek 色 ‘color’
j-	<u>j</u> û 如 ‘if’	ji-	<u>ji</u> p 入 ‘to enter’

2.1.4 Comparisons to Mandarin initials

While Taiwanese and Mandarin initials share a large number of the same sounds, there are still a few which differ.

The table below compares the initials in both Taiwanese and Mandarin. Initials that have the same phonetic sound are highlighted by the cognate chosen as an example in both languages. While these cognates may differ in finals, tone, and Romanization spelling, the sound of the initial is actually equivalent. English approximations and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions are also provided for reference.

TAIWANESE (<i>Pèh-ōe-jī</i>)		MANDARIN (<i>Hànyǔ Pīnyīn</i>)	MEANING	ENGLISH APPROX	IPA
b	<u>b</u> ah	--	肉 ‘meat’	<u>b</u> at	[b]
p	<u>p</u> au	b <u>b</u> āo	包 ‘to wrap’	spell	[p]
ph	<u>ph</u> iò	p <u>p</u> iào	票 ‘ticket’	<u>p</u> ark	[pʰ]
t	<u>t</u> ōa	d <u>d</u> à	大 ‘big’	<u>t</u> op	[t]
th	<u>th</u> ng	t <u>t</u> āng	湯 ‘soup’	<u>t</u> ime	[tʰ]
g	<u>g</u> û	--	牛 ‘cow’	<u>g</u> ift	[g]
k	<u>k</u> ái	g <u>g</u> ài	改 ‘to alter’	<u>k</u> y	[k]
kh	<u>kh</u> àu	k <u>k</u> ū	哭 ‘to cry’	<u>k</u> iss	[kʰ]
ch	<u>ch</u> ē	z <u>z</u> uò	坐 ‘to sit’	<u>e</u> ats	[ts]
chi	<u>chi</u> ap	j <u>j</u> iē	接 ‘to receive’	<u>g</u> ym	[tɕ]
(<i>incl. chek, cheng</i>)					
chh	<u>chh</u> ài	c <u>c</u> ài	菜 ‘vegetable’	<u>t</u> sunami	[tsʰ]
chhi	<u>chhi</u> áⁿ	q <u>q</u> īng	請 ‘please’	<u>ch</u> eat	[tɕʰ]
(<i>incl. chhek, chheng</i>)					
h	<u>h</u> ó	--	好 ‘good’	<u>h</u> elp	[h]
--	--	h <u>h</u> ǎo	好 ‘good’	loch	[x]
j	<u>j</u> óah	--	熱 ‘hot’	roads	[dz]
ji	<u>j</u> it	--	日 ‘day’	pudgy	[dz]
l	<u>l</u> ái	l <u>l</u> ái	來 ‘to come’	<u>l</u> ake	[l]
s	<u>s</u> aⁿ	s <u>s</u> an	三 ‘three’	<u>s</u> it	[s]
si	<u>s</u> in	x <u>x</u> īn	新 ‘new’	<u>sh</u> eept	[ɕ]
(<i>incl. sek, seng</i>)					
m	<u>m</u> ē	m <u>m</u> à	罵 ‘to scold’	<u>m</u> ap	[m]
n	<u>n</u> iáu	n <u>n</u> iǎo	鳥 ‘bird’	<u>n</u> ight	[n]
ng	<u>ng</u> eh	--	夾 ‘to pinch’	uncle	[ŋ]
--	--	r <u>r</u> én	人 ‘people’	pleasure	[ʒ]
--	--	ch <u>ch</u> ī	吃 ‘to eat’	<u>ch</u> urn	[tɕʰ]
--	--	sh <u>sh</u> àng	上 ‘above’	<u>sh</u> irt	[ʃ]
--	--	zh <u>zh</u> ōng	中 ‘middle’	<u>g</u> erm	[tɕ]

Taiwanese ‘h’

Aspiration and voicing

ASPIRATED	NON-ASPIRATED / NON-VOICED	VOICED
<u>p</u> hah 拍 ‘to hit’	pah 百 ‘hundred’	<u>b</u> ah 肉 ‘meat’
<u>k</u> hùn 暈 ‘to sleep’	<u>k</u> ún 滾 ‘to boil’	<u>g</u> ún 阮 ‘we’
<u>ch</u> hoah 掣 ‘to tremble’	<u>ch</u> oah 洩 ‘to splash out’	jóah 熱 ‘hot’
<u>ch</u> hit 七 ‘seven’	<u>ch</u> it 一 ‘one’	jít 日 ‘day’

Both Taiwanese and Mandarin have sounds that become palatalized (the tongue placement occurs farther back on the roof of the mouth). However, the Mandarin *Hànyǔ Pīnyīn* Romanization indicates this with different letters while the Taiwanese *Pêh-ōe-jī* Romanization relies on this change in articulation by using certain finals (**-i-**, **-ek**, **-eng**).

	NON-PALATALIZED		PALATALIZED
	做 ‘to do’		煎 ‘fry’
ch-	<u>ch</u> ò	chi-	<u>chi</u> an
z-	<u>z</u> uò	j-	<u>j</u> iān
	冊 ‘book, volume’		清 ‘to clean’
chh-	<u>chh</u> eh	chhi-	<u>chh</u> eng
c-	<u>c</u> è	q-	<u>q</u> īng

	送 ‘to send’		先 ‘first’
s-	<u>s</u> àng	si-	<u>s</u> ian
s-	<u>s</u> òng	x-	<u>x</u> iān
	如 ‘if’		字 ‘character’
j-	jû	ji-	jī
--	--	--	--

Retroflexes

Additionally, Taiwanese lacks the curled tongue sounds (*retroflexes*) that are present in the Mandarin initials ‘**r-**’, ‘**ch-**’, ‘**sh-**’, and ‘**zh-**’.

2.2 Finals

Finals form the ending component of every Taiwanese syllable. In general, they are vowel sounds that can have nasal or stopped consonant endings. In addition, two syllabic nasal consonants (‘**m**’ and ‘**ng**’) can function as finals without a vowel.

2.2.1 Nasals

Nasals are formed when air leaves from both the nose and the mouth. Taiwanese has a large number of nasal sounds which help gives the language its unique character.

2.2.1.1 Nasal vowels

There are four pure vowel nasals and five vowel nasals that are diphthongs, or vowel clusters. English does not have distinct nasal vowels even though some vowel sounds become slightly nasalized when occurring next to nasal consonants. Mandarin similarly does not have explicit nasal vowels but also has nasal consonants that impact the preceding vowel sounds. The *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization indicates

nasal vowels by placing a superscript ‘-ⁿ’ after the vowel(s).

In the table below, English approximations are provided by using vowels adjacent to nasal consonants. Note that Taiwanese nasal vowels are even more enunciated than these English approximations.

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
-a ⁿ	<i>n<u>o</u>nsense (nasalized)</i>	[ã]	sa ⁿ 衫 ‘clothes’
-e ⁿ	<i>m<u>e</u>nd (nasalized)</i>	[ɛ̃]	pê ⁿ 平 ‘flat’
-i ⁿ	<i>m<u>e</u>an (nasalized)</i>	[ĩ]	tî ⁿ 甜 ‘sweet’
-o ⁿ	<i>m<u>o</u>an (nasalized)</i>	[õ]	o ⁿ 鳴 ‘buzz’
-ai ⁿ	<i>m<u>i</u>ning (nasalized)</i>	[aĩ]	phái ⁿ 歹 ‘bad’
-ia ⁿ	<i>insom<u>n</u>ia (nasalized)</i>	[iã]	thia ⁿ 聽 ‘to hear’
-iu ⁿ	<i>n<u>e</u>w (nasalized)</i>	[iũ]	siu ⁿ 傷 ‘too much’
-oa ⁿ	<i>igu<u>a</u>na (nasalized)</i>	[uã]	poa ⁿ 搬 ‘to move’
-oi ⁿ	<i>wh<u>i</u>ning (nasalized)</i>	[uaĩ]	koai ⁿ 關 ‘to close’

2.2.1.2 Nasal consonants

Aside from nasal vowels, Taiwanese also has nasal consonants finals (-**m**, -**n**, -**ng**), which can form the ending of a syllable. As mentioned earlier, vowels that precede nasal consonants become nasalized but not to the same degree as nasal vowels. In Taiwanese, the difference between nasal vowels and nasal consonants marks a distinction between words.

NASAL VOWEL	NASAL CONSONANTS		
- ⁿ	- n	- ng	- m
sa ⁿ 三 ‘three’	sán 瘦 ‘skinny’	sang 鬆 ‘loose’	sàm 搨 ‘to slap’
kì ⁿ 見 ‘to meet’	kín 緊 ‘fast’	kéng 揀 ‘to select’	kim 金 ‘gold’
sia ⁿ 聲 ‘sound’	sian 先 ‘first’	siang 雙 ‘pair’	siám 閃 ‘to hide’

2.2.1.3 Syllabic nasal consonants

The two nasal consonants ‘**m**’ and ‘**ng**’ can form complete syllables without a vowel sound. Because of this, they are considered *syllabic consonants*.

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
m	pr <u>ism</u>	[m]	<u>m̩</u> 毋 ‘not, not want’
ng	ton <u>gue</u>	[ŋ]	<u>ŋ</u> 黃 ‘yellow’

The ‘**ng**’ can stand alone as a syllabic consonant (as in ŋ 黃 ‘yellow’) or combine with an initial (as in 糖 thŋ ‘sugar’). Additionally, the ‘**ng-**’ can also begin a syllable as an initial (as in ngeh 夾 to pinch).

The nasal consonant ‘**m**’ cannot combine with an initial and only forms the syllabic ‘**m**’ (as in m̩ 毋 ‘not, not want’).

2.2.2 Stops

Taiwanese finals also can end in stops, which block the flow of air by ending the syllable with consonant endings ‘**-p**’, ‘**-t**’, ‘**-k**’ or a glottal stop ‘**-h**’. Unlike Mandarin, Taiwanese (as well as other southern Chinese languages such as Cantonese and Hakka) has retained stops that were present in Middle Chinese.

The hard consonant endings ‘**-p**’, ‘**-t**’, ‘**-k**’ differ from their English counterparts in that they do not release air at the end of the sound. In English, a similar phenomenon occurs in the middle of words with doubled consonants.

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
p	pop <u>ped</u>	[p]	kap 蓋 ‘to cover’
t	cot <u>ton</u>	[t]	bat 捌 ‘familiar with’
k	oc <u>cupy</u>	[k]	tàk 逐 ‘every’

Words ending in ‘**-h**’ have what is referred to as a *glottal stop*, an obstruction in the airflow (caused by closure of the vocal chords) thereby abruptly stopping any sound. In English, this can also be observed between doubled consonants such as the *pause* between the ‘**tt**’ in the English word ‘**bitten**’ or like the space represented by the hyphen in the English utterance ‘**uh-oh!**’

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
h	uh- <u>oh!</u>	[ʔ]	ba <u>h</u> 肉 ‘meat’

It should also be noted that there is a historical connection between tones and stopped endings (see [2.5.3 Tone changes](#)). In Middle Chinese, syllables that ended in stops belonged to separate tone classes (4th and 8th tones). As a result, in Taiwanese, when a syllable ends in ‘**-p**’, ‘**-t**’, ‘**-k**’, or ‘**-h**’, the tone must be either in the 4th or 8th tone. It may also be helpful to group words that end in the glottal stop ‘**-**

h' separately from those that end in **'-p'**, **'-t'**, **'-k'**. With regards to tone changes, these two groups follow different rules.

Furthermore, the stops **'-p'**, **'-t'**, **'-k'** are actually counterparts to the nasal consonant finals **'-m'**, **'-n'**, **'-ng'**, respectively, from other tone classes. The correspondence is mapped in the table below.

tones	NASALS					STOPS	
	1	2	3	5	7	4	8
-m	籠	荏	滴	男	濫	塌	納
	lam	lám	lám	lâm	lām	-p lap	láp
	'to cage'	'weak'	'mud'	'male'	'mix in'	'collapse'	'hand in'
-n	薰	粉	檀	雲	份	囫	核
	hun	hún	hùn	hūn	hūn	-t hut	hút
	'smoke'	'powder'	'expand'	'cloud'	'portion'	'devour'	'core'
-ng	先	省	性	成	盛	色	熟
	seng	séng	sèng	sêng	sēng	-k sek	sék
	'first'	'save'	'quality'	'succeed'	'glorious'	'color'	'ripe'

Moreover, due to a lack of standardization among some speakers, the distinction between words with a final **'-h'** and those words without may not always be made clearly, if at all. For example, for some speakers there is no phonetic distinction made between the prepositions 佢 **kah** 'with, and' and 共 **kā** 'to, facing'. As a result, the two words are often conflated.

伊 佢 我 欲 去 看 電影。

I kah góa beh khi khò^a tiān-iá^a.

他 和 我 要 去 看 電影。

Tā hé wǒ yào qù kàn diànyǐng.

He and I are going to see a movie.

伊 共 我 講 笑話。

I kā góa kóng chhiò-ōe.

他 跟 我 講 笑話。

Tā gēn wǒ jiǎng xiàohuà.

He told me a joke.

2.2.3 Letters **o** and **o'**

In Taiwanese, letters **o** and **o'** represent distinct vowel sounds. The *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization has a special character **'o'** referred to as the 'o with a raised dot', which sounds similar to the 'aw' in the English word 'paw'.

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
o	sof <u>a</u> (<i>South</i>)	[ɿ]	h <u>ó</u> 好 ‘good, well’
	sp <u>o</u> ke (<i>North</i>)	[o]	
o'	pa <u>w</u>	[ɔ]	h <u>ō</u> 予 ‘to give’

The final ‘-o’ (as in **hó** 好 ‘good’) has two regional pronunciations. In the accent representative of Southern Taiwan, the pronunciation sounds like the ‘a’ in the English word ‘sofa’. In the accent representative of Northern Taiwan, the final ‘-o’ sounds like the ‘o’ in the English word ‘spoke’.

2.2.4 Finals -ek, -eng

In the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization, the finals ‘-eng’ and ‘-ek’ deviate in pronunciation from the other finals that contain ‘-e-’. The actual vowel sound is similar to that in the finals ‘-ip’, ‘-it’, and ‘-ih’.

	ENG APPROX	IPA	EXAMPLE
-e	f <u>l</u> ellow	[ɛ]	坐 ch <u>ē</u> ‘to sit’
-eh	h <u>e</u> h	[ɛʔ]	提 th <u>eh</u> ‘to take’
-ip	wh <u>i</u> pped	[ɪp]	翕 h <u>ip</u> ‘stuffy’
-it	k <u>i</u> tten	[ɪt]	這 ch <u>it</u> ‘this’
-ek	h <u>i</u> ccup	[ɪk]	叔 ch <u>ek</u> ‘uncle’
-ih	pe <u>a</u> pod	[iʔ]	滴 t <u>ih</u> ‘to drip’
-eng	king	[ɪŋ]	揀 k <u>éng</u> ‘to select’

Also note that both ‘-ek’ and ‘-eng’ follow the same sound changes as other finals beginning with ‘-i-’. For example, the initial ‘s-’ changes to a sound like ‘sh’ in the English ‘sheep’ when occurring before finals beginning with ‘-i-’.

	EXAMPLES WITH INITIAL ‘S-’	MEANING	ENG APPROX
-e	sé	洗 ‘to wash’	<u>s</u> ell
-eh	seh	雪 ‘snow’	<u>s</u> even
-ip	sip	濕 ‘moist’	<u>s</u> hip
-it	sit	失 ‘to lose’	<u>s</u> hit (<i>vul.</i>)
-ek	sek	色 ‘color’	<u>s</u> hiksa
-ih	sih	蝕 ‘to erode’	<u>s</u> hic
-eng	seng	先 ‘first’	pu <u>s</u> hing

2.2.5 Comparison to Mandarin finals

The table below compares the finals in both Taiwanese and Mandarin. Finals that have the same phonetic sound are highlighted by the cognate chosen as an example in both languages. While these cognates may differ in initials, tone, and Romanization spelling, the sound of the final is actually equivalent. English approximations and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are also provided for reference.

TAIWANESE (<i>Pêh-ōe-jī</i>)		MANDARIN (<i>Hànyǔ Pīnyīn</i>)	MEANING	ENGLISH APPROX	IPA
a	chhâ	a	chá	差 ‘to check’	f <u>ath</u> er [a]
ah	bah	--	--	肉 ‘meat’	bl <u>ah</u> [aʔ]
ai	ài	ai	ài	愛 ‘love’	e <u>ve</u> [ai]
ai ⁿ	phái ⁿ	--	--	歹 ‘bad’	m <u>ining</u> (<i>nasalized</i>) [aĩ]
ak	sak	--	--	揀 ‘push’	o <u>ccu</u> py [ak]
am	hām	--	--	和 ‘with’	b <u>om</u> b [am]
an	pan	an	bān	班 ‘class’	f <u>aw</u> n [an]
a ⁿ	tà ⁿ	--	--	擔 ‘vendor’	n <u>ons</u> ense (<i>nasalized</i>) [ã]
ang	káng	ang	gǎng	港 ‘harbor’	s <u>ong</u> [aŋ]
ap	kap	--	--	敲 ‘connect’	p <u>opp</u> ed [ap]
at	bat	--	--	捌 ‘to know’	c <u>ott</u> on [at]
au	lāu	ao	lǎo	老 ‘old’	c <u>ow</u> [aʊ]
e	bé	--	--	馬 ‘horse’	f <u>ell</u> ow [ɛ]
eh	péh	--	--	白 ‘white’	h <u>eh</u> [ɛʔ]
--	--	ei	bēi	杯 ‘cup’	cl <u>ay</u> [ei]
ek	sək	--	--	色 ‘color’	h <u>icc</u> up [ɪk]
--	--	en	hěn	很 ‘very’	f <u>un</u> [ən]
e ⁿ	pē ⁿ	--	--	平 ‘flat’	m <u>end</u> (<i>nasalized</i>) [ɛ̃]
eng	peng	ing	bīng	冰 ‘ice’	k <u>ing</u> [iŋ]
--	--	eng	lěng	冷 ‘cold’	l <u>ung</u> [əŋ]
--	--	er	èr	二 ‘two’	u <u>rn</u> [ɹ]
i	lí	i	nǐ	你 ‘you’	s <u>ee</u> [i]
ia	khia	ia	jiā	迦 (<i>phonetic</i>)	pap <u>aya</u> [ia]
iah	liáh	--	--	掠 ‘catch’	y <u>ach</u> t [iaʔ]
iam	iām	--	--	鹽 ‘salt’	y <u>um</u> my [iam]
ian	piàn	ian	biàn	變 ‘to change’	civili <u>an</u> [iɛn]
ia ⁿ	sia ⁿ	--	--	聲 ‘sound’	insomn <u>ia</u> (<i>nasalized</i>) [iã]
iang	liāng	iang	liáng	涼 ‘cool’	Bia <u>n</u> ca [jaŋ]
iap	chiap	--	--	接 ‘to receive’	y <u>up</u> [iap]
iat	liát	--	--	烈 ‘intense’	g <u>et</u> [ɪɛt]
iau	thiàu	iao	tiào	跳 ‘to jump’	m <u>eo</u> w [iaʊ]
--	--	ie	jiē	街 ‘street’	y <u>ell</u> ow [jɛ]
ih	mih	--	--	物 ‘thing’	pe <u>ap</u> od [iʔ]
im	sim	--	--	心 ‘heart’	dim [ɪm]
in	sin	in	xīn	新 ‘new’	gr <u>ee</u> n [in]
i ⁿ	tī ⁿ	--	--	甜 ‘sweet’	m <u>ean</u> (<i>nasalized</i>) [ĩ]
io	sio	--	--	燒 ‘warm’	y <u>ear</u> n (<i>with pursed lips</i>) [io]
ioh	tiòh	--	--	著 ‘correct’	j <u>er</u> k [ioʔ]
iok	chiok	--	--	足 ‘very’	y <u>olk</u> [ɪɔk]
iong	hiông	iong	xióng	雄 ‘mighty’	w <u>e own</u> gold [ioŋ]

ip	<u>jip</u>	--	--	入 'enter'	<u>whipped</u>	[ɪp]
it	<u>chit</u>	--	--	一 'one'	<u>kitten</u>	[ɪt]
iu	<u>kiū</u>	--	--	球 'ball'	<u>you</u>	[iu]
--	--	iu	<u>liū</u>	六 'six'	<u>yogurt</u>	[jəʊ]
iuⁿ	<u>siūⁿ</u>	--	--	想 'to think'	<u>new</u> (<i>nasalized</i>)	[iū]
m	<u>m̄</u>	--	--	毋 'not'	<u>prism</u>	[m]
ng	<u>thng</u>	--	--	湯 'soup'	<u>tongue</u>	[ŋ]
o (S)	<u>khò</u>	e	<u>kè</u>	課 'lesson'	<u>sofa</u>	[ɤ]
o (N)	<u>pô</u>	o	<u>pó</u>	婆 'grandmother'	<u>spoke</u>	[o]
o'	<u>hō'</u>	--	--	雨 'rain'	<u>paw</u>	[ɔ]
--	--	ou	<u>tóu</u>	頭 'head'	<u>toe</u>	[əʊ]
oa	<u>kòà</u>	ua	<u>guà</u>	掛 'to hang'	<u>aqua</u>	[ua]
oah	<u>khoah</u>	--	--	闊 'broad'	<u>muah</u> (<i>kiss</i>)	[uaʔ]
oai	<u>koai</u>	uai	<u>guāi</u>	乖 'well-behaved'	<u>quiet</u>	[uai]
oaiⁿ	<u>koaiⁿ</u>	--	--	關 'to close'	<u>whining</u> (<i>nasalized</i>)	[uaĩ]
oaⁿ	<u>soaⁿ</u>	--	--	山 'mountain'	<u>iguana</u> (<i>nasalized</i>)	[uā]
oan	<u>chóan</u>	uan	<u>zhuàn</u>	轉 'to turn'	<u>quantity</u>	[uan]
--	--	uang	<u>guàng</u>	逛 'to stroll'	<u>wonk</u>	[waŋ]
oat	<u>hoat</u>	--	--	法 'law'	<u>kilowatt</u>	[uat]
oe	<u>ōe</u>	--	--	話 'speech'	<u>way</u>	[ue]
oeh	<u>hoeh</u>	--	--	血 'blood'	<u>weigh</u>	[ueʔ]
oh	<u>toh</u>	--	--	卓 'table'	<u>dough</u>	[oʔ]
ok	<u>kok</u>	--	--	國 'country'	<u>caulk</u>	[ɔk]
om	<u>om</u>	--	--	掩 'to conceal'	<u>omelet</u>	[ɔm]
ong	<u>tóng</u>	ong	<u>tóng</u>	同 'same'	<u>own goal</u>	[ɔŋ]
u	<u>hù</u>	u	<u>fù</u>	付 'to pay'	<u>food</u>	[u]
--	--	ü	<u>nǚ</u>	女 'female'	<u>view</u> (<i>with pursed lips</i>)	[y]
--	--	ue	<u>yüē</u>	月 'moon'	<u>duet</u> (<i>with pursed lips</i>)	[yɛ]
uh	<u>tùh</u>	--	--	揆 'poke'	<u>pooh</u>	[uʔ]
ui	<u>kùì</u>	--	--	貴 'expensive'	<u>queen</u>	[ui]
un	<u>kún</u>	un	<u>gǔn</u>	滾 'to boil'	<u>Owen</u>	[wən]
ut	<u>kut</u>	--	--	骨 'bone'	<u>put</u>	[ut]
--	--	ui	<u>tuī</u>	推 'push'	<u>quail</u>	[weɪ]
--	--	uo	<u>zuò</u>	坐 'to sit'	<u>woke</u>	[wo]
--	--	weng	<u>wēng</u>	翁 'old man'	<u>swung</u>	[wəŋ]

As is evident, Taiwanese has a much greater number of finals than Mandarin. The majority of the difference arises from Taiwanese having additional nasal vowels (-**aⁿ**, -**aiⁿ**, -**eⁿ**, -**iⁿ**, -**iaⁿ**, -**iuⁿ**, -**oaⁿ**, -**oaiⁿ**), the nasal consonant (-**m**), consonant stops (-**p**, -**t**, -**k**), and the glottal stop (-**h**).

In contrast, Taiwanese lacks several sounds found in Mandarin including rounded vowels with the 'ü' sound (including -**üe** and the finals -**u**, -**un** after **j**-, **x**-, or **y**-).

2.3 Sound changes

2.3.1 Contractions

Often in rapid spoken speech multiple syllables are contracted into fewer syllables or a particular sound is omitted. Below are a few common examples.

ORIGINAL	CONTRACTION	MEANING
e-hng-àm	eng-àm	下昏暗 ‘tonight’
phàng-m̄-kì ⁿ	phàng-kì ⁿ	拍毋見 ‘missing’
siá ⁿ -lâng	siâng	啥人 ‘who, whom’
chit-má	chím-á	這馬 ‘now’
kā lâng	kâng	共人 ‘to, for someone’
hō lâng	hông	予人 ‘to allow someone’
kā góa	kā-á	共我 ‘to, for me’
hō góa	hō-á	予我 ‘to, give me’

2.3.2 Liaison with suffix 仔 -á

With some nouns that end in the suffix 仔 -á, a phenomenon similar to the French *liaison* occurs. For Taiwanese nouns that end in a consonant sound (-p, -t, -k) or nasal (-m, -n, -ng, -ⁿ), the consonant or nasal sound is carried over to the beginning of the following syllable 仔 -á. If the final consonant is unvoiced, then it becomes voiced at the beginning of the next syllable.

ORIGINAL	ALTERED VERSION	MEANING
áp-á	áp-bá	盒子 ‘small box’
chhát-á	chhát-lá	賊仔 ‘thief’
chhák-á	chhák-gá	鑿仔 ‘chisel’
chiam-á	chiam-má	尖仔 ‘needle’
kin-á	kin-ŋá	巾仔 ‘towel’
hāng-á	hāng-ŋá	巷仔 ‘alley’
pi ⁿ -á	pi ⁿ -ŋá	邊仔 ‘side’

2.3.3 Other sound changes

In some words, note that some speakers may add or alter certain consonant sounds to make them easier to pronounce.

ORIGINAL	ALTERED VERSION	MEANING
chōng-hóng	chōng- <u>k</u> hóng	狀況 ‘situation’
khí-lâi	khî- <u>t</u> lâi	起來 ‘to rise’
sàn-pō̇	sà <u>m</u> -pō̇	散步 ‘to go for a walk’

2.4 Regional variation

There is a great deal of regional variation in pronunciation within Taiwan. Most localities have some mixture of accents from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, the two provinces in China from which most speakers of Hokkien originated. However, over four hundred years of population movements within the island have led to local accents that are difficult to align along the Quanzhou/Zhangzhou divide (*see [1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan](#)*). Nevertheless, some of the pronunciation differences encountered in Taiwanese can be attributed to this distinction.

Below are some more common pronunciation differences that occur between the two originating accents.

INITIALS		
ZHANGZHOU	QUANZHOU	MEANING
l- / g-	j-	
liáu / giáu	jiáu	爪 ‘claws’
lip / gip	jip	入 ‘to enter’
b-	m-	
bîn-á-chài	miâ-á-chài	明仔載 ‘tomorrow’
bîn-chhâng	mîng-chhâng	眠床 ‘bed’

FINALS		
ZHANGZHOU	QUANZHOU	MEANING
-i	-u	
gí	gú	語 ‘language’
ti	tu	豬 ‘pig’
-eⁿ	-iⁿ	
sè ⁿ	sì ⁿ	姓 ‘to be surnamed’
pē ⁿ	pī ⁿ	病 ‘sick’
-e	-oe	

ê	ôe	鞋 ‘shoes’
beh	boeh	欲 ‘to want, going to’

Some of the more common variations in pronunciation have been noted throughout this text.

2.5 Tones

Tones are a component of every Taiwanese syllable. A tone indicates that the syllable should be spoken at a particular pitch that can be sustained, rising, falling, stopped, or a combination thereof.

Because Chinese languages tend to have many homophones, the tone is a critical part of pronunciation. Along with context, the tones help to disambiguate between otherwise similar sounding syllables. And, while context does help to indicate the correct meaning, some situations plausibly allow for confusion if correct tones are not used. For example, the word 買 **bé** ‘buy’ is pronounced with a second tone while the word 賣 **bē** ‘sell’ is said with a seventh tone.

Tones in Chinese languages are thought to have evolved from Middle Chinese (~AD 600), which originally had eight classes of tones. However, over the centuries most of the different varieties of Chinese have both split and merged tones into different classes. Taiwanese still maintains seven distinct tones with the 2nd and 6th tones having merged. This explains the ‘missing’ 6th tone. In contrast, Mandarin only has four tones while Cantonese has six to seven tones depending on region.

2.5.1 Original tones

Each syllable has an original tone that can be indicated on the syllable using the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization scheme.

Tones are relative to one’s vocal register. If the range of tones were graphed onto a scale measuring from pitch 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) of one’s vocal register, the middle line 3 (middle) would represent the pitch of one’s voice at its most relaxed.

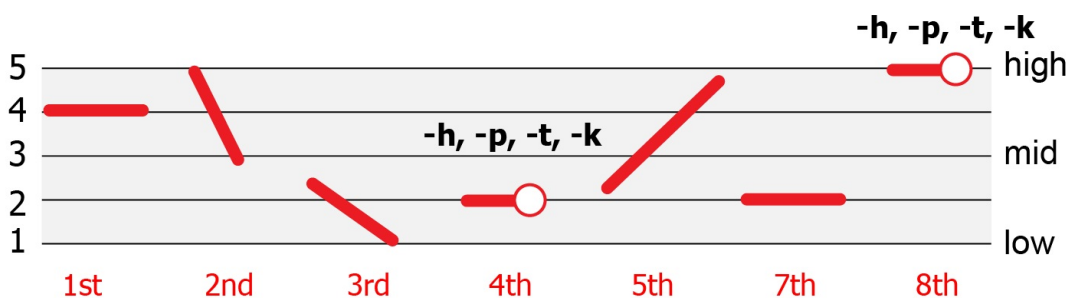


FIGURE 2.1 Original tones for Southern Taiwan

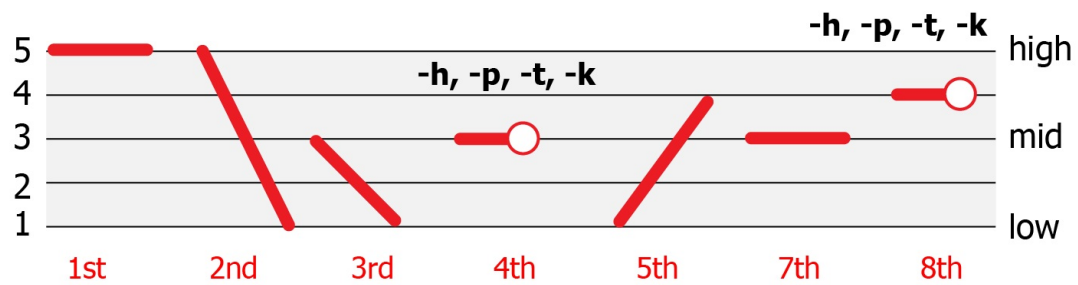


FIGURE 2.2 Original tones for Northern Taiwan

As with pronunciation and vocabulary, there is a certain degree of regional variation in tone usage. This section will use overall tone descriptions that capture the general differences in pitch contour for the majority of Taiwanese accents. More specific differences in beginning and ending pitch are provided in the images, which indicate specific pitch and contour information for the two major Common accents spoken in southern Taiwan (as represented by Tainan, Kaoshiung, and Taitung) and northern Taiwan (as represented by Taipei and Hsinchu) (see [1.1.3 Local differences within Taiwan](#)).

First tone (*High flat*)

The first tone (high flat) starts at a high pitch and is held at the same pitch throughout the syllable. Plain, unmarked syllables that do not end in ‘-p’, ‘-t’, ‘-k’, and ‘-h’, are in the first tone.

EXAMPLES

si 詩 ‘poetry’ to 刀 ‘knife’ hong 風 ‘wind’

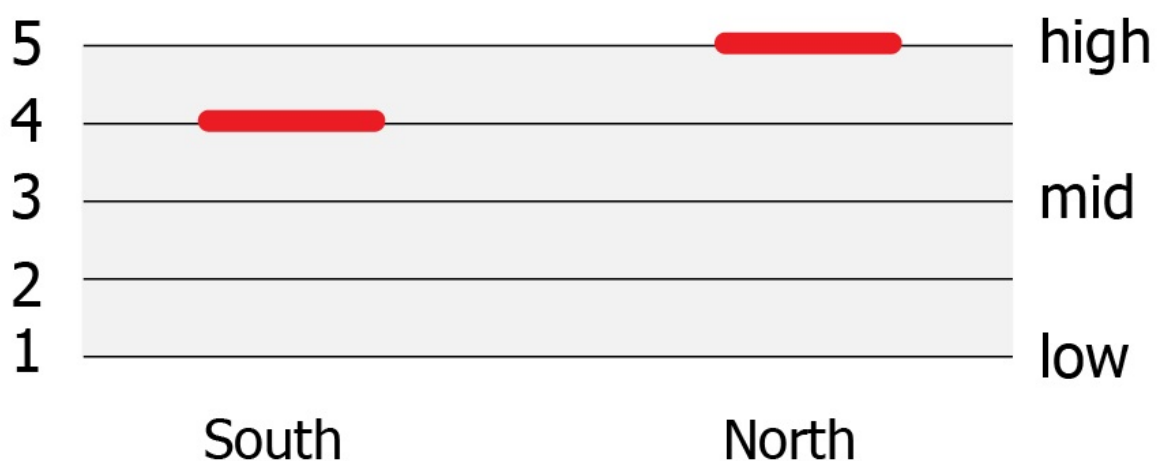


FIGURE 2.3 First tone

The Taiwanese first tone is similar to the Mandarin flat first tone. Note that Mandarin marks the first tone with a macron accent ($\bar{\quad}$), but Taiwanese uses no diacritic.

Second tone (*High falling*)

The second tone (high falling) starts high and rapidly drops. An acute accent ($\acute{\quad}$) placed over the

syllable indicates the second tone.

EXAMPLES

sí 死 ‘to die’ tò 倒 ‘to fall over’ hóng 仿 ‘to imitate’



FIGURE 2.4 Second tone

The Taiwanese second tone is similar to the Mandarin falling fourth tone. However, note that the accent mark is written in the reverse direction.

Third tone (*Low falling*)

The third tone (low falling) starts in the middle of one's register and drops slightly lower. A grave accent (`) placed over the syllable indicates the third tone.

EXAMPLES

sì 四 ‘four’ tò 倒 ‘to pour’ hòng 放 ‘to release’

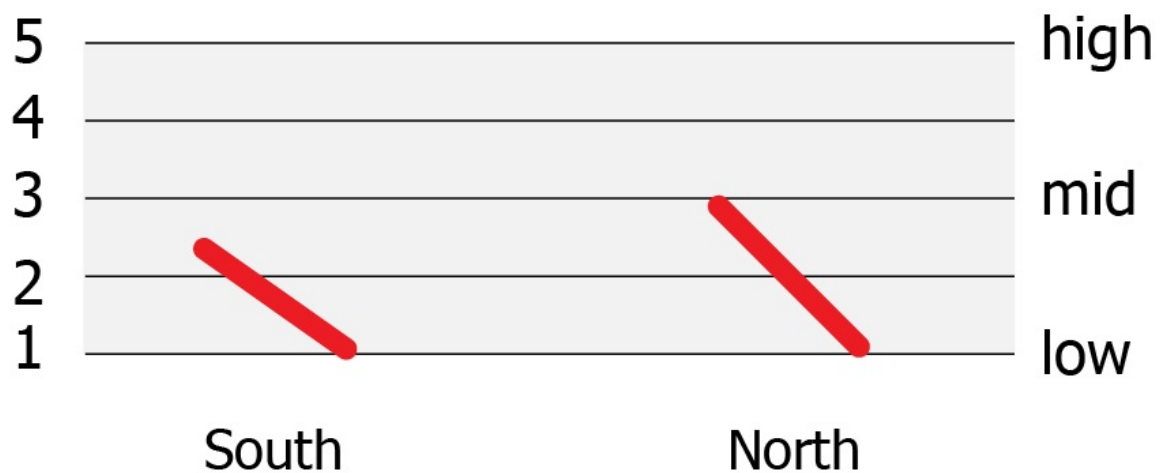


FIGURE 2.5 Third tone

The Taiwanese third tone is similar to the Mandarin half-third tone, a dipping tone that does not rise again. Note that the accent mark differs.

Fourth tone (*Mid stopped*)

The fourth tone (mid stopped) starts at the middle of one's register and then stops abruptly. Note that this tone only occurs when the syllable ends with '-p', '-t', '-k', or '-h'. No accent mark is written on syllables in the fourth tone, but the syllables are distinguished from those in the first tone by the presence of any of the four stopped endings (-p, -t, -k, -h).

EXAMPLES

sih 熾 'bright' toh 桌 'table' hok 福 'fortune'

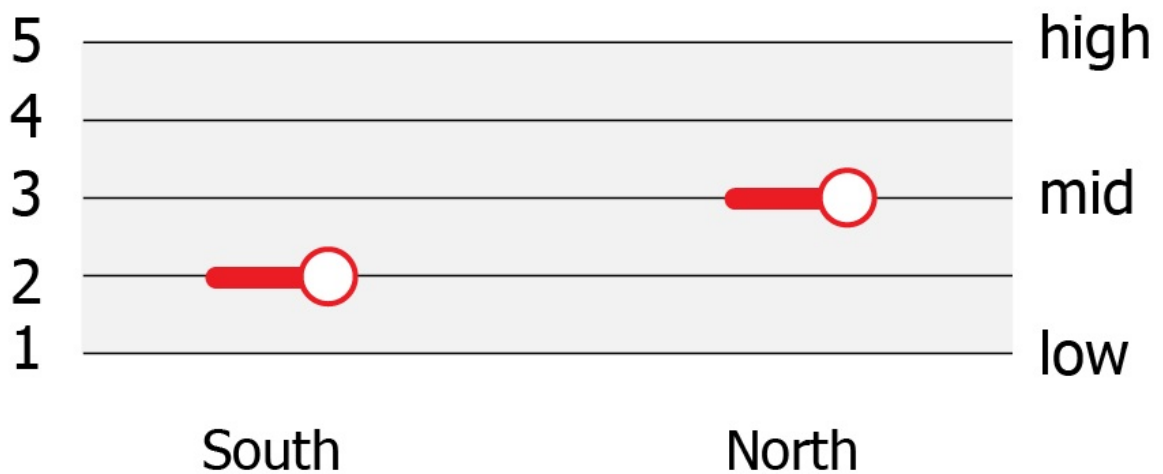


FIGURE 2.6 Fourth tone

Mandarin does not have syllables with stopped endings.

Fifth tone (*Rising*)

The fifth tone (rising) starts at the lower end of one's register and rises quickly. A circumflex accent (^) placed over the syllable indicates the fifth tone.

EXAMPLES

sî 時 'time' tô 逃 'to flee' hông 防 'to defend'



FIGURE 2.7 Fifth tone

The Taiwanese fifth tone is similar to the Mandarin rising second tone. Note that the accent mark differs.

Sixth tone = Same as Second tone

In Taiwanese, the sixth tone has merged with the second tone.

Seventh tone (*Low flat*)

The seventh tone (low flat) starts in the middle to lower end of one's register and is held at the same pitch throughout the syllable. A macron accent ($\bar{}$) placed over the syllable indicates the seventh tone.

EXAMPLES

sī 是 'to be' tō 就 'just' hōng 鳳 'phoenix'

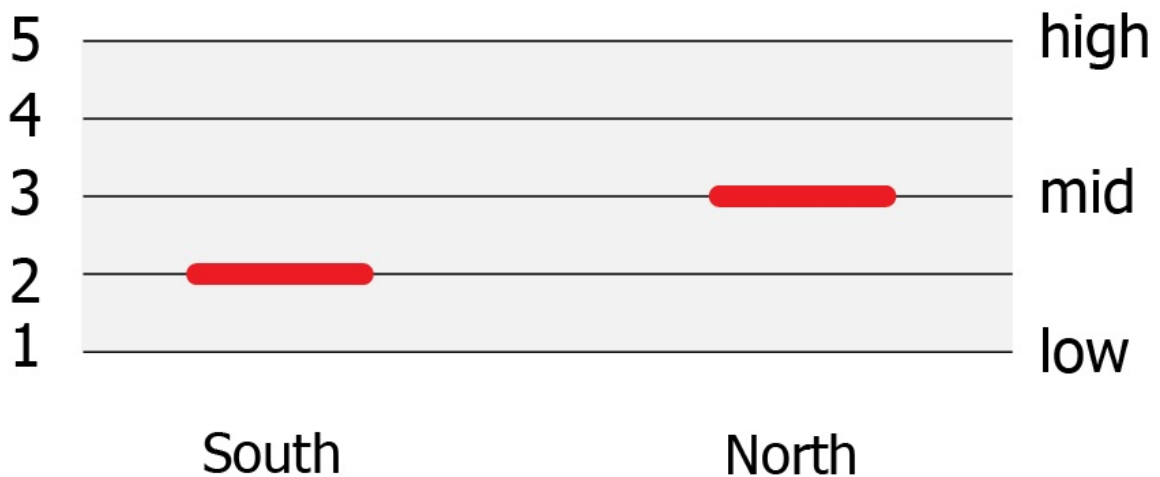


FIGURE 2.8 Seventh tone

Mandarin does not have an equivalent to the Taiwanese low flat tone.

Eighth tone (*High stopped*)

The eighth tone (high stopped) starts at the higher end of one's register and then stops abruptly. Note that this tone only occurs when the syllable ends with '-p', '-t', '-k', or '-h'. A vertical line accent (') placed over the syllable indicates the eighth tone and distinguishes the syllable from a fourth tone (mid stopped) syllable.

EXAMPLES

sih 蝕 'to erode' tòh 著 'to light' hòk 復 'again'



FIGURE 2.9 Eighth tone

Mandarin does not have stopped syllables.

Neutral tone

The neutral tone in Taiwanese is generally light, mid-register and can be thought of as similar to the third tone (low falling). POJ marks the neutral tones by preceding the syllable with a double hyphen. Neutral tones tend to be applied to suffixes or particles occurring at the end of a clause or sentence.

EXAMPLES

--bô 無 *question particle* --chit-ē 一下 ‘a little bit’

Note that there is a degree of inconsistency in usage with hyphens. In theory, hyphens connect syllables that form a cohesive unit of meaning. This can play a useful role when deciding on tone changes. For example, for multi-syllable nouns the final syllable does not change tone. For other parts of speech, the use of a hyphen is negligible and has no impact on tone changes. In some of these areas, there can be some inconsistency among users of the POJ or TL Romanization systems (see [1.4.2.4 Differences between POJ and TL](#)).

2.5.2 Placement of tone diacritics

Tone markings are placed over vowels within a syllable, or nasal consonants if no vowel is present. Below are general guidelines for accent placement according to the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization scheme. Note that some software input editors and users of POJ do not always adhere to these guidelines.

- 1) If the syllable has a single vowel, place the tone mark over the vowel.

khì 去 ‘to go’

gû 牛 ‘cow’

2) If there is no vowel, place the tone mark over the nasal consonant.

m̄ 毋 ‘no, not’

thng 糖 ‘sugar’

3) Because the letters ‘i’ and ‘u’ are considered *semi-vowels* (also known as glides), they are subordinate to the vowels ‘a’, ‘e’, and ‘o’. As a result, if a syllable contains ‘i’ and/or ‘u’, place the tone mark over the other vowel.

pháin 歹 ‘bad’

cháu 走 ‘run’

thiàu 跳 ‘to jump’

4) If there are two vowels in a syllable that contains both ‘i’ and ‘u’, place the tone mark over the ‘u’.

kiû 球 ‘ball’

súi 嬌 ‘pretty’

5) If ‘o’ co-occurs with ‘a’ or ‘e’, place the tone mark over the ‘o’.

hôi 懷 ‘to cherish’

hòe 歲 ‘years old’

2.5.3 Tone changes

Similar to other Chinese languages, Taiwanese syllables can change tones. While Mandarin only has a few tone changes (e.g. consecutive third tones or changes to **bù** 不 ‘not’ or **yī** 一 ‘one’ before certain tones), Taiwanese has relatively extensive tone change rules (see [2.6 Tone change rules](#)).

While there are many rules for when tone changes occur, for the purposes of introducing the pattern of tone changes, one rule will be introduced here: a two-syllable noun will have the first syllable change tone, while the last syllable remains in the original tone.

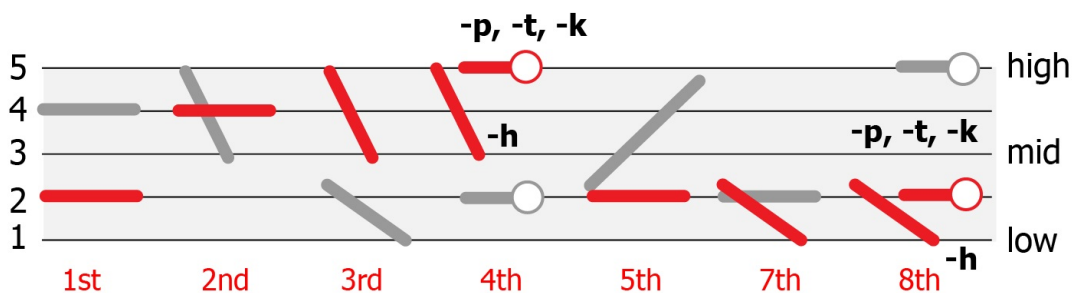


FIGURE 2.10 Changed tones for Southern Taiwan

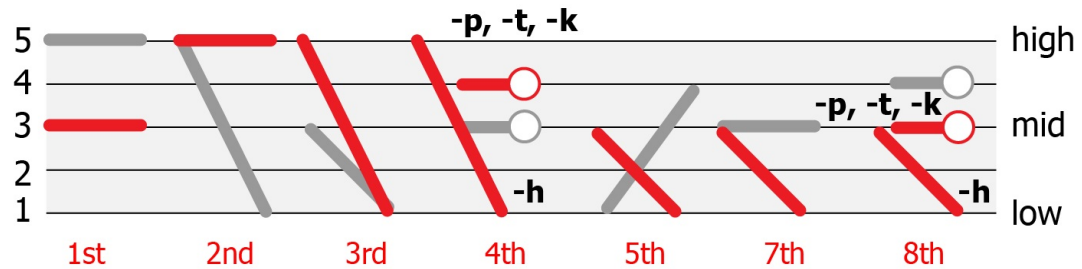


FIGURE 2.11 Changed tones for Northern Taiwan

The convention in the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization is to only annotate the original tone leaving it up to the reader to know when to pronounce the syllables with the changed tone.

First tone (High flat)

First tone (High flat) → Seventh tone (Low flat)

The high flat tone changes to a low flat tone. For example, for the two-syllable noun 身軀 **seng-khu** ‘body’, the first syllable ‘**seng-**’ should be read in the seventh tone as if it were marked ‘**sēng-**’. The last syllable ‘**-khu**’ remains in the first tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
seng-khu	sēng-khu	身軀 ‘body’

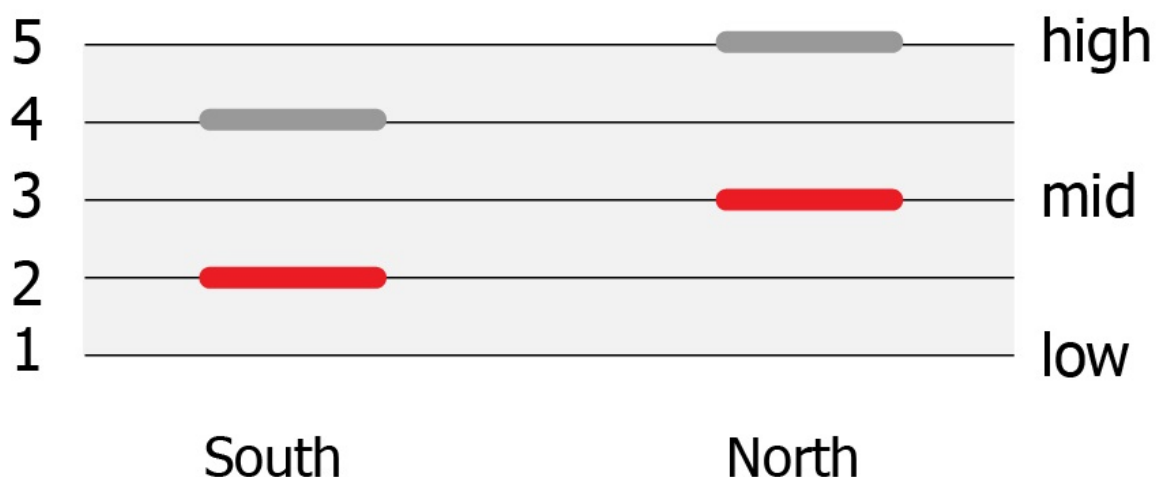


FIGURE 2.12 Changed first tone

Second tone (High falling)

Second tone (High falling) → First tone (High flat)

The high falling tone changes to a high flat tone. For example, for the two-syllable noun 果子 **kóe-chí** ‘fruit’, the first syllable ‘**kóe-**’ should be read in the first tone as if it were marked ‘**koe-**’. The last syllable ‘**-chí**’ remains in the second tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
kóe-chí	koe-chí	果子 ‘fruit’

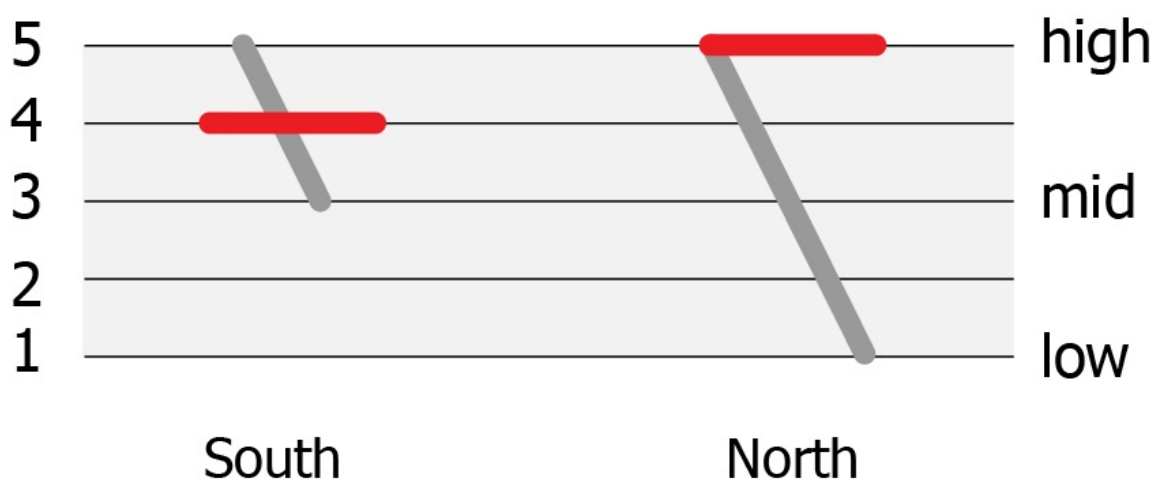


FIGURE 2.13 Changed second tone

Third tone (Low falling)

Third tone (Low falling) → Second tone (High falling)

The low falling tone changes to a high falling tone. For example, for the two-syllable noun 太太 **thài-thài** ‘Mrs., wife’, the first syllable ‘**thài-**’ should be read in the first tone as if it were marked ‘**thái-**’. The last syllable ‘**-thài**’ remains in the third tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
thài-thài	thái-thài	太太 ‘Mrs., wife’

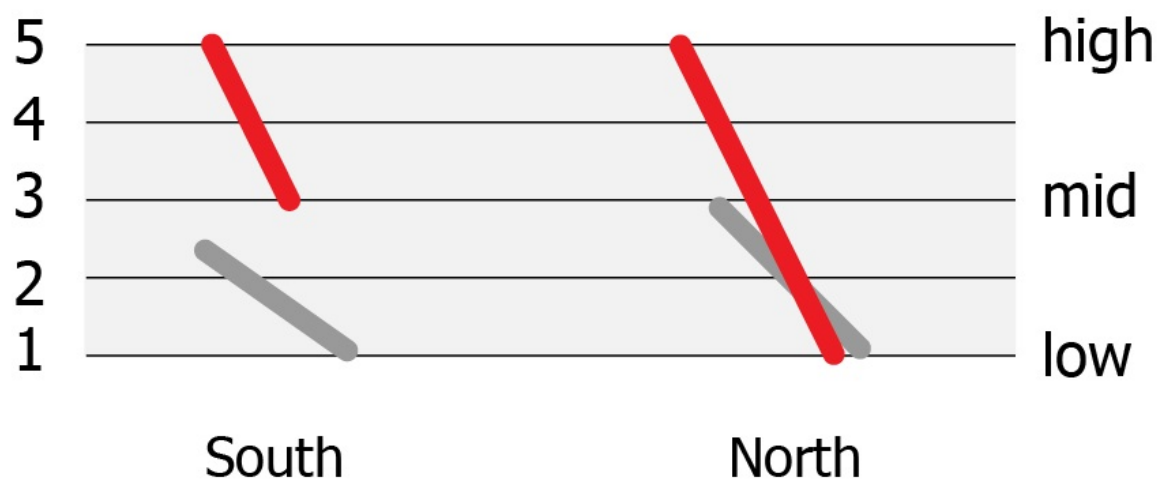


FIGURE 2.14 Changed third tone

Fourth tone (Mid stopped)

Fourth tone ends in -h (Mid stopped) → Second tone (High falling)

The mid stopped tone changes to a high falling tone if the syllable ends in ‘-h’. For example, for the two-syllable noun 客廳 **kheh-thiaⁿ** ‘living room’, the first syllable ‘**kheh-**’ should be read in the eighth tone as if it were marked ‘**khé-**’. The last syllable ‘**-thiaⁿ**’ remains in the first tone. Also, notice that along with the tone change, the syllable loses the ‘-h’ and now flows from the first to the second syllable without a glottal stop.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
kheh-thia ⁿ	khé-thia ⁿ	客廳 ‘living room’

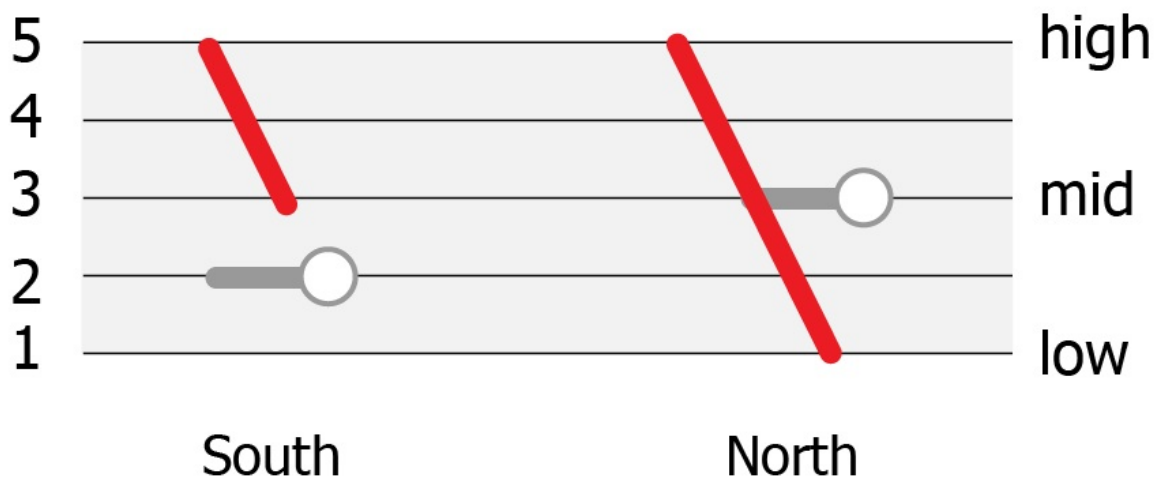


FIGURE 2.15 Changed fourth tone ending in -h

Fourth tone ends in -p, -t, -k (Mid stopped) → Eighth tone (high Stopped)

The mid stopped tone flips to a high stopped tone if the syllable ends in ‘-p’, ‘-t’, ‘-k’. For example, for the two-syllable noun 腹肚 **pak-tó** ‘stomach’, the first syllable ‘**pak-**’ should be read in the eighth tone as if it were marked ‘**pák-**’. The last syllable ‘**-tó**’ remains in the second tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
pak-tó ^ˈ	pák-tó ^ˈ	腹肚 ‘stomach’

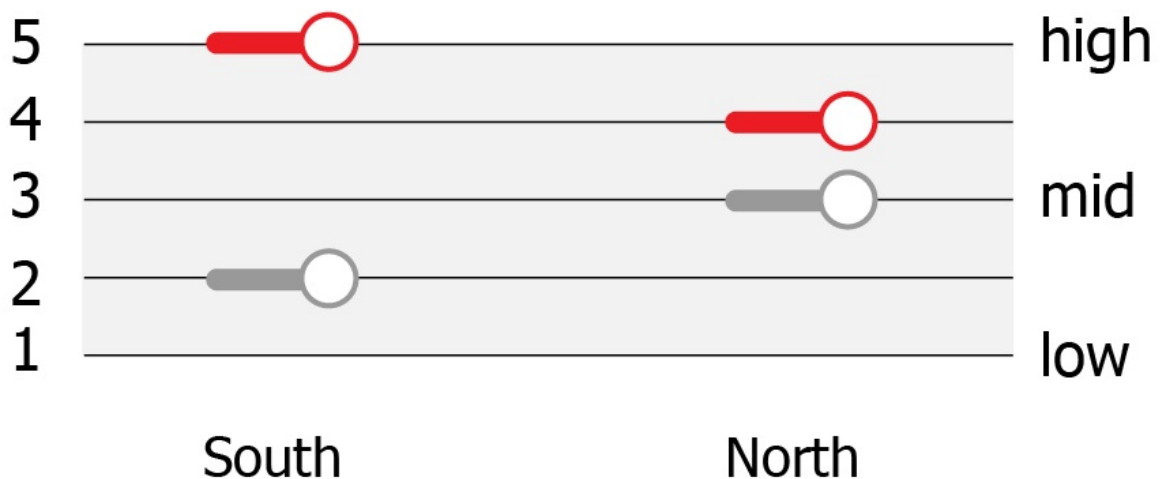


FIGURE 2.16 Changed fourth tone ending in -p, -t, -k

Fifth tone (Rising)

Fifth tone (Rising) → Seventh tone (Low flat) - Southern Taiwan

Fifth tone (Rising) → Third tone (Low falling) - Northern Taiwan

The rising tone changes to a low flat tone (southern Taiwan) or a low falling tone (northern Taiwan). For example, for the two-syllable noun 台灣 **Tâi-ôan** ‘Taiwan’, the first syllable ‘**Tâi-**’ should be read in the seventh tone as if it were marked ‘**Tâi-**’ (in southern Taiwan) or in the third tone as it were marked ‘**Tâi-**’ (in northern Taiwan). The last syllable ‘**-ôan**’ remains in the fifth tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
Tâi-ôan	Tâi-ôan (S) / Tâi-ôan (N)	台灣 ‘Taiwan’

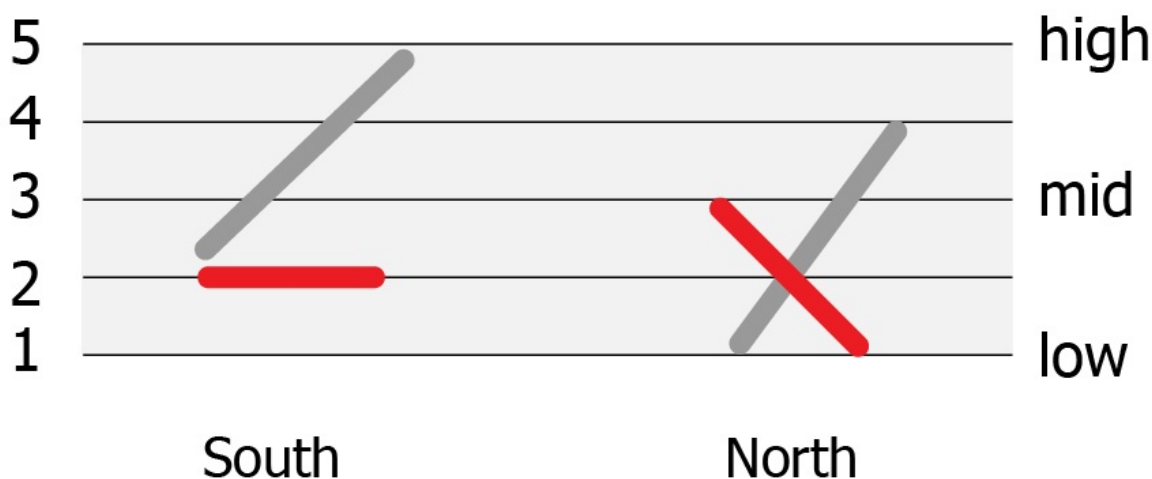


FIGURE 2.17 Changed fifth tone

Seventh tone (Low flat)

Seventh tone (Low flat) → Third tone (Low falling)

The low flat tone changes to a low falling tone. For example, for the two-syllable noun 護士 **hō-sū** ‘nurse’, the first syllable ‘**hō**’ should be read in the third tone as if it were marked ‘**hò-**’. The last syllable ‘**-sū**’ remains in the seventh tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
hō-sū	hò-sū	護士 ‘nurse’

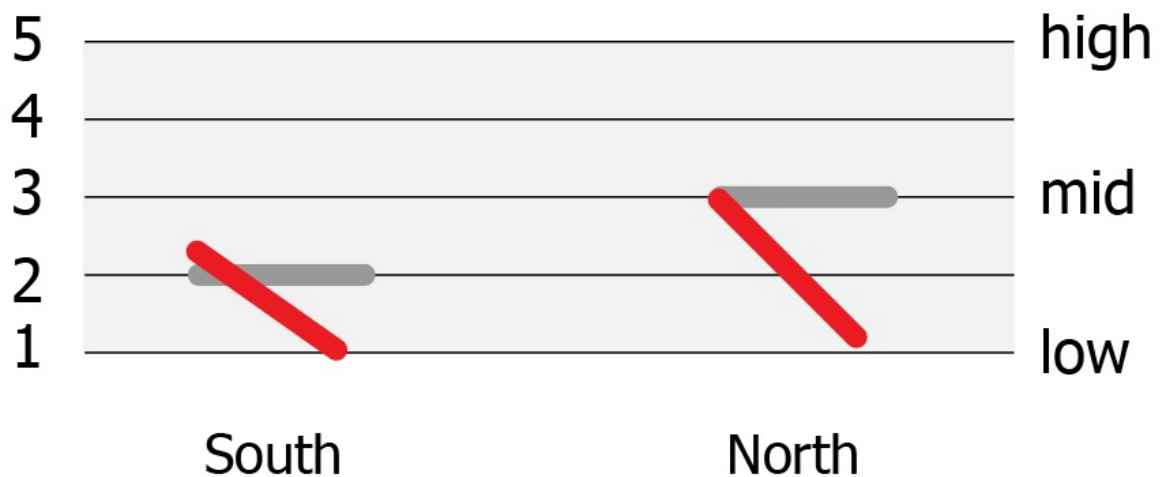


FIGURE 2.18 Changed seventh tone

Eighth tone (High Stopped)

Eighth tone ends in -h (High stopped) → Third tone (Low falling)

The high stopped tone changes to a low falling tone if the syllable ends in ‘-h’. For example, for the two-syllable noun 物件 **mih-kiāⁿ** ‘thing’, the first syllable ‘**mih-**’ should be read in the third tone as if it were marked ‘**mi-**’. The last syllable ‘-**kiāⁿ**’ remains in the seventh tone. Also, notice that along with the tone change, the syllable loses the ‘-h’ and now flows from the first to the second syllable without a glottal stop.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
mih-kiā ⁿ	mi-kiā ⁿ	物件 ‘thing’

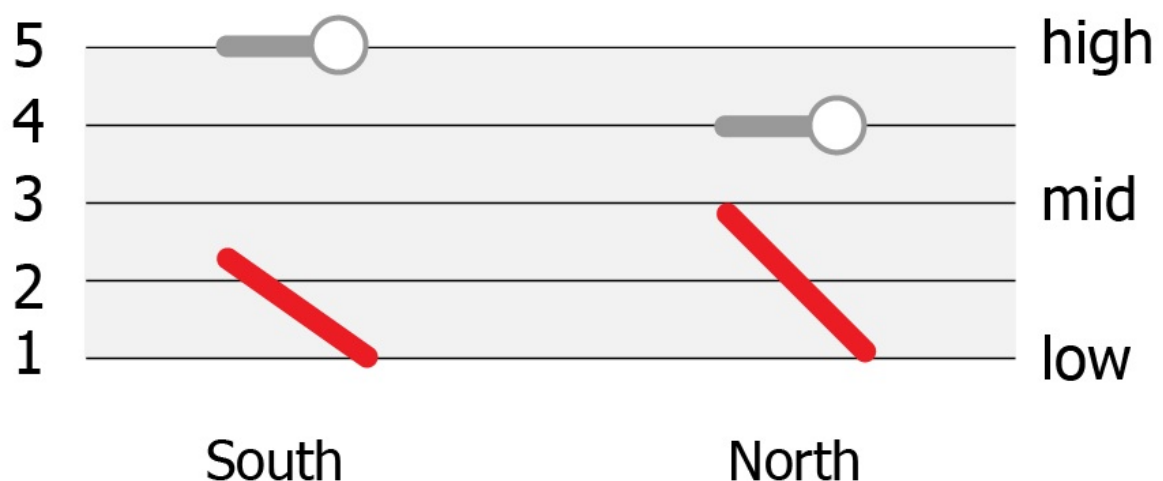


FIGURE 2.19 Changed eighth tone ending in -h

Eighth tone ends in -p, -t, -k (High stopped) → Fourth tone (Mid stopped)

The high stopped tone flips to a mid stopped tone if the syllable ends in ‘-p’, ‘-t’, ‘-k’. For example, for the two-syllable noun 雪文 **sáp-bûn** ‘soap’, the first syllable ‘**sáp**’ should be read in the fourth tone as if it were marked ‘**sap-**’. The last syllable ‘-**bûn**’ remains in the fifth tone.

ORIGINAL TONES	CHANGED TONES (IF MARKED)	MEANING
sáp-bûn	sap-bûn	雪文 ‘soap’

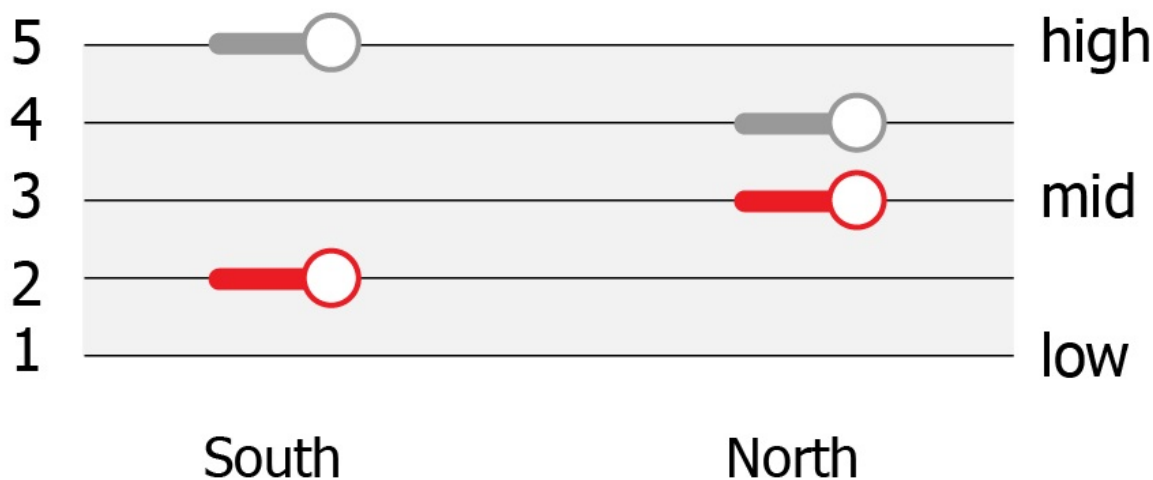


FIGURE 2.20 Changed eighth tone ending in -p, -t, -k

2.6 Tone change rules

Taiwanese and its Southern Min cousins have some of the most extensive systems of changing tones (*tone sandhi*) among Chinese languages. In fact, most syllables in a sentence are read in the changed tone rather than the original tone.

Unlike Mandarin, which has tone changes primarily due to phonetic reasons (such as consecutive third tones 很好 **hě**n **hǎ**o ‘very good’ or fourth tones 不大 **bù** **dà** ‘not big’), Taiwanese tone changes are driven more by grammatical reasons. In general, tone changes in Taiwanese help to group ideas within a sentence and indicate emphasis.

More specifically, the overarching guiding principle is to change the tones of all syllables except for the final syllables before the end of a clause or sentence—thereby marking borders between thoughts and ideas. Additional rules refine this grouping by allowing other syllables within to keep their original tone based on part of speech or word-specific reasons.

Another layer of refinement at the word and phrase level comes from placing some syllables in the neutral tone, allowing emphasis to fall on the preceding syllable, which generally does not change tone.

Essentially, places of emphasis occur on syllables that do not change tone. From this observation, it can be seen that borders between thoughts and ideas as well as the demarcation of nouns (the primary actors within a sentence) receive the most attention. Other parts of speech or specific words may also receive stress by keeping their original tone. Additionally, it is possible to use these points of emphasis as a way to pace one’s speech and give sentences the natural cadence of Taiwanese.

Note to the student: For many students of Taiwanese, the number of tone changes and rules governing

their usage can be intimidating and overwhelming. Moreover, the prospect of processing every one of these rules and tone changes in real-time speech is even more daunting. Native speakers, of course, do not go through this process when they speak, but perhaps recall how they have heard certain words and phrases spoken in the past. For learners, perhaps this can be instructive as to focus attention on remembering how phrases or words ‘sound’ in order to achieve a more authentic pronunciation. The tone change rules can be applied during study as an aid to help accurately read aloud and hear the proper tones. Ideally, hearing oneself pronounce correct tones will also help refine one’s ‘sense’ of proper tones.

2.6.1 The guiding principle of tone changes

The guiding principle for tone changes in Taiwanese is to change the tone of all syllables except for the final syllable before the end of a clause or sentence. In other words, syllables at the end of a clause or sentence stay in their original tones

Guiding principle: *syllables at the end of a clause or sentence stay in their original tones.*

This general rule applies regardless of the final syllable’s part of speech. The only exception to this rule is if the final syllable(s) is in the neutral tone in which case the preceding non-neutral tone syllable becomes the one that stays in the original tone.

Punctuation such as commas, periods, semi-colons, and question marks helps to delineate the borders of clauses and sentences. However, in light of a scarcity of written material in Taiwanese using Romanization, one can think of these borders as occurring where the speaker might naturally pause for a breath (such as to emphasize the preceding content or prior to moving on to a new thought or idea).

In fact, as places of emphasis, syllables that keep their original tones can be considered interim destinations for one’s speech. These original-tone syllables form stopping points during an utterance and are often slightly elongated with brief pauses (or long pauses for rhetorical effect) following immediately after. The pauses give emphasis to the preceding idea or to mark the end of a thought.

In the examples below, the ***bolded italicized*** syllables stay in their original tone while all other syllables change.

我會曉講台灣話。

Góa ē-hiáu kóng Tâi-ôan-***ōe***.

我會講台語。

Wǒ huì jiǎng Táiyǔ

I can speak Taiwanese.

我的筆借予你，但是一定愛還我。

Góa ê ***pít*** chioh hō ***lí***, tân-sī it-tēng ài hêng ***góa***.

我的筆借給你，但是一定要還我。

Wǒ de bǐ jiè gěi nǐ, dànshì yīdìng yào huán wǒ.

I will lend you my pen, but you must return it to me.

你敢買了矣？

Lí kám bé **liáu**--ah?

你買完了沒有？

Nǐ mǎiwán le méiyǒu?

Did you buy it?

你看，有人咧排隊，咱應該較早來。

Lí **khòaⁿ**, ū **lâng** teh pài-**tūi**, lán eng-kai khah chá **lâi**.

你看，有人在排隊，我們應該早一點來。

Nǐ kàn, yǒu rén zài páiduì, wǒmen yīnggāi zǎo yīdiǎn lái.

Look! There are people lining up. We should have come earlier.

Note that Taiwanese is less stringent with comma placement than English is.

2.6.2 The neutral tone and tone changes

The neutral tone, essentially a third tone (low falling), is lighter and softer to de-emphasize the syllable. The use of the neutral tone also has the effect of emphasizing the preceding syllable by usually allowing it to stay in the original tone. With consecutive syllables in the neutral tone, the syllable before the first neutral tone syllable stays in the original tone. Note that neutral tones can occur both at the end of a clause or sentence and mid-clause. The neutral tone is written with double hyphens when occurring at the end of a clause or sentence.

伊佇膨椅坐咧。

I tī phòng-**í chē--leh**.

她在沙發坐著。

Tā zài shāfā zuòzhe.

She is sitting on the sofa.

張太太共阮趕出去矣。

Tiuⁿ thài-**thài** kā gún **kóaⁿ--chhut-khì--ah**.

張太太把我們趕出去。

Zhāng tàitai bǎ wǒmen gǎnchūqù.

Mrs. Tiunn has shooed us away.

2.6.3 Part of speech based rules

Aside from the general rule of tone changes, additional rules based on part of speech further refine tone changes that occur mid-clause.

In the following sections, ***bolded italicized*** syllables denote all syllables that keep their original tone. That is to say, all other syllables will change tone. Underlined syllables highlight examples of the specific rule discussed in each section.

2.6.3.1 Nouns

The last syllable of multi-syllable nouns does not change tone regardless of position within a sentence (see [4 Nouns](#)). Single-syllable nouns also do not change tone.

彼 台 腳踏車 已經 歹 去 矣。

Hit tâi kha-tâh-***chhia*** í-keng ***phái***--khì--ah.

那 台 腳踏車 已經 壞 掉 了。

Nà tái jiǎotàchē yǐjīng huàidiào le.

That bicycle is already broken.

明仔載 你 一定 愛 共 冊 還 圖書館。

Bîn-á-***chài*** lí it-tēng ài kā ***chheh*** hêng tô-su-***kóan***.

明天 你 一定 要 把 書 還 圖書館。

Míngtiān nǐ yīdìng yào bǎ shū huán túshūguǎn.

Tomorrow, you definitely have to return the book to the library.

If a noun or location is modified by another noun, all syllables of any modifying noun will change tone (see [6.6.3 Nouns that modify without 的 ê](#)). Only the final syllable of the head noun will keep its original tone.

台北 動物園

Tâi-pak tōng-bùt-***hng***

台北 動物園

Táiběi dòngwùyuán

Taipei zoo

韓國 同事

Hân-kok tōng-***sū***

韓國 同事

Hánguó tóngshì

Korean colleague

If a noun is modified by a phrase with the modifying particle 的 ê, then the final syllable before the modifier ê does not change tone (see [6.6 Noun phrases and the modifying particle 的 ê](#)). Note that the particle 的 ê itself does change tone and the head noun following adheres to regular tone change rules.

伊 穿去 我 上 愛 的 膨紗衫。

I chhēng-khì góa siōng ài ê phòng-se-saⁿ.

她 穿走 我 最愛 的 毛衣。

Tā chuānzǒu wǒ zuì'ài de máoyī.

She wore my favorite sweater.

However, if the head noun is omitted, then the modifying particle 的 ê is put in the neutral tone (see [6.6.4 Omitting the head noun - nominalization](#)).

伊 穿去 我 上 愛 的。

I chhēng-khì góa siōng ài--ê.

她 穿走 我 最愛 的。

Tā chuānzǒu wǒ zuì'ài de.

She wore my favorite one.

If a noun is omitted (and implied) after a measure word, the measure word does not change tone (see [4.7 Omitting the noun](#)).

三 隻 (鳥鼠仔) 攞 死去 矣。

Saⁿ chiah (niáu-chhí-á) lóng sí--khì--ah.

三 隻 (老鼠) 都 死掉 了。

Sān zhī (lǎo shǔ) dōu sǐdiào le.

All three (mice) died.

2.6.3.2 Pronouns

Pronouns generally change tone (see [5 Pronouns](#)). However, if pronouns appear at the end of a clause or sentence, they can be either placed in the neutral tone or kept in the original tone depending on emphasis. A neutral tone reading places emphasis on the preceding word, while a reading in the original tone focuses on the pronoun itself.

阮 老師 罵 我。

Gún lāu-**su** mē **góa**.

我的老師罵我。

Wǒ de lǎoshī mà wǒ.

My teacher scolded me (*surprised at being the target of anger*).

阮老師罵我。

Gún lāu-**su** **mē**--góa.

我的老師罵我。

Wǒ de lǎoshī mà wǒ.

My teacher scolded me (*surprised at the teacher's behavior*).

The demonstrative pronouns 這 **che** 'this' and 彼 **he** 'that' do not change tone in any position.

這是阮兜的車。

Che sī gún **tau** ê **chia**.

這是我家的車。

Zhè shì wǒ jiā de chē.

This is my family's car.

彼敢是你的電腦？

He kám sī lí ê tiān-**náu**?

那是不是你的電腦？

Nà shìbùshì nǐ de diànnǎo?

Is that your computer?

2.6.3.3 Verbs

In general, verbs follow regular tone change rules. When occurring mid-clause, all syllables undergo tone changes. If occurring at the end of a clause or sentence, only the final syllable keeps its original tone.

阮男朋友共我介紹予您父母。

Gún lâm pêng-**iú** kā góa **kài-siāu** hō ìn pē-**bú**.

我的男朋友把我介紹給他的父母。

Wǒ de nán péngyǒu bǎ wǒ jièshào gěi tā de fùmǔ.

My boyfriend introduced me to his parents.

伊的表兄共阮介紹。

I ê piáu-**hia**ⁿ kā gún kài-**siāu**.

她的表哥介紹我們認識。

Tā de biǎogē jièshào wǒmen rènshi.

Her cousin introduced us.

Some Taiwanese verbs take default objects (see [7.1.4 Default objects](#)). In these cases, the verb and object components follow the tone change rules for their respective parts of speech: the verb changes tone according to the rule for verbs stated above, and the default object follows the rules for nouns.

你當時欲食飯？

Lí tang-**sī** beh **chiāh** **pāng**?

你何時要吃飯？

Nǐ héshí yào chīfàn?

When do you want to eat?

2.6.3.4 Aspect markers

For the perfective aspect, the pre-verbal marker 有 **ū** follows normal tone change rules for verbs (see [8.1 Perfective aspect](#)). Phase complements used to mark the perfective aspect (了 **liáu**, 好 **hó**, 完 **ôan**, 煞 **soah**) do not undergo tone changes regardless of position within a sentence.

恁阿母講了有道理。

Lín a-**bú** kóng **liáu** ū tō-**lí**.

你媽媽說的有道理。

Nǐ māmā shuō de yǒu dàolǐ.

What your mom said is reasonable.

For the continuous aspect, the pre-verbal dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** always occurs mid-clause and changes tone (see [8.2 Continuous aspect](#)). The static continuous aspect marker 咧 --**leh** remains in the neutral tone regardless of position. However, note that the preceding verb will change tone mid-clause but keep its original tone at the end.

哪恁無咧照顧囡仔？

Ná lín bô **teh** chiàu-kò`gín-**á**?

為甚麼你們沒有在照顧小孩？

Wèishènmè nǐmen méiyǒu zài zhàogù xiǎohái?

Why aren't you taking care of the children?

伊倒咧佇眠床頂。

I tó--leh tī m̄ng-chh̄ng-**téng**.

她在床上躺著。

Tā zài chuángshàng tǎngzhe.

She is lying on the bed.

我的珠寶攞包咧。

Góa ê chu-**pó** lóng **pau--leh**.

我的飾品都包著。

Wǒ de shìpǐn dōu bāozhe.

All of my jewelry is wrapped.

For the experiential aspect, the pre-verbal marker 捌 **bat** follows normal tone change rules for verbs (see [8.3 Experiential aspect](#)). When mid-clause, the verb suffix 過 **-kòe** does not change tone, but the preceding verb does change tone. However, at the end of a clause or sentence, the verb suffix 過 **-kòe** is neutralized with the preceding verb keeping its original tone.

我捌食過臭豆腐。

Góa **bat** chiáh-**kòe** chhàu tâu-**hū**.

我吃過臭豆腐。

Wǒ chīguò chòu dòufu.

I have eaten stinky tofu before.

德國，我已經去過。

Tek-**kok**, góa í-keng **khi--kòe**.

德國，我已經去過。

Déguó, wǒ yǐjīng qùguò.

I've already gone to Germany.

For the anterior aspect, the end-of-sentence particle 矣 **--ah** is always placed in the neutral tone (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)).

外口天暗矣。

Gōa-**kháu thiⁿ àm--ah**.

外面天黑了。

Wàimiàn tiān hēi le.

Outside the sky has gotten dark.

For the habitual aspect, the pre-verbal marker 有咧 **ū teh** only occurs mid-clause and changes tone on both syllables.

暗頓食了，我有咧啉茶。

Àm-**tng** chiáh **liáu**, góa **ū teh** lim **tê**.

晚餐吃完，我經常喝茶。

Wǎncān chī wán, wǒ jīngcháng hē chá.

I drink tea after dinner.

For the tentative aspect, if the verb is repeated, the first verb changes tone regardless of position within the sentence, while the second verb keeps the original tone (see [8.6 Tentative aspect](#)).

替我共塗跤掃掃。

Thè góa kā thô-**kha** sàu-sàu.

替我把地板掃一掃。

Tì wǒ bǎ dìbǎn sǎoyisǎo.

Clean the floor a little for me.

先嘸嘸才吞落去。

Seng pō-**pō** chiah **thun**--lòh-khì.

先嚼嚼再吞下去。

Xiān juéjué zài tūn xiàqù.

First chew then swallow.

When used to indicate the tentative aspect, the phrase 一下 --**chit-ē** is always placed in the neutral tone regardless of position.

咱來公園行一下。

Lán lái kong-**hng** **kiâ**--chit-ē.

我們來走一下吧。

Wǒmen lái zǒu yīxià ba.

After we eat, let's go walk a little.

With the phrase 看覓 **khòaⁿ-māi** the final syllable 覓 -**māi** keeps its original tone, while 看 **khòaⁿ** and the preceding verb undergo tone changes.

咱來去新公園行看覓。

Lán lái khì sin kong-**hng** **kiâⁿ** khòaⁿ-māi.

我們去新公園走走看吧。

Wǒmen qù xīn gōngyuán zǒuzǒukàn ba.

Let's go for a walk and check out the new park.

If 試 **chhi**- precedes a verb to mark the tentative aspect, the 試 **chhi**- undergoes a tone change, while the following verb keeps its original tone.

試啲這甌麥仔酒。

Chhi-**lim** chit au béh-á-**chiú**.

呵呵看 這 杯 啤酒。

Hēhēkàn zhè bēi píjiǔ.

Try this glass of beer.

2.6.3.5 Verb complements

Verb complements vary in tone changes according to type of complement and position within the sentence.

Phase complements indicating completion (了 **liáu**, 完 **ôan**, 煞 **soah**, 好 **hó**) keep their original tone even mid-clause (see [11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#)).

阿母 熨 了 這 領 褲。

A-bú ut **liáu** chit niá **khò**.

媽媽 燙 了 這 件 褲 子。

Māmā tàngle zhè jiàn kùzi.

Mom ironed these pants.

學 生 的 考 試 單 仔 改 好 矣。

Hák-**seng** ê khó-chhì-toaⁿ-á kái **hó**--ah.

學 生 的 考 卷 改 好 了。

Xuéshēng de kǎojiàn gǎihǎo le.

The students' tests are graded.

Phase complements of achievement and potential (著 **-tiòh**, 有 **ū**) differ in their tone changes. While both 著 **-tiòh** and 有 **ū** undergo regular tone changes mid-clause, 著 **-tiòh** is neutralized, and 有 **ū** keeps its original tone at the end of clauses and sentences (see [11.1.2 Phase complements indicating achievement](#), [11.1.3 Phase complements indicating potential](#)).

伊 揣 有 鎖 匙 的 時， 共 我 講。

I chhōe **ū** só-**sī** ê **sī**, kā góa **kóng**.

他 找 到 鑰 匙 的 時 候， 跟 我 講。

Tā zhǎodào yàoshi de shíhòu, gēn wǒ jiǎng.

When he finds his keys, tell me.

你 的 臭 衫 味， 我 攏 鼻 有 矣。

Lí ê chhàu saⁿ **bī**, góa lóng phīⁿ **ū**--ah.

你 的 衣 服 臭 味 道， 我 都 聞 到 了。

Nǐ de yīfú chòu wèidào, wǒ dōu wéndào le.

I can smell all of your dirty clothes.

我昨昏暗 拄著 恁 小弟。

Góa cha-hng-**ám** tú-tiòh lín sió-tī.

我昨晚 碰到 你 弟弟。

Wǒ zuówǎn pèngdào nǐ dìdì.

I bumped into your younger brother last night.

您後生的 畫圖，我無 看著。

In hāu-**se** ē ōe-**tô**; góa bô **khòa**--tiòh.

他們 兒子的 圖畫，我沒 看到。

Tāmen érzi de túhuà, wǒ méi kàndào.

I didn't see their son's drawing.

Resultative complements mid-clause undergo tone changes, while those at the end of a clause or sentence keep their original tone (see [11.2 Resultative complements](#)). The verb preceding the complement changes tone.

你無 關牢 窗仔，所以 內底 才有 蠓仔。

Lí bô koaiⁿ-tiâu thang-**á**, só-í lâi-**té** chiah ū báng-**á**.

你沒有 關好 窗戶，所以 裡面 才有 蚊子。

Nǐ méiyǒu guān hǎo chuānghù, suǒyǐ lǐmiàn cái yǒu wénzi.

You didn't close the window tightly, so inside there are mosquitoes.

這 張 批 可能 愛 用 刀仔 割開。

Chit tiuⁿ **phoe** khó-lêng ài ēng to-**á** koah-**khui**.

這 封 信 可能 需要 用 刀子 割開。

Zhè fēng xìn kěnéng xūyào yòng dāozi gēkāi.

You probably need a knife to open up this letter.

Directional complements mid-clause undergo tone changes but are placed in the neutral tone at the end of clauses and sentences (see [11.3 Directional complements](#)). Note that with double-directional complements at the end of clauses and sentences both directional complements are neutralized, and the verb keeps its original tone.

楊 先生 共 報告 提過去 顧客 的 辦公室。

Iūⁿ sian-siⁿ kā pò-kò thèh-kòe-khì kò-**kheh** ē pān-kong-**sek**.

楊 先生 把 報告 帶過去 顧客 的 辦公室。

Yáng xiānshēng bǎ bàogào dàiguòqù gùkè de bàngōngshì.

Mr. Iunn took the report over to his client's office.

莫拖椅子，用兩枝手夯起來。

Mài thoa í-á, ēng n̄ng ki chhiú giâ--khí-lâi.

不要拖椅子，用兩隻手抬起來。

Bùyào tuō yǐzi, yòng liǎng zhī shǒu táiqǐlái.

Don't drag the chairs. Use both hands to lift them up.

Because of their length, potential complements generally do not appear mid-clause (see [11.4 Potential complements](#)). At the end of a clause or sentence, the verb and potential infix undergo tone changes, while the complement stays in the original tone. If a speaker perspective directional complement is added, this is put in the neutral tone.

到尾仔，伊的答案講有出來。

Kàu boé-á, i ê tap-àn kóng-ū-chhut--lâi.

到最後，他的答案說出來了。

Dào zuìhòu, tā de dá'àn shuōchūlái le.

Finally he was able to give his answer.

遐爾大的藥丸，伊絕對吞袂落去。

Hiah-nī tōa ê iòh-ôan, i chóat-tùi thun-bē-lòh--khì.

那麼大的藥丸，他絕對吞不下去。

Nàme dà de yàowán, tā juéduì tūnbuxiàqù.

He absolutely can't swallow that large of a pill.

阮朋友的鋼琴演奏會，我看無著。

Gún pêng-iú ê kng-khîm ián-chàu-hōe, góa khòa"-bô-tiòh.

我的朋友的鋼琴演奏會，我看不到。

Wǒ de péngyǒu de gāngqín yǎnzòuhuì, wǒ kànbudào.

I wasn't able to see my friend's piano recital.

Manner complements (著 tiòh and 了 liáu) only occur mid-clause since they are always followed by a description of the manner (see [11.6 Manner complements](#)). However, even though they appear mid-clause, manner complements keep their original tone.

阮阿姊拍籃球拍著足好。

Gún a-chí phah nâ-kiû phah-tiòh chiok hó.

我姊姊打籃球打得很好。

Wǒ jiějie dǎ lánqiú dǎ de hěn hǎo.

My older sister plays basketball really well.

伊食了真緊。

I chiáh liáu chin kín.

他吃得很快。

Tā chī de hěn kuài.

He ate really fast.

Extent complements (甲 **kah** and 予 **hō**) also only occur mid-clause because they are always followed by a description of extent or degree (see [11.7 Extent complements](#)). While 甲 **kah** undergoes tone changes, 予 **hō** keeps its original tone.

學生讀冊讀里目睷攏紅紅。

Hák-**seng** thák **chheh** thák kah bàk-**chiu** lóng âng-**âng**.

學生讀書讀得眼睛都紅紅。

Xuéshēng dú shū dú de yǎnjīng dōu hóngóng.

The students studied so much that their eyes were all red.

咖啡共我斟予溷。

Ka-**pi** kā góa thîn hō t̃h̃.

咖啡幫我倒滿。

Kāfēi bāng wǒ dào mǎn.

Fill my coffee to the brim.

2.6.3.6 Adverbs

Multi-syllable time expressions ('tomorrow', 'next week') keep the original tone on the final syllable (see [14.1.2 Time adverbs](#)).

郭小姐明仔暗會去台中。

Koeh sió-**chiá** bîn-á-àm ē khi Tâi-**tióng**.

郭小姐明晚會去台中。

Guō xiǎojiě míngwǎn huì qù Táizhōng.

Ms. Koeh will go to Taichung tomorrow evening.

All other single and multi-syllable adverbs undergo tone changes on all syllables.

好佳哉恁朋友有紮三枝雨傘。

Hó-ka-chài lín pêng-**iú** ū chah saⁿ ki hō-**sòá**.

幸虧你的朋友有帶三枝雨傘。

Xìngkuī nǐ de péngyǒu yǒu dài sān zhī yǔsǎn.

Fortunately, your friend brought three umbrellas.

2.6.3.7 Question words

Question words follow the regular tone change rule of changing tones mid-clause and keeping original tones at the end of a clause or sentence (see [20.5 Question words](#)). However, some question words have nouns as part of the question word (啥貨 **siáⁿ-hòe** ‘what’, 啥人 **siáⁿ-lâng** ‘who, whom’, 按怎樣 **án-chóaⁿ-iūⁿ** ‘how was it’, etc.). The noun components follow the normal tone change rules for nouns.

啥人 講 我 袂 使 去 ？

Siáⁿ-lâng kóng góa bē-sái **khi**?

誰 說 我 不 可 以 去 ？

Shéi shuō wǒ bù kěyǐ qù?

Who said I couldn’t go?

啥貨 遐 爾 臭 ？

Siáⁿ-hòe hiah-nī **chhàu**?

什麼 東西 那麼 臭 ？

Shénme dōngxī nàme chòu?

What smells so bad?

你 欲 愛 啥 ？

Lí beh ài **siáⁿ**?

你 要 什麼 ？

Nǐ yào shénme?

What do you want?

伊 怎樣 買 三 台 車 ？

I **chóaⁿ-iūⁿ** bé saⁿ tái **chhia**?

他 怎樣 買 三 台 車 ？

Tā zěnyàng mǎi sān tái chē?

How did he buy three cars?

2.6.3.8 Location participles

Location participles keep their original tone whether they are mid-clause or at the end of a clause or sentence (see [16.2 Location participles](#)).

佇 桌仔頂 已經 有 四 盤 菜 。

Tī toh-á-**téng** í-keng ū sì pōaⁿ **chhài**.

在桌子上已經有四盤菜。

Zài zhuōzi shàng yǐjīng yǒu sì pán cài.

There are already four dishes on the table.

你的舊鞋子攏園佇眠床跤。

Lí ê kū ê-á lóng khng tī bîn-chhng-**kha**.

你的舊鞋子都放在床下。

Nǐ de jiù xiézi dōu fàng zài chuángxià.

Your old shoes are all placed underneath your bed.

2.6.3.9 Numbers

Numbers read in isolation change tones on each syllable except for the final syllable (see [3 Numbers](#)). Single-syllable numbers also do not change tone.

4	<u>四</u>	<u>sì</u>
	四	sì
17	<u>十七</u>	<u>cháp-chhit</u>
	十七	shíqī
205	<u>兩百空五</u>	<u>nāg-pah khòng gō</u>
	兩百零五	liǎng bǎi líng wǔ

If numbers modify a noun, tone changes apply to all syllables. The modified noun follows regular tone change rules for nouns.

4 people	<u>四</u> 个 人	<u>sì</u> ê <u>lāng</u>
	四 个 人	sì gè rén
17 chairs	<u>十七</u> 條 椅 仔	<u>cháp-chhit</u> liāu í-á
	十七 把 椅 子	shíqī bǎ yǐzi
205 dollars	<u>兩百空五</u> 箍	<u>nāg-pah khòng gō</u> kho
	兩百零五 塊	liǎng bǎi líng wǔ kuài

The numerical measure words 千 **chheng** ‘thousand’, 萬 **bān** ‘ten thousand’, 億 **ek** ‘hundred million’, and higher all keep their original tones in all positions unless the number is part of a modifying phrase. 百 **pah** ‘hundred’ is an exception and changes tone unless it is the final syllable.

1004 一千空四 chit-**chheng** khòng sì

	一千零四	yī qiān líng sì
2500	兩千五百	nāng- <u>chheng</u> gō-pah
	兩千五百	liǎng qiān wǔ bǎi
15,000	一萬五千	chhit- <u>bān</u> go- <u>chheng</u>
	一萬五千	yī wàn wǔ qiān
20,500	兩萬空五百	nāng- <u>chheng</u> khòng gō-pah
	兩萬零五百	liǎng wàn líng wǔ bǎi

If numbers with numerical measure words modify a noun, tone changes will also apply to the measure words. The modified noun follows regular tone change rules for nouns.

1004 students	一千零四个學生	chit- <u>chheng</u> khòng sì ê hák-seng
	一千零四個學生	yī qiān líng sì gè xuéshēng
2500 dollars	兩千五百 鎊	nāng- <u>chheng</u> gō-pah <i>kho'</i>
	兩千五百 塊	liǎng qiān wǔ bǎi kuài
20,500 houses	兩萬空五百 間 厝	nāng- <u>chheng</u> khòng gō-pah keng <i>chhù</i>
	兩萬零五百 間 房屋	liǎng wàn líng wǔ bǎi jiān fángwū

2.6.3.10 Other parts of speech

Other parts of speech such as negation, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, and measure words all follow regular tone change rules. Mid-clause these parts of speech change tone on each syllable. At the end of a clause or sentence, the final syllable keeps the original tone.

NEGATION

這個冊包 毋是我的。

Chit ê chheh-*pau* m̄-sī *góa--ê*.

這個書包 不是我的。

Zhège shūbāo bùshì wǒ de.

This book bag is not mine.

ADJECTIVE

莫共 垃圾 衫仔褲 園 踎 塗跤。

Mài kā lah-sap saⁿ-á-*khò* khng tàm thô-*kha*.

不要把 髒 衣服 放在 地上。

Bùyào bǎ zāng yīfú fàng zài dìshàng.

Don't put your dirty clothes on the floor.

PREPOSITION

阮小妹和我去博物館。

Gún sió-**mōe** hām góa khi phok-bùt-**kóan**.

我妹妹和我去博物館。

Wǒ mèimei hé wǒ qù bówùguǎn.

My younger sister went with me to the museum.

CONJUNCTIONS

因為我袂記得鎖門，所以阮阿爸受氣矣。

In-ūi góa bē-kì-tit só **m̄ng**, só-í gún a-**pa** siū-**khì**--ah.

因為我忘記鎖門，所以我爸爸生氣了。

Yīnwèi wǒ wàngjì suǒ mén, suǒyǐ wǒ bàba shēngqì le.

Because I forgot to lock the door, my dad became angry.

MEASURE WORDS

伊欲買彼枝錶仔，毋是這枝。

I beh bé hit kì pió-**á**, m̄-sī chit **kì**.

他要買那枝手錶，不是這枝。

Tā yào mǎi nà zhī shǒubiǎo, bùshì zhè zhī.

He wants to buy that watch, not this one.

2.6.4 Word-specific rules

Some tone changing rules apply to specific words in particular contexts. Below are some of the more common cases.

2.6.4.1 Suffix 仔 -á

As part of a noun suffix, the normal rules for a multi-syllable noun apply. In other words, the final syllable, which is ‘仔 -á’, does not change while the preceding syllables do change (see [4.1 Noun suffix 仔 -á](#)).

手錶仔

chhiú-pió-**á**

手錶

shǒubiǎo

wristwatch

湯匙仔

thng-sî-á

湯匙

tāngchí

soup spoon

When 仔 --á is part of a manner adverb expression, it is placed in the neutral tone, and the preceding syllable does not change tone (see [14.2.3 Manner adverbs](#)).

彼个查埔囡仔直直仔行轉去。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á tít-tít--á *kiâ*'--tng-khì.

那個男孩子直直地走回去。

Nàge nán háizi zhízhí de zǒuhuíquè.

The boy is walking home in a straight line.

When 仔 -á- is in the middle of a multi-syllable word, it changes tone. Only the final syllable of the word keeps the original tone.

今仔日

kin-á-*jít*

今天

jīntiān

today

牛仔褲

gû-á-*khò*'

牛仔褲

niúzǎikù

jeans

2.6.4.2 Names and titles

Among terms of address only 先生 **sian-si** 'Mr.' follows special tone change rules. When following a surname, 先生 **sian-si** is placed in the neutral tone, while the surname retains the original tone. If 先生 **sian-si** is not preceded by a surname including when used to mean 'sir', 'doctor', or 'teacher', the first syllable changes tone, while the second syllable keeps the original tone (see [23.2.3 Titles](#)).

李 先生，請 等 一 下。

Lí--sian-siⁿ, chhiáⁿ tán--chit-ē.

李 先生，請 等 一 下。

Lǐ xiānshēng, qǐng děng yīxià.

Mr. Li, please wait a moment.

先 生，請 等 一 下。

Sian-siⁿ, chhiáⁿ tán--chit-ē.

先 生，請 等 一 下。

Xiānshēng, qǐng děng yīxià.

Sir, please wait a moment.

Other forms of address and titles such as 小姐 *sió-chiá* ‘Ms., madam’, 老師 *lāu-su* ‘teacher’, 醫師 *i-su* ‘doctor’, etc. are not put in the neutral tone but follow the regular tone rules for nouns. In addition, the surname itself changes tone when followed by these titles.

謝 小姐 林 教授 黃 醫師

Siā sió-chiá Lâm kàu-siū Ng i-su

謝 小姐 林 教授 黃 醫師

Xiè xiǎojiě Lín jiàoshòu Huáng yīshī

Ms. Sia Professor Lim Dr. Ng

When someone’s full name is provided, only the final syllable of the given name keeps the original tone.

王 瑩偉

Ông Êng-úi

王 瑩偉

Wáng Yíngwěi

Eng-ui Ong

2.6.4.3 遮 *chia* ‘here’ and 遐 *hia* ‘there’

The location expressions 遮 *chia* ‘here’ and 遐 *hia* ‘there’ do not change tone in any position.

我 因 衫仔褲 佇 遮 敢 會 使？

Góa khng saⁿ-á-khòⁿ tī chia kám ē-sái?

我 放 衣服 在 這裡 可 不可以？

Wǒ fàng yīfú zài zhèlǐ kěbukěyǐ?

May I put my clothes here?

遐是上好的田地。

Hia sī siōng hó ê chhân-**tē**.

那裡是最好的田地。

Nàlǐ shì zuì hǎo de tiándì.

Over there is the best farmland.

3 Numbers

3.1 Counting numbers

3.1.1 Numbers 0-10

		TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
0	空	khòng	--
	零	lân / lêng	líng
1	一	it / chit	yī
2	二 / 兩	jī / n̄ng	èr / liǎng
3	三	sa ⁿ	sān
4	四	sì	sì
5	五	gō	wǔ
6	六	lák	liù
7	七	chhit	qī
8	八	peh	bā
9	九	káu	jiǔ
10	十	cháp	shí

In Taiwanese 空 **khòng** is the primary counting number used for ‘zero’. 零 **lân / lêng** ‘zero’ is used only in specific expressions.

pocket change	零星錢 <u>lân</u> -san-chh̄n	零錢 língqián
parts, components	零件 <u>lêng</u> -kiān	零件 língjiàn

The Taiwanese numbers 一 **chit** ‘one’ and 兩 **n̄ng** ‘two’ are forms used before measure words (see [4.3 Measure words](#)).

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
one book	一本冊 <u>chit</u> pún chheh	一本書 yī běn shū
two pens	兩枝筆 <u>n̄ng</u> ki pit	兩枝筆 liǎng zhī bǐ

Additionally, it is also common to use these readings when counting from 1 to 10. However, after 10, only 一 **it** ‘one’ and 二 **jī** ‘two’ are used in the ones digit.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
eleven	十一 cháp-it	十一 shíyī
twenty-two	二十二 jī-cháp-jī	二十二 èrshí'èr

Unlike Mandarin where colloquial readings allow for 二百 èr **bǎi** or 二千 èr **qiān**, Taiwanese must use 兩 **n̄ng** before measure words.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
two hundred	兩百 n̄ng pah	兩百 liǎng bǎi / 二百 èr bǎi
two thousand	兩千 n̄ng chheng	兩千 liǎng qiān / 二千 èr qiān

3.1.2 Literary reading for numbers

The literary reading for numbers is rarely used nowadays except for reading aloud individual digits (see [1.2.1.2 literary and colloquial register](#)). Some uses include reciting telephone numbers, years, or numbers within set expressions.

0	空	khòng
1	一	it
2	二	jī
3	三	sam

4	四	sù
5	五	ngó ^ˊ
6	六	liók
7	七	chhit
8	八	pat
9	九	kiú
10	十	sip

Note that Standard Mandarin does not use a separate set of literary readings for numbers.

Telephone numbers

我的電話是空二三四八九一六七。

Góa ê tiān-ōe sī khòng – jī – sam – ngó^ˊ – sù – pat – kiú – it – liók – chhit.

我的電話是〇二三四八九一六七。

Wǒ de diànhuà shì líng – èr – sān – wǔ – sì – bā – jiǔ – yī – liù – qī.

My telephone number is 0-2-3-5-4-8-9-1-6-7.

Years

伊 1-9-8-3 年出世。

I it – kiú – pat – sam nî chhut-sì.

他 1-9-8-3 年出生。

Tā yī – jiǔ – bā – sān nián chūshēng.

He was born in 1983.

Set expressions

四季

sù-kùi

四季

sìjì

four seasons

3.1.3 Numbers 11-99

Numbers between 11-99 use a combination of a multiple of 十 **cháp** ‘tens’ with digits from 一 **it** ‘one’ to 九 **káu** ‘nine’.

		TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
11	十一	cháp-it	shíyī
12	十二	cháp-jī	shíèr
13	十三	cháp-sa ⁿ	shísān
14	十四	cháp-sì	shísì
15	十五	cháp-gō ^ˊ	shíwǔ
16	十六	cháp-lák	shíliù
17	十七	cháp-chhit	shíqī
18	十八	cháp-peh	shíbā
19	十九	cháp-káu	shíjiǔ
20	二十	jī-cháp	èrshí
21	二十一	jī-cháp-it	èrshíyī
22	二十二	jī-cháp-jī	èrshíèr
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
30	三十	sa ⁿ -cháp	sānshí
40	四十	sì-cháp	sìshí
50	五十	gō ^ˊ -cháp	wǔshí
60	六十	lák-cháp	liùshí
70	七十	chhit-cháp	qīshí
80	八十	peh-cháp	bāshí
90	九十	káu-cháp	jiǔshí

Numbers from 11-19 do not use 一 **it** ‘one’ before the 十 **cháp** ‘ten’. Note that unlike Mandarin this does not change even in larger numbers.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
114	一百十四	一百二十四
	chít pah cháp-sì	yī bǎi <u>yī</u> shísì
219	兩百十九	兩百二十九
	nāng pah cháp-káu	liǎng bǎi <u>yī</u> shíjiǔ

3.1.4 Numbers 100 and greater

Numbers 100 and above use measure words to represent the following increments.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
hundreds	百 pah	bǎi
thousands	千 chheng	qiān
ten thousands	萬 bān	wàn
hundred millions	億 ek	yì

Numbers larger than 10,000 are broken down by how many ‘ten thousands’ (every 4 digits) they contain. The measure word forms of 一 **chit** ‘one’ and 兩 **nāng** ‘two’ are used when preceding these numerical measure words.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
100	一百 chit pah	yī bǎi
1000	一千 chit chheng	yī qiān
10,000	一萬 chit bān	yī wàn
100,000	十萬 cháp bān	shí wàn
1,000,000	一百萬 chit pah bān	yī bǎi wàn
10,000,000	一千萬 chit chheng bān	yī qiān wàn
100,000,000	一億 chit ek	yī yì
1,000,000,000	十億 cháp ek	shí yì

Below is an example comparing the structure of a number in both the English and Chinese numerical systems.

219,743,526

ENGLISH

2 hundred 19 million | 7 hundred 43 thousand | 5 hundred 26

TAIWANESE / MANDARIN

2 hundred-millions | 1 thousand 9 hundred 74 ten-thousands | 3 thousand 5 hundred 26

兩 意 | 一 千 九 百 七 十 四 萬 | 三 千 五 百 二 十 六

nāng ek | chit chheng káu pah chhit-cháp-sì bān | saⁿ chheng gō pah jī-cháp-lák

liǎng yì | yī qiān jiǔ bǎi qīshísì wàn | sān qiān wǔ bǎi èrshíliù

Below are more examples of numbers following the Chinese numerical system.

258 兩 百 五 十 八

	nāg pah gō·cháp-peh
	liǎng bǎi wǔshíbā
1533	一千五百三十三
	chit chheng gō·pah sa ⁿ -cháp-sa ⁿ
	yī qiān wǔ bǎi sānshísān
48,230	四萬八千兩百三十
	sì bān peh chheng nāg pah sa ⁿ -cháp
	sì wàn bā qiān liǎng bǎi sānshí
362,400	三十六萬兩千四百
	sa ⁿ -cháp-lák bān nāg chheng sì pah
	sānshíliù wàn liǎng qiān sì bǎi
5,793,000	五百七十九萬三千
	gō·pah chhit-cháp-káu bān sa ⁿ chheng
	wǔ bǎi qīshíjiǔ wàn sān qiān
68,240,000	六千八百二十四萬
	lák chheng peh pah jī-cháp-sì bān
	liù qiān bā bǎi èrshísì wàn
219,700,000	兩億一千九百七十萬
	nāg ek chit chheng káu pah chhit-cháp bān
	liǎng yì yī qiān jiǔ bǎi qīshí wàn

3.1.5 Interior zeroes

When a zero occurs two between two numerals, 空 **khòng** ‘zero’ serves as a placeholder when the number is read aloud. If there are consecutive zeroes, only a single 空 **khòng** ‘zero’ needs to be stated.

202	兩百空二
	nāg pah <u>khòng</u> jī
	兩百零二
	liǎng bǎi <u>líng</u> èr
2042	兩千空四十二
	nāg chheng <u>khòng</u> sì-cháp-jī
	兩千零四十二
	liǎng qiān <u>líng</u> sìshí'èr

2402	兩千四百空二 nāng chheng sì pah <u>khòng</u> jī 兩千四百零二 liǎng qiān sì bǎi <u>líng</u> èr
2002	兩千空二 nāng chheng <u>khòng</u> jī 兩千零二 liǎng qiān <u>líng</u> èr
20,402	兩萬空四百空二 nāng bān <u>khòng</u> sì pah <u>khòng</u> jī 兩萬零四百零二 liǎng wàn <u>líng</u> sì bǎi <u>líng</u> èr
2,040,002	兩百空四萬空二 nāng pah <u>khòng</u> sì bān <u>khòng</u> jī 兩百零四萬零二 liǎng bǎi <u>líng</u> sì wàn <u>líng</u> èr

3.2 Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers are formed by placing 第 **tē** as a prefix before a counting number.

		TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
first	第一	tē-it	dìyī
second	第二	tē-jī	dìèr
third	第三	tē-sa ⁿ	dīsān
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
tenth	第十	tē-cháp	dìshí
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
fifteenth	第十五	tē-cháp-gō	dìshíwǔ

3.3 Partial numbers

3.3.1 Fractions

Fractions in Taiwanese are expressed by first stating the ‘whole’ followed by ‘part of the whole’. The two parts are joined together by the phrase 分之 **hun chi**. Note that this is the reverse of how fractions are expressed in English.

whole + 分之 + part of the whole

whole + hun chi + part of the whole

‘part of the whole / whole’

1/3 三分之一 saⁿ hun chi it
sān fēn zhī yī

4/5 五分之四 gō hun chi sì
wǔ fēn zhī sì

Improper fractions, which have a larger numerator than denominator, follow the same format.

7/5 五分之七 gō hun chi chhit
wǔ fēn zhī qī

The common fractional value ‘half’ is expressed by 半 **pò^a**.

½ 半 pò^a
bàn

When used before a noun, 半 **pò^a** ‘half’ comes *before* the measure word and noun.

half an hour 半點鐘 pò^a tiám-cheng

半個小時 bàn gè xiǎoshí

half a year 半年 pò^a-nî

bàn nián

half a cake 半个雞卵糕 pò^a ê ke-nng-ko

半個蛋糕 bàn gè dàngāo

When a half is added to an existing number, the 半 **pòàⁿ** ‘half’ comes after the measure word but before the noun.

one and a half hours	一點半鐘	chit tiám <u>pòàⁿ</u> cheng
	一個半小時	yī gè <u>bàn</u> xiǎoshí
two and a half months	兩個半月	nāg kò <u>pòàⁿ</u> gòeh
		liǎng gè <u>bàn</u> yuè
two and a half cakes	兩塊半雞卵糕	nāg tè <u>pòàⁿ</u> ke-nāg-ko
	兩塊半蛋糕	liǎng kuài <u>bàn</u> dàngāo
five and a half pages	五頁半	gō iáh <u>pòàⁿ</u>
		wǔ yè <u>bàn</u>

Note that some measure words such as 頁 **iah** ‘page’ also function as nouns and do not require a noun to follow 半 **pòàⁿ** ‘half’.

3.3.2 Rates

In English, a rate is often expressed by specifying a quantity followed by the preposition ‘per’ and a singular noun.

four books per person

700 dollars per night

two cars per family

Taiwanese does the reverse order of English by placing the singular noun before the specified quantity. No special preposition is used.

— + *measure word* + (*singular noun*) + *number* + *measure word* + (*noun*)

chit + *measure word* + (*singular noun*) + *number* + *measure word* + (*noun*)

'*number* + *noun* per *singular noun*'

一個人 四本

chit ê lâng sì pún

一個人 四本

yī gè rén sì běn

four books per person

一 暗 七 百 籬

chit àm chhit pah kho´

一夜七百塊

yī yè qī bǎi kuài

seven hundred dollars per night

一戶兩台車

chit hō nāng tái chhia

一戶兩台車

yī hù liǎng tái chē

two cars per household

3.3.3 Percentages

Percentages follow the same form as fractions with the ‘whole’ always stated as 百 **pah** ‘100’ followed by the ‘part of the whole’. The two parts are again linked by the phrase 分之 **hun chi**.

百 + 分之 + *number*

pah + hun chi + *number*

‘*number* %’

25% 百分之二十五 pah hun chi jī-cháp-gō´

bǎi fēn zhī èrshíwǔ

42% 百分之四十二 pah hun chi sì-cháp-jī

bǎi fēn zhī sìshí'èr

100% 百分之百 pah hun chi pah

bǎi fēn zhī bǎi

3.3.4 Discounts

Discounts are often expressed as the percentage to be paid on the original price rather than the percentage taken off the price. For example, ‘10% off’ is instead marked as ‘90% of the original price’.

The verb phrase 拍折 **phah chiat** ‘to offer a discount’ is used with a number between 0-10 placed before 折 **chiat** ‘discount’. The percentage derived is based on the number out of ten (2/10 = 20%, 5/10

= 50%).

拍 + *number between 0-10* + 折

phah + *number between 0-10* + chiat

20% off 拍8折 phah peh chiat

打8折 dǎ bā zhé

50% off 拍5折 phah gō'chiat

打5折 dǎ wǔ zhé

Numbers that are not multiples of ten are recited as individual digits.

5% off 拍9,5折 phah káu gō'chiat

打9,5折 dǎ jiǔ wǔ zhé

75% off 拍2,5折 phah jī gō'chiat

打2,5折 dǎ èr wǔ zhé

When discussing absolute amounts for discounts, use 扣 **khàu** ‘to deduct, to take off’.

頭家講伊欲扣掉五十箍。

Thâu-ke kóng i beh khàu-tiâu gō-cháp kho.

老闆說他要扣掉五十塊。

Lǎobǎn shuō tā yào kòudiào wǔshí kuài.

The owner said he would take off 50 dollars.

Shorthand for percentages which are multiples of ten may use 成 **siâⁿ** as a measure word.

40% 四成 sì siâⁿ

sì chéng

70% 七成 chhit siâⁿ

qī chéng

Additionally, some speakers will use the Japanese imported term **phâ-sián-to** (パーセント) ‘percent’.

25% jī-cháp-gō phâ-sián-to

èrshíwǔ pā

60% làk-cháp phâ-sián-to

liùshí pā

Taiwan Mandarin also uses the term 趴 **pā** as a shorthand for ‘percent’.

3.3.5 Decimals

The decimal point is expressed as 點 **tiám** ‘point’. Numbers that come before the decimal may either be read as a single number or broken down into individual digits. After the decimal point, numbers are always recited as individual digits. Interior zeroes after the decimal point must each be read aloud.

number + 點 + *digit, digit, digit...*

number + tiám + *digit, digit, digit...*

‘*number* + . + *digit, digit, digit...*’

0.7	(空)點七 零點七	(khòng) <u>tiám</u> chhit líng <u>diǎn</u> qī
2.5	二 / 兩點五 二點五	jī/nāng <u>tiám</u> gō èr <u>diǎn</u> wǔ
6.41	六點四一	lák <u>tiám</u> sì it liù <u>diǎn</u> sì yī
9.005	九點空空五 九點零零五	káu <u>tiám</u> khòng khòng gō jiǔ <u>diǎn</u> líng líng wǔ
12.38	十二點三八 / 一二點三八	cháp-jī <u>tiám</u> sa ⁿ peh / it jī <u>tiám</u> sa ⁿ peh shí'èr <u>diǎn</u> sān bā / yī èr <u>diǎn</u> sān bā
39.04	三十九點空四 / 三九點空四 三十九點零四 / 三九點零四	sa ⁿ -cháp-káu <u>tiám</u> khòng sì / sa ⁿ káu <u>tiám</u> khòng sì sānshíjiǔ <u>diǎn</u> líng sì / sān jiǔ <u>diǎn</u> líng sì

3.3.6 Multiples

To indicate multiples of a number (twice, five times as much/many, etc.) the measure word 倍 **pōe** (also pronounced **pòe**) ‘-fold’ is placed after the number.

number + 倍

number + pōe

‘*number* times as much/many’

onceover (doubled)	一倍	chit <u>pōe</u> yī <u>bèi</u>
twice as much/many	兩倍	nāng <u>pōe</u>

		liǎng <u>bèi</u>
three times as much	三倍	sa ⁿ <u>pōe</u>
		sān <u>bèi</u>
ten times as much/many	十倍	cháp <u>pōe</u>
		shí <u>bèi</u>

Another common way to state an amount has increased onceover is to use 加倍 **ka-pōe** ‘to double’.

我毋信票價已經加倍矣。

Góa m̄ sìn phiò-kè í-keng ka-pōe--ah.

我不相信票價已經加倍了。

Wǒ bù xiāngxìn piàojià yǐjīng jiābèi le.

I don't believe the ticket price has already doubled.

If a half value is included, then 半 **pòan** ‘half’ comes after the measure word 倍 **pōe** ‘-fold’.

one and a half times as much	一倍半	chit pōe <u>pòan</u>
		yī bèi <u>bàn</u>
two and a half times as much	兩倍半	n̄ng pōe <u>pòan</u>
		liǎng bèi <u>bàn</u>

3.3.7 Arithmetic

add (plus)	加	ka	1 加 3 等於 佶濟 ?
			Chit <u>ka</u> sa ⁿ téng-î gōa-chē?
			jīa 1 加 3 等於 多少 ?
			Yī <u>jiā</u> sān děngyú duōshǎo?
			1 + 3 = ?
subtract (minus)	減	kiám	5 減 2 等於 佶濟 ?
			Gō <u>kiám</u> jī téng-î gōa-chē?
			jiǎn 5 減 2 等於 多少 ?
			Wǔ <u>jiǎn</u> èr děngyú duōshǎo?
			5 - 2 = ?
multiply (times)	乘以	sēng-í	4 乘以 7 等於 佶濟 ?
			Sì <u>sēng-í</u> chhit téng-î gōa-chē?

		chéngyǐ	4 乘以 7 等於 多少？ Sì <u>chéngyǐ</u> qī děngyú duōshǎo? 4 <u>x</u> 7 = ?
divided by	除以	tū-í	10 除以 5 等於 偌濟？ Cháp <u>tū-í</u> gō`téng-î gōa-chē?
		chúyǐ	10 除以 5 等於 多少？ Shí <u>chúyǐ</u> wǔ děngyú duōshǎo? 10 <u>÷</u> 5 = ?
divided into	除	tū	5 除 10 等於 偌濟？ Gō` <u>tū</u> cháp téng-î gōa-chē?
		chú	5 除 10 等於 多少？ Wǔ <u>chú</u> shí děngyú duōshǎo? 5 <u>divided into</u> 10 = ?
equals	等於	téng-î	8 減 6 等於 2。° Peh kiám lāk <u>téng-î</u> jī.
		děngyú	8 減 6 等於 2。° Bā jiǎn liù <u>děngyú</u> èr.
			8 minus 6 <u>equals</u> 2.
leaves	賸	chhun	8 減 6 賸 2。° Peh kiám lāk <u>chhun</u> jī.
	剩下	shèng xià	8 減 6 剩下 2。° Bā jiǎn liù <u>shèngxià</u> èr.
			8 less 6 <u>leaves</u> 2.
answer	答案	tap-àn	答案 是 五。° <u>Tap-àn</u> sī gō.
		dá'àn	答案 是 五。° <u>Dá'àn</u> shì wǔ. The <u>answer</u> is 5.

3.4 Approximations

3.4.1 Range

To offer a rough approximation within a given range, state the two numbers that provide the extents of the range.

2-3 dollars	<u>兩三</u> 箍	<u>nāng-saⁿ</u> kho'
	<u>兩三</u> 塊	<u>liǎng sān</u> kuài
10-20 minutes	<u>一二十</u> 分鐘	<u>it-jī</u> -cháp hun-cheng
		<u>yī èrshí</u> fēnzhōng
16-17 years old	<u>十六七</u> 歲	cháp-lák <u>chhit</u> hòe
		<u>shíliù qī</u> suì
200-300 people	<u>兩三百</u> 個人	<u>nāng-saⁿ</u> pah ê lāng
	<u>兩三百</u> 個人	<u>liǎng sān</u> bǎi gè rén

Note that when stating the range 10-20, the numeral 一 **it** 'one' is used and attributed to the following 十 **cháp** 'ten'.

3.4.2 Estimates

To express that a value is an estimate, use the phrase 差不多 **chha-put-to** 'nearly', 左右 **chó-iū** 'more or less', or 成 **chiâⁿ** 'almost'.

差不多 **chha-put-to** 'nearly' or 'almost' used before a number indicates an amount that just falls short of the number.

差不多 + *number* + *measure word* + (*noun*)
 chha-put-to + *number* + *measure word* + (*noun*)
 'almost *number*'

差不多 一點鐘

chha-put-to chit tiám-cheng

差不多 一個小時

chàbùduō yī gè xiǎoshí

nearly an hour

差不多 一千人

chha-put-to chit chheng lāng

差不多 一千人

chàbùduō yī qiān rén

almost a thousand people

左右 **chó-iū** ‘more or less’ can be placed after a number to indicate that the actual value is slightly above or below the target number.

number + measure word + (noun) + 左右
number + measure word + (noun) + chó-iū
 ‘more or less *number*’

兩 點鐘 左右

nāng tiám-cheng chó-iū

兩 個 小時 左右

liǎng gè xiǎoshí zuǒyòu

two hours more or less

五 百 个 人 左右

gō'pah ê lâng chó-iū

五 百 個 人 左右

wǔ bǎi gè rén zuǒyòu

around 500 people

成 **chiâⁿ** ‘almost’ is also placed before a number to express that the actual value is close to a target number but falls short. This usage tends to be more old-fashioned.

成 + number + measure word + (noun)
chiâⁿ + number + measure word + (noun)
 ‘almost or nearly a *number*’

成 五 十 个 人 客

chiâⁿ gō-cháp ê lâng-kheh

接近 五 十 個 客人

jiējìn wǔshí gè kèrén

nearly 50 guests

3.4.3 More than

To express that a figure is actually greater than the stated number, attach 外 **-gōa** ‘more’ after the number.

number + 外
number + -gōa
 ‘more than *number*’

over 50	五十外	gō-cháp-gōa
	五十多	wǔshí duō
more than 2000	兩千外	nāng chheng-gōa
	兩千多	liǎng qiān duō
greater than 86,000	八萬六千外	peh bān lāk chheng-gōa
	八萬六千多	bā wàn liù qiān duō

If the measure word and noun are included, 外 **gōa** ‘more’ comes *before* the measure word and noun.

number + 外 + *measure word* + (*noun*)
number + -gōa + *measure word* + (*noun*)
 ‘more than *number* + *noun*’

more than 20 people	二十外个人	jī-cháp-gōa ê lâng
	二十多個人	èrshí duō gè rén
greater than 700 books	七百外本冊	chhit pah-gōa pún chheh
	七百多本書	qī bǎi duō běn shū
over 10,000 applications	一萬外份申請	chit bān-gōa hun sin-chhéng
	一萬多份申請	yī wàn duō fèn shēnqǐng

幾 **kúi** ‘several, few’ can also be used to express an approximate value that is similar to the English suffix ‘-some’ or ‘-odd’. If the measure and noun are included, 幾 **kúi** comes *before* the measure word and noun

number + 幾 + *measure word* + (*noun*)
number + -kúi + *measure word* + (*noun*)
 ‘*number*-some/odd *noun*’

sixty-some pounds	六十幾磅	lāk-cháp-kúi pōng
		liùshí jǐ bàng
twenty-odd students	二十幾個學生	jī-cháp-kúi ê hák-seng
	二十幾個學生	èrshí jǐ gè xuéshēng

To express that the stated value is *equal to or more than* the actual value, place 以上 **í-siōng** after the number. If a measure word is used, the placement is between the number and 以上 **í-siōng**.

number + (measure word) + (noun) + 以上
 number + (measure word) + (noun) + í-siōng
 ‘number + noun or more’

60 or more	六十 <u>以上</u>	lák-cháp í-siōng liùshí yǐshàng
10,000 or more soldiers	一萬个兵 <u>以上</u> 一萬個兵 <u>以上</u>	chit-bān ê peng í-siōng yī wàn gè bīng yǐshàng

3.4.4 Less than

To express that the stated value is *equal to or less than* the actual value, place 以下 **í-hā** after the number. If a measure word and noun is used, the placement is between the number and 以下 **í-hā**.

number + (measure word) + (noun) + 以下
 number + (measure word) + (noun) + í-hā
 ‘number + noun or less’

less than 25	二十五 <u>以下</u> 二十五 <u>以下</u>	jī-cháp-gō í-hā èrshíwǔ yǐxià
less than 200 flowers	兩百蕊花 <u>以下</u> 兩百朵花 <u>以下</u>	nāg pah lúi hoe í-hā liǎng bǎi duǒ huā yǐxià

Another common way to express ‘less than’ emphasizes that the actual value has not reached the stated number. Place 無到 **bô kàu** ‘not even’ before the number.

無到 + number + (measure word) + (noun)
 hô kàu + number + (measure word) + (noun)
 ‘not even number + noun’

not even 25	無到二十五 不到二十五	bô kàu jī-cháp-gō bù dào èrshíwǔ
not even 200 flowers	無到兩百蕊花 不到兩百朵花	bô kàu nāg pah lúi hoe bù dào liǎng bǎi duǒ huā

3.5 Money

Money in Taiwanese is expressed through measure words for specific denominations of a currency. The term 錢 **chhiⁿ** ‘money’ can optionally follow.

number + monetary measure word + (錢)

number + monetary measure word + (chhiⁿ)

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
dollar	箍 khoˊ	塊 kuài
dime	角 kak	毛 máo
cent	仙 sián	分 fēn

The smallest commonly used denomination of currency in Taiwan is 一箍 **chit-kho** ‘one dollar’ (1 NTD = New Taiwanese dollar). However, smaller denominations can be found in the financial industry for products such as stocks or currencies. Additionally, usage of Taiwanese in other countries that have currencies with smaller subdivisions can use the traditional terms 角 **kak** ‘dime’ and 仙 **sián** ‘cent’. 仙 **sián** ‘cent’ itself is a borrowed term from the English ‘cent’.

連一仙錢，我攏無啦。

Liân chit sián chhiⁿ, góa lóng bô--lah.

連一分錢，我都沒有啦。

Lián yī fēn qián, wǒ dōu méiyǒu la.

I don’t even have a cent.

Below are some examples demonstrating how to express monetary amounts.

\$ 30.25	三十 箍 saⁿ-cháp khoˊ 三十 塊 sānshí kuài	兩 角 nāng kak 兩/二 毛 liǎng/èr máo	五 仙 gō sián 五 分 wǔ fēn	(錢) (chhiⁿ) (錢) (qián)
\$209.61	兩 百 空 九 箍 nāng pah khòng káu khoˊ 兩 百 零 九 塊 liǎng bǎi líng jiǔ kuài	六 角 lák kak 六 毛 liù máo	一 仙 chit sián 一 分 yī fēn	(錢) (chhiⁿ) (錢) (qián)

Additionally, 一 **chit** ‘one’ can be omitted before measure words when expressing monetary amounts. This occurs when the first digit is 1 and the second digit is a value between 1-9. If the remaining digits have a non-zero value, then 一 **chit** ‘one’ cannot be omitted and the full number is stated.

\$1.60	(一) 箍六 一塊六	(chit) kho-lák yī kuài liù
\$1.62	一 箍六角二仙 一 快六毛二分	chit kho-lák kak jī sián yī kuài liù máo èr fēn
\$140	(一) 百四 箍 一百四 塊	(chit) pah sì kho' yī bǎi sì kuài
\$145	一百四十五 箍 一百四十五 塊	chit pah sì-cháp-gō'kho' yī bǎi sìshíwǔ kuài
\$1,800	(一) 千八 箍 一千八 塊	(chit) chheng peh kho' yī qiān bā kuài
\$1,850	一千八百五十 箍 一千八百五十 塊	chit chheng peh pah gō-cháp kho' yī qiān bā bǎi wǔshí kuài
\$10,500	一 萬空五百 箍 一 萬零五百 塊	chit bān khòng gō'pah kho' yī wàn líng wǔ bǎi kuài
\$15,000	(一) 萬五 箍 一 萬五 塊	(chit) bān gō'kho' yī wàn wǔ kuài

Mandarin cannot omit the leading 一 yī 'one'.

4 Nouns

Taiwanese nouns generally do not reflect number (singular or plural), gender (masculine or feminine), or case (accusative, nominative, genitive, etc.).

4.1 Noun suffix 仔 -á

Most Taiwanese nouns do not have a special marker to differentiate them from other parts of speech. However, the suffix 仔 -á ‘small thing’ that originally served as a diminutive has now become a noun marker. These days, the suffix 仔 -á does not necessarily imply smallness. Additionally, its usage is optional for many words and is often added purely for euphony.

NOUN	NOUN WITH SUFFIX	MEANING
鼻 phī ⁿ	鼻仔 phī ⁿ -á 鼻子 bízi	nose
狗 káu	狗仔 káu-á 狗 gǒu	dog
賊 chhát	賊仔 chhát-á (chhát-lá) 小偷 xiǎotōu	thief

With nouns that end in a consonant sound (-p, -t, -k, -m, -n, -ng, -ⁿ), the sound is often carried over to the beginning of the following syllable 仔 -á. In the examples above, 賊仔 **chhát-á** ‘thief’ sounds more like **chhát-lá** because of the glide (see [2.3.2 Liaison with 仔 -á](#)).

Note the Taiwanese 仔 -á is equivalent to the Mandarin noun suffix 子 -zi. However, not all cognates shared between Mandarin and Taiwanese will use the noun suffix.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
帽仔 bō-á	帽子 màozi	hat
藥仔 iòh-á	藥 yào	medicine
鏡 kià ⁿ	鏡子 jìngzi	mirror

4.2 Plural and singular

In general there is no distinction between the singular and plural form of nouns. To indicate that a noun is single or that there are multiple, the *number* of items must be specified. Between the number and the noun, a *measure word*, a word that is added to help make the noun countable, is always used.

number + measure word + noun

SINGULAR

一本冊 chit pún chheh

一本書 yī běn shū

one book

PLURAL

三本冊 saⁿ pún chheh

三本書 sān běn shū

three books

In Mandarin, the suffix 們 **-men** is sometimes added to mark the plural forms of some nouns involving people (such as 朋友們 **péngyǒumen** ‘friends’ and 孩子們 **háizimen** ‘children’) or personal pronouns (such as 我們 **women** ‘we, us’ and 他們 **tāmen** ‘they’). However, in Taiwanese there is no direct equivalent for this personal pronoun suffix (see [5.1.3 Plural personal pronouns](#)).

4.3 Measure words

Taiwanese nouns cannot be directly counted as in English (three birds, four stones, etc.). Instead, every noun must use a specific measure word. These measure words are sometimes referred to as ‘counter words’ or ‘classifiers’.

In English, there are instances where measure words are used to isolate individual parts of a collective noun (a piece of paper, a pair of pants, a drop of water). However, in Taiwanese every noun, collective or not, has a specific measure word associated with it.

Most nouns fall into broad categories of measure words that are distinguished by whether they specify a quantity (value, duration, weight) or physical property (shape, container shape, size) of the noun.

磅 PONG (POUND)

三 磅 蘋果

saⁿ pong phōng-kó

三 磅 蘋果

sān bàng píngguǒ

three pounds of apples

枝 KI (LONG THIN OBJECTS)

一枝筆

chit ki pit

一枝筆

yī zhī bǐ

one pen

條 TIĀU (LONG THIN OBJECTS THAT CAN BE BENT)

這條路

chit tiâu lō̍

這條路

zhè tiáo lù

this road

In Taiwanese, the general measure word 个 ê can be used for both people and things. If unfamiliar with a specific measure word associated with a noun, the general measure word 个 ê can usually be substituted. Note that in Taiwanese the pronunciations for the general measure word 个 ê and for the possessive and modifying particle 的 ê are the same.

這个是我的。

Chit ê sī góa--ê.

這個是我的。

Zhège shì wǒ de.

This (one) is mine.

4.3.1 Numbers with measure word forms

In Taiwanese the numbers ‘one’ and ‘two’ have two forms. One version is for counting and the other is used before measure words.

	COUNTING FORM		MEASURE WORD FORM	
one	一	it	一	chit
		yī		yī
two	二	jī	兩	nāng
		èr		liǎng

Note that Mandarin does not have a separate measure word form for 一 yī ‘one’.

COUNTING FORM

十二 cháp-it	十二 shíyī	eleven
二十 jī-cháp	二十 èrshí	twenty

MEASURE WORD FORM

二个人 <u>chit</u> ê lâng	二個人 <u>yī</u> gè rén	<u>one</u> person
兩本冊 <u>nāg</u> pún chheh	兩本書 <u>liǎng</u> běn shū	<u>two</u> books

Higher numbers will often use both counting and measure word forms within a single number because higher units of value such as 百 **pah** ‘hundreds’, 千 **chheng** ‘thousands’, 萬 **bān** ‘ten thousands’, and 億 **ek** ‘hundred millions’ are all measure words.

101	二百空二	<u>chit</u> pah khòng <u>it</u>
	二百零二	<u>yī</u> bǎi líng <u>yī</u>
2222	兩千兩百三十二	<u>nāg</u> chheng <u>nāg</u> pah jī-cháp-jī
		<u>liǎng</u> qiān <u>liǎng</u> bǎi <u>èrshí'èr</u>

4.3.2 Cognates between Taiwanese and Mandarin measure words

For the most part, Taiwanese shares with Mandarin many of the same measure words, although often with a slight adjustment in pronunciation. See the table below for a list of common measure words that are cognates between Taiwanese and Mandarin.

MEASURE WORD	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	CATEGORIES OF NOUNS
本	pún	běn	books, periodicals, files
枝	ki	zhī	rods, branches, pens
條	tiâu	tiáo	roads, rivers, belts
雙	siang	shuāng	pair
間	keng	jiān	rooms, houses, apartments
樓	lâu	lóu	floors (building)
段	tōa ⁿ	duàn	paragraphs, stories, time
台	tâi	tái	electronics, machines, cars
句	kù	jù	words, phrases, sentences
歲	hòe	suì	years of age
位	ūi	wèi	people (<i>polite</i>)
班	pan	bān	groups, classes, flights

Note that for some nouns multiple measure words may be considered acceptable.

4.3.3 Differences between Taiwanese and Mandarin measure words

While Taiwanese and Mandarin have many measure words that are cognates, their usage may differ within each language.

In some cases, multiple Taiwanese measure words representing different concepts correspond to a single measure word used in Mandarin.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	CATEGORIES OF NOUNS
隻 chiah	隻 zhī	animals
跤 kha	隻 zhī	single (one of a pair)
領 niá	件 jiàn	pieces of clothing
項 hāng	件 jiàn	affairs, matters
個 kò	個 gè	months
个 ê	個 gè	people, <i>general counter</i>

Based on the characters selected by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan to represent Taiwanese, the general measure word 个 ê is differentiated from 個 kò, which serves as a counter for months in Taiwanese as in 兩個月 **n̄ng kò gòeh** ‘two months’. Note that in Mandarin, the general measure word 個 gè is used in both of these circumstances and the character 个 gè is just the simplified character form of 個 gè.

Conversely, there are cases where a single Taiwanese measure word corresponds to multiple measure words in Mandarin.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	CATEGORIES OF NOUNS
塊 tè	塊 kuài	chunks, bite-sized pieces
塊 tè	張 zhāng	tables, chairs
塊 tè	首 shǒu	songs
罐 kòan	罐 guàn	cans, jars, jugs
罐 kòan	瓶 píng	bottles

There are also some measure words that are not cognates. That is to say, different measure words are used to express the same concept.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	CATEGORIES OF NOUNS
-----------	----------	---------------------

齣 chhut	部 bù	movies
檯 châng	棵 kē	plants, trees
莢 ngheh	根 gēn	bananas
趟 chōa	趟 tàng	trips
尾 bóe	條 tiáo	fish

4.4 Plural marked by group measure words

Besides specifying the number of items to mark a noun as plural (五塊椅仔 **gō`tè í-á** ‘five chairs’), an indefinite group measure word can be used to indicate multiple items. The most general of these group measure words is 寡 **kóa** ‘several, few’. The phrase 一寡 **chit-kóa** is equivalent in usage to the English indefinite plural ‘some’.

寡 **KÓA** (SEVERAL, FEW)

一寡 朋友

chit-kóa pêng-iú

一些 朋友

yīxiē péngyǒu

some friends

Note that group measure words generally are preceded by 一 **chit** ‘one’ unless indicating multiple groupings, in which case a plural number may precede the measure word.

Below are some other common group measure words.

堆 **TUI** (A MESSY, UNSORTED GROUPING)

一 堆 人

chit tui lâng

一 堆 人

yī duī rén

a heap of people

群 **KÛN** (GROUPS OF ANIMALS, PEOPLES, OR INSECTS)

兩 群 人

nāng kûn lâng

兩 群 人

liǎng qún rén

two groups of people

埤 PŪ (A HEAP OF ITEMS OR A SINGLE MASS)

三 埤 衫仔褲

saⁿ pŭ saⁿ-á-khò

三 堆 衣服

sān duī yīfú

three piles of clothes

4.5 Plural marked by 幾 kúi ‘several’

The plural can also be marked by using 幾 kúi ‘several’ to indicate an unknown quantity less than ten. 幾 kúi is placed before the measure word.

幾 + *measure word* + *noun*

kúi + *measure word* + *noun*

‘several noun’

幾 个 朋友

kúi ê pêng-iú

幾 個 朋友

jǐ gè péngyǒu

several friends

幾 kúi can also be used as a question word to ask how many (see [20.5.8 How many](#)).

伊 有 幾 个 囡?

I ū kúi ê kiáⁿ?

他 有 幾 個 孩子?

Tā yǒu jǐ gè hái^{zi}?

How many children does he have?

4.6 Demonstratives

Demonstratives are words that show where an object is in relationship to the speaker. In English, the demonstratives ‘this/these’ indicate objects that are closer to the speaker, while ‘that/those’ refer to

objects that are farther away.

CLOSE TO THE SPEAKER	AWAY FROM THE SPEAKER
<u>This</u> car	<u>That</u> car
<u>These</u> shirts	<u>Those</u> shirts

In a way, demonstratives can function like adjectives by describing the noun that follows. Note that *demonstrative adjectives* differ from demonstratives that work like pronouns (This is mine. Those are dirty), which are further discussed in the chapter on pronouns (see [5.4 Demonstrative pronouns](#)).

4.6.1 Demonstrative adjectives – singular

In Taiwanese, the demonstratives 這 **chit** ‘this’ and 那 **hit** ‘that’ can be placed before a measure word and noun to indicate where the noun is in relationship to the speaker. While nouns themselves have no plural marker, the use of singular demonstrative adjectives 這 **chit** ‘this’ and 那 **hit** ‘that’ can indicate that the nouns that follow are singular.

CLOSE TO SPEAKER	AWAY FROM SPEAKER
這 + <i>measure word</i> + <i>noun</i>	那 + <i>measure word</i> + <i>noun</i>
chit + <i>measure word</i> + <i>noun</i>	hit + <i>measure word</i> + <i>noun</i>
‘this <i>noun</i> ’	‘that <i>noun</i> ’
這個 查某 囡仔	彼個 查某 囡仔
<u>chit</u> ê cha-bó`gín-á	<u>hit</u> ê cha-bó`gín-á
這個 女 孩子	那個 女 孩子
<u>zhè</u> ge nǚ háizi	<u>nà</u> ge nǚ háizi
<u>this</u> girl	<u>that</u> girl
這 枝 筆	彼 枝 筆
<u>chit</u> ki pit	<u>hit</u> ki pit
這 枝 筆	那 枝 筆
<u>zhè</u> zhī bǐ	<u>nà</u> zhī bǐ
<u>this</u> pen	<u>that</u> pen

In Mandarin, if the general measure word 個 **gè** is attached to the demonstrative 這 **zhè** ‘this’ or 那 **nà** ‘that’, the measure word 個 **gè** is suffixed and neutralized in tone to form 這個 **zhège** and 那個 **nàge**.

4.6.2 Demonstrative adjectives – plural specified number

To express the plural form of demonstrative adjectives ‘these’ and ‘those’ with a specific quantity (these two books, those three girls), the Taiwanese singular demonstrative adjective 這 **chit** ‘this’ or 那 **hit** ‘that’ is followed by a number greater than one, measure word, and noun.

CLOSE TO SPEAKER

這 + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*chit + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*‘these *number noun*’這兩 个人客chit nāng ê lâng-kheh這兩個 客人zhè liǎng gè kèrénthese two guests

AWAY FROM SPEAKER

那 + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*hit + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*‘those *number noun*’彼四 塊眠床hit sì tè mîng-chûn那四 張床nà sì zhāng chuángthose four beds

4.6.3 Demonstrative adjectives – plural unspecified number

To express the plural form of demonstrative adjectives ‘these’ and ‘those’ but without a specific number in mind, the location expression 遮 **chia** ‘here’ or 遐 **hia** ‘there’ is followed by the possessive marker 的 **-ê** and the noun.

CLOSE TO SPEAKER

遮 + 的 + *noun*chia + **-ê** + *noun*‘these *noun*’遮的 查某 囡仔chia-ê cha-bó`gín-á這些 女孩子zhè xiē nǚ háizithese girls

AWAY FROM SPEAKER

遐 + 的 + *noun*hia + **-ê** + *noun*‘those *noun*’遐的 查某 囡仔hia-ê cha-bó`gín-á那些 女孩子nà xiē nǚ háizithose girls

Note that this construction for the plural demonstrative adjectives differs from Mandarin. The plural form in Mandarin continues to use the singular demonstrative adjectives 這 **zhè** ‘this’ or 那 **nà** ‘that’ but then adds the group measure word 些 **xiē** ‘some, few’.

Demonstratives can also act like pronouns and replace nouns (This works. These taste great!). In Taiwanese there are two versions of singular demonstrative pronouns 這 **che** ‘this’ and 彼 **he** ‘that’ or 這個 **chit-ê** ‘this’ and 彼个 **hit-ê** ‘that’ (see [5.4 Demonstrative pronouns](#)).

這本冊真重。

Chit pún chheh chin tâng.

這本書很重。

Zhè běn shū hěn zhòng.

This book is heavy.

這 / 這個真重。

Che / chit--ê chin tâng.

這很重。

Zhè hěn zhòng.

This (one) is heavy.

4.7 Omitting the noun

Because measure words help to identify what kind of object a noun might be, the noun can be omitted if proper context has been established.

number + measure word + (noun)

這兩隻真古錐。

Chit n̄ng chiah chin kó-chui.

這兩隻很可愛。

Zhè liǎng zhī hěn kě'ài.

These two are cute (*some type of animal*).

三本攏真重。

Saⁿ pún lóng chin tâng.

三本都很重。

Sān běn dōu hěn zhòng.

All three are heavy (*books, periodicals, or files*).

4.8 Possessive

In English, possessive is indicated by adding an apostrophe 's' (John's, the girl's, mother's), adding the preposition 'of' (the book of John, the dress of the girl, the right of the mother), or by using a possessive pronoun (my, his, our, their).

APOSTROPHE 'S'

Steven's book

girl's dress

parents' right

OF

book of Steven

dress of the girl

right of the parents

POSSESSIVE PRONOUN

his book

her dress

their rights

4.8.1 Using the possessive marker 的 ê

Taiwanese uses the possessive marker 的 ê to indicate possession. The possessive marker 的 ê joins the possessor and the object in a way similar to the English use of the apostrophe 's'.

owner + 的 + object

owner + ê + object

'owner's object'

頭家 的 車

thâu-ke ê chhia

老闆 的 車

lǎobǎn de chē

the boss's car

囡仔 的 早頓

gín-á ê chá-tòng

孩子 的 早餐

háizi de zǎocān

the children's breakfast

我 的 班幾

góa ê pan-ki
 我的 航班
 wǒ de hángbān
my flight

While there are no separate possessive pronouns in Taiwanese, personal pronouns followed by the possessive marker 的 ê can serve this function.

personal pronoun + 的 + noun
personal pronoun + ê + noun
 ‘personal pronoun (his, my, our, etc.) noun’

伊的 頭毛
 i ê thâu-mo'
 她的 頭髮
 tā de tóufa
her hair

阮的 衫
 gún ê sa'
 我們的 衣服
 wǒmen de yīfú
our clothes

4.8.2 Implied possession with close personal relations or titles

Additionally, possession can be implied without use of the possessive marker 的 ê. If expressing a close personal relationship or connection to someone with a title, the plural personal pronoun can be used in place of a singular personal pronoun with possessive marker 的 ê (see [5.3.2 Plural personal pronouns marking possession](#)). Context typically makes clear whether the possessor is singular or plural. For additional emphasis, the possessive marker 的 ê can still be used with plural pronouns.

阮(的) 查某团
 gún (ê) cha-bó-kián
 我 / 我們(的) 女兒
 wǒ / wǒmen (de) nǚ'ér
my / our daughter

恁 翁

in ang

她 先生

tā xiānshēng

her husband

恁 醫生

lín i-seng

你 / 你們 的 醫生

nǐ / nǐmen de yīshēng

your (*singular / plural*) doctor

In Mandarin the possessive marker 的 *de* can be omitted when expressing possession with a close personal relationship. However, usage of the plural personal pronoun to indicate possession does not occur in Mandarin.

4.8.3 Implied possession before demonstrative adjectives

Placing a personal pronoun before a demonstrative adjective can also imply possession (see [5.3.3 Possession by using demonstrative adjectives](#)).

personal pronoun + demonstrative adjective + measure word + noun

恁 彼 台 車

in hit tâi chhia

他們 那 台 車

tāmen nà tái chē

their car

我 這 篇 文章

góa chit phiⁿ bûn-chiong

我 這 篇 文章

wǒ zhè piān wénzhāng

my essay

4.9 Definite and indefinite nouns

When referring to a noun, the reference can be considered *definite* or *indefinite*.

Definite nouns refer to nouns that are already known to the listener. In English, these nouns are often marked by a demonstrative adjective (this cat, those dresses) or by the article ‘the’ (the boy, the fork).

In contrast, *indefinite nouns* refer to a noun that is not known to the listener. These nouns are often preceded by a number (one tree, seven cookies) or the article ‘a(n)’ (a restaurant, an author).

Taiwanese has both demonstrative adjectives (這 **chhit** ‘this’, 遐的 **hiah-ê** ‘those’) and numbers (七个 **chhit ê** ‘seven items’, 十本 **cháp pún** ‘ten books’) but does not have distinct articles such as ‘a(n)’ or ‘the’.

DEFINITE NOUN	INDEFINITE NOUN
彼 枝 雨 傘	三 隻 狗 仔
<u>hit</u> ki hō-sòan	<u>sa</u> ⁿ chiah káu-á
那 枝 雨 傘	三 隻 狗
<u>nà</u> zhī yǔsǎn	<u>sān</u> zhī gǒu
<u>that</u> umbrella	<u>three</u> dogs

When demonstrative adjectives or numbers are not present, Taiwanese uses the position of the noun relative to the main verb as well as context to help determine definiteness.

In general, when nouns are placed before the main verb without any particular marker, the noun is considered *definite*. If the noun is unmarked and placed after the verb, the noun is generally considered *indefinite*. This also follows the general reasoning within Taiwanese sentences that usually information known to the listener is presented first, while new information for the listener is presented last.

DEFINITE	INDEFINITE
伊 錶 仔 欲 買 。	伊 欲 買 錶 仔 。
I pió-á beh bé.	I beh bé pió-á.
他 手 錶 要 買 。	他 要 買 手 錶 。
Tā shǒubiǎo yào mǎi.	Tā yào mǎi shǒubiǎo.
He wants to buy <u>the</u> watch.	He wants to buy <u>a</u> watch.

Note that if the noun is the subject, Mandarin allows for placement before or after the verb indicating definite or indefinite reference. Taiwanese, however, does not accept placing the subject after a verb marked with the perfective aspect marker 矣 --**ah**. To express an indefinite noun as the subject in this situation, the noun must be placed before the verb and marked with a number to render it indefinite.

DEFINITE	INDEFINITE
公 車 來 矣 。	二 台 公 車 來 矣 。
Kong-chhia lái--ah.	<u>chit</u> tâi kong-chhia lái--ah.
公 車 來 了 。	來 了 公 車 。
Gōngchē lái le.	Lái le gōngchē.

The bus has come. A bus has come.

If a marker is used to explicitly indicate that a noun is indefinite (number) or definite (demonstrative adjective), then the position of the noun relative to the verb no longer signals the definiteness.

DEFINITE

伊欲買彼枝錶仔。

I beh bé hit ki pió-á.

他要買那枝手錶。

Tā yào mǎi nà zhī shǒubiǎo.

He wants to buy that watch.

INDEFINITE

伊兩枝錶仔欲買。

I nāng ki pió-á beh bé.

他兩枝手錶要買。

Tā liǎng zhī shǒubiǎo yào mǎi.

He wants to buy two watches

A noun following the preposition 共 **kā** as part of the 共 **kā** construction is always *definite* if left unmarked (see [17.4 共 kā construction](#)).

DEFINITE

我共麥仔酒園跔外口。

Góa kā bēh-a-chiú khng tàm gōa-kháu.

我把啤酒放在外面。

Wǒ bǎ píjiǔ fàng zài wàimiàn.

I put the beer outside.

INDEFINITE

我共一罐麥仔酒園跔外口。

Góa kā chit kòan bēh-a-chiú khng tàm gōa-kháu.

我把一瓶啤酒放在外面。

wǒ bǎ yī píng píjiǔ fàng zài wàimiàn.

I put a beer outside.

5 Pronouns

Pronouns are words used to replace nouns or other pronouns that have been previously mentioned. There are several types of pronouns that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Uncle is coming tomorrow, but he will be late (*personal pronoun*).

I will clean my room by myself (*reflexive pronoun*).

The green pants are mine (*possessive pronoun*).

Those are not good to eat (*demonstrative pronoun*).

Nobody has heard of that film (*indefinite pronoun*).

5.1 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to a specific person(s). Unlike English, Taiwanese does not differentiate between subject pronouns (I, he, we) and object pronouns (me, him, us). The same personal pronouns are used in both cases.

5.1.1 Subject and object personal pronouns

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
我 góa	我 wǒ	I, me
你 lí	你, 妳 nǐ	you (<i>singular</i>)
伊 i	他, 她 tā	he, she
阮 gún (góan)	我們 wǒmen	we, us (<i>exclusive</i>)
咱 lán	咱們 zánmen	we, us (<i>inclusive</i>)
恁 lín	你們 nǐmen	you (<i>plural</i>)
佢 in	他們, 她們 tāmen	they, them

5.1.2 Exclusive and inclusive ‘we’

The first person plural pronoun ‘we’ has two forms. The exclusive form 阮 **gún** (also pronounced **góan**) indicates that the speaker and listener are in different groups. The inclusive form 咱 **lán** indicates that the speaker and listener are part of the same group.

阮無欲和你做伙泔水。

Gún bô beh hām lí chò-hóe siû chúí.

我們並不要跟你一起游泳。

Wǒmen bìng bù yào gēn nǐ yīqǐ yóuyóǒng.

We (exclusive) are not going to swim with you.

咱來去公園。

Lán lái khì kong-hng.

咱們來去公園吧。

Zànmén lái qù gōngyuán ba.

Let’s (inclusive) go to the park.

Note that in Mandarin, the inclusive first person plural 咱們 **zánmen** ‘we (*inclusive*)’ is limited to usage in the area around Beijing and in some northern Mandarin dialects. For other Mandarin speakers, 我們 **wǒmen** ‘we, us’ is used for all cases without distinction.

5.1.3 Plural personal pronouns

To indicate plural forms of the personal pronouns, Taiwanese phonetically attaches ‘-n’ to the end of singular forms. Because ‘-n’ itself is not an independent syllable, a different character is used to represent the new phonetically combined syllable.

SINGULAR	PLURAL
‘I, ME’	‘WE, US’
我 góa	阮 gún (góan)
我 wǒ	我們 wǒmen
‘YOU’	‘YOU (PLURAL)’
你 lí	恁 lín
你 nǐ	你們 nǐmen
‘HE, SHE’	‘THEY, THEM’
伊 i	恁 in

他/她 tā 他們/她們 tāmen

Note that Mandarin personal pronouns can add the suffix marker 們 **-men** to indicate the plural. The usage of 們 **-men** in Mandarin to indicate plural for nouns involving people such as 朋友們 **péngyǒumen** ‘friends’ or 孩子們 **háizimen** ‘children’ does not occur in Taiwanese.

5.1.4 Gender in personal pronouns

Taiwanese does not distinguish gender with its personal pronouns in either the written or spoken form.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN			MEANING
	MASCULINE	NEUTER/MIX	FEMININE	
你 lí	你 nǐ	--	妳 nǚ	you (<i>singular</i>)
伊 i	他 tā	它 tā	她 tā	he, she, it
恁 lín	你們 nǐmen	你們 nǐmen	妳們 nǚmen	you (<i>plural</i>)
您 in	他們 tāmen	它們 tāmen	她們 tāmen	they, them

While Mandarin also does not differentiate gender in speech, the written language does reflect gender differences through the use of gender-specific characters in the second and third person personal pronouns.

5.1.5 Honorific personal pronouns

Taiwanese does not have a specific pronoun to politely address strangers or superiors, but traditionally uses 咱 **lán** ‘we (*inclusive*)’ in place of 你 **lí** ‘you’ in order to express politeness. While this usage is more common among older generations, the use of 咱 **lán** ‘we (*inclusive*)’ suggests that the listener and speaker relationship is more familial and less formal (see [23.1 Social niceties](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
請問 咱 貴姓?	請問 您 貴姓?
Chhiáⁿ-m̄ng lán kùi-sèⁿ?	Qǐngwèn nín guìxìng?

May I ask what is your surname? (*polite*)

In contrast, Mandarin does have a polite form in the second person 您 **nín** ‘you (*singular polite*)’ and 您們 **nǐnmen** ‘you (*plural polite*)’.

5.2 Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used when the subject is also the object of an action or when there is a desire to emphasize that the subject is alone in performing an action. In English, the pronouns all add the suffix ‘-self’.

They washed themselves under the waterfall (*the subject and object is the same*).

He looked at himself in the mirror (*the subject and object is the same*).

I will do it myself (*the subject ‘I’ alone is emphasized*).

Taiwanese does not have specific reflexive pronouns, but uses the word 家己 **ka-tī** ‘oneself’ (also pronounced **ka-kī**) to give a reflexive meaning. Like English, Taiwanese uses the reflexive pronoun in cases when the subject is also the object of the action or to emphasize that the subject is alone in performing an action.

5.2.1 Subject receives the action

When 家己 **ka-tī** ‘oneself’ indicates that the subject receives the action (i.e. the subject is also the object of the action), the placement occurs after the verb. The appropriate personal pronoun may optionally be placed immediately before 家己 **ka-tī**.

subject + verb + (personal pronoun) + 家己

subject + verb + (personal pronoun) + ka-tī

‘subject doing verb on/to/at oneself’

伊拍家己。

I phah ka-tī.

她打自己。

Tā dǎ zìjǐ.

She hit herself.

阮笑阮家己。

Gún chhiò gún ka-tī.

我們笑我們自己。

Wǒmen xiào wǒmen zìjǐ.

We laughed at ourselves.

5.2.2 Subject performs action alone

If the reflexive is used to emphasize that the subject performs an action alone, then 家己 **ka-tī** ‘oneself’ comes immediately after the subject.

subject + 家己 + verb

subject + ka-tī + verb

‘*subject doing verb by oneself*’

我 家己 會 做。

Góa ka-tī ē chò.

我 自己 會 做。

Wǒ zìjǐ huì zuò.

I will do it myself.

伊 家己 駛車 去 庄跤。

I ka-tī sái-chhia khì chng-kha.

他 自己 開車 去 鄉下。

Tā zìjǐ kāichē qù xiāngxià.

He drove by himself to the countryside.

5.3 Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are used to show who owns a particular object, person, or animal.

That bag is mine.

Ours is over by the bench.

Don’t forget to bring yours on the trip.

5.3.1 Using the possessive marker 的 ê

Taiwanese does not have distinct words for possessive pronouns as in English (mine, yours, its, his,

hers, ours, theirs). Instead, the personal pronouns are followed by the possessive marker 的 ê to convey possession.

personal pronoun + 的

personal pronoun + ê

‘mine / yours / its / his / hers / ours / theirs’

紅裙是我的。

Âng kûn sī góa--ê.

紅裙子是我的。

Hóng qúnzi shì wǒ de.

The red dress is mine.

您的是白色的厝。

In--ê sī pèh-sek ê chhù.

他們的是白色的房屋。

Tāmen de shì báisè de fángwū.

Theirs is the white house.

Note that the personal pronoun followed by the possessive marker 的 ê can be used to express both possessive adjectives (my, your, his, her, our, their) and possessive pronouns (mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs).

POSSESSIVE PRONOUN

土色鞋仔是我的。

Thô-sek ê-á sī góa--ê.

棕色鞋子是我的。

Zōngsè xiézi shì wǒ de.

The brown shoes are mine.

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE

我的鞋仔佇櫥仔內。

Góa ê ê-á tī tû-á-lāi.

我的鞋子在櫃子裡。

Wǒ de xiézi zài guìzi lǐ.

My shoes are in the cupboard.

你的延誤矣

Lí--ê iân-gō--ah.

你的延誤了。

Nǐ de yánwù le.

Yours is delayed.

你的班機延誤矣。

Lí ê pan-ki iân-gō--ah.

你的航班延誤了。

Nǐ de hángbān yánwù le.

Your flight is delayed.

Note that the possessive pronouns have two dashes between the personal pronoun and possessive marker 的 ê. This both indicates that the possessive marker 的 ê is read in the neutral tone and emphasizes the personal pronoun (see [4.8.1 Using possessive marker 的 ê](#)).

5.3.2 Plural personal pronouns marking possession

When expressing close personal relationships or connection to someone with a title, the plural personal pronoun can be used in place of a singular personal pronoun with possessive marker 的 ê (see [4.8.2 Implied possession with close personal relations or titles](#)). Context typically makes clear whether the possessor is singular or plural.

阮後生佇遐。

Gún hāu-seⁿ tī hia.

我兒子在那裡。

Wǒ érzi zài nàlǐ.

My son is over there.

恁翁欲去無？

Lín ang beh khì--bô?

你先生要去嗎？

Nǐ xiānshēng yào qù ma?

Is your husband going?

恁老師欲過來。

In lāu-su beh kòe--lâi.

他的老師要過來。

Tā de lǎoshī yào guòlái.

His teacher will come over.

請敲電話予恁醫生。

Chhiáⁿ khà tiān-ōe hō lín i-seng.

請打電話給你的醫生。

Qǐng dǎ diànhuà gěi nǐ de yīshēng.

Please call your doctor.

阮厝佇市區。

Gún chhù tī chhī-khu.

我家在市區。

Wǒ jiā zài shìqū.

My house is in the downtown area.

In colloquial usage, the possessive marker 的 ê is also sometimes omitted with objects as well.

你(的) 飯 緊 食食 咧！

Lí (ê) p̄ng kín chiáh-chiáh--leh!

你(的) 飯 快 吃 啊！

Nǐ (de) fàn kuài chī a!

Hurry up and eat your food!

If the subject actually is plural, the plural pronoun is still used. The possessive marker 的 ê is optional and may be added for emphasis.

阮(的) 厝 是 佇 遐。

Gún (ê) chhù sī tī hia.

我們(的) 家 在 那裡。

Wǒmen (de) jiā zài nàlǐ.

Our house is over there.

恁(的) 公車 咧欲 來 矣。

Lín (ê) kong-chhia teh-beh lâi--ah.

你們(的) 公車 快要 來 了。

Nǐmen (de) gōngchē kuàiyào lái le.

Your (plural) bus is about to come.

In Mandarin the possessive marker 的 **de** can be omitted when expressing possession with a close personal relationship. However, usage of the plural personal pronoun to indicate possession does not occur in Mandarin.

5.3.3 Possession by using demonstrative adjectives

An alternative method to show personal possession is to combine the use of a personal pronoun with a demonstrative adjective followed by the appropriate measure word. The noun can be omitted if understood from context.

personal pronoun + demonstrative adjective + measure word + (noun)

伊 彼 領 褲

i hit niá khò`

他 那 件 褲子

tā nà jiàn kùzi

his pants

我 這 个 皮 包 仔

góa chit ê phôe-pau-á

我 這 個 錢 包

Wǒ zhègè qiánbāo

my wallet

伊 這 條 拔 鍊

i chit tiâu phóah-liân

她 這 條 項 鍊

tā zhè tiáo xiàngliàn

her necklace

5.4 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstratives are words that indicate a specific object or objects to which the speaker is referring. In English, the demonstratives ‘this/these’ indicate objects that are closer to the speaker, while ‘that/those’ refer to those objects that are further away. Demonstratives can also function like pronouns and replace nouns.

CLOSE TO THE SPEAKER

I want this.

These are better.

FAR FROM THE SPEAKER

Don’t give me that.

Those are dirty.

Taiwanese has both singular and plural demonstrative pronouns. In addition, another set of demonstrative pronouns can be used to refer to an unspecified item or group of items.

	SINGULAR	PLURAL	NON-SPECIFIC
CLOSE TO SPEAKER	這個 chit--ê	遮的 chia--ê	這 che
	這個 zhègè	這些 zhè xiē	這 zhè
	this (one)	these (ones)	this
FAR FROM SPEAKER	彼个 hit--ê	遐的 hia--ê	彼 he
	那個 nàgè	那些 nà xiē	那 nà
	that (one)	those (ones)	that

Note that these *demonstrative pronouns* differ from demonstratives that function like adjectives (this car, those shirts) (see [4.6 Demonstratives](#)).

5.4.1 Singular demonstrative pronouns

Singular demonstrative pronouns are formed by joining the demonstratives 這 **chit** ‘this’ and 彼 **hit** ‘that’ with a measure word. Note that they are linked by a double-hyphen which neutralizes the tone on the measure word and places emphasis on the demonstrative 這 **chit** ‘this’ and 彼 **hit** ‘that’. This slight difference in pronunciation and the lack of a noun following the measure word helps to distinguish between the demonstrative pronoun and demonstrative adjective.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

這 + --measure word

chit + --measure word

‘this (one)’

這個 有名。

Chit--ê ū-miâ.

這個 有名。

Zhège yǒumíng.

This (one) is famous.

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

這 + measure word + noun

chit + measure word + noun

‘this noun’

這個人 有名。

Chit ê lâng ū-miâ.

這個人 有名。

Zhège rén yǒumíng.

This person is famous.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

彼 + --measure word

hit + --measure word

‘that (one)’

彼 檯 真 懸。

Hit--châng chin kôan.

那 棵 很 高。

Nà kē hěn gāo.

That (one) is tall.

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

彼 + measure word + noun

hit + measure word + noun

‘that noun’

彼 檯 樹 仔 真 懸。

Hit châng chhiū-á chin kôan.

那 棵 樹 很 高。

Nà kē shù hěn gāo.

That tree is tall.

5.4.2 Plural demonstrative pronouns

The plural demonstrative pronouns are the same as the plural demonstrative adjectives for an unspecified number (see [4.6.3 Demonstrative adjectives - plural unspecified number](#)).

However, there is a slight difference in pronunciation marked by a double-hyphen before the possessive marker 的 --ê. This double-hyphen indicates that the possessive marker 的 --ê is in the neutral tone and gives more emphasis on the preceding syllable 遮 **chia** or 遐 **hia**. Note that the plural forms are not followed by a measure word.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

遮的

chia--ê

‘these (ones)’

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

遮的 + *noun*chia-ê + *noun*‘these *noun*’

遮的上貴。

Chia--ê siōng kùi.

這些最貴。

Zhè xiē zuì guì.

These (ones) are the most expensive.

遮的錶仔上貴。

Chia-ê pió-á siōng kùi.

這些手錶最貴。

Zhè xiē shǒubiǎo zuì guì.

These watches are the most expensive.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

遐的

hia--ê

‘those (ones)’

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

遐的 + *noun*hia-ê + *noun*‘those *noun*’

共遐的提轉去。

Kā hia--ê thèh--túg-khì.

把那些拿回去。

Bǎ nà xiē ná huíqù.

Take those back home.

共遐的冊提轉去。

Kā hia-ê chheh thèh--túg-khì.

把那些書拿回去。

Bǎ nà xiē shū ná huíqù.

Take those books back home.

Because the plural demonstrative pronouns and the plural demonstrative adjectives for an unspecified number are constructed from the words 遮 **chia** and 遐 **hia**, there is the risk of conflating them with 遮 **chia** ‘here’ and 遐 **hia** ‘there’ when used with the modifying particle 的 ê. In this usage, the emphasis is on that of an object ‘belonging’ to a specific location.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

遮的 chia--ê

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

遮的 chia-ê

MODIFYING PARTICLE

遮的 chia ê

遮的

chia--ê

這些

遮的樹仔

chia-ê chhiū-á

這些樹

遮的樹仔

chia ê chhiū-á

這裡的樹

zhè xiē	zhè xiē shù	zhèlǐ de shù
these (trees)	these trees	trees from here
DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN	DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE	MODIFYING PARTICLE
遐的 hia--ê	遐的 hia-ê	遐 的 hia ê
遐的	遐的 樹仔	遐 的 樹仔
hia--ê	hia-ê chhiū-á	hia ê chhiū-á
那些	那些 樹	那裡 的 樹
nà xiē	nà xiē shù	nàlǐ de shù
those (trees)	those trees	trees from there

5.4.3 Unspecified demonstrative pronouns

Taiwanese has another set of demonstrative pronouns that can be used when the number or category of items is unspecified. The demonstrative pronouns 這 **che** ‘this’ and 彼 **he** ‘that’ are used without measure words. They can be used both for abstract (ideas, concepts, etc.) and concrete (books, chairs, etc.) nouns.

Note that while the characters used for both singular and unspecified demonstrative pronouns are the same, the pronunciation differs.

UNSPECIFIED DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN	SINGULAR DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN
這	這 + --measure word
che	chit + --measure word
‘this’	‘this (one)’
這 真 好 食 。	這 个 真 好 食 。
<u>Che</u> chin hó-chiáh.	<u>Chit--ê</u> chin hó-chiáh.
這 很 好 吃 。	這 個 很 好 吃 。
<u>Zhè</u> hěn hào-chī.	<u>Zhège</u> hěn hào-chī.
<u>This</u> is delicious.	<u>This (one)</u> is delicious.

While 這 **che** and 彼 **he** can refer to either a single or multiple number of objects, generally the reference is a singular entity, whether a single item or singular grouping of many items. In contrast, the use of the plural demonstrative pronoun emphasizes multiple items that are not considered as part of a collection.

UNSPECIFIED DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

彼

he

‘those’

PLURAL DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

遐 + --measure word

hiah + --measure word

‘those (ones)’

彼攏真嬌。

He lóng chin súi.

那都很漂亮。

Nà dōu hěn piàoliang.

Those (*a set of items*) are all pretty.

遐的攏真嬌。

Hiah--ê lóng chin súi.

那些很漂亮。

Nà xiē hěn piàoliang.

Those (*different items*) are all pretty.

5.5 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to unspecified people, objects, times, or places. In English, indefinite pronouns often begin with ‘every-’, ‘any-’, ‘some-’, or ‘no-’ (everyone, anything, someone, nobody, etc.) but can also include words such as ‘all’, ‘several’, or ‘few’.

5.5.1 Expressing ‘any-’, ‘every-’, or ‘-ever’

In Taiwanese, indefinite pronouns beginning with ‘any-’ and ‘every-’ or ending in ‘-ever’ are constructed by placing a question word before the adverb 攏 **lóng** ‘both, all’ or 嘛 **mā** ‘also’ (see [20.5 Question words](#)). A noun may optionally be placed immediately after the question word. Generally, these indefinite pronoun constructions occur before the main verb.

question word + (noun) + 攏 / 嘛 + verb

question word + (noun) + lóng / mā + verb

伊 啥物 攏 愛。

I siáⁿ-mih lóng ài.

他 什麼 都 喜歡。

Tā shénme dōu xǐhuān.

He likes everything/anything/whatever.

彼 隻 狗仔 啥人 嘛 會 吠。

Hit chiah káu-á siáⁿ-lâng mā ē pūi.

那隻狗誰也會吠。

Nà zhī gǒu shéi yě huì fèi.

That dog barks at anyone/everyone/whomever.

日本啥物所在攏有便利商店。

Jit-pún siáⁿ-mih só-chāi lóng ū piān-lī siong-tiām.

日本什麼地方都有便利商店。

Rìběn shénme dìfāng dōu yǒu biànlì shāngdiàn.

Everywhere in Japan has a convenient store.

5.5.2 Expressing ‘no-’ or ‘not any’

Indefinite pronouns beginning with ‘no-’ or ‘not any’ are constructed by placing the appropriate negation after the adverb 攏 **lóng** ‘both, all’ or 嘛 **mā** ‘also’.

question word + (noun) + 攏 / 嘛 + negation

question word + (noun) + lóng / mā + negation

伊啥物攏無愛。

I siáⁿ-mih lóng bô ài.

他什麼都不喜歡。

Tā shénme dōu bù xǐhuan.

He likes nothing.

He doesn’t like anything.

頭家和啥物人嘛袂講話。

Thâu-ke hām siáⁿ-mih lâng mā bē kóng ōe.

老闆跟什麼人也不會講話。

Lǎobǎn gēn shénme rén yě bù huì jiǎng huà.

The boss talks to nobody.

The boss doesn’t talk to anybody.

啥物所在攏無便所。

Siáⁿ-mih só-chāi long bô piān-só.

什麼地方都沒有廁所。

Shénme dìfāng dōu méiyǒu cèsuǒ.

Nowhere are there bathrooms.

There are no bathrooms anywhere.

5.5.3 Expressing 'some-'

Indefinite pronouns 'some-' are constructed by placing 有 ū 'to exist' before a question word (see [20.5 Question words](#)).

有 + *question word* + (*noun*)

ū + *question word* + (*noun*)

有 啥物 人 阮 會 當 問 無?

Ū siáⁿ-mih lâng gún ē-tàng m̄ng--bô ?

有 誰 我們 能不能 問 ?

Yǒu shéi wǒmen néngbùnéng wèn?

Is there someone we can ask?

有 啥物 伊 愛 無?

Ū siáⁿ-mih i ài--bô?

有 什麼 他 喜歡 嗎 ?

Yǒu shénme tā xǐhuan ma?

Is there something he likes?

有 佗位 賣 冷氣機?

Ū tó-ūi bē léng-khì-ki?

有 哪裡 賣 冷氣機 ?

Yǒu nǎlǐ mài lěngqìjī ?

Is there somewhere that sells air conditioners?

6 Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe nouns. In English, adjectives generally appear *before* the noun they modify.

the new car

An adjective can also appear *after* the noun it modifies if there is a linking verb joining the noun and adjective.

The car is new.

In Taiwanese, most adjectives can similarly be placed *before* or *after* the nouns they modify.

When the adjective is placed *before* the noun, the group of words cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

這台新車

chit tâi sîn chhia

這台新車

zhè tái xīn chē

this new car

However, when the adjective occurs *after* the noun, there is no need for a linking verb like in English. In this way, adjectives in Taiwanese are often described as capable of taking on characteristics of verbs. The linking verb ‘to be’ is already bound up in the adjective. When in this position, the noun-adjective phrase can form a complete stand-alone sentence.

這台車真新。

Chit tâi chhia chin sîn.

這台車很新。

Zhè tái chē hěn xīn.

This car is new.

However, when the adjective appears *after* the noun, an *intensifier* must come before the adjective. An *intensifier* is a type of adverb that specifies the degree of an adjective.

Below is a table of some common adjectives.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
貴 kùi	貴 guì	expensive

懸 kôan	高 gāo	tall
清氣 chheng-khì	乾淨 gānjìng	clean
古錐 kó-chui	可愛 kě'ài	cute
忝 thiám	累 lèi	tired
燒 sio	溫暖 wēnnuǎn	warm/hot (<i>things</i>)
新 sin	新 xīn	new
嬌 súi	漂亮 piàoliang	pretty

6.1 Intensifiers

Intensifiers are a type of adverb that modifies other adjectives or adverbs by specifying degree (see [14 Adverbs](#)).

This food is very good.

Your son is truly awful.

6.1.1 Common intensifiers

Taiwanese has a number of intensifiers that frequently (and in some cases *must*) appear before adjectives.

Below is a table of some common intensifiers.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
真 chin	很 hěn	very (<i>default</i>)
誠 chiâ ⁿ	真 zhēn	really, truly
足 chiok	非常 fēicháng	extremely
有夠 ū-kàu	非常 fēicháng	extremely
非常 hui-siông	非常 fēicháng	extremely
袂講得 bē-kóng-tit(eh)	得不得了 -debùdéliǎo	exceedingly
特別 tèk-piàt	特別 tèbié	particularly
尤其 iû-kî	尤其 yóuqí	especially
遮(爾)(仔) chiah(-nī)(-á)	這麼 zhème	so, so very much
遐(爾)(仔) hiah(-nī)(-á)	那麼 nàme	so, so very much

較 khah	比較 bǐjiào	rather, relatively
閣較 koh-khah	更 gèng	even more
愈較 jú-khah	更 gèng	even more
完全 ôan-chôan	完全 wánquán	completely
上 siōng	最 zuì	most
傷 siu ⁿ	太 tài	too
無多 bô-gōa	不太 bùtài	not too
一點仔 chit-tiám-á	有點 yǒudiǎn	a bit, a little
一屑仔 chit-sut-á	有點 yǒudiǎn	a bit, a little
略略仔 liòh-liòh-á	稍微 shāowēi	slightly

Note that Mandarin has a few intensifiers that can appear *after* the adjective such as 極了 -**jí le** ‘exceedingly’, 得不得了 -**de bùdéliǎo** ‘extremely’, or 得很 -**de hěn** ‘very’. Taiwanese generally places all intensifiers *before* the adjective. In spite of this, Taiwanese does use extent complements (see [11.7 Extent complements](#)), which appear *after* the verb and are used more commonly than in Mandarin for superlative constructions.

歹食甲欲死

pháiⁿ chiáh kah beh sì

難吃得要死

nán chī de yào sǐ

bad tasting (lit. ‘bad tasting to the point of wanting to die’)

6.1.2 Placeholder intensifier

When an adjective functions like a verb and comes *after* the noun, generally an intensifier or negative must be used with the adjective.

伊的裙真嬌。

I ê kûn chín súi.

她的裙子很漂亮。

Tā de qúnzi hěn piàoliang.

Her skirt is (very) pretty.

伊的裙無嬌。

I ê kûn bô súi.

她的裙子不漂亮。

Tā de qúnzi bù piàoliang.

Her skirt is not (very) pretty.

Unless emphasized, the intensifier 真 **chīn** serves as a default placeholder and has no additional meaning of ‘very’. This is equivalent in function to the Mandarin intensifier 很 **hěn**.

6.2 Absolute adjectives

There are some adjectives that cannot be modified by intensifiers because a degree cannot be specified. These *absolute adjectives* describe a particular property or characteristic that a noun either possesses or does not. Unlike other adjectives, absolute adjectives cannot take on verb characteristics such as direct negation or occur independently after the nouns they modify.

Below is a table of some common absolute adjectives.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
空 khāng	空 kōng	empty
國際 kok-chè	國際 guójì	international
現代 hiān-tāi	現代 xiàndài	modern
無形 bô hêng	無形 wúxíng	invisible
假 kè	假 jiǎ	fake
女 lú	女 nǚ	female
天然 thian-jiân	天然 tiānrán	natural

When an absolute adjective comes before the noun it describes, the adjective behaves like other adjectives.

absolute adjective + (的) + *noun*

absolute adjective + (ê) + *noun*

我的女朋友倚佇遐。

Góa ê lú pêng-iú khiā tī hia.

我的女朋友站在那裡。

Wǒ de nǚ péngyǒu zhàn zài nàlǐ.

My girlfriend is standing over there.

現代的機場應該有網路，著無？

Hiān-tāi ê ki-tiûⁿ eng-kai ū bāng-lō, tiòh--bô?

現代的機場應該有網路，對不對？

Xiàndài de jīchǎng yīnggāi yǒu wǎnglù, duìbùduì?

Modern airports should have internet access, right?

However, when the adjective appears after the noun, the absolute adjective must be changed into a noun by adding the modifying particle 的 --ê (see [6.6.4 Omitting the head noun \(nominalization\)](#)). Once the adjective has been changed into a noun, the linking verb 是 sī ‘to be’ may be used to join the two nouns together.

noun + 是 + *absolute adjective* + 的

noun + sī + *absolute adjective* + --ê

天頂 是 空 的。

Thiⁿ-téng sī khāng--ê.

天空 是 空 的。

Tiānkōng shì kōng de.

The sky is empty.

遮的 護照 攏 是 假 的。

Chiah-ê hō-chiàu lóng sī kè--ê.

這些 護照 都 是 假 的。

Zhè xiē hùzhào dōu shì jiǎ de.

These passports are fakes.

Additionally, absolute adjectives cannot be directly negated. Instead the linking verb 是 sī ‘to be’ is changed to the negative form 毋是 m̄-sī ‘is not’.

天頂 毋是 空 的。

Thiⁿ-téng m̄-sī khāng--ê.

天空 不是 空 的。

Tiānkōng bùshì kōng de.

The sky is not empty.

遮的 護照 攏 毋是 假 的。

Chiah-ê hō-chiàu lóng m̄-sī kè--ê.

這些 護照 都 不是 假 的。

Zhè xiē hùzhào dōu bùshì jiǎ de.

These passports are not fakes.

6.3 Comparisons

In English, comparisons are generally made by adding the suffix ‘-er’ to an adjective or by using the adverb ‘more’ before the adjective.

The cat is cleaner than the pig.

The cat is more clean than the pig.

The word ‘than’ indicates that the first item is ‘more’ compared to the second item.

Taiwanese creates comparisons with special constructions using 比 **pí** ‘compared with’. Note that because absolute adjectives do not have degrees, they cannot be placed in comparison constructions.

6.3.1 Comparisons using 比 **pí** ... 較 **khah** ‘compared with...more than’

Taiwanese places 比 **pí** ‘compared with’ between the two items to be compared. After introducing the subjects of the comparison, the adverb 較 **khah** ‘more’ and adjective follow.

item 1 + 比 + item 2 + 較 + adjective

item 1 + pí + item 2 + khah + adjective

‘item 1 is more adjective than item 2’

貓仔 比 豬仔 較 清氣。

Niau-á pí ti-á khah chheng-khì.

貓 比 豬 乾淨。

Māo bǐ zhū gānjìng.

Cats are cleaner than pigs.

Note that in Mandarin, there is no need for an additional ‘more’ before the adjective. However, in Taiwanese 較 **khah** ‘more’ must precede the adjective.

Often repetitive elements may be omitted from the second item of the comparison.

對你來講，這張報紙 比 彼張 (報紙) 較 有趣味。

Tùi lí lái kóng, chit tiuⁿ pò-chóa pí hit tiuⁿ (pò-chóa) khah ū chhù-bī.

對你來說，這張報紙 比 那張 (報紙) 有趣。

Dùi nǐ lái shuō, zhè zhāng bàozhǐ bǐ nà zhāng (bàozhǐ) yǒu qù.

This newspaper will be more interesting for you than that (newspaper).

If the items for comparison are already understood from context, they do not need to be reintroduced.

這領較好看。

Chit niá khah hó-khòan.

這件比較好看。

Zhè jiàn bǐjiào hǎokàn.

This one looks better (two items of clothing have already been discussed).

6.3.2 Comparisons using 比較 pí-kàu ‘to compare’

Another method to express comparisons in Taiwanese is to use 比較 pí-kàu ‘to compare’ as a verb. To construct this comparison structure, the sentence is divided into two clauses. The first clause includes the subjects of comparison joined by a conjunction (such as 和 hām, 佢 kah, or 參 chham) and then followed by the verb 比較 pí-kàu. The second clause repeats the ‘more than’ or ‘greater than’ item and is followed by 較 khah ‘more’ and the adjective. An alternate form is 比起來 pí--khí-lâi instead of 比較 pí-kàu.

item 1 + 和 + item 2 + 比較 , item (greater) + 較 + adjective

item 1 + hām + item 2 + pí-kàu, item (greater) + khah + adjective

‘Comparing item 1 and item 2, item (the ‘greater’) is more adjective’

新加坡 佢 台灣 比較 , 台灣 較大。

Sin-ka-pho kah Tâi-oan pí-kàu, Tâi-ôan khah tōa.

新加坡 和 台灣 比 , 台灣 比較 大。

Xīnjiāpō hé Táiwān bǐ, Táiwān bǐjiào dà.

Comparing Singapore and Taiwan, Taiwan is bigger.

狗仔 和 貓仔 比起來 , 狗仔 較 忠誠。

Káu-á hām niau-á pí--khí-lâi, káu-á khah tiong-sêng.

狗 和 貓 比起來 , 狗 比較 忠誠。

Gǒu hé māo bǐqǐlái, gǒu bǐjiào zhōngchéng.

Between dogs and cats, dog are more loyal.

Note that the sentence pattern for comparisons using the cognate 比較 pí-kàu differs between Taiwanese and Mandarin. With Taiwanese, 比較 pí-kàu functions more like a verb meaning ‘to compare’. The Mandarin 比較 bǐjiào functions more like an adverb to express ‘relatively more’.

6.3.3 Implicit comparisons

較 **khah** ‘more’ can also be used to make hypothetical comparisons, even when no other items have been mentioned earlier.

subject + 較 + adjective

subject + khah + adjective

‘*subject is relatively more adjective*’

遮的衫較貴。

Chiah-ê saⁿ khah kùi.

這些衣服比較貴。

Zhè xiē yīfú bǐjiào guì.

These clothes are more expensive (*no specific pieces of clothing have been referred to earlier. Only the overall sense of the average cost of clothes is being assessed*).

這個百花公司的便所較清氣。

Chit ê pah-hoè kong-si ê piān-só khah chheng-khì.

這個百貨公司的廁所比較乾淨。

Zhègè bǎihuò gōngsī de cèsuǒ bǐjiào gānjìng.

This department store’s restrooms are cleaner (*relative to other department stores*).

6.3.4 Specifying how much difference in a comparison

Indicating how much the difference is between two items of comparison can be accomplished by placing the quantity or multiplier after the adjective.

item 1 + 比 + item 2 + 較 + adjective + quantity/multiplier

item 1 + pí + item 2 + khah + adjective + quantity/multiplier

伊的晚餐比我的較貴十箍。

I ê àm-tng pí góa--ê khah kùi cháp kho.

他的晚餐比我的貴十塊。

Tā de wǎncān bǐ wǒ de guì shí kuài.

His dinner is ten dollars more expensive than mine.

伊比您阿兄肥兩倍。

I pí in a-hiaⁿ pûi nāg pōe.

他比他哥哥胖兩倍。

Tā bǐ tā gēgē pàng liǎng bèi.

He is twice as fat as his older brother.

6.3.5 Comparing actions

Items of comparison can also include verbs and verb phrases.

verb 1 + 比 + verb 2 + 較 + adjective

verb 1 + pí + verb 2 + khah + adjective

坐計程車 比 坐火車 較 緊。

Chē kè-thêng-chhia pí chē hóe-chhia khah kín.

坐計程車 比 坐火車 快。

Zuò jìchéngchē bǐ zuò huǒchē kuài.

Taking a taxi is faster than taking a train.

6.3.6 Negating a comparison

Comparisons can be negated by placing the negative 無 **bô** ‘not’ or 袂 **bē** ‘will not’ before 比 **pí** ‘compared with’.

item 1 + 無 / 袂 + 比 + item 2 + 較 + adjective

item 1 + bô / bē + pí + item 2 + khah + adjective

‘item 1 is/will not be more adjective than item 2’

豬仔 無 比 貓仔 較 清氣。

Ti-á bô pí niau-á khah chheng-khì.

豬 丕 比 貓 乾淨。

Zhū bù bǐ māo gānjìng.

Pigs are not cleaner than cats.

坐計程車 袂 比 坐火車 較 緊。

Chē kè-thêng-chhia bē pí chē hóe-chhia khah kín.

坐計程車 丕 會 比 坐火車 快。

Zuò jìchéngchē bù huì bǐ zuò huǒchē kuài.

Taking a taxi will not be faster than taking a train.

6.3.7 Comparisons expressing inferiority

An item can be shown to be ‘less than’ or ‘not as much’ as another item in some characteristic by placing the negative 無 **bô** ‘not have’ between the items. After introducing the items, the intensifiers 遮爾仔 **chiah-nī-á** or 遐爾仔 **hiah-nī-á** ‘so’ can optionally be placed before the adjective.

item 1 + 無 + item 2 + (遮爾仔 / 遐爾仔) + adjective

item 1 + bô + item 2 + (chiah-nī-á / hiah-nī-á) + adjective

‘item 1 is not as (so) adjective as item 2’

伊 無 你 遐爾仔 賢。

I bô lí hiah-nī-á gâu.

她 沒有 你 那麼 能幹。

Tā méiyǒu nǐ nàme nénggàn.

She is not as talented as you are.

阮 後生 無 恁 的 軀。

Gún hāu-seⁿ bô lín--ê lò.

我的 兒子 沒有 你的 高。

Wǒ de érzi méiyǒu nǐ de gāo.

My son is not as tall as yours.

6.3.8 Comparisons expressing equality

An item can be shown to be the ‘same as’ or ‘identical to’ another item by placing a conjunction (such as 和 **hām**, 恰 **kah**, or 參 **chham**) between the items followed by 全款 **kāng-khóan** ‘same type’.

Additionally, to specify what quality the two items share equally, an adjective describing this quality can be placed after 全款 **kāng-khóan**. Alternative forms include 相全 **sio-kāng** ‘same, identical’ or 平 **pêh** ‘equally’.

item 1 + 和 + item 2 + 全款 + (adjective)

item 1 + hām + item 2 + kāng-khóan + (adjective)

‘item 1 and item 2 are the same (equally adjective)’

阿爸 佢 阿母 全 款歹。

A-pa kah a-bú kāng-khóan pháiⁿ.

爸爸 和 媽媽 一樣 兇。

Bàba hé māmā yīyàng xiōng.

Dad and mom are equally mean.

這張相 和 彼張 相全。

Chit tiuⁿ siòng hām hit tiuⁿ sio-kāng.

這張照片 和 那張 一樣。

Zhè zhāng zhàopiàn hé nà zhāng yīyàng.

This photograph is the same as that one.

昨昏暗的電影 參 下昏暗的 平 歹看。

Cha-hng-àm ê tiān-iáⁿ chham e-hng-àm--ê pêⁿ pháiⁿ-khòaⁿ.

昨晚的電影 和 今晚的 一樣 難看。

Zuówǎn de diànyǐng hé jīnwǎn de yīyàng nánkàn.

Last night's movie was as bad as tonight's.

6.3.9 Comparative degree

The comparative degree is used to express that an item is ‘even more’ in some quality than another item, which has already been mentioned. Place the intensifier 閣較 **koh-khah** before the adjective. Alternative forms include 愈較 **jú-khah** ‘even more’ and 猶閣較 **iáu-koh khah** ‘still more’.

item + 閣較 + *adjective*

item + koh-khah + *adjective*

‘this *item* is even more *adjective*’

這棟大樓真懸。彼棟 閣較 懸。

Chit tòng tōa-lâu chin kōan. Hit tòng koh-khah kōan.

這棟大樓很高。那棟 更 高。

Zhè dòng dàlóu hěn gāo. Nà dòng gèng gāo.

This building is tall. That building is even taller.

這個紅嬰仔真古錐，但是你的 猶閣較 古錐。

Chit ê āng-eⁿ-á chin kó-chui, tân-sī lí--ê iáu-koh khah kó-chui.

這個嬰兒很可愛，但是你的還是更可愛。

Zhège yīng'ér hěn kě'ài, dànshì nǐ de háishì gèng kě'ài.

This baby is cute, but yours is still even cuter.

6.3.10 Superlative degree

The superlative degree is used in comparisons to express the ‘most’ out of three or more items. The exact number of items to be compared does not need to be specified. In English, the superlative form is generally created by adding the suffix ‘-est’ to an adjective or by using the adverb ‘most’ before the adjective. In Taiwanese, 上 **siōng** ‘most’ is placed before the adjective.

上 + *adjective*

siōng + *adjective*

‘most *adjective*’

上俗的位佇後面。

Siōng siok ê ūi tī āu-bīn.

最便宜的位子在後面。

Zuì piányí de wèizi zài hòumiàn.

The cheapest seats are in the back.

我是這班泅水泅甲上慢的。

Góa sī chit pan siū chúí siū kah siōng bān--ê.

我是這班游泳游得最慢的。

Wǒ shì zhè bān yóuyǒng yóu de zuì màn de.

I am the slowest swimmer in this class.

6.4 Desirable and undesirable adjectives

The desirability of an adjective can have an impact on word structure, choice of verb, and negation. Generally, what is deemed desirable comes from the speaker’s perspective.

6.4.1 Adjective structure based on desirability

Some adjectives can be formed by adding 好 **hó** to an action verb. The effect is to create an adjective indicating that it is ‘easy to’ do the action verb. This adjective structure is generally reserved for desirable qualities.

好 + *action verb*

hó + *action verb*

‘easy to *action verb*’

這塊餅真好食。

Chit tè piáⁿ chin hó-chiáh.

這塊餅乾很好吃。

Zhè kuài bǐnggān hěn hàochī.

This cookie is delicious.

In contrast, 歹 **pháiⁿ** ‘difficult to’ can equally be used to create adjectives for undesirable qualities.

歹 + *action verb*

pháiⁿ + *action verb*

‘difficult to *action verb*’

這塊餅真歹食。

Chit tè piáⁿ chin pháiⁿ-chiáh.

這塊餅乾很難吃。

Zhè kuài bǐnggān hěn nánchī.

This cookie tastes bad.

Some combinations have become so commonplace that they are now joined by a hyphen and form part of the lexicon.

ACTION VERB	ADJECTIVE (DESIRABLE)	ADJECTIVE (UNDESIRABLE)
	有 ū / 無 bô	會 ē / 袂 bē
食 chiáh	好食 hó-chiáh	歹食 pháiⁿ-chiáh
吃 chī	好吃 hǎochī	難吃 nánchī
to eat	delicious	bad tasting
看 khòaⁿ	好看 hó-khòaⁿ	歹看 pháiⁿ-khòaⁿ
看 kàn	好看 hǎokàn	難看 nánkàn

to see	attractive	ugly
聽 thia ⁿ	好聽 hó-thia ⁿ	歹聽 phái ⁿ -thia ⁿ
聽 tīng	好聽 hǎotīng	難聽 nántīng
to hear	nice sounding	bad sounding
坐 chē	好坐 hó chē	歹坐 phái ⁿ chē
坐 zuò	好坐 hǎozuò	難坐 nánzuò
to sit	easy to sit	difficult to sit
揸 kōa ⁿ	好揸 hó kōa ⁿ	歹揸 phái ⁿ kōa ⁿ
提 tí	好提 hǎotí	難提 nántí
to carry	easy to carry	difficult to carry

6.4.2 Verb choice based on adjective desirability

The choice of verb before an adjective also depends on the desirability of the adjective. Generally, the verbs 有 **ū** / 無 **bô** are used with adjectives connoting desirable qualities. What constitutes desirability depends on the speaker's viewpoint. Additionally, the use of verb 有 **ū** can be used in past, present, or future descriptions.

有 / 無 + *adjectives (desirable)*

ū / bô + *adjectives (desirable)*

這個歌手的上新的唱片 有 好聽。

Chit ê koa-chhiú ê siōng sin ê chhiùⁿ-phìⁿ ū hó-thiaⁿ.

這個歌手的最新的唱片 好 聽。

Zhègè gēshǒu de zuì xīn de chàngpiàn hǎotīng.

This singer's latest album sounds good.

我的冊包 有 好擡。

Góa ê chheh-pau ū hó giáh.

我的書包 很 好背。

Wǒ de shūbāo hěn hǎo bèi.

My backpack is easy to carry.

In contrast, the verbs 會 **ē** / 袂 **bē** are used with adjectives connoting undesirable qualities. Again, what constitutes undesirability depends on the speaker's viewpoint. Additionally, the use of verb 會 **ē** can be

used in past, present, or future descriptions.

會 / 袂 + *adjectives (undesirable)*

ē / bē + *adjectives (undesirable)*

你會感覺遮的窗也布真歹看袂？

Lí ē kám-kak chia-ê thang-á-pò`chin pháiⁿ-khòaⁿ--bē?

你會覺得這些簾子難看嗎？

Nǐ huì juéde zhè xiē liánzi nánkàn ma?

Do you think these curtains are ugly?

這條椅仔，坐傷久會歹坐。

Chit liâu í-á, chē siuⁿ kú ē pháiⁿ chē.

這把椅子，坐太久會難坐。

Zhè bǎ yǐzi, zuò tài jiǔ huì nán zuò.

This chair is hard to sit in for very long.

6.4.3 Negation based on adjective desirability

The choice of negation for adjectives also depends on desirability of the adjective. For adjectives deemed to be desirable by the speaker, the negative used is 無 **bô**. In contrast, undesirable qualities are preceded by the negative 袂 **bē**.

While in other grammatical contexts these two negatives (無 **bô** and 袂 **bē**) differ according to aspect (see [8 Aspect](#)), when occurring before adjectives the choice between the two negatives 無 **bô** and 袂 **bē** is based only on desirability of the adjective. Additionally, it should be noted that it is possible that the same adjective may be seen as desirable in one context and undesirable for another context.

無 + *adjective (desirable quality)*

bô + *adjective (desirable quality)*

‘not *adjective (desirable quality)*’

下昏暗的節目無好笑。

E-hng-àm ê chiat-bók bô hó-chhiò.

今晚的節目不搞笑。

Jīnwǎn de jiémù bù hǎoxiào.

Tonight’s program will not be funny.

這個西瓜無甜。

Chit ê si-koe bô tiⁿ.

這個西瓜不甜。

Zhège xīguā bù tián.

This watermelon is not sweet.

彼間店的臭豆腐無臭。

Hit keng tiàm ê chhàu tâu-hū bô chhàu.

那家店的臭豆腐不臭。

Nà jiā diàn de chòu dòufu bù chòu.

That restaurant's stinky tofu is not stinky (*it should be stinky*).

袂 + adjective (*undesirable quality*)

bē + adjective (*undesirable quality*)

'not adjective (*undesirable quality*)'

咱昨昏食的王梨袂酸。

Lán cha-hng chiáh ê ông-lâi bē sng.

我們昨天吃的鳳梨不酸。

Wǒmen zuótiān chī de fènglí bù suān.

The pineapple we ate yesterday wasn't sour (*sour is undesirable*).

彼隻狗真乖，袂吵。

Hit chiah káu chin koai, bē chhá.

那隻狗很乖，不吵。

Nà zhī gǒu hěn guāi, bù chǎo.

That dog is very well behaved; it isn't noisy.

車頭的便所袂垃圾。

Chhia-thâu ê piān-só bē lah-sap.

車站的廁所不髒。

Chēzhàn de cèsuǒ bù zāng.

The bathrooms in the train station aren't dirty.

There are a few exceptions in which the adjectives are not negated by 無 **bô** and 袂 **bē**. Some adjectives must take the negation 毋 **m̄** 'not' (see [13.1 Negative particle 毋 m̄](#)) regardless of the adjective's desirability.

One common adjective that may be negated by both 毋 **m̄** and 無 **bô** is 好 **hó** 'good'. However, each form of negation offers a slight difference in meaning.

無好 **bô hó** indicates 'not good' with regards to quality.

彼齣電影無好。

Hit chhut tiān-iaⁿ bô hó.

那部電影不好。

Nà bù diànyǐng bù hǎo.

That movie isn't good (*the storyline, acting, special effects, etc. are not good*).

毋好 **m-hó** means ‘not good’ because of a sense of moral disapproval.

彼齣電影毋好。

Hit chhut tiān-iaⁿ m-hó.

那部電影不好。

Nà bù diànyǐng bù hǎo.

The movie isn't good to watch (*there is objectionable or offensive content in the film*).

Note that some native speakers of Taiwanese are not particular about the usage of 無好 **bô hó** and 毋好 **m-hó** and use them interchangeably. Mandarin uses 不好 **bù hǎo** in both contexts and leaves the meaning up to interpretation.

6.5 Adjectives with verb characteristics

Most adjectives (excluding absolute adjectives) can take on the properties of verbs such as aspect and direct negation.

6.5.1 Change-of-state particle 矣 --ah

Changes in state are often indicated by the end-of-sentence particle 矣 --**ah**, which signals the anterior aspect (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)).

天暗矣。

Thiⁿ àm--ah.

天空暗了。

Tiānkōng àn le.

The sky has darkened.

伊規熱天運動，所以這馬較甬矣。

I kui jóah-thiⁿ ūn-tōng, só-í chit-má khah íóng--ah.

他 整 個 夏 天 運 動 ， 所 以 現 在 比 較 壯 了 。

Tā zhěng gè xiàtiān yùndòng, suǒyǐ xiànzài bǐjiào zhuàng le.

He worked out all summer, so now he has become stronger.

二 點 鐘 以 後 ， 湯 的 味 有 較 重 矣 。

Nīng tiám-cheng í-āu, thng ê bī ū khah tāng--ah.

兩 個 小 時 之 後 ， 湯 的 味 道 更 濃 了 。

Liǎng gè xiǎoshí zhīhòu, tāng de wèidào gèng nóng le.

After two hours, the flavor of the soup is stronger.

Mandarin often uses the end-of-sentence particle 了 **-le** to signal a change of state with adjectives.

6.5.2 Describing conditions that have worsened 去 --khì

When describing a condition that has gotten worse, the suffix 去 --**khì** is often added to adjectives. Additionally, the end-of-sentence particle 矣 --**ah** marking a change of state may be added.

adjective + 去 + (矣)

adjective + --khì + (--ah)

我 無 紮 雨 傘 ， 所 以 西 裝 澹 去 矣 。

Góa bô chah hō-sòⁿ, só-í se-chong tâm--khì--ah.

我 沒 有 帶 雨 傘 ， 所 以 西 裝 濕 了 。

Wǒ méiyǒu dài yǔsǎn, suǒyǐ xīzhuāng shī le.

I didn't bring an umbrella so my suit got wet.

恁 若 無 穿 鞋 仔 ， 跣 會 垃 圾 去 。

Lín nā bô chhēng ê-á, kha ē lah-sap--khì.

你 們 要 不 是 穿 鞋 子 ， 腳 會 髒 掉 。

Nǐmen yàobùshì chuān xiézi, jiǎo huì zāngdiào.

If you don't wear shoes, your feet will get dirty.

One notable exception is 好去 **hó--khì** which conveys that a condition related to one's health has improved.

歇 睏 幾 工 了 後 ， 感 冒 攏 好 去 矣 。

Hioh-khùn kúi kang liáu-āu, kám-mō' lóng hó--khì--ah.

休息幾天之後，感冒都好了。

Xiūxi jǐ tiān zhīhòu, gǎnmào dōu hǎo le.

After resting a few days, my cold has completely gotten better.

6.6 Noun phrases and the modifying particle 的 ê

The modifying particle 的 ê allows adjectives, nouns, verbs, and even whole phrases to modify nouns. The noun that becomes modified is often referred to as the *head noun*. Everything that helps to modify the head noun including the head noun itself is referred to as a *noun phrase*. Generally, all modifiers appear before the nouns that they modify. The modifying particle 的 ê is placed between the modifier and the head noun.

adjective / noun / verb / phrase + 的 + head noun

adjective / noun / verb / phrase + ê + head noun

古錐的紅嬰仔

kó-chui ê âng-eⁿ-á

可愛的嬰兒

kě'ài de yīng'ér

cute baby

In the example above, 紅嬰仔 âng-eⁿ-á ‘baby’ is the head noun and 古錐的紅嬰仔 kó-chui ê âng-eⁿ-á ‘cute baby’ is the entire noun phrase.

6.6.1 Adjectives with modifying particle 的 ê

When an adjective comes before the noun and is more than one-syllable, a modifying particle 的 ê is generally placed between the adjective and noun. Single-syllable adjectives often do not include 的 ê.

single-syllable adjective + (的) + head noun

single-syllable adjective + (ê) + head noun

貴手機

kùi chhiú-ki

貴手機

guì shǒujī

expensive mobile phone

臭的襪仔

chhàu ê bóeh-á

臭的襪子

chòu de wàzi

smelly socks

multi-syllable adjective + 的 + head noun

multi-syllable adjective + ê + head noun

好坐的膨椅

hó chē ê phòng-í

舒服的沙發

shūfu de shāfā

comfortable sofa

清氣的桌仔

chheng-khì ê toh-á

乾淨的桌子

gānjìng de zhuōzi

clean table

One-syllable adjectives preceded by an intensifier use the modifying particle 的 ê.

intensifier + one-syllable adjective + 的 + head noun

intensifier + one-syllable adjective + ê + head noun

ONE-SYLLABLE ADJECTIVE

歹囡仔

pháiⁿ gín-á

壞孩子

huài háizi

bad kid

ONE-SYLLABLE ADJECTIVE WITH INTENSIFIER

真歹的囡仔

chín pháiⁿ ê gín-á

很壞的孩子

hěn huài de háizi

very bad kid

However, if the adjective functions like a verb and appears after the noun, there is no need for the modifying particle 的 ê.

head noun + (intensifier) + adjective

膨椅真好坐。

Phòng-í chin hó chē.

沙發很舒服。

Shāfā hěn shūfu.

The sofa is comfortable.

桌仔真清氣。

Toh-á chin chheng-khì.

桌子很乾淨。

Zhuōzi hěn gānjìng.

The table is clean.

彼个囡仔真歹。

Hit ê gín-á chin pháiⁿ.

那個孩子很壞。

Nàge háizi hěn huài.

That kid is very bad.

6.6.2 Nouns, verbs, and phrases that modify with 的 ê

Nouns, verbs, and also entire phrases can modify nouns when joined with the modifying particle 的 ê.

noun / verb / phrase + 的 + head noun

noun / verb / phrase + ê + head noun

MODIFYING NOUN

學校的運動埕

hák-hāu ê ūn-tōng-tiāⁿ

學校的操場

xuéxiào de cāochǎng

school's athletic field

餐廳的停車場

chhan-thiaⁿ ê thêng-chhia-tiûⁿ

餐廳的停車場

cāntīng de tíngchēchǎng

restaurant parking lot

MODIFYING VERB

走路的人客

kiâⁿ lô ê lāng-kheh

走路的客人

zǒu lù de kèrén

guests who walked

跳舞的查某

thiàu-bú ê cha-bó¹

跳舞的女人

tiàowǔ de nǚrén

ladies who danced

MODIFYING PHRASE

昨暗做暗餐的阿姨

cha-àm chò àm-tng ê a-î

昨晚做晚饭的阿姨

zuówǎn zuò wǎnfàn de āyí

the aunt who cooked dinner last night

會曉講韓國話的學生

ē-hiáu kóng Hân-kok-ōe ê hák-seng

會講韓國話的學生

huì jiǎng Hánguóhuà de xuéshēng

the student who can speak Korean

As can be seen in the glosses above, Taiwanese does not have relative clauses, which are descriptive phrases that come after the noun and begin with ‘who’, ‘whom’, ‘which’, etc. Instead, Taiwanese places the entire descriptive phrase before the noun and adds the modifying particle 的 ê.

6.6.3 Nouns that modify without 的 ê

There are a few occasions when nouns can modify other nouns without using the modifying particle 的 *ê*. If the modifying noun is closely associated with the head noun, the 的 *ê* may be omitted.

中國 (的) 人

Tiong-kok (*ê*) lâng

中國 (的) 人

Zhōngguó (*de*) rén

Chinese person

If the modifying noun has a close personal relationship with the head noun, the 的 *ê* may also be omitted.

朋友 (的) 阿姊

pêng-iú (*ê*) a-chí

朋友 (的) 姐姐

péngyǒu (*de*) jiějiě

friend's older sister

6.6.4 Omitting the head noun (nominalization)

In a noun phrase, the head noun itself can be omitted if understood from context.

adjective / noun / verb / phrase + 的 + (head noun)

adjective / noun / verb / phrase + ê + (head noun)

辦公室的 咧 修理。

Pān-kong-sek--ê teh siu-lí.

辦公室的 修理中。

Bàngōngshì de xiūlǐzhōng.

The office's (*bathrooms*) are out of service.

Omitting the head noun actually has the effect of changing the modifying adjective, verb, or phrase into a noun. This change is called *nominalization*, which is the process of changing other parts of speech into nouns. These nominalized adjectives, verbs, or phrases can be roughly translated into English as 'one(s) that *adjective/verb/phrase*'.

adjective / verb / phrase + 的

adjective / verb / phrase + --ê

'one(s) that *adjective / verb / phrase*'

ADJECTIVE

這台烏色的是阮的。

Chit tâi o-sek--ê sī gún--ê.

這台黑色的是我們的。

Zhè tái hēisè de shì wǒmen de.

This black one is ours (*car*).

共上輕的，攞來予我。

Kā siōng khin--ê, giah-lâi hó'góa.

把最輕的，拿來給我。

Bǎ zuì qīng de, nálái gěi wǒ.

Give me the one that is the lightest (*luggage*).

VERB

掩咯雞的佇佗位?

Ng-kók-ke--ê tī tó-ūi?

捉迷藏的在 哪裡?

Zhuōmícáng de zài nǎlǐ?

Where is the one who is playing hide-and-seek (*child*)?

PHRASE

彼个無戴帽仔的是上緣投。

Hit ê bô tì bō-á--ê sī siōng iân-tâu.

那個沒有戴帽子的是最英俊。

Nàge méiyǒu dài màozi de shì zuì yīngjùn.

The one not wearing a hat is the most handsome (*man*).

6.6.5 Multiple modifiers in sequence

It is possible for multiple modifiers to co-occur and describe a single noun. In general, a particular order is followed based on the meaning of the modifier. The *number + measure word* can be seen as a dividing line of which some modifiers occur before, while others occur afterwards. Broadly speaking, modifiers which give a background context to the head noun come before the *number + measure word*, while the modifiers that describe properties of the head noun come after. Note that this ordering is not necessarily fixed and there can be some degree of flexibility depending on emphasis.

modifiers (background) + *number + measure word* + ***modifiers (properties)*** + *head noun*

6.6.5.1 Modifiers (background)

Modifiers which offer background context to help situate the noun are placed before the *number + measure word + head noun*. Background modifiers include possession, location, time, and scope. If more than one background modifier co-occurs then the ordering generally follows that as presented in the previous sentence.

modifiers (background) + number + measure word + head noun

POSSESSION

林小姐的一隻狗

Lîm sió-chiá ê chit chiah káu

林小姐的一隻狗

Lín xiǎojiě de yī zhī gǒu

Ms. Lim's dog

你的二台電腦

lí ê n̄ng tâi tiān-náu

你的兩台電腦

nǐ de liǎng tái diànnǎo

your two computers

LOCATION

銀行內的兩個警衛

gîn-hâng-lāi ê n̄ng ê keng-ōe

銀行裡的兩個警衛

yínháng lǐ de liǎng ge jǐngwèi

the two security guards in the bank

公園內的三塊椅條

kong-hng-lāi ê saⁿ tè í-liâu

公園裡的三張長板凳

gōngyuán lǐ de sān zhāng chángbǎndèng

three benches in the park

TIME

後禮拜的一個班

āu lé-pài ê chit ê pan

下禮拜的一個班

xià lǐbài de yī gè bān

a class next week

下早的 一杯 咖啡

e-chái ê chit poe ka-pi

早上 的 一杯 咖啡

zǎoshang de yī bēi kāfēi

a cup of coffee from this morning

SCOPE

別的 三 個 故事

pat-ê saⁿ ê kò-sū

別的 三 個 故事

biéde sān gè gùshì

three other stories

彼 寡 機會

hit kóa ki-hōe

那 些 機會

nà xiē jīhuì

those few opportunities

6.6.5.2 Modifiers (properties)

Modifiers which offer information on the properties of the head noun are placed after the *number + measure word* but before the head noun. Property modifiers include activity, characteristics, shape, color, material, and function. If more than one property modifier co-occurs then the ordering generally follows that as presented in the previous sentence.

*number + measure word + **modifiers (properties)** + head noun*

ACTIVITY

一个 煮食 課

chit ê chú-chiáh khò

一 堂 烹飪 課

yī táng pēnggrèn kè

a cooking class

彼 寡 劉 先生 寫 的 報告

hit kóa Lâu--sian-siⁿ siá ê pò-kò
 那些 劉先生寫的 報告
 nà xiē Liú xiānshēng xiě de bàogào
 the reports Mr. Lau wrote

CHARACTERISTICS

這個 滑滑的 塗跤
 chit ê kùt-kùt ê thô-kha
 這個 滑滑的 地板
 zhège huáhuá de dìbǎn
 this slippery floor

一個 巧賊仔
 chit ê khiáu chhát-á
 一個 聰明的 小偷
 yī gè cōngmíng de xiǎotōu
 a clever thief

SHAPE

一塊 圓圓的 桌仔
 chit tè îⁿ-îⁿ ê toh-á
 一張 圓圓的 桌子
 yī zhāng yuányuán de zhuōzi
 a circular table

一個 有角的 面
 chit ê ū kak ê bīn
 一個 方形的 臉
 yī gè fāngxíng de liǎn
 an angular face

COLOR

一點 紅 血
 chit tiám âng hoeh
 一點 紅 血
 yī diǎn hóng xuè
 a drop of red blood

三個 青 葉仔
 saⁿ ê chheⁿ hióh-á

三個青葉子

sān gè qīng yèzi

three green leaves

MATERIAL

一個玻璃的罐仔

chit ê po-lê ê kòan-á

一個玻璃的瓶子

yī gè bōlí de píngzi

a glass bottle

十個絲仔圍巾

cháp ê si-á ûi-kin

十個絲圍巾

shí gè sīwéijīn

ten silk scarves

FUNCTION

一領雨幔

chit niá hō-moa

一件雨衣

yī jiàn yǔyī

a raincoat

一雙拳擊用的手套

chit siang kūn-kek iōng ê chhiú-thò

一雙拳擊用的手套

yī shuāng quánjí yòng de shǒutào

a pair of boxing gloves

6.6.5.3 Co-occurring modifiers

If more than one category of modifier co-occurs, the ordering of modifiers roughly follows the list below.

*possession + location + time + scope + **measure word** + activity + characteristics + shape + color + material + function + **noun***

我的眠床頂昨昏彼領垃圾去新的長烏色棉布的出外褲，是你提去無？

Góa ê bîn-chhông-téng cha-hng hit niá lah-sap--khì sin ê tng o-sek mî-pò ê chhut-gōa khò, sī lí thèh--khì--bô?

我的床上昨天那件髒了新的長黑色棉布的出外褲子，是你拿走嗎？

Wǒ de chuángshàng zuótiān nà jiàn zāngle xīn de cháng hēisè miánbù de chūwài kùzi, shì nǐ ná zǒu ma?

Did you take my pair of dirtied, new, long, black, cotton, going-out (*fancy*) pants that was on my bed yesterday?

NOUN WITH MULTIPLE MODIFIERS

<i>possession</i>	我的	góa ê	my
<i>location</i>	眠床頂	bîn-chhông-téng	on the bed
<i>time</i>	昨昏	cha-hng	yesterday
<i>scope</i>	彼	hit	that
<i>measure word</i>	領	niá	pair (<i>measure word for clothing</i>)
<i>activity</i>	垃圾去	lah-sap--khì	dirtied
<i>characteristics</i>	新	sin	new
<i>shape</i>	長	tng	long
<i>color</i>	烏色	o-sek	black
<i>material</i>	棉布的	mî-pò ê	cotton
<i>function</i>	出外	chhut-gōa	going out (<i>fancy</i>)
<i>head noun</i>	褲	khò	pants

REMAINING ELEMENTS

<i>focusing particle</i>	是	sī	it was
<i>subject</i>	你	lí	you
<i>verb phrase</i>	提去	thèh--khì	take away
<i>question particle</i>	無	--bô	right?

In the example above, the object is topicalized and moved to the front of the sentence. Complicated and longer objects tend to be placed before the verb. The ordering of these modifiers is not rigid as there is some flexibility depending on emphasis and personal preference. Additionally, the example sentence provided above is intended to demonstrate the relative ordering of modifiers depending on attribute and what is grammatically possible. Nonetheless, Taiwanese speakers generally prefer multiple shorter sentences to a single longer sentence.

6.7 Repetition

Certain single-syllable adjectives that are physically descriptive or sensory in nature can be repeated or given special suffixes to express different intensities. Not all adjectives are capable of this feature, but a few more commonly used adjectives do exhibit this property. Note that this only occurs when adjectives function like verbs and appear *after* the noun.

6.7.1 Reduplication with single-syllable adjectives

When single-syllable adjectives are doubled, this has the effect of lessening the intensity of the adjective suggesting a ‘little’ or ‘bit’. Often the particle 仔 -á is added to the reduplicated adjective for euphony.

adjective + adjective + (仔)

adjective + adjective + (-á)

啲一杯葡萄酒了後，伊的面就紅紅。

Lim chit poe phû-tô-chiú liáu-āu, i ê bīn tō âng-âng.

喝一杯葡萄酒之後，他的臉就紅紅的。

Hē yī bēi pútáojiǔ zhīhòu, tā de liǎn jiù hóng hóng de.

After one sip of wine, his face becomes a little red.

這隻狗仔蠢蠢，伊一直追家己的尾仔走。

Chit chiah káu-á gōng-gōng-á, i it-tit tui ka-tī ê bóe-á chāu.

這隻小狗笨笨的，牠一直追自己的尾巴跑。

Zhè zhī xiǎo gǒu bènbènde, tā yīzhí zhuī zìjǐ de wěibā pǎo.

This puppy is a little stupid. It keeps chasing its own tail.

Note that in Mandarin, that the possessive marker 的 *de* must appear after the reduplicated adjective.

6.7.2 Reduplication with two-syllable adjectives

With two-syllable adjectives, doubling allows for the meaning to intensify. There are two methods to double two-syllable adjectives.

Split doubling method

The split doubling method doubles the first-syllable of the adjective and then doubles the second-syllable to follow an X-X-Y-Y format. This is the more common method of two-syllable adjective reduplication.

SPLIT DOUBLING WITH TWO-SYLLABLE ADJECTIVE X-Y

X + X + Y + Y

老老實實

láu-láu-sit-sit

老老實實

lǎolǎoshíshí

very honest

嚴嚴重重

giâm-giâm-tiōng-tiōng

嚴嚴重重

yányánchóngchóng

very serious

貧貧惰惰

pîn-pîn-tōaⁿ-tōaⁿ

懶懶惰惰

lǎnlǎnduòduò

very lazy

Repeated doubling method

The repeated doubling method repeats the entire two-syllable adjective to follow an X-Y-X-Y format. Fewer adjectives can use this method of reduplication. Unfortunately, adjectives that can accept this format must be learned on a case-by-case basis.

REPEATED DOUBLING WITH TWO-SYLLABLE ADJECTIVE X-Y

$X + Y + X + Y$

老實老實

láu-sit-láu-sit

老實老實

lǎoshílǎoshí

very honest

垃圾垃圾

lah-sap-lah-sap

非常髒

fēicháng zāng

very dirty

簡單簡單

kán-tan-kán-tan

簡單簡單

jiǎndānjiǎndān

very simple

6.7.3 Exceeding suffix

To express that the intensity of the adjective has exceeded a level of comfort, an *exceeding suffix* can be added to the adjective.

adjective + exceeding suffix

‘exceedingly *adjective*’

This *exceeding suffix* is constructed from a reduplicated syllable that is a descriptive word or an onomatopoetic word representing a sound that evokes a more colorful description of the adjective’s intensity.

DESCRIPTIVE WORD EXCEEDING SUFFIX

ADJECTIVE	RELATED WORD	ADJ WITH EXCEEDING SUFFIX
澹	漉漉	澹漉漉
tām	lok-lok	tām-lok-lok
wet	filter, sieve	soaked, dripping wet

In some cases the reduplicated syllable is derived from a descriptive word that together with the adjective depicts an image that expresses the intensity of the adjective. For example, 澹漉漉 **tām-lok-lok** ‘soaked’ is composed of the single syllable adjective 澹 **tām** ‘wet’ and a doubling of the word 漉 **lok** ‘strain, filter’. This combination of meaning perhaps visually evokes being so wet that it is as if water is passing through a filter or sieve.

ONOMATOPOETIC WORD EXCEEDING SUFFIX

ADJECTIVE	ONOMATOPOETIC WORD	ADJ WITH EXCEEDING SUFFIX
冷	吱吱	冷吱吱
léng	ki-ki	léng-ki-ki
cold	chirping, squeaking	frosty, chillingly cold

In other cases the suffix provides an onomatopoetic quality to describe the experience of the adjective. For example, 冷吱吱 **léng-ki-ki** ‘freezing’ is composed of the single syllable adjective 冷 **léng** ‘cold’ and a doubling of the onomatopoetic word 吱 **ki** ‘chirping, squeaking’. This combination perhaps suggests being so cold that the noises made from one’s trembling or teeth chattering sound like a chirping bird or squeaking mouse.

ADJECTIVE	REDUPLICATED SYLLABLE	ADJ WITH EXCEEDING SUFFIX	MANDARIN
暗	摸摸	暗摸摸	黑壓壓

àm	mo·mo´	àm-mo·mo´	hēiyāyā
dark	to grope, to touch	pitch black	
紅	記記	紅記記	紅咚咚
āng	kì-kì	āng-kì-kì	hóngdōngdōng
red	to remember, to note	bright red	
澎	獅獅	澎獅獅	氣鼓鼓
phòng	sai-sai	phòng-sai-sai	qìgǔgǔ
swollen	lion	seething in anger	
澹	漉漉	澹漉漉	濕漉漉
tām	lok-lok	tām-lok-lok	shīlùlù
wet	filter, sieve	soaked, dripping wet	
冷	吱吱	冷吱吱	冷冰冰
léng	ki-ki	léng-ki-ki	lěngbīngbīng
cold	chirping, squeaking	frosty, chillingly cold	

緊 轉來，外面 已經 暗摸摸 矣。

Kín tng--lâi, gōa-bīn í-keng àm-mo·mo´--ah.

快 回家，天空 已經 黑壓壓 了。

Kuài huí jiā, tiānkōng yǐjīng hēiyāyā le.

Hurry and come home. It's already pitch dark outside.

哎喲喂! 你的面 攏 紅記記 !

Ai-iō-ôe! Lí ê bīn lóng āng-kì-kì!

哎喲喂! 你的臉 紅咚咚 的 !

Āiyōwèi! Nǐ de liǎn dōu hóngdōngdōng de!

Oh my! Your face is all bright red!

While Mandarin also has a number of adjectives with these exceeding suffixes, the usage is much more common in Taiwanese.

6.8 Expressions with adjectives describing change

A few common expressions using 愈 **jú** (also pronounced **lú**) ‘the more...’ describe changes with adjectives over time or as a result of other changes.

6.8.1 Changes over time

To convey a gradual change over time, the expression 愈來愈 *jú lái jú* ‘more and more’ can be placed before an adjective (see [29.6 Expressing changes over time](#)).

愈來愈 + *adjective*

jú lái jú + *adjective*

‘more and more *adjective*’

天愈來愈暗。

Thiⁿ *jú lái jú* àm.

天空越來越暗。

Tiānkōng *yuè lái yuè* àn.

The sky is getting more and more dark.

阿公愈來愈歹。

A-kong *jú lái jú* pháiⁿ.

爺爺越來越兇。

Yéyé *yuè lái yuè* xiōng.

Grandpa is becoming more and more mean.

6.8.2 Changes that cause other changes

To convey that the change of an action verb directly impacts another change, 愈 *jú* can be placed before the action verb followed by repeating 愈 *jú* before an adjective (see [29.6.3 Changes caused by another action](#)).

愈 + *action verb* + 愈 + *adjective*

jú + *action verb* + *jú* + *adjective*

‘the more *action verb* the more *adjective*’

伊愈食愈肥。

I *jú* chiáh *jú* pûi.

他越吃越胖。

Tā *yuè* chī *yuè* pàng.

The more he eats, the fatter he gets.

阮愈讀冊愈愛睏。

Gún jú thák chheh jú ài-khùn.

我們 越 看 書 越 想 睡。

Wǒmen yuè kàn shū yuè xiǎng shuì.

The more we read, the sleepier we become.

7 Action verbs

Action verbs involve movement and physical engagement (such as running, singing, reading). Moreover, action verbs can be further subdivided into those that are open-ended with duration and those that involve a change-of-state.

7.1 Open-ended action verbs

Open-ended action verbs represent an action that is continuous in nature over time. The extent of the action may be left unspecified or may be indicated as a duration (fixed amount of time), a frequency (fixed number of repetitions), an end location, or an end time. Thus, the term *open-ended* does not mean that the specified action never ends, but rather that the action will happen in a continuous fashion for as long as is designated.

For example, the verb 走 **cháu** ‘to run’ indicates continuous running movement unless otherwise specified.

我 走。

Góu cháu.

我 跑。

Wǒ pǎo.

I am running (*the movement of running continues*).

DURATION (FIXED AMOUNT OF TIME)

我 走 四十 分鐘。

Góu cháu sí-cháp hun-cheng.

我 跑 四十 分鐘。

Wǒ pǎo sìshí fēnzhōng.

I ran for 40 minutes (*the movement occurred only for a period of time*).

FREQUENCY (FIXED NUMBER OF REPETITIONS)

我 走 五 圈。

Góu cháu gō'liàn.

我 跑 五 圈。

Wǒ pǎo wǔ quān.

I ran five laps (*the movement occurred for a specified number of times*).

ENDPOINT (LOCATION)

我走到公園。

Góa cháu kàu kong-hîng.

我跑到公園。

Wǒ pǎo dào gōngyuán.

I ran until I reached the park (*the movement occurred until a destination*).

ENDPOINT (TIME)

我走到三點。

Góa cháu kàu saⁿ tiám.

我跑到三點。

Wǒ pǎo dào sān diǎn.

I ran until it was three o'clock (*the movement occurred until a specific time*).

Below is a table of some common open-ended action verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
睏 khún	睡 shuì	to sleep
看 khòa ⁿ	看 kàn	to see, to look
聽 thia ⁿ	聽 tīng	to hear, to listen
講 kóng	說 shuō	to talk
走 cháu	跑 pǎo	to run
寫 siá	寫 xiě	to write
買 bé	買 mǎi	to buy
讀 thák	讀 dú	to read, to study
食 chiáh	吃 chī	to eat
耍 sng	玩 wán	to play
啉 lim	喝 hē	to drink
唱 chhiù ⁿ	唱 chàng	to sing
畫 ōe	畫 huà	to draw

7.1.1 Specifying the duration

To specify the duration of an open-ended action verb, place the period of time after the verb. Often 久

kú ‘long (*time*)’ is added after the duration expression for emphasis.

action verb + duration + (久)

action verb + duration + (kú)

‘*action verb for duration*’

我昨暗睏 十點鐘久。

Góa cha-àm khùn cháp tiám-cheng kú.

我昨晚睡了 十個小時。

Wǒ zuówǎn shuìle shí gè xiǎoshí.

Last night I slept for ten hours.

您泅 十五分鐘。

In siû cháp-gō hun-cheng.

他們游泳 十五分鐘。

Tāmen yóuyǒng shíwǔ fēnzhōng.

They swam for 15 minutes.

Note that Mandarin does not add 久 **jiǔ** ‘long (*time*)’ for emphasis.

7.1.2 Specifying the frequency

To specify the frequency of an open-ended action verb, place the frequency after the verb. Taiwanese can use the generic terms 擺 **pái**, 改 **kái**, and 遍 **piàn** to express completed ‘times’. Measure words that implicitly convey frequency for specific actions (such as 輾 **liàn** ‘laps’, 趟 **chōa** ‘trips’, 輪 **lún** ‘rounds’) are also used.

action verb + frequency

‘*action verb for frequency*’

伊的名，伊寫 五十擺。

I ê miâ, i siá gō-cháp pái.

他的名字，他寫 五十次。

Tā de míngzì, tā xiě wǔshí cì.

He wrote his name fifty times.

吳先生已經離婚過 三改。

Gô--sian-siⁿ í-keng lī-hun-kòe saⁿ kái.

吳先生已經離婚過三遍。

Wú xiānshēng yǐjīng líhūnguò sān biàn.

Mr. Gou has already divorced three times.

阮阿叔有去過中國五遍。

Gún a-chek ū khi-kòe Tiong-kok gō piàn.

我叔叔去過中國五遍。

Wǒ shūshu qùguò Zhōngguó wǔ biàn.

My uncle has traveled to China five times.

7.1.3 Specifying the endpoint

To specify an endpoint of an open-ended action verb, place an endpoint based on time or location after the verb. Generally, the preposition 到 **kàu** ‘up to’ is placed before the endpoint.

action verb + 到 + endpoint (location)

action verb + kàu + endpoint (location)

我欲行到郵局。

Góa beh kiâⁿ kàu iû-kiòk.

我要走到郵局。

Wǒ yào zǒu dào yóujú.

I will walk to the post office.

恁應該讀到五十頁。

Lín eng-kai thák kàu gō-cháp iáh.

你們應該讀到五十頁。

Nǐmen yīnggāi dú dào wǔshí yè.

You all should read to page 50.

action verb + 到 + endpoint (time)

action verb + kàu + endpoint (time)

恁會使跔外口耍到暗時。

Lín ē-sái tàt gōa-kháu sng kàu àm-sî.

你們可以在戶外玩到傍晚。

Nǐmen kěyǐ zài hùwài wán dào bàngwǎn.

You can play outside until dark.

我欲睏 到明仔載中晝。

Góa beh khùn kàu bîn-á-chài tiong-tàu.

我要睡 到明天中午。

Wǒ yào shuì dào míngtiān zhōngwǔ.

I want to sleep until noon tomorrow.

The directional complements indicating speaker perspective (去 **-khì** ‘away from the speaker’ and 來 **-lâi** ‘towards the speaker’) can also be used in place of a preposition to indicate a geographic endpoint (see [11.3.1 Directional complements indicating speaker perspective](#)).

action verb + 去 / 來 + endpoint (location)

action verb + -khì / -lâi + endpoint (location)

咱泐去 彼板橋。

Lán siû-khì hit pán kiô.

我們游泳去 那座橋 吧。

Wǒmen yóuyǒng qù nà zuò qiáo ba.

Let’s swim to that bridge.

下班了後，駛來 阮兜。

Hā-pan liáu-āu, sái-lâi gún tau.

下班之後，開來 我家。

Xiàbān zhīhòu, kāilái wǒ jiā.

Drive to my house when you finish work.

7.1.4 Default objects

Some open-ended action verbs can take a direct object. A direct object receives the action of a verb.

My dad threw the ball.

In the example above, ‘the ball’ is the direct object of the action ‘throwing’.

While many action verbs in Taiwanese can take a direct object, some take what is known as a *default object*. These verbs always use the default object unless a more specific direct object replaces it. Generally the default object does not get translated into English.

阮咧食 飯。

Gún teh chiáh p̄ng.

我們在吃飯。

Wǒmen zài chī fàn.

We are eating.

In the example above, 飯 **p̄ng** ‘rice’ is the default object for the verb 食 **chiáh** ‘to eat’. The phrase 食飯 **chiáh p̄ng** needs only be translated as ‘to eat’.

If a more specific object is required, the default object is simply replaced by the more specific object.

阮咧食麵。

Gún teh chiáh mī.

我們在吃麵。

Wǒmen zài chī miàn.

We are eating noodles.

Note that a verb and its object are not bound together and may be separated by other grammatical elements.

Below is a table of some common action verbs with default objects.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	LITERAL TRANSLATION	MEANING
看冊 khòan chheh	看書 kàn shū	‘see’ ‘book’	to read
讀冊 thak chheh	讀書 dú shū	‘study’ ‘book’	to study
講話 kóng oe	說話 shuō huà	‘talk’ ‘speech’	to speak
食飯 chiáh p̄ng	吃飯 chī fàn	‘eat’ ‘rice’	to eat
唱歌 chhiùn koa	唱歌 chàng gē	‘sing’ ‘song’	to sing
寫字 siá jī	寫字 xiě zì	‘write’ ‘character’	to write
行路 kiân lō	走路 zǒu lù	‘walk’ ‘road’	to walk

Generally, Mandarin and Taiwanese share similar default objects for action verbs. However, a few common verbs used in Taiwanese differ from their Mandarin counterparts in that they do not require default objects.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	LITERAL TRANSLATION (MANDARIN)	MEANING
睏 khùn	睡覺 shuì jiào	‘sleep’ ‘nap’	to sleep
走 cháu	跑步 pǎo bù	‘run’ ‘step’	to run
泅 siû	游泳 yóu yǒng	‘swim’ ‘dive’	to swim

7.1.5 Including both objects and duration

When both the object and the duration are included with an action verb, there are two possible sentence patterns.

Pattern 1 - Making the duration a modifier

The duration can be turned into a modifier by adding the modifying particle 的 ê. As a modifier, the duration can be placed between the verb and the object. 久 kú can follow the duration for emphasis.

PATTERN 1

verb + **duration** + (久) + 的 + object

verb + **duration** + (kú) + ê + object

阿爸講 四十分鐘 久的話。

A-pa kóng sì-cháp hun-cheng kú ê òe.

爸爸說 四十分鐘 的話。

Bàba shuō sìshí fēnzhōng de huà.

Dad spoke for forty minutes.

阮會唱 五分鐘 的歌。

Gún ē chhiùⁿ gō hun-cheng ê koa.

我們會唱 五分鐘 的歌。

Wǒmen huì chàng wǔ fēnzhōng de gē.

We will sing for five minutes.

Pattern 2 - Verb copying

The verb can be repeated after the verb + object phrase and then followed by the duration (see [17.3 Verb copying](#)). 久 kú can follow the duration for emphasis.

PATTERN 2

verb + object + verb + **duration** + (久)

verb + object + verb + **duration** + (kú)

阿爸講話講 四十分鐘 久。

A-pa kóng òe kóng sì-cháp-hun-cheng kú.

爸爸說話說 四十分鐘。

Bàba shuō huà shuō sìshí fēnzhōng.

Dad spoke for forty minutes.

阮會唱歌唱 五分鐘。

Gún ē chhiùⁿ koa chhiùⁿ gō`hun-cheng.

我們 會 唱 歌 唱 五 分鐘。

Wǒmen huì chàng gē chàng wǔ fēnzhōng.

We will sing for five minutes.

7.1.6 Including both objects and frequency

When both the object and the frequency are included with an action verb, only a verb copying sentence pattern is possible (see [17.3 Verb copying](#)). The verb is repeated after the *verb + object* phrase and then followed by the frequency.

*verb + object + verb + **frequency***

恁 已經 唱 歌 唱 三 擺!

Lín í-keng chhiùⁿ koa chhiùⁿ saⁿ pái!

你們 已經 唱 歌 唱 三 次!

Nǐmen yǐjīng chàng gē chàng sān cì!

You have already sung three times!

你 一定 一 工 讀 冊 讀 兩 改。

Lí it-tēng chit kang thák chheh thák nāg kái.

你 一定 一 天 讀 書 讀 兩 次。

Nǐ yīdìng yī tiān dú shū dú liǎng cì.

You must study twice a day.

7.2 Change-of-state action verbs

Whereas open-ended action verbs represent continuous actions over time, change-of-state action verbs describe actions that change immediately from one state to another. For example, the verb 坐 **chē** ‘to sit’ is an action that describes the change from the state of ‘standing’ to the state of ‘sitting’.

This grouping includes verbs that inherently describe some type of change such as verbs of displacement (跳 **thiàu** ‘to jump’), changes in posture (倚 **khīā** ‘to stand up’), changes in status (畢業 **pīit-giáp** ‘to graduate’), and changes in condition (懷胎 **hōai-thai** ‘to be pregnant’).

Below is a table of some common change-of-state action verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
DISPLACEMENT		
跳 thiàu	跳 tiào	to jump
來 lái	來 lái	to come
開 khui	開 kāi	to open up
挂 kòa	挂 guà	to hang up
穿 chhēng	穿 chuān	to wear (to put on)
POSTURE		
倚 khiā	站 zhàn	to stand up
坐 chē	坐 zuò	to sit down
覆 phak	趴 pā	to lie on one's stomach
STATUS / CONDITION		
畢業 pit-giáp	畢業 bìyè	to graduate
死 sí	死 sǐ	to die
懷胎 hôai-thai	懷孕 huáiyùn	to be pregnant

7.2.1 Change-of-state verbs in the continuous aspect

For the most part, change-of-state action verbs share many properties with open-ended action verbs. However, because there is no duration, change-of-state action verbs have a slightly different meaning when placed in the continuous aspect, which describes an ongoing activity (see [8.2 Continuous aspect](#)).

The dynamic continuous aspect indicates that an action is in the middle of occurring (see [8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect](#)). However, with change-of-state action verbs, there is no duration of action. The dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** cannot be used with a change-of-state action verb.

To focus on the process of transitioning from one state to another, a directional complement needs to be added to the change-of-state verb.

change-of-state action verb + directional complement

阿公 慢慢 倚起來。

A-kong bān-bān khiā--khí-lâi.

爺爺 慢慢 站起來。

Yéyé mànman zhànqǐlái.

Grandpa is slowly standing up.

The static continuous aspect indicates that an action is in a constant or persistent state (see [8.2.2 Static continuous aspect](#)). With change-of-state action verbs, the static continuous aspect emphasizes that, after the change of state has occurred, the subject remains in a particular state or condition.

change-of-state action verb + 咧

action verb + --leh

阿母 坐咧 膨椅頂。

A-bú chē--leh phòng-í-téng.

媽媽 坐者 沙發 上。

Māma zuòzhě shāfā shàng.

Mom is sitting on the sofa.

窗仔 開咧，所以 這馬 較 冷。

Thang-á khui--leh, só-í chit-má khah léng.

窗戶 開著，所以 現在 比較 冷。

Chuānghù kāizhe, suǒyǐ xiànzài bǐjiào lěng.

The window is open, so now it's colder.

7.2.2 Change-of-state verbs doubling as stative verbs

When suffixed with the static continuous aspect marker 咧 **--leh**, some change-of-state verbs can be interpreted as stative verbs (see [9 Stative verbs](#)).

VERB	CHANGE-OF-STATE INTERPRETATION	STATIVE INTERPRETATION
開 khui	to open up	to be open
倚 khiā	to stand up	to be standing
坐 chē	to sit down	to be sitting
穿 chhēng	to wear (to put on)	to be wearing
挂 kòa	to hang up	to be hanging

CHANGE-OF-STATE INTERPRETATION

你 倚起來 的時陣，注意 頭殼 莫 去 予 硯著。

Lí khīa-khí-lâi ê sî-chūn, chù-ì thâu-khak mài khì hō khòk--tiòh.

你 站起來 的時候，注意 頭 不 會 被 撞到。

Nǐ zhànqǐlái de shíhòu, zhùyì tóu bù huì bèi zhuàngdào.

When you stand up, be careful not to hit your head.

STATIVE INTERPRETATION

你若佇遐徭咧，你會予雨沃著。

Lí nā tī hia khiā--leh, lí ē hō hō'ak-tiòh.

你如果在那裡站著，你會被雨淋到。

Nǐ rúguǒ zài nàlǐ zhànzhē, nǐ huì bèi yǔ líndào.

If you stand there, you will get wet from the rain.

8 Aspect

Unlike English, Taiwanese does not inflect verbs to indicate tense (past, present, and future). Instead, Taiwanese uses a combination of context, time adverb, time expressions, modal verbs, and aspect markers to help clarify when an action occurs.

In fact, the verb in the sentence below can refer to any point in time.

伊 清 房間。

I chheng pâng-keng.

他 清 房間。

Tā qīng fángjiān.

He cleaned / cleans / will clean the room.

Generally, context will make clear when an action has occurred. However, if more clarification is required, a time adverb or time expression (e.g. ‘January 30’, ‘last week’, or ‘5 o’clock’) can be provided (see [14.1.2 Time adverbs](#)).

TIME ADVERB

伊 連 鞭 清 房間。

I liām-mī chheng pâng-keng.

他 馬上 清 房間。

Tā mǎshàng qīng fángjiān.

He will clean the room soon.

TIME EXPRESSION

伊 昨 昏 清 房間。

I cha-hng chheng pâng-keng.

他 昨天 清 房間。

Tā zuótiān qīng fángjiān.

He cleaned the room yesterday.

Besides context, time adverbs, and time expressions to help provide clues as to when an event occurs, Taiwanese makes use of modal verbs and aspect markers.

For example, the modal verb 會 ē ‘will’ can be placed before the verb to convey an action occurring in the future tense (see [12 Modal verbs](#)).

MODAL VERB

伊 會 清 房間。

I ē chheng pâng-keng.

他 會 清 房間。

Tā huì qīng fángjiān.

He will clean the room.

Additionally, aspect markers can be used to help understand when an action occurs. Aspect describes how a verb is understood with regards to the flow of time. That is to say, aspect provides further information such as whether an action was completed, continues, repeats, has relevance to the present, etc.

In English, aspect is often considered a type of tense. The four kinds of past tense below actually highlight different aspects for the past tense.

SIMPLE PAST (ACTION COMPLETED WITHIN A SET TIME FRAME)

I ate.

PAST PERFECT SIMPLE (ACTION COMPLETED BEFORE A SPECIFIC TIME IN THE PAST)

I had eaten.

PAST PROGRESSIVE (ACTION CONTINUOUS BEFORE INTERRUPTION)

I was eating.

PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE (ACTION CONTINUOUS FOR A DURATION OF TIME)

I had been eating.

While Taiwanese does not have tense markers, there are ways to mark aspect.

PERFECTIVE ASPECT

伊 有 清 房間。

I ū chheng pâng-keng.

他 清了 房間。

Tā qīngle fángjiān.

He cleaned the room.

EXPERIENTIAL ASPECT

伊 清過 房間。

I chheng-kòe pâng-keng.

他 清過 房間。

Tā qīngguò fángjiān.

He has cleaned rooms before.

ANTERIOR ASPECT

伊 清 房間 矣。

I chheng pâng-keng--ah.

他 渣 房間 了。

Tā qīng fángjiān le.

He has cleaned the room.

While the three examples above all occurred in the past tense, the use of different aspect markers allows the speaker to stress how the action of ‘cleaning’ can be understood. The perfective aspect stresses that ‘the cleaning’ occurred as a simple completed action with nothing more implied. The experiential aspect stresses the fact of having had the experience of ‘cleaning’ before. And, the anterior aspect stresses that the ‘cleaning’ was completed but also indicates that knowing this information is now relevant to listener.

This chapter explores six aspects in Taiwanese: perfective (bounded events), continuous (ongoing occurrences), experiential (past experiences), anterior (current relevance), habitual (routine actions), and tentative (brief actions/tests).

8.1 Perfective aspect

The *perfective aspect* describes an action that can be considered a completed action within a set time frame. More accurately, the action can be understood in its entirety (beginning, middle, and end). Nothing more is implied other than the action having begun, occurred, and then finished. Because of this, the perfective aspect is often used for events that have occurred in the past. This is similar to the simple past tense in English.

Taiwanese makes use of two methods to express the perfective aspect:

- placing 有 ū before the verb
- placing a phase complement 了 liáu, 完 ôan, 好 hó, 煞 soah after the verb (see [11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#)).

Note that Mandarin generally puts a verb into the perfective aspect by adding the suffix 了 -le.

8.1.1 Perfective aspect with 有 ū

One approach to expressing the perfective aspect is to place 有 ū immediately before the verb. This method can only be used when describing events that have occurred in the past. The negative form is 無 bô.

有 + verb

ū + verb

伊下早 有 唱歌。

I e-chái ū chhiùⁿ koa.

他早上 唱了 歌。

Tā zǎoshang chàngle gē.

He sang this morning.

阮阿姐 有 生 雙生仔。

Gún a-chí ū seⁿ siang-seⁿ-á.

我姐姐 生了 雙胞胎。

Wǒ jiějiě shēngle shuāngbāotāi.

My older sister gave birth to twins.

謝先生 無 共 我 借 錢。

Siā--sian-siⁿ bô kā góa chioh chiⁿ.

謝先生 沒有 跟 我 借 錢。

Xiè xiānshēng méiyǒu gēn wǒ jiè qián.

Mr. Sia didn't borrow money from me.

The perfective aspect may only be used with action verbs. Stative verbs, adjectives, and modal verbs are not easily understood as bound and completed actions. As a result, they cannot take a perfective marker. Instead, these types of verbs must use time expressions to describe occurrences in the past.

STATIVE VERB

我 舊年 知 愛 去 佗位。

Góa kū-nî chài ài khì tó-ūi.

我 去年 知道 要 去 哪裡。

Wǒ qùnián zhīdào yào qù nǎlǐ.

Last year, I knew where to go.

ADJECTIVE

伊 昨暗 真 忝。

I cha-àm chin thiám.

她 昨晚 很 累。

Tā zuówǎn hěn lèi.

Last night she was tired.

MODAL VERB

兩禮拜前, 阮 會 使 入 去。

Nāg lé-pài-chêng, gún ē-sài jip-khì.

兩個禮拜以前, 我們 可以 進去。

Liǎng gè lǐbài yǐqián, wǒmen kěyǐ jìnqù.

Two weeks ago, we were allowed to go inside.

Notice that Standard Mandarin does not employ the use of 有 **yǒu** before verbs for the perfective aspect. However, some speakers of Taiwan Mandarin (due to the influence of Taiwanese), will include 有 **yǒu** in their speech to mark the perfective aspect.

STANDARD MANDARIN

我昨天寫了一封信。

Wǒ zuótiān xiěle yī fēng xìn.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

我昨天有寫一封信。

Wǒ zuótiān yǒu xiěle yī fēng xìn.

Yesterday, I wrote a letter.

8.1.2 Perfective aspect with phase complements

A second approach to expressing the perfective aspect in Taiwanese is to use a phase complement (了 **liáu**, 完 **ôan**, 好 **hó**, 煞 **soah**) to indicate that the action of the verb has ended (see [11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#)).

VERB + PHASE COMPLEMENT

伊下早歌唱好。

I e-chái koa chhiùⁿ hó.

他早上唱了歌。

Tā zǎoshang chàngle gē.

He sang this morning.

阮阿姐雙生仔生了。

Gún a-chí siang-seⁿ-á seⁿ liáu.

我姐姐生了雙胞胎。

Wǒ jiějiě shēngle shuāngbāotāi.

My older sister gave birth to twins.

In most contexts the usage of 有 **ū** or one of the phase complements to indicate the perfective aspect is interchangeable. However, because both 有 **ū** and some of the phase complements have different grammatical uses, there can also be different interpretations for the same sentence.

PERFECTIVE READING USING 有 ū

我 有 淋 紅酒。

Góa ū lim âng-chiú.

我 喝 了 紅酒。

Wǒ hēle hóngjiǔ.

I drank red wine.

PERFECTIVE READING USING PHASE COMPLEMENT

我 淋 了 紅酒。

Góa lim liáu âng-chiú.

我 喝 了 紅酒。

Wǒ hēle hóngjiǔ.

I drank red wine.

EMPHATIC READING OF 有 Ū

我 有 淋 紅酒!

Góa ū lim âng-chiú!

我 有 喝 紅酒 啊!

Wǒ yǒu hē hóngjiǔ a!

I did drink red wine!

HABITUAL READING OF 有 Ū

我 有 咧 淋 紅酒。

Góa ū teh lim âng-chiú.

我 經常 喝 紅酒。

Wǒ jīngcháng hē hóngjiǔ.

I do drink red wine.

RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENT READING

我 紅酒 淋 了 矣。

Góa âng-chiú lim liáu--ah.

我 紅酒 喝 光 了。

Wǒ hóngjiǔ hē guāng le.

I drank up all the red wine.

Note that Mandarin must use an adverb such as 經常 **jīngcháng** ‘regularly’ to indicate the habitual reading of its verbs.

8.2 Continuous aspect

The continuous aspect describes an activity that is ongoing. The term ‘activity’ is used here to include both physical movements described by action verbs (such as hitting or swimming) and active engagement described by some stative verbs (such as learning or explaining).

In some cases, the continuous aspect is similar to the English progressive tense, which adds the ‘-ing’ suffix to a verb along with a form of ‘to be’ as a helping verb (‘Julie is talking.’).

In Taiwanese, this ongoing activity can be seen from two slightly different perspectives. A *dynamic perspective* examines an activity that is in the middle of happening (‘She is waving her hand.’), while the *static perspective* describes a continuous condition (‘The picture is hanging on the wall.’). Each perspective has a corresponding grammatical construction.

8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect

The dynamic version of the continuous aspect describes an activity that is already in progress.

8.2.1.1 Dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh**

Dynamic continuous aspect can be used with action verbs and stative verbs that involve active engagement.

A verb can be put into the dynamic continuous aspect, by placing 咧 **teh** before the verb (咧 may also be pronounced **leh**; however, the pronunciation **teh** is used in this text to help distinguish from the use of 咧 --**leh** as a static continuous aspect marker). Depending on emphasis, 咧 **teh** can also be separated from the main verb by other grammatical elements like adverbs or prepositions. The negative form places 無 **bô** before 咧 **teh**.

咧 + verb

teh + verb

伊敲予我時，我咧食飯。

I khà hō' góa sī, góa teh chiáh p̄ng.

她打給我時，我在吃飯。

Tā dǎ gěi wǒ shí, wǒ zài chī fàn.

I was eating when she called.

賴教授咧改阮的文章。

Lōa kàu-siū teh kái gún ê bûn-chiong.

賴教授 在改 我們的文章。

Lài jiàoshòu zài gǎi wǒmen de wénzhāng.

Professor Loa is grading our papers.

哪恁無咧照顧囡仔？

Ná lín bô teh chiàu-kò gín-á?

為甚麼你們沒有在照顧小孩？

Wèishènmè nǐmen méiyǒu zài zhàogù xiǎohái?

Why aren't you taking care of the children?

恁咧好好仔準備選舉。

In teh hó-hó-á chún-pī sóan-kí.

他們在好好準備選舉。

Tāmen zài hǎohǎo zhǔnbèi xuǎnjǔ.

They are preparing for the election.

8.2.1.2 Emphasizing the immediacy of an action

While the use of 咧 **teh** already stresses that an activity is in progress, the immediacy can be further emphasized by placing 當 **tng-** before 咧 **teh** to form 當咧 **tng-teh**. Alternate forms include 拄咧 **tú-teh** and 佇咧 **tī-leh** (note the slight change in pronunciation). These forms can only occur when referring to events in the present tense (see [26.3 Ongoing actions](#)).

當咧 + *verb*

tng-teh + *verb*

‘to be *verb*-ing right now’

學生 當咧 考試，所以請恬恬行路。

Hák-seng tng-teh khó-chhi, só-í chhiáⁿ tiām-tiām kiâⁿ lô.

學生 正在 考試，所以請悄悄走路。

Xuéshēng zhèngzài kǎoshì, suǒyǐ qǐng qiāoqiāo zǒu lù.

The students are taking a test, so please walk quietly.

阮 拄咧 做餅，所以較緊過來。

Gún tú-teh chò piáⁿ, só-í khah kín kòe-lâi.

我們 正在 做餅乾，所以快過來。

Wǒmen zhèngzài zuò bǐnggān, suǒyǐ kuài guòlái.

We are making cookies so come over quickly.

陳小姐 佇咧 和人客 講話，莫 齟伊。

Tân sió-chiá tī-leh hām lâng-kheh kóng ôe, mài chak i.

陳小姐 正在 和 客人 說話，不要 打擾 她。

Chén xiǎojiě zhèngzài hé kèrén shuō huà, bù yào dǎrǎo tā.

Ms. Tan is speaking with a client. Don't disturb her.

Note in Mandarin, the equivalent emphasis on immediacy can be expressed by placing 正 **zhèng** before 在 **zài** to form 正在 **zhèngzài**. However, note that Taiwanese does not have an equivalent end-of-sentence particle such as the Mandarin 呢 **ne** to emphasize the dynamic continuous aspect.

8.2.2 Static continuous aspect

The static version of the continuous aspect describes an action that is in a constant state. The verb can be describing a manner of existence (such as lights hanging from the ceiling), a persistent posture (such as lying on the grass), or repetitive motions without an implied ending (such as chewing gum).

8.2.2.1 Describing a manner of existence

The static continuous aspect marker 咧 **--leh** can be used to describe a manner of existence. When an action has been performed on an object, the object is considered to be in a continual state as a consequence of the verb (even when movement has ceased). By adding the suffix 咧 **--leh** to the verb, the current manner of existence is made clear.

verb + 咧

verb + **--leh**

一條長褲 罔咧 佇 椅仔頂。

Chit thiâu tng-khò khng--leh tī í-á-téng.

一條長褲 放 在 椅子上。

Yī tiáo chángkù fàng zài yǐzi shàng.

A pair of pants is hanging on the chair.

我的珠寶 攏 包咧。

Góa ê chu-pó lóng pau--leh.

我的飾品都 包著。

Wǒ de shìpǐn dōu bāozhe.

All of my jewelry is wrapped.

窗仔愛關咧才袂予蠓仔飛入去。

Thang-á ài koaiⁿ--leh chiah bē ho' báng-á poe--jip-khì.

窗戶要關起來才不會讓蚊子飛進去。

Chuānghù yào guānqǐlái cái bù huì ràng wénzi fēijìnqù.

The windows need to be closed, so mosquitoes don't fly in.

Mandarin uses the suffix 著 **-zhe** to indicate static continuous aspect. However, in some contexts, Taiwanese tends to use the static continuous aspect, while Mandarin prefers a resultative complement.

我袂當駛出去，因為有人共我擋咧。

Góa bē-tàng sái--chhut-khì, in-ūi ū lâng kā góa tòng--leh.

我不能開出去，因為有人把我攔住。

Wǒ bùnéng kāichūqù, yīnwèi yǒu rén bǎ wǒ lánzhù.

I can't drive out because someone is blocking me.

8.2.2.2 Describing a continued posture

A static situation also occurs with verbs of posture. Verbs that describe posture (such as sitting, kneeling, or lying down) can be suffixed with 咧 **--leh** when the posture is maintained.

verb + 咧

verb + --leh

伊倒咧佇眠床頂。

I tó--leh tī bîn-chhîng-téng.

她在床上躺著。

Tā zài chuáng shàng tǎngzhe.

She is lying on the bed.

彼个查埔囡仔跼咧揣水雞。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á khû--leh chhōe chúí-ke.

那個男孩子蹲著找青蛙。

Nàge nánháizi dūnzhe zhǎo qīngwā.

The little boy is squatting by the creek looking for frogs.

Mandarin often uses the corresponding static continuous aspect marker 著 **-zhe** to indicate a background action when two actions are occurring simultaneously. While Mandarin allows 著 **-zhe** to be suffixed to a variety of verbs, Taiwanese can only attach 咧 **--leh** to verbs of posture when signaling a background action (see [34.2.1 Indicating a constant state with verb suffix 咧 --leh](#)).

伊規晡攏徛咧等人客。

I kui po' lóng khiā--leh tán lāng-kheh.

他整個下午都站著等客人。

Tā zhěng gè xiàwǔ dōu zhànzhe děng kèrén.

He has been standing all afternoon waiting for customers.

8.2.2.3 Describing repetitive movements

Continued movements with small repetitive motions (such as clapping, cutting, chewing) may also be suffixed with 咧 **--leh**. Often the verb is reduplicated.

verb + verb + 咧

verb + verb + --leh

這種藥仔愛先嘍嘍咧才會當吞落去。

Chit chióng iòh-á ài seng pō-pō--leh chiah ē-tàng thun--lòh-khì.

這種藥得先嚼一嚼才能吞下去。

Zhè zhǒng yào děi xiān juéyījué cái néng tūnxiàqù.

This kind of medicine needs to be chewed before swallowing.

共這隻狗掠予牢，我欲共伊的毛鉸鉸咧。

Kā chit chiah káu liáh hō tiâu, góa beh kā i ê mng ka-ka--leh.

把這隻狗抓著，我要把牠的毛剪一剪。

Bǎ zhè zhī gǒu zhūazhe, wǒ yào bǎ tā de máo jiǎnyījiǎn.

Hold the dog tightly. I want to trim its fur.

8.2.3 Verbs exhibiting both dynamic and static aspects

With some verbs, both dynamic and static continuous aspects can be used. Note the difference in meaning between the dynamic and static forms.

DYNAMIC CONTINUOUS ASPECT

伊 咧戴 安全帽。

I teh tì an-chôan-bō.

她 在戴 安全帽。

Tā zài dài ānquánmào.She is putting on a helmet.

STATIC CONTINUOUS ASPECT

伊 戴列 安全帽。

I tì--leh an-chôan-bō.

她 戴著 安全帽。

Tā dàizhe ānquánmào.She is wearing a helmet.

莫 靛 伊，伊 這馬 咧記 路。

Mài chak i, i chit-má teh kì lō'.

不要 打擾 他，他 正在 在記 路。

Bùyào dǎrǎo tā, tā zhèngzài zài jì lù.Don't bother him. He's memorizing the way.

毋免 煩惱，伊 路 已經 攞記 咧。

M-bián hōan-ló, i lō' í-keng lóng kì--leh.

不要 煩惱，他 已經 都 記住 路了。

Bùyào fánnǎo, tā yǐjīng dōu jìzhù lù le.Don't worry. He's memorized the way.

8.3 Experiential aspect

The experiential aspect describes an action that has been experienced at some unspecified point in the past. Notice that non-repeatable actions (such as dying, graduating, or aging) cannot be placed in the experiential aspect.

Taiwanese has three methods to express the experiential aspect: placing 捌 **bat** before the verb, placing 過 **-kòe** after the verb, or using a combination of both 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe**. While all three methods are interchangeable, the tendency is to use the combination of both 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe** for longer utterances.

Mandarin can only indicate the experiential aspect by placing 過 **-guò** after the verb.

8.3.1 Experiential aspect with 捌 bat

The aspect marker 捌 **bat**, which is derived from the verb meaning 'to be familiar with', can be placed before a verb to indicate the experiential aspect. The negative form is 毋捌 **m̄ bat**. When put in the negative form, 從來 **chêng-lâi** 'from the beginning' or an adverb with a similar meaning is frequently added to lend the meaning of 'never'.

捌 + verb

bat + verb

我 捌食 臭豆腐。

Góa bat chiáh chhàu tâu-hū.

我 吃過 臭豆腐。

Wǒ chīguò chòu dòufu.

I have eaten stinky tofu before.

伊從來 毋捌駛車。

I chêng-lâi m̄ bat sái chhia.

她從來 沒開過 車。

Tā cónglái méi kāiguò chē.

She has never driven a car before.

8.3.2 Experiential aspect with 過 -kòe

The suffix 過 -kòe can be placed after the verb to indicate the experiential aspect. The character 過 literally means ‘to cross, to go over’ but can be used in a more figurative sense to have ‘gone over’ an experience. Often 有 ū is added as an emphasis marker (see [10.2.4 有 ū as an emphasis marker](#)). The negative form of the 過 -kòe construction is to place 無 bô before the verb. When put in the negative form, 從來 chêng-lâi ‘from the beginning’ or an adverb with a similar meaning is frequently added to lend the meaning of ‘never’. Additionally, 過 --kòe is placed in the neutral tone at the end of clauses or sentences and preceded by a double-hyphen.

(有) + verb + 過

(ū) + verb + -kòe

我有 食過 臭豆腐。

Góa ū chiáh-kòe chhàu tâu-hū.

我 吃過 臭豆腐。

Wǒ chīguò chòu dòufu.

I have eaten stinky tofu before.

伊從來 無駛過 車。

I chêng-lâi bô sái-kòe chhia.

她從來 沒開過 車。

Tā cónglái méi kāiguò chē.

She has never driven a car before.

8.3.3 Experiential aspect with both 捌 bat and 過 -kòe

The aspect marker 捌 **bat** and verb suffix 過 **-kòe** can be used in combination to indicate the experiential aspect.

捌 + verb + 過

bat + verb + -kòe

我 捌 食 過 臭 豆腐 。

Góa bat chiáh-kòe chhàu tâu-hū.

我 吃 過 臭 豆腐 。

Wǒ chīguò chòu dòufu.

I have eaten stinky tofu before.

伊 從來 毋 捌 駛 過 車 。

I chêng-lâi m̄ bat sái-kòe chhia.

她 從來 沒 開 過 車 。

Tā cónglái méi kāiguò chē.

She has never driven a car before.

8.4 Anterior aspect

The anterior aspect describes actions that started in the past but have continuing relevance in the present ('She has eaten (*no need to feed her*)', 'We have cleaned our room (*can we play now?*)'). In English, a tense that similarly accomplishes this is commonly referred to as the perfect tense, but this text will use 'anterior aspect' to prevent confusion with the 'perfective aspect' mentioned in (*see [8.1 Perfective aspect](#)*). The anterior aspect can also be used to mark a change in situation or relay new information to the listener.

Taiwanese marks the anterior aspect by placing the particle 矣 **--ah** at the end of a clause or sentence. This particle 矣 **--ah** is always in the neutral tone. The negation of the anterior aspect is 未 **bōe** (also pronounced **bē**) but is more commonly seen as part of the compound 猶未 **iáu-bōe** 'not yet'.

In Mandarin, the equivalent anterior aspect marker is the end-of-sentence particle 了 **le**.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
AFFIRMATIVE		
矣 --ah	了 -le	'has / have + verb-ed'

NEGATIVE

猶未 iáu-bōe 還沒 hái-měi ‘hasn’t / haven’t + verb-ed + yet’

8.4.1 Anterior aspect particle 矣 --ah

The anterior aspect particle 矣 --**ah** only occurs at the end of a clause or sentence and signals that there is relevance in the present arising from a change in situation or new information to the listener. This information can also be emphasized by optionally adding the adverb 已經 í-keng ‘already’.

(已經) + verb + ...矣
 (í-keng) + verb + ...--ah
 ‘(already) has/have verb’

咱 已經 唱過 這條 歌 矣。

Lán í-keng chhiùⁿ-kòe chit tiâu koa--ah.

我們 已經 唱過 這 首 歌 了。

Wǒmen yǐjīng chàngguò zhè shǒu gē le.

We have already sung this song.

外口 天 暗 矣。

Gōa-kháu thiⁿ àm--ah.

外面 天 黑 了。

Wàimiàn tiān hēi le.

Outside the sky has gotten dark.

楊 先生 頭路 猶未 揣著。

Iūⁿ--sian-siⁿ thâu-lō iáu-bōe chhōe--tiòh.

楊 先生 還沒 找到 工作。

Yáng xiānshēng hái-méi zhǎodào gōngzuò.

Mr. Iunn hasn’t found a job yet.

The Taiwanese anterior aspect particle 矣 --**ah** is analogous to the Mandarin end-of-sentence particle 了 le.

8.4.2 Anterior with other aspects

The anterior aspect can co-occur with other aspects.

ANTERIOR AND CONTINUOUS ASPECTS

伊 這馬 咧 行 路 矣。

I chit-má teh kiâⁿ lō--ah.

他 現在 在 走 路 了。

Tā xiànzài zài zǒu lù le.

He is walking now (*as opposed to not before*).

ANTERIOR AND EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS

伊 已經 捌 講 過 矣。

I í-keng bat kóng--kòe--ah.

她 已經 說 過 了。

Tā yǐjīng shuōguò le.

She has already said that before.

ANTERIOR AND TENTATIVE ASPECTS

您 已經 共 塗 跤 掃 掃 矣。

In í-keng kā thō-kha sàu-sàu--ah.

他們 已經 把 地板 打 掃 了。

Tāmen yǐjīng bǎ dìbǎn dǎsǎo le.

They have already cleaned the floor a little.

ANTERIOR AND HABITUAL ASPECTS

我 已經 有 咧 運 動 矣。

Góa í-keng ū teh ūn-tōng--ah.

我 經常 運 動 了。

Wǒ jīngcháng yùndòng le.

I have already been exercising (*regularly*).

ANTERIOR AND PERFECTIVE ASPECTS

阮 阿兄 大學 有 畢 業 矣。

Gún a-hiaⁿ tāi-hák ū pit-giáp--ah.

我 哥哥 是 大學 畢 業 了。

Wǒ gēgē shì dàxué bìyè le.

My older brother has graduated college (*emphasizes he's a college graduate*).

While both the perfective and anterior aspects can refer to actions that happened in the past, the focus differs. The perfective aspect underscores the completion of an action while the anterior aspect looks at how an action (completed or not) has relevance to the present.

Because Mandarin uses the same character for both the perfective 了 **-le** and the end-of-sentence anterior aspect 了 **le**, there are instances where a sentence could end in 了 **le** and have either or both interpretations concurrently. This can occur when a verb is at the end of a sentence.

8.5 Habitual aspect

8.5.1 Habitual actions in the present

To indicate habitual actions in the present, 有 **ū** combined with the dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** can be placed in front of the verb. Note that if a time expression is provided, the addition of 有 咧 **ū teh** before the verb is optional.

有 + 咧 + *verb*

ū + teh + *verb*

您 拜六 有 咧 騎 車 去 公園。

In pài-lák ū teh khiâ chhia khi kong-hîg.

他們 禮拜六 經常 騎 車 去 公園。

Tāmen lǐbàiliù jīngcháng qí chē qù gōngyuán.

They ride their bicycles to the park on Saturdays.

早起時 伊 做 瑜伽。

Chá-khí-sī i chò jû-ka.

早上 的 時候 他 做 瑜伽。

Zǎoshang de shíhòu tā zuò yújiā.

In the mornings he does yoga.

Note that Mandarin generally does not have a direct equivalent to mark the habitual aspect in the present. Instead, an adverb such as 經常 **jīngcháng** ‘regularly’ can be used to convey a habitual action.

However, similar to Taiwanese, in Taiwan Mandarin 有在 **yǒu zài** is used colloquially to express the habitual aspect.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

他們 禮拜六 有 在 騎 車 去 公園。

Tāmen lǐbàiliù yǒu zài qí chē qù gōngyuán.

They ride their bicycles to the park on Saturdays.

8.5.2 Habitual actions in the past

To describe the habitual past ('I used to swim' or 'She used to sing'), a time expression can be added to emphasize that an action occurred regularly in the past.

time expression (past) + 有 + 咧 + verb

time expression (past) + ū + teh + verb

'used to verb'

我 五冬前 有 咧 啉 咖啡。

Góa gō-tang-chêng ū teh lim ka-pi.

我 五年前 經常 喝 咖啡。

Wǒ wǔ nián qián jīngcháng hē kāfēi.

Five years ago, I used to drink coffee.

An alternate form to express habitual aspect in the past is to use a combination of time expressions, relative frequency adverbs, and the referential adverb 攞 **lóng**, which are all placed before the verb (see [27.3 Habitual actions in the past](#)).

time expression + relative frequency adverb + 攞 + verb

time expression + relative frequency adverb + lóng + verb

'time ago, used to always verb frequency'

我 五冬前 逐日 攞 啉 咖啡。

Góa gō-tang-chêng tàk-jit lóng lim ka-pi.

我 五年前 每天 都 喝 咖啡。

Wǒ wǔ nián qián měitiān dōu hē kāfēi.

Five years ago, I used to always drink coffee everyday.

8.6 Tentative aspect

The tentative aspect looks at actions that are only performed 'for a little while' or 'to try out something'. Note that only action verbs can be placed in the tentative aspect. Taiwanese has four

methods of expressing the tentative aspect: reduplication of the verb, adding the phrase 一下 **chit-ē**, adding the phrase 看覓 **khòaⁿ-māi**, and attaching the verb to 試 **chhi** ‘to try’.

Similar to Taiwanese, Mandarin can express the tentative aspect with reduplication of the verb, the addition of the phrase 一下 **yíxià**, and verb reduplication with the suffix 看 **-kàn**. However, the Mandarin construction *verb* + 一 **yī** + *verb* (看一看 **kànyikàn**, 走一走 **zǒuyizǒu**) does not have an exact equivalent in Taiwanese.

8.6.1 Reduplicating the verb

Reduplicating a verb suggests that the action is performed for a short unspecified amount of time. The reason for performing an action in the tentative aspect is not made explicit, but the reason can range from not sufficient time to hesitancy.

verb + *verb*

食了了後，咱來公園行行。

Chiáh liáu liáu-āu, lán lái kong-hng kiâⁿ-kiâⁿ.

吃飯之後，我們來走走。

Chī fàn zhīhòu, wǒmen lái zǒuzǒu ba.

After we eat, let's go walk a little.

買這本冊進前，我欲先看看。

Bé chit pún chheh chìn-chêng, góa beh seng khòaⁿ-khòaⁿ.

買這本書之前，我要先看看。

Mǎi zhè běn shū zhīqián, wǒ yào xiān kànkàn.

I want to read this book a little before I buy it.

這罐牛奶敢有歹去矣？共我鼻鼻咧。

Chit kòan gû-leng kám ū pháiⁿ--khì--ah? Kā góa phīⁿ-phīⁿ--leh.

這瓶牛奶壞了沒有？幫我聞聞看。

Zhè píng niúniǎi huàile méi yǒu? Bāng wǒ wénwénkàn.

Can you sniff this milk for me to see if it's gone bad?

8.6.2 Adding the phrase 一下 --chit-ē

Placing the phrase 一下 --chit-ē ‘a little bit’ after the verb shortens the duration of the action and can indicate the tentative aspect. Note that the phrase 一下 --chit-ē is always in the neutral tone when suffixed to a verb.

verb + 一下

verb + --chit-ē

食了了後，咱來公園行一下。

Chiáh liáu liáu-āu, lán lâi kong-hng kiâⁿ--chit-ē.

吃飯之後，我們來走一下吧。

Chī fàn zhīhòu, wǒmen lái zǒu yīxià ba.

After we eat, let's go walk a little.

買這本冊進前，我欲先看一下。

Bé chit pún chheh chìn-chêng, góa beh seng khòaⁿ--chit-ē.

買這本書之前，我要先看一下。

Mǎi zhè běn shū zhīqián, wǒ yào xiān kàn yīxià.

I want to read this book a little before I buy it.

這罐牛奶敢有歹去矣？共我鼻一下看。

Chit kòan gû-leng kám ū phâiⁿ--khì--ah? Kā góa phîⁿ--chit-ē khòaⁿ?

這瓶牛奶壞了沒有？幫我聞一下看。

Zhè píng niúnǎi huàile méi yǒu? Bāng wǒ wén yīxià kàn?

Can you sniff this milk for me to see if it's gone bad?

8.6.3 Adding the phrase 看覓 khòaⁿ-māi

Placing the phrase 看覓 khòaⁿ-māi after the verb can indicate the tentative aspect but only to express a desire ‘to test out’ or ‘to try out’. Note if the main verb itself is 看 khòaⁿ ‘to look, to read’, only the suffix 覓 -māi needs to be added.

verb + 看覓

verb + khòaⁿ-māi

食了了後，咱來去新公園行看覓。

Chiáh liáu liáu-āu, lán lâi khì sin kong-hng kiâⁿ khòaⁿ-māi.

吃飯之後，我們去新公園走走看吧。

Chī fàn zhīhòu, wǒmen qù xīn gōngyuán zǒuzǒu kàn ba.

After we eat, let's go for a walk and check out the new park.

買這本冊進前，我欲先看覓。

Bé chit pún chheh chìn-chêng, góa beh seng khòaⁿ-māi.

買這本書之前，我要先看看。

Mǎi zhè běn shū zhīqián, wǒ yào xiān kànkàn.

I want to read this book a little before I buy it.

這罐牛奶敢有歹去矣？共我鼻看覓。

Chit kòan gû-leng kám ū pháiⁿ--khì--ah? Kā góa phīⁿ khòaⁿ-māi.

這瓶牛奶壞了沒有？幫我聞聞看。

Zhè píng niúnǎi huàile méi yǒu? Bāng wǒ wénwénkàn.

Can you sniff this milk for me to see if it's gone bad?

8.6.4 Attaching verbs to 試 chhì

Placing 試 **chhì** ‘to try’ before a verb can also indicate the tentative aspect.

試 + verb

chhì- + verb

我若無試啉，我按怎知這罐紅酒有好啉？

Góa nā bô chhì-lim, góa án-nóa chai chit kòan âng-chiú ū hó lim?

如果我沒有喝喝看，我怎麼知道這瓶紅酒好不好喝？

Rúguǒ wǒ méiyǒu hēhēkàn, wǒ zěnmē zhīdào zhè píng hóngjiǔ hǎobùhǎo hē?

If I don't sip any, how do I know if this bottle of red wine is any good?

你先試穿這領褲，無適合，我閣揣一領。

Lí seng chhì-chhēng chit niá khò, bô sek-háp, góa koh chhōe chit niá.

你先穿穿看這件褲子，不適合的話，我再找一件。

Nǐ xiān chuānchuānkàn zhè jiàn kùzi, bù shìhé de huà, wǒ zài zhǎo yī jiàn.

First try on this pair of pants. If they don't suit you, then I'll find another pair.

試 **chhì** can also be followed by 一下 --**chit-ē** or 看覓 **khòaⁿ-māi** as a general phrase to express ‘to try out’ or ‘to test out’.

我挂才煮好的湯，你敢欲試一下？

Góa tú-chiah chú hó ê thng, lí kám beh chhì--chit-ē?

我剛才煮完的湯，你要不要喝喝看？

Wǒ gāngcái zhǔwán de tāng, nǐ yàobùyào hēhēkàn?

Do you want to try a little of the soup I just finished making?

這領膨紗衫，試看覓。

Chit niá phòng-se-saⁿ, chhì khòaⁿ-māi.

這件毛衣，試試看。

Zhè jiàn máoyī, shìshìkàn.

Try on this sweater.

Note that Taiwan Mandarin tends to use the structure *verb + verb + 看 kàn* to indicate the tentative aspect, while in Standard Mandarin the structure tends to be 試 *shì* + 試 *shì* + *verb*.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

verb + verb + 看

verb + verb + kàn

吃吃看

chīchīkàn

to try eating, to taste

STANDARD MANDARIN

試 + 試 + *verb*

shì + shì + *verb*

試試吃

shìshìchī

8.7 Summary of aspect

PERFECTIVE

有ū (無 bō) + *verb*

verb + 了 liáu

verb + 完 ōan

verb + 好 hó

verb + 煞 soah

CONTINUOUS

DYNAMIC

咧 teh + *verb*

STATIC

verb + 咧 --leh

EXPERIENTIAL捌 bat + *verb**verb* + 過 -kòe捌 bat + *verb* + 過 -kòe**ANTERIOR***verb* + 矣 --ah**HABITUAL****PRESENT**有咧 ū teh + *verb***PAST***time expression* + 有咧 ū teh + *verb**time expression* + *relative frequency* + 攞 lóng + *verb***TENTATIVE***verb* + *verb**verb* + 一下 chit-ē*verb* + 看覓 khòaⁿ-māi試 chhì + *verb*

9 Stative Verbs

Stative verbs generally involve actions dealing with the mind, including cognition (to know, to remember, to understand), intentions (to plan, to prepare, to decide), emotions (to like or love, to fear, to be happy), and bodily sensations (to be hungry, to be thirsty, to be sore).

Because stative verbs in essence describe a ‘state’, they often share properties with adjectives. Similar to adjectives, stative verbs may be modified by intensifiers, used in comparison structures, and followed by extent structures. Unlike action verbs, stative verbs cannot be placed in the perfective or experiential aspects. Additionally, stative verbs cannot be followed by durational or frequency complements.

9.1 Common stative verbs

Below is a table of common stative verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
<i>COGNITION</i>		
知影 chai-ia ⁿ	知道 zhīdào	to know
相信 siong-sìn	相信 xiāngxìn	to believe
會記得 ē-kì-tit	記得 jìde	to remember
袂記得 bē-kì-tit	忘記 wàngjì	to forget
了解 liáu-kái	了解 liǎojiě	to understand
<i>INTENTIONS</i>		
拍算 phah-s̀ng	打算 dǎsuàn	to plan
希望 hi-bōng	希望 xīwàng	to hope
開始 khai-sí	開始 kāishǐ	to begin
準備 chún-pī	準備 zhǔnbèi	to prepare
學 òh	學 xué	to learn
<i>EMOTIONS</i>		
愛 ài	愛 ài, 喜歡 xǐhuān	to love, to like

恰意 kah-ì	喜歡 xǐhuān	to like
驚 kia ⁿ	怕 pà	to fear
歡喜 hoa ⁿ -hí	高興 gāoxìng	to be happy
受氣 siū-khì	生氣 shēngqì	to be angry
煩惱 hoan-ló	煩惱 fánnǎo	to be worried

BODILY SENSATIONS

枵 iau	餓 è	to be hungry
渴 khoah	渴 kě	to be thirsty
痠 sng	痠痛 suāntòng	to be sore
病 pē ⁿ	病 bìng	to be sick
感覺 kám-kak	感到 gǎndào	to feel

9.2 Stative verbs and intensifiers

Like adjectives, stative verbs dealing with emotions can be modified by intensifiers (see [6.1 Intensifiers](#)). However, note that one-syllable stative verbs do not require a default placeholder intensifier. If 真 **chin** ‘very’ precedes a one-syllable stative verb, the meaning of ‘very’ does apply.

(intensifier) + one-syllable stative verb

伊 驚 狗。

I kiaⁿ káu.

她 怕 狗。

Tā pà gǒu.

She is afraid of dogs.

阮 阿兄 真 歡喜 提著 獎學金。

Gún a-hiaⁿ chin hoaⁿ-hí theh--tiòh chióng-hák-kim.

我 哥哥 很 高興 拿到 獎學金。

Wǒ gēgē hěn gāoxìng nádao jiǎngxuéjīn.

My brother was very happy to win a scholarship.

9.3 Stative verbs and continuous aspect

The dynamic continuous aspect emphasizes an activity in progress (see [8.2 Continuous aspect](#)). This activity does not necessarily have to be a physical movement (such as throwing or walking), but can be an active mental engagement. As a result, some stative verbs that imply active participation (such as explaining or appreciating) can take the dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh**, while more passive ones (such as fearing or knowing) cannot.

咧 + *active stative verb*

Because stative verbs inherently describe persistent states and mental conditions, generally the static continuous marker 咧 --**leh** is not necessary.

Below is a table of some common stative verbs grouped according to active or passive engagement.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
<i>ACTIVE</i>		
開始 khai-sí	開始 kāishǐ	to begin
準備 chún-pī	準備 zhǔnbèi	to prepare
解釋 kái-sek	解釋 jiěshì	to explain
學 òh	學 xué	to learn
欣賞 him-sióng	欣賞 xīnshǎng	to appreciate
<i>PASSIVE</i>		
愛 ài	愛 ài, 喜歡 xǐhuān	to love, to like
恰意 kah-ì	喜歡 xǐhuān	to like
知影 chai-ia ⁿ	知道 zhīdào	to know
驚 kia ⁿ	怕 pà	to fear
相信 siong-sìn	相信 xiāngxìn	to believe
希望 hi-bōng	希望 xīwàng	to hope

阮小妹 咧 學 芭蕾舞。

Gún sió-mōe teh òh pa-lê bú.

我妹妹 在 學 芭蕾舞。

Wǒ mèimei zài xué bālěi wǔ.

My younger sister is learning ballet.

阮 目前 咧 決定 啥物 時陣 欲 搬厝。

Gún bók-chêng teh koat-tēng siáⁿ-mih sî-chūn beh poaⁿ-chhù.

我們 目前 在 決定 什麼 時候 要 搬家。

Wǒmen mùqián zài juédìng shénme shíhòu yào bānjiā.

We are deciding on when we should move.

9.4 Stative verbs in the past

Stative verbs cannot be placed in the perfective or experiential aspects. To indicate that a stative verb has occurred in the past, a time expression or time adverb must be used (see [27.1 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the past](#)). Compare the examples below using both stative and action verbs.

time expression / time adverb + stative verb

ACTION VERB WITH PERFECTIVE ASPECT

我頂禮拜這份報告寫了。

Góa téng lé-pài chit hūn pò-kò siá liáu.

我上個禮拜寫了這份報告。

Wǒ shàng gè lǐbài xiě zhè fèn bàogào.

I wrote this report last week.

STATIVE VERB WITH TIME EXPRESSION

我頂禮拜這份報告準備。

Góa téng lé-pài chit hūn pò-kò chún-pī.

我上個禮拜準備這份報告。

Wǒ shàng gè lǐbài zhǔnbèi zhè fèn bàogào.

I prepared this report last week.

ACTION VERB WITH EXPERIENTIAL ASPECT

林小姐已經共你講過。

Lîm sió-chiá í-keng kā lí kóng--kòe.

林小姐已經跟你說過。

Lín xiǎojiě yǐjīng gēn nǐ shuōguò.

Ms. Lim has already said this to you before.

STATIVE VERB WITH TIME ADVERB

林小姐已經共你解釋。

Lîm sió-chiá í-keng kā lí kái-sek.

林小姐已經跟你解釋。

Lín xiǎojiě yǐjīng gēn nǐ jiěshì.

Ms. Lim has already explained this to you before.

10 Special verbs

This chapter gives special treatment to three common verbs 是 *sī*, 有 *ū*, and 佇 *ū*, which all have several grammatical functions within Taiwanese.

10.1 是 *sī*

是 *sī* functions as a linking verb, a focusing marker, a passive voice marker, and also a verb indicating existence. The negative form of 是 *sī* is 毋是 *m̄-sī* in all cases.

10.1.1 是 *sī* as a linking verb

Linking verbs are used to ‘equate’ or ‘link’ two nouns. In English, a form of the verb ‘to be’ often accomplishes this task (such as ‘She is the boss’ or ‘We are the winners’).

伊 是 美國 人。

I sī Bí-kok lâng.

他 是 美國 人。

Tā shì Měiguó rén.

He is American (*He = American*).

我 是 王 先生。

Góa sī Ông--sian-siⁿ.

我 是 王 先生。

Wǒ shì Wáng xiānshēng.

I am Mr. Ong (*I = Mr. Ong*).

10.1.2 是 *sī* in the focusing construction

是 **sī** can be used to indicate emphasis whether by focusing attention or indicating contrast. Sometimes referred to as the 是 **sī**...的 --ê focusing construction, 是 **sī** is placed immediately before whichever element is under focus or to be given additional vocal emphasis. The particle 的 --ê is often omitted, but if used, 的 --ê must come at the end of the clause or sentence and be placed in the neutral tone. Additionally, 是 **sī** must occur before the main verb.

是 + *item for emphasis* + (的)

sī + *item for emphasis* + (--ê)

ORIGINAL SENTENCE

我明仔載 和 阿媽 欲 去 機場。

Góa bîn-á-chài hām a-má beh khi ki-tiûⁿ.

我 明天 和 奶奶 要 去 機場。

Wǒ míngtiān hé nǎinai yào qù jīchǎng.

I will go with grandma to the airport tomorrow.

Bold indicates vocal stress in the examples below.

EMPHASIS ON WITH WHOM

我明仔載 **是** 和 阿媽 欲 去 機場 (的)。

Góa bîn-á-chài **sī hām a-má** beh khi ki-tiûⁿ (--ê).

我 明天 **是** 和 奶奶 要 去 機場 (的)。

Wǒ míngtiān **shì hé nǎinai** yào qù jīchǎng (de).

It is with grandma with whom I will go to the airport tomorrow.

EMPHASIS ON WHEN

我 **是** 明仔載 和 阿媽 欲 去 機場 (的)。

Góa **sī bîn-á-chài** hām a-má beh khi ki-tiûⁿ (--ê).

我 **是** 明天 和 奶奶 要 去 機場 (的)。

Wǒ **shì míngtiān** hé nǎinai yào qù jīchǎng (de).

It is tomorrow that I will go with grandma to the airport.

EMPHASIS ON WHAT ACTIVITY

我明仔載 和 阿媽 **是** 欲 去 機場 (的)。

Góa bîn-á-chài hām a-má **sī beh khi ki-tiûⁿ** (--ê).

我 明天 和 奶奶 **是** 要 去 機場 (的)。

Wǒ míngtiān hé nǎinai **shì yào qù jīchǎng** (de).

It is going to the airport that I will do with grandma tomorrow.

Note that the emphasis conveyed with 是 **sī** is slightly different from that given by 有 **ū** (see [10.2.4 有 ū as an emphasis marker](#)).

是 SĪ INDICATING EMPHASIS

我昨昏暗 是 食 兩 碗 飯。

Góa cha-hng-àm sī chiáh n̄ng óaⁿ p̄ng.

我昨晚 是 吃 兩 碗 飯。

Wǒ zuówǎn shì chī liǎng wǎn fàn.

I ate two bowls of rice last night (*as opposed to eating something else*).

有 Ū INDICATING EMPHASIS

我昨昏暗 有 食 兩 碗 飯。

Góa cha-hng-àm ū chiáh n̄ng óaⁿ p̄ng.

我昨晚 吃了 兩 碗 飯 啊。

Wǒ zuówǎn chīle liǎng wǎn fàn a.

I did eat two bowls of rice last night (*as opposed to not eating at all*).

10.1.3 是 sī marking the passive voice

The 是 sī...的 --ê construction can also be used for passive voice sentences. In contrast to the 予 hō' construction, which can only be used for passive sentences in adverse circumstances (see [19.1 Passive marker 予 hō](#)), 是 sī...的 --ê can be used in neutral or positive contexts.

阮阿母 是 入選 做 校長的。

Gún a-bú sī jip-sóan chò hāu-tiúⁿ--ê.

我媽媽 是 入選 為 校長的。

Wǒ māmā shì rùxuǎn wèi xiàozhǎng de.

My mother was chosen to be principal.

這張批 是 阮阿祖 寫的。

Chit tiuⁿ phoe sī gún a-chó'siá--ê.

這封信 是 我曾祖父 寫的。

Zhè fēng xìn shì wǒ zēngzǔfù xiě de.

This letter is written by my great-grandfather.

10.1.4 是 sī expressing existence

是 sī can be used to express existence. Related to its use as a linking verb to equate two nouns, existence can be conveyed through a metaphorical connection between a location and a noun. By stating that a location ‘is’ another noun, the location is understood to be completely occupied by the noun.

location + 是 + *noun*

location + sī + *noun*

頭前 是 教室。

Thâu-chêng sī kàu-sek.

前面 是 教室。

Qiánmiàn shì jiàoshì.

The front is the classroom.

飯店的頂樓 是 游泳池。

Png-tiàm ê téng-lâu sī iû-éng-tī.

飯店的頂樓 是 游泳池。

Fàndiàn de dǐnglóu shì yóuyǒngchí.

On the hotel roof is a pool.

This usage differs slightly from how 有 ū expresses existence. 有 ū accounts for the nouns at a particular location but does not preclude the possibility of other items at that location (see [10.2.2 有 ū expresses existence](#)). 是 sī, on the other hand, suggests that the noun is the only thing wholly existing at the location.

是 sī SHOWING EXISTENCE

第二樓 是 健身房。

Tē-jī lāu sī kiān-sin-pāng.

第二樓 是 健身房。

Dìer lóu shì jiànshēnfáng.

The second floor is a gym.

有 ū SHOWING EXISTENCE

第二樓 有 健身房。

Tē-jī lāu ū kiān-sin-pāng.

第二樓 有 健身房。

Dìer lóu yǒu jiànshēnfáng.

The second floor has a gym.

伊的塗跤攏 是 衫。

I ê thô-kha lóng sī saⁿ.

她的地板上都是衣服。

Tā de dìbǎn shàng dōu shì yīfú.

Her floor is just covered in clothes.

伊的塗跤攏 有 衫。

I ê thô-kha lóng ū saⁿ.

她的地板上都有衣服。

Tā de dìbǎn shàng dōu yǒu yīfú.

There are a lot of clothes on her floor.

10.2 有 ū

有 ū has many functions in Taiwanese as both a verb and grammatical particle. As a verb, 有 ū expresses possession and existence. As a grammatical particle, 有 ū can be used for the perfective aspect, for emphasis, for the habitual aspect, for verb complements, and for desirable adjectives. The negation of 有 ū in all these contexts is 無 bô.

10.2.1 有 ū expressing possession

有 ū can be used as a stative verb to express possession.

洪小姐有兩個兄弟。

Âng sió-chiá ū n̄ng ê hiaⁿ-tī.

洪小姐有兩個兄弟。

Hóng xiǎojiě yǒu liǎng gè xiōngdì.

Ms. Ang has two brothers.

這間套房有露台。

Chit keng thò-pâng ū lô-tâi.

這間套房有陽台。

Zhè jiān tàofáng yǒu yángtái.

This apartment has a balcony.

10.2.2 有 ū expressing existence

When the subject is a time or location, 有 ū can express existence which often translates into English as ‘there is/are’. The location or time may optionally be preceded by the preposition 佇 tī ‘on, at, in’.

(佇) + *location / time* + 有

(tī) + *location / time* + ū

‘there is/are...’

佇公園內有游泳池。

Tī kong-hûng-lāi ū iû-êng-tī.

在公園有游泳池。

Zài gōngyuán yǒu yóuyǒngchí.

There is a swimming pool in the park.

明仔早起 有 會議。

Bîn-á-chái-khí ū hōe-gī.

明天 早上 有 會議。

Míngtiān zǎoshang yǒu huìyì.

Tomorrow morning there is a meeting.

(遮) 有 車禍 無?

(Chia) ū chhia-hō--bô?

(這裡) 有 車禍 嗎?

(Zhèlǐ) yǒu chēhuò ma?

Was there a car accident (here)?

桌仔頂 無 碗箸。

Toh-á-téng bô óaⁿ-tī.

桌上 沒有 餐具。

Zhuōshàng méiyǒu cānjù.

There are no utensils or tableware on the table.

Note that some sentences with locations as the subject may translate 有 ū either as possession or existence depending on emphasis.

日本 有 真 濟 櫻花。

Jīt-pún ū chīn chē eng-hoe.

日本 有 很 多 櫻花。

Rìběn yǒu hěn duō yīnghuā.

Japan has many cherry trees.

There are many cherry trees in Japan.

10.2.3 有 ū as a perfective aspect maker

The perfective aspect describes actions that have been fully completed and generally describes events in the past (see [8.1 Perfective aspect](#)). While in Taiwanese there are several ways to put a verb in the perfective aspect, one approach places 有 ū before the verb.

王老師 有 予 我 一 本 課本。

Ông lâu-su ū hō góa chit pún khò-pún.

王老師 給了 我一本課本。

Wáng lǎoshī gěile wǒ yī běn kèběn.

Mr. Ong, our teacher, gave me a textbook.

阿母 有 替阮洗衫。

A-bú ū thè gún sé saⁿ.

媽媽 幫 我們 洗了 衣服。

Māmā bāng wǒmen xǐle yīfú.

Mom washed our clothes for us.

Mandarin uses the verb suffix 了 **-le** to mark the perfective aspect.

10.2.4 有 ū as an emphasis marker

有 **ū** can be used to emphasize that an action is indeed occurring or did in fact occur in the past. When emphasizing that an action is occurring in the present, generally the dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** is used in conjunction with 有 **ū** ('He is flying') (see [8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect](#)).

有 + 咧 + *verb*

ū + teh + *verb*

紅嬰仔 有 咧 講話!

Âng-eⁿ-á ū teh kóng ōe!

嬰兒 在 說話 啊!

Yīng'ér zài shuō huà a!

The baby is talking!

Note that in Standard Mandarin emphasis in the present is generally marked by the end-of-sentence particle 啊 **a**. However, in Taiwan Mandarin, some speakers may use 有 **yǒu** as an emphasis marker similar to that of Taiwanese.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

嬰兒 有在 說話!

Yīng'ér ū zài shuō huà!

The baby is talking!

The use of 有 **ū** as an emphasis marker in the past is similar to the English usage of 'did' in the past tense ('She did give me the keys'). Note the continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** is dropped and only 有 **ū**

is placed before the verb. Depending on context, the meaning of the sentence can be interpreted as a simple completed action in the perfective aspect or one which additionally has an emphasis marker. This ambiguity may occur when the 有 *ū* is used for indicating the perfective aspect (see [8.1.1 Perfective aspect with 有 *ū*](#)).

有 + verb

ū + verb

伊 有 敲 電話 予 朋友。

I *ū* khà tiān-ōe hō pêng-iú.

她 有 打 電話 給 朋友 啊 / 她 打了 電話 給 朋友。

Tā *yōu dǎ* diànhuà gěi péngyǒu a / Tā *dǎle* diànhuà gěi péngyǒu.

She *did call* her friend (*emphasis*) / She *called* her friend (*perfective aspect*).

If the sentence uses a phase complement to indicate the perfective aspect (了 *liáu*, 完 *ôan*, 好 *hó*, 煞 *soah*), 有 *ū* placed before a verb is unambiguously an emphasis marker (see [8.1.2 Perfective aspect with phase complements](#)).

有 + verb + phase complement

ū + verb + phase complement

伊 有 敲 了 予 朋友。

I *ū* khà liáu hō pêng-iú.

她 有 打 電話 給 朋友 啊。

Tā *yōu dǎ* diànhuà gěi péngyǒu a.

She *did call* her friend (*emphasis*).

10.2.5 有 *ū* as a habitual aspect marker

有 *ū* can be used to describe habitual actions in the present. In conjunction with the dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 *teh*, 有 *ū* can be placed before a verb. Note that if a time expression is provided, the addition of 有咧 *ū teh* before the verb is optional (see [8.5.1 Habitual actions in the present](#)).

有 + 咧 + verb

ū + *teh* + verb

李 小姐 下 早時仔 有 咧 泗 水。

Lí sió-chiá e-chái-sí-á *ū teh* siû chúí.

李小姐在早上經常游泳。

Lǐ xiǎojiě zài zǎoshang jīngcháng yóuyóǒng.

Ms. Li swims every morning.

For habitual actions in the past, a time expression or time adverb must be used to express that one ‘used to’ do an action in the past (see [8.5.2 Habitual actions in the past](#)).

time expression (past) + 有 + 咧 + verb

time expression (past) + ū + teh + verb

‘used to verb’

彼陣阿公有咧淋酒。

Hit chūn a-kong ū teh lim chiú.

那時候爺爺經常喝酒。

Nà shíhòu yěyě jīngcháng hē jiǔ.

At that time, grandpa used to drink alcohol.

Note that Standard Mandarin generally does not have a direct equivalent to mark the habitual aspect. Instead, an adverb such as 經常 **jīngcháng** ‘regularly’ can be used to convey a habitual action. However, Taiwan Mandarin often places 有在 **yǒu zài** before the verb, similar to Taiwanese.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

李小姐在早上有在游泳。

Lǐ xiǎojiě zài zǎoshang yǒu zài yóuyóǒng.

Ms. Li swims every morning.

那時候爺爺有在喝酒。

Nà shíhòu yěyě yǒu zài hē jiǔ.

At that time, grandpa used to drink alcohol.

10.2.6 有 ū with verb complements

有 ū can appear in verb complement constructions for both phase complements and potential complements.

10.2.6.1 Phase complements with 有 ū

有 ū can be used in both phase complements indicating achievements and those indicating potential. Structurally, both types of complements are the same. However, the difference comes from the interpretation of the meaning. Phase complements indicating achievement state whether the action from the main verb has been achieved or completed. In contrast, phase complements indicating potential comment only on the *ability* of the main verb to complete the verb. Phase complements indicating potential only apply to verbs relating to the senses (see, hear, feel, taste, etc.).

main verb + 有

main verb + ū

PHASE COMPLEMENT INDICATING ACHIEVEMENT

門票你敢買有?

Mîng-phiò lí kám bé ū?

你買到了門票嗎?

Nǐ mǎidàole ménpiào ma?

Did you buy the tickets?

PHASE COMPLEMENT INDICATING POTENTIAL

爵士樂你敢聽有?

Chiak-sū-gák lí kám thiaⁿ ū?

你聽得懂爵士音樂嗎?

Nǐ tīngdedǒng juéshì yīnyuè ma?

Do you understand jazz music?

10.2.6.2 Potential complements with 有 ū

有 ū can appear within potential verb complement constructions (see [11.4 Potential complements](#)). The 有 ū joins the verb to its complement and indicates whether the verb was *able* to achieve the complement. In potential verb complement constructions using 有 -ū-, the events have already occurred, making this construction past-oriented.

verb + 有 + *complement*

verb + -ū- + *complement*

‘by doing *verb* was able to achieve *complement*’

睏十點鐘應該睏有飽。

Khùn cháp tiám-cheng eng-kai khùn-ū-pá.

睡十個小時應該睡得飽。

Shuì shí gè xiǎoshí yīnggāi shuìdebǎo.

Sleeping for 10 hours should be enough sleep.

坐 踎 遐 敢 看 有 著?

Chē tà̍m hia kám khòaⁿ-ū-tiòh?

坐 在 那 裡 看 得 到 嗎?

Zuò zài nàlǐ kàndedào ma?

Were you able to see by sitting there?

Mandarin does not have an exact equivalent to the actualized potential complement form. The distinction is not overtly made but left to interpretation of the context. At times, Mandarin translations will make use of the simple past tense form or the potential complement 得 **-de-**, which does not distinguish between an actualized or unrealized potential such as in Taiwanese (see [11.4 Potential complements](#)).

您 這 馬 聽 會 著 矣。

In chit-má thiaⁿ-ē-tiòh--ah.

他們 現在 聽 得 到 了。

Tāmen xiànzài tīngdedào le.

They are able to hear it now.

10.2.7 有 ū with desirable adjectives

有 ū can be used before desirable adjectives including those that have been constructed with 好 hó ‘good’ combined with an action verb (好聽 hó-thiaⁿ ‘good sounding’, 好食 hó-chiàh ‘delicious’). Whether an adjective is considered desirable depends on the speaker as well as the noun that is described.

In contrast, 會 ē is used before undesirable adjectives including those formed by combining 歹 pháiⁿ ‘bad’ with action verbs (歹看 pháiⁿ-khòaⁿ ‘ugly’, 歹用 pháiⁿ-ēng ‘hard to use’ (see [6.4 Desirable and undesirable adjectives](#)).

這 台 機車 有 好 駛。

Chit tâi ki-chhia ū hó sái.

這 台 機車 好 騎。

Zhè tái jīchē hǎo qí.

This scooter is easy to drive.

這 種 茶 有 較 好 淋 無?

Chit chióng tê ū khah hó lim bô?

這 種 茶 比 較 好 喝 嗎?

Zhè zhǒng chá bǐjiào hǎo hē ma?

Does this tea taste better?

Note that in Mandarin, 有 **yǒu** is generally not used before adjectives. Instead, the adjective stands alone or has an intensifier added.

10.3 佇 tī

佇 **tī** can be used as a verb to indicate existence at a specific location, a preposition specifying ‘at’, ‘on’, or ‘in’ a location, and a continuous aspect marker 佇咧 **tī-leh**.

10.3.1 佇 tī expressing existence at a specific location

佇 **tī** can be used as a verb to show existence at a specific location. The negative form is 無佇 **bô tī**.

阮囡仔 佇 學校。

Gún gín-á tī hák-hāu.

我 孩子 在 學校。

Wǒ háizi zài xuéxiào.

My children are at school.

棉被 攏 佇 櫃仔。

Mī-phōe lóng tī kúi-á.

棉被 都 在 櫃子。

Miánbèi dōu zài guìzi.

The blankets are all in the cabinet.

10.3.2 佇 tī as a preposition

佇 **tī** can also be used as a preposition indicating ‘at’, ‘on’, or ‘in’ a specific location or point in time. An alternate form of the preposition is 佇咧 **tī-leh**.

您 佇 辦公室 食 中晝頓。

In tī pān-kong-sek chiáh tiong-tàu-tng.

他們 在 辦公室 吃 午餐。

Tāmen zài bàngōngshì chī wǔcān.

They are eating lunch at the office.

我 佇 眠床頂 看 冊。

Góa tī bîn-chhng-téng khòaⁿ chheh.

我 在 床上 看 書。

Wǒ zài chuángshàng kàn shū.

I am reading in bed.

你的 貓仔 覆 佇 桌仔頂。

Lí ê niau-á phak tī toh-á-téng.

你的 貓 趴 在 桌子上。

Nǐ de māo pā zài zhuōzi shàng.

Your cat is lying on the table.

咱 佇 下晡 已經 約 伊 去 看 電影。

Lán tī ē-po í-keng iok i khi khòaⁿ tiān-iaⁿ.

我們 在 下午 已經 約 她 去 看 電影。

Wǒmen zài xiàwǔ yǐjīng yuē tā qù kàn diànyǐng.

We've already planned to watch a movie with her in the afternoon.

楊 老師 倚 佇咧 遐。

Iūⁿ lāu-su khiā tī-leh hia.

楊 老師 站著 那裡。

Yáng lǎoshī zhànzhe nàlǐ.

The teacher, Mr. Iunn, is standing over there.

10.3.3 佇咧 tī-leh as a continuous aspect marker

佇咧 **tī-leh** can be used as a dynamic continuous aspect marker, indicating that a verb is already in progress (see [8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect](#)). Compared to the basic form 咧 **teh**, the use of 佇咧 **tī-leh** emphasizes the immediacy of the action.

謝 小姐 佇咧 看 冊。

Siā sió-chiá tī-leh khòaⁿ chheh.

謝小姐 正在 看書。

Xiè xiǎojiě zhèngzài kàn shū.

Ms. Sia is reading a book (*right now*).

Additionally, when adding the static continuous aspect marker 咧 **--leh** after the verb 佇 **tī** ‘to be located at’, the meaning shifts slightly to an expression stating whether a person is present or absent.

恁翁這馬無 佇咧。

In ang chit-má bô tī--leh.

她的先生現在不 在。

Tā de xiānshēng xiànzài bù zài.

Her husband is not home right now.

11 Verb complements

Verb complements are like extensions to the verb offering additional information about the action performed. Both Taiwanese and Mandarin use verb complements extensively to give more depth of information to verbs that do not inflect as they do in other languages.

In general, verbs and their complements form a cohesive unit and only in rare circumstances are they separable. Together they form a *verb compound*.

verb compound = verb + complement

Complements themselves range from verbs that can function independently in other settings to bound syllables that only appear within the verb compound structure.

11.1 Phase complements

Phase complements indicate the current ‘phase’, or stage, of action for a verb.

11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion

Most phase complements indicate that the action of the main verb has completed or stopped occurring. While the action has stopped, no more is stated about whether the action was completed successfully or performed to a desired end. In contrast with resultative verb complements, which focus on the outcome of the verb, the focus of phase complements is on the action of the main verb itself (see [11.2 Resultative complements](#)).

The four primary phase complements indicating completion are in the table below.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
了 liáu	完 -wán	to end
完 ôan	完 -wán	to end
煞 soah	完 -wán	to halt, to pause

好 hó 好 -hǎo to complete sufficiently

verb + 了 / 完 / 煞 / 好

verb + liáu / ôan / soah / hó

我這本冊拄才看了。

Góa chit pún chheh tú-chiah khòaⁿ liáu.

我這本書剛才看完。

Wǒ zhè běn shū gāngcái kànwán.

I am done looking at this book (*may or may not have read the entire book*).

恁的運動猶未做完。

Lín ê ùn-tōng iáu-bōe chò ôan.

你們的運動還沒做完。

Nǐmen de yùndòng háiméi zuòwán.

You still didn't finish doing your exercises.

咱先講煞，就食飯。

Lán seng kóng soah, tō chiah p̄ng.

我們先說完，就吃飯。

Wǒmen xiān shuōwán, jiù chī fàn.

Let's end our discussion and then eat (*we may begin again later*).

彼張申請表，你敢寫好？

Hit tiuⁿ sin-chéng-pió, lí kám siá hó?

那張申請表，你寫好嗎？

Nà zhāng shēnqǐngbiǎo, nǐ xiěhǎo ma?

Are you done filling out that application (*may or may not be filled out well*)?

Phase complements indicating completed actions can also be used to mark the perfective aspect, which describes actions that can be understood in their entirety (beginning, middle, and end) (see [8.1.2 Perfective aspect with phase complements](#)). Note that Taiwanese can also indicate the perfective aspect by placing 有 ū before verb.

伊桌仔拭好。

I toh-á chhit hó.

她桌子擦了。

Tā zhuōzi cāle.

She wiped the table.

這張報紙，我下早看煞。

Chit tiuⁿ pò-chóa, góa e-chái khòaⁿ soah.

這張報紙，我早上看了。

Zhè zhāng bàozhǐ, wǒ zǎoshang kànle.

I read this newspaper in the morning.

In Mandarin, generally places an action into the perfective aspect by suffixing 了 **-le** to the main verb.

11.1.2 Phase complements indicating achievement

Some phase complements specifically indicate whether the action of the main verb has been achieved, or in other words, completed successfully. Verbs that can take this complement are typically those verb actions that can be evaluated by success or failure. For example, the verb 掠 **liáh** ‘to catch’ can only succeed if an object is caught.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
著 -tiòh	到 dào, 著 zháo	to attain, to achieve
有 ū	到 dào, 著 zháo	to obtain

At the end of a clause or sentence, 著 --**tiòh** receives the neutral tone, while 有 **ū** keeps its original tone.

verb + 著 / 有

verb + -tiòh / ū

伊 掠著 鳥鼠仔。

I liáh-tiòh niáu-chhí-á.

他 抓到 老鼠。

Tā zhuādào lǎoshǔ.

He caught the mouse.

新餐廳，你敢 揣有？

Sin chhan-thiaⁿ, lí kám chhōe ū?

新餐廳，你 找到 嗎？

Xīn cāntīng, nǐ zhǎodào ma?

Did you find the new restaurant?

狗咧吠因為伊 聽著 人搥門。

Káu teh pūi in-ūi i thiaⁿ-tiòh lāng lòng m̄ng.

狗在吠因為牠 聽到 人敲門。

Gǒu zài fēi yīnwèi tā tīngdào rén qiāo mén.

The dog is barking because it heard a knock at the door.

這個好主意，阮頭拄仔想著。

Chit ê hó chú-ì, gún thau-tú-á siu--tiòh.

這個好主意，我們剛剛想到。

Zhègè hǎo zhǔyì, wǒmen gānggāng xiǎngdào.

We just thought of this good idea.

11.1.3 Phase complements indicating potential

In addition to indicating achievement, the phase complement 有 -ū can have the interpretation of indicating potential. This interpretation generally only applies to sensory verbs (see, hear, touch, feel, smell, etc.) and comments on the *subject's* ability to succeed or fail at achieving the verb. For example, the phrase 聽有 thiaⁿ ū means that the subject is able to 'listen and understand'.

verb + 有

verb + ū

SENTENCE WITH TWO POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

藝術館的現代圖，你敢看有？

Gē-sùt-kóan ê hiān-tāi tô, lí kám khòaⁿ ū?

POTENTIAL READING

藝術館的現代圖，你看得懂嗎？

Yìshùguǎn de xiàndài tú, nǐ kàndedǒng ma?

Were you able to understand the contemporary paintings in the art museum (*did you have the ability to appreciate them*)?

ACHIEVEMENT READING

藝術館的現代圖，你看到了嗎？

Yìshùguǎn de xiàndài tú, nǐ kàndào le ma?

Did you see the contemporary paintings in the art museum (*did you have a chance to see them before we left*)?

SENTENCE WITH TWO POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

昨暗的紅酒，我攞淋無。

Cha-àm ê âng-chiú, góa lóng lim bô.

POTENTIAL READING

昨晚的紅酒，我喝不出品質。

Zuó wǎn de hóngjiǔ, wǒ hēbùchū pǐnzhí.

I couldn't taste any differences among last night's red wines.

ACHIEVEMENT READING

昨晚的紅酒，我都喝不到。

Zuówǎn de hóngjiǔ, wǒ dōu hēbudào.

I didn't get a chance to drink any of last night's red wines (*wanted to but had no chance*).

11.1.4 Phase complements and objects

The verb and phase complement form a cohesive unit that generally cannot be separated called a *verb compound* (see exceptions in the following sections). When an object is introduced, the object must be placed before or after the verb compound (*main verb + phase complement*).

PATTERN 1

object + verb + phase complement

PATTERN 2

verb + phase complement + **object**

11.1.4.1 Phase complements indicating completion with objects

For phase complements indicating completed actions (了 **liáu**, 完 **ôan**, 煞 **soah**, 好 **hó**), objects are always placed *before* the verb compound. Objects may be placed after the subject or *topicalized* (i.e. put before the subject and set off by a comma) (see [17.2 Topicalized objects](#)).

object + verb + phase complement (*completion*)

彼篇論文，伊寫了。

Hit phiⁿ lûn-bûn, i siá liáu.

那篇論文，她寫完。

Nà piān lùnwén, tā xiěwán.

She finished writing that paper.

阮阿毋共阮的衫洗好矣。

Gún a-bú kâ gún ê saⁿ sé hó--ah.

我們的媽媽把我們的衣服洗好了。

Wǒmen de māmā **bǎ wǒmen de yīfú** xǐhǎo le.

Our mom has finished washing **our clothes**.

Note that Mandarin has more flexibility in placing the object before or after the verb compound. The examples above can also be rewritten in Mandarin with the object *after* the verb compound.

MANDARIN SENTENCES WITH OBJECT AFTER VERB

她 寫完 那 篇 論文。

Tā xiěwán **nà piān lùnwén**.

She finished writing **that paper**.

我們 的 媽媽 洗好 我們 的 衣服 了。

Wǒmen de māmā xǐhǎo **wǒmen de yīfú** le.

Our mom finished washing **our clothes**.

11.1.4.2 Phase complements indicating achievement and potential with objects

For phase complements indicating achievement (著 -**tiòh**, 有 **ū**) or potential (有 **ū**), objects may be placed either *before* or *after* the verb compound.

PATTERN 1

object + verb + phase complement (achievement / potential)

伊 噴 的 芳水， 你 敢 鼻有？

I **phùn ê phang-chúi**, lí kám phīⁿ ū?

她 噴 的 香水， 你 聞到 了 嗎？

Tā **pēn de xiāngshuǐ**, nǐ wéndào le ma?

Did you smell **the perfume she's wearing**?

我 好 朋友， 我 佇 市場 拄著。

Góa hó **pêng-iú**, góa tī chhī-tiūⁿ tú--tiòh.

我 好 朋友， 我 在 市場 遇到。

Wǒ hǎo **péngyǒu**, wǒ zài shìchǎng yùdào.

I bumped into **my good friend** at the market.

教授 的 報告， 我 聽有。

Kàu-siū ê pò-kò, góa thiaⁿ ū.

教授 的 報告， 我 聽得懂。

Jiàoshòu de bàogào, wǒ tīngdedǒng.

I could understand **the professor's lecture**.

PATTERN 2

verb + phase complement (achievement / potential) + object

你敢鼻有伊噴的芳水？

Lí kám phĩ ũ i phùn ê phang-chúi?

你聞到了她噴的香水嗎？

Nĩ wéndào le tā pēn de xiāngshuǐ ma?

Did you smell **the perfume she's wearing**?

我佇市場拄著我好朋友。

Góa tī chhĩ-tiūⁿ tú-tiòh góa hó pēng-iú.

我在市場遇到我好朋友。

Wǒ zài shìchǎng yùdào wǒ hǎo péngyǒu.

I bumped into **my good friend** at the market.

我聽有教授的報告。

Góa thiaⁿ ũ kàu-siū ê pò-kò.

我聽得懂教授的報告。

Wǒ tīngdedǒng jiàoshòu de bàogào.

I could understand **the professor's lecture**.

While a verb and phase complement form a compound that generally cannot be separated, there are a few idiomatic expressions that allow an object (usually a pronoun) to split the main verb and phase complement.

放伊煞

pàng i soah

放過他

fàngguò tā

'to let someone to get away with something'

頭家掠著查某囡仔偷提物仔了後，伊放伊煞。

Thâu-ke liáh-tiòh cha-bó'gín-á thau-thèh mih-á liáu-āu, i pàng i soah.

老闆抓到女孩子偷拿東西之後，他放過她。

Lǎobǎn zhuādào nǚháizi tōuná dōngxī zhīhòu, tā fàngguò tā.

After the shopkeeper caught the little girl stealing, he let **her go**.

看伊有

khòa^a i ũ

看得起 他

kàndeqǐ tā

‘to think highly of someone’

因為 阿公 家己 開店，所以 阮 攏 看 伊 有。

In-ūi a-kong ka-tī khui-tiàm, só-í gún lóng khòa^a i ũ.

因為 爺爺 自己 開店，所以 我們 都 看得起 他。

Yīnwèi yěyě zìjǐ kāidiàn, suǒyǐ wǒmen dōu kàndeqǐ tā.

Because grandpa opened up his own shop, we all think highly of him.

11.2 Resultative complements

Resultative complements (resultatives) indicate a particular outcome as a ‘result’ of the action given by the verb. Often open-ended action verbs take on a resultative complement in order to conclude an action.

11.2.1 Resultative complements from adjectives

Because resultative complements generally describe an outcome, many are adjectives or stative verbs. This allows for a large number of possible resultatives.

RESULTATIVE	EXAMPLE	MEANING
飽 pá ‘full’	食飽 chiáh-pá 吃飽 chībǎo	to eat until full
牢 tiâu ‘sticky’	食牢 chiáh-tiâu 上癮 shàngyǐn	to become addicted
毋著 m̄-tiòh ‘incorrect’	食毋著 chiáh-m̄-tiòh 吃錯 chīcuò	to eat incorrectly

verb + resultative complement

狗仔 食飽 矣，毋通 閣 飼。

Káu-á chiáh-pá--ah, m̄-thang koh chhī.

狗 吃飽 了，不要再 餵。

Gǒu chībǎo le, bù yào zài wèi.

The dog is already full. Do not feed it more.

開始 食薰 真 簡單 食牢。

Khai-sí chiáh-hun chin kan-tan chiáh-tiâu.

開始 抽煙 很 容易 上癮。

Kāishǐ chōuyān hěn róngyì shàngyǐn.

If you start smoking it's very easy to become addicted.

While most resultatives are adjectives, some action verbs can also function as resultatives.

RESULTATIVE	EXAMPLES	MEANING
走 cháu 'to run'	提走 thèh-cháu 拿走 názǒu	to take away
死 sí 'to die'	枵死 iau-sí 餓死 èsǐ	to be dying of hunger
開 khui 'to open'	破開 phòà-khui 剖開 pōukāi	to crack something open

糞埤, 共 我 提走。

Pùn-sò, kā góa thèh-cháu.

垃圾，幫 我 拿走。

Lèsè, bāng wǒ názǒu.

Help me take away the trash.

椰子 已經 破開 矣。

lâ-chí í-keng phòà--khui--ah.

椰子 已經 剖開 了。

Yēzi yǐjīng pōukāi le.

The coconut is already split open.

Below is a table of some common resultative complements.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
了(了) -liáu(-liáu)	光光 guāngguāng	to finish until nothing remains

完 -ôan	完 -wán	to finish completely
好 -hó	好 -hǎo	to do something well
走 -cháu	走 -zǒu	to remove or take away
掉 -tiāu	掉 -diào	to be fully removed
去 -khì, --khì	掉 -diào	to disappear from, to lose
牢 -tiâu	住 -zhù	to stick firmly
死 -sí	死 -sǐ	to die from
開 -khui, --khui	開 -kāi	to be open
飽 -pá	飽 -bào	to be full
醉 -chùi	醉 -zuì	to be drunk
毋著 -m-tiòh	錯 -cuò	to do incorrectly
歹 -phái ⁿ	壞 -huài	to break, to ruin
破 -phòà	破 -pò	to break, to shatter
熟 -sèk	熟 -shóu	to be ripe, fully cooked
湊 -tū ⁿ	滿 -mǎn	to be full (<i>liquids</i>)
做 -chò	做 -zuò, 成 -chéng	to regard as (<i>mistakenly</i>)
成 -sêng	成 -chéng	to successfully complete

注意你坐的火車的時間，毋通坐毋著。

Chù-ì lí chē ê hóe-chhia ê sî-kan, m̄-thang chē-m̄-tiòh.

注意你坐的火車的時間，不要坐錯。

Zhùyì nǐ zuò de huǒchē de shíjiān, bù yào zuòcuò.

Pay attention to the time of the train you're taking. Don't take the wrong one.

阮舊物仔，我攏想欲擲掉。

Gún kū mih-á, góa lóng siuⁿ-beh tàn-tiāu.

我的舊東西，我都想要丟掉。

Wǒ de jiù dōngxī, wǒ dōu xiǎngyào diūdiào.

I would like to throw away all my old things.

因為伊清彩寫字，所以我有看毋著地止。

In-ūi i chhìn-chhái siá jī, só-í góa ū khòaⁿ-m̄-tiòh tē-chí.

因為他隨便寫字，所以我看錯了地址。

Yīnwèi tā suíbiàn xiě zì, suǒyǐ wǒ kàncuòle dìzhǐ.

Because he wrote sloppily, I misread the address.

地動了後，壁攏必開矣。

Tē-tāng liáu-āu, piah lóng pīt--khui--ah.

地震以後，牆壁都裂開了。

Dìzhèn yǐhòu, qiángbì dōu lièkāi le.

After the earthquake, the walls all cracked open.

In the *Pèh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization system, resultative complements are suffixed to the verb with a single hyphen. However, note that some resultative complements (such as 去 --khì and 開 --khui) are put in the neutral tone and written with double-hyphens when occurring at the end of a clause or sentence.

11.2.2 Resultative complements with objects

Generally, the verb and resultative complement form an indivisible unit that cannot be separated (see exceptions in the following sections) called the *verb compound*. When an object is introduced, the object must be placed *before* or *after* the verb compound. That said, not every type of object may be placed in either position.

PATTERN 1

object + verb + resultative complement

PATTERN 2

verb + resultative complement + **object**

11.2.2.1 Indefinite objects

Indefinite objects, which refer to objects that are not known to the listener (a book, two pencils, some chairs), are *always* placed *after* the verb compound (see [4.9 Definite and indefinite nouns](#)).

verb + resultative complement + **indefinite object**

伊 搥破 一寡 杯仔。

I lóng-phòà chit-kóa poe-á.

他 弄破 一些 杯子。

Tā nòngpò yīxiē bēizi.

He broke **a few cups**.

總舖師 切開 兩個 金瓜。

Chóng-phò-sai chhiat-khui **n̄ng ê kim-koe**.

廚師 切開 兩個南瓜。

Chúshī qiēkāi liǎng gè nánguā.

The chef cut open two pumpkins.

11.2.2.2 Definite objects

With definite objects, which refer to objects known to the listener (the book, these pencils), the object can be placed in both positions: either *before* the main verb or *after* the verb complement (see [4.8 Definite and indefinite nouns](#)). However, note that individual preference may vary. When the object is moved before the main verb, the object can be *topicalized* (i.e. placed before the subject and set off by a comma) or introduced by the preposition 共 *kā* (see [17.2 Topicalized objects](#), [17.4 共 *kā* construction](#)).

PATTERN 1

definite object + verb + resultative complement

我的杯仔，伊 (共 您) 搥破。

Góa ê poe-á, i (kā in) lóng-phò.

我的杯子，他 弄破 了。

Wǒ de bēizi, tā nòngpò le.

He broke my cups.

總舖師 共 彼 个 金瓜 切開。

Chóng-phò-sai kā **hit ê kim-koe** chhiat--khui.

廚師 把 那個 南瓜 切開。

Chúshī bǎ **nàgē nánguā** qiēkāi.

The chef cut open that pumpkin.

PATTERN 2

verb + resultative complement + **definite object**

伊 搥破 我的杯仔。

I lóng-phò góa ê poe-á.

他 弄破 我的杯子。

Tā nòngpò wǒ de bēizi.

He broke my cups.

總舖師 切開 彼 个 金瓜。

Chóng-phò-sai chhiat-khui **hit ê kim-koe**.

廚師 切開 那個 南瓜。

Chúshī qiēkāi nàge nánguā.

The chef cut open **that** pumpkin.

Additionally, if the definite object is a personal pronoun, then it must be placed *before* the verb with the use of the 共 **kā** construction.

共 + **definite object (personal pronoun)** + verb + resultative complement

kā + **definite object (personal pronoun)** + verb + resultative complement

阮 阿媽 共 您 趕走。

Gún a-má **kā in** kóaⁿ-cháu.

我的 奶奶 把 他們 趕走。

Wǒ de nǎinai **bǎ tāmen** gǎnzǒu.

My grandmother shooed **them** away.

恁 共 阮 驚死 矣！

Lín **kā gún** kiaⁿ-sí--ah!

你們 把 我們 嚇死 了！

Nǐmen **bǎ wǒmen** xiàsǐ le!

You scared **us** to death!

There are a few exceptional expressions that allow the object to split the verb from the resultative complement. However, this placement is rather rare.

verb + **object** + resultative complement

食 飯 飽

chiáh pāng pá

吃飽 飯

chībǎo fàn

‘to eat one’s fill’

伊 食 飯 飽 未？

I chiáh **pāng pá** bōe?

他 吃飽 飯 了 沒有？

Tā chībǎo **fàn** le méiyǒu?

Has he eaten **his fill** yet?

淋 酒 醉

lim chiú chùi

喝醉酒

hēzuì jiǔ

‘to become drunk’

慫 咁 酒 醉 矣。

In lim **chiú** chùi--ah.

他們 喝醉酒 了。

Tāmen hēzuì **jiǔ** le.

They have gotten drunk.

Note that Mandarin does not allow for a split between the main verb and the resultative complement.

11.3 Directional complements

Directional complements follow verbs that involve movement and provide further information about the direction of this movement.

11.3.1 Directional complements indicating speaker perspective

The directional complements 來 **-lâi** ‘towards’ and 去 **-khì** ‘away’ refer to the direction of movement with reference to the speaker.

verb + directional complement (speaker)

伊 明仔載 欲 搬來 美國。

I bîn-á-chài beh poaⁿ-lâi Bí-kok.

她 明天 要 搬來 美國。

Tā míngtiān yào bānlái Měiguó.

Tomorrow she will move to America (*the speaker is in America*).

伊 明仔載 欲 搬去 美國。

I bîn-á-chài beh poaⁿ-khì Bí-kok.

她 明天 要 搬去 美國。

Tā míngtiān yào bānqù Měiguó.

Tomorrow she will move to America (*the speaker is somewhere outside of America*).

In the *Pêh-ōe-jī* (POJ) Romanization system, directional complements are suffixed to the verb with a single hyphen. However, if the directional complements appear at the end of a clause or sentence, they are put in the neutral tone and written with double-hyphens. This signals that the directional complements essentially become third tones and the main verb keeps its original tone. When directional complements occur mid-clause they undergo tone changes.

11.3.2 Double-directional complements

In addition to the speaker perspective directional complements, 來 **-lâi** ‘towards’ and 去 **-khì** ‘away’, there are six additional directional complements which further describe the direction of movement for an action verb.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
起 -khí	起 qǐ, 上 shàng	upwards, up
落 -lòh	下 xià	downwards
入 -jip	進 jìn, 入 rù	into, in
出 -chhut	出 chū	outwards, out
轉 -tng	回 huí	backwards, return
過 -kòe	過 guò	over, through

These additional six directional complements must be combined with one of the two speaker referencing directional complements 來 **-lâi** ‘towards’ and 去 **-khì** ‘away’ to form a double-directional complement. With double-directionals, the movement of the main verb can be described by a combination of two directions.

The speaker referencing directional complements (來 **-lâi** ‘towards’ and 去 **-khì** ‘away’) are always placed at the end of the double-directional complement.

verb + directional complement + directional complement (speaker)

伊好勢的時陣就行過去。

I hó-sè ê sî-chūn tō kiâⁿ--kòe-khì.

她好了的時候就走過去。

Tā hǎole de shíhòu jiù zǒuguòqù.

When she's ready, walk over there.

However, in some cases, the double-directionals take on a more abstract or idiomatic meaning.

DIRECTIONALS	MEANING	EXAMPLES
--------------	---------	----------

起來 -khí-lâi	<i>to go up</i>	倚起來 khiā-khí-lâi ‘to stand up’ 站起來 zhànqǐlái
	<i>to initiate</i>	冰起來 peng-khí-lâi ‘to freeze’ 冷凍起來 lěngdòngqǐlái
落去 -lòh-khì	<i>to go down</i>	倒落去 tó-lòh-khì ‘to fall over’ 倒下去 dàoxiàqù
	<i>to continue</i>	講落去 kóng-lòh-khì ‘to keep talking’ 說下去 shuōxiàqù
出來 -chhut-lâi	<i>to come out</i>	提出來 thêh-chhut-lâi ‘to take out’ 拿出來 náchūlái
	<i>to realize</i>	做出來 chò-chhut-lâi ‘to produce’ 做出來 zuòchūlái

對阮阿媽來講，這個樓梯真歹爬起來。

Tùi gún a-má lâi kóng, chit ê lâu-thui chin pháin peh--khí-lâi.

對我的奶奶來說，這個樓梯很難爬上去。

Dùi wǒ de nǎinǎi lái shuō, zhège lóutī hěn nán páshàngqù.

These stairs are difficult for my grandma to climb up.

這包糖仔，提轉去予恁小妹。

Chit pau thng-á, thêh-tng-khì hō lín sió-mōe.

這包糖果，拿回去給你妹妹。

Zhè bāo tángguǒ, náhuíqù gěi nǐ mèimei.

Take this bag of candy back to your younger sister.

服務費猶未加入去。

Hòk-bū-hùi iáu-bōe ka--jip-khì.

服務費還沒包含。

Fúwùfèi háiméi bāohán.

The service fee has not been included yet.

你若坐落去，椅子會歹去。

Lí nā chē--lòh-khì, í-á ē pháin--khì.

如果你坐下來，椅子會壞掉。

Rúguǒ nǐ zuòxiàlái, yǐzi huì huàidiào.

If you sit down, the chair will break.

Note that there is a Taiwanese verb 來去 **lâi-khì** meaning ‘to leave’ or ‘to proceed with some action’. It is not the verb 來 **lâi** combined with the directional complement 去 **khì**. Generally, 來去 **lâi-khì** is used in the first person but not in the negative or past tense.

我食飽了後先來去矣。

Góa chiáh-pá liáu-āu seng lâi-khì--ah.

我食飽之後先離開了。

Wǒ chībǎo zhīhòu xiān líkāi le.

I will leave after I’m full.

咱下晡來去圖書館。

Lán ē-po lâi-khì tô-su-kóan.

我們下午去圖書館吧。

Wǒmen xiàwǔ qù túshūguǎn ba.

Let’s go to the library this afternoon.

Directional verb complements mid-clause undergo tone changes but are placed in the neutral tone at the end of clauses and sentences. Note that with double directional complements at the end of clauses and sentences, both directional complements are in the neutral tone, while the verb keeps its original tone.

11.3.3 Directional complements and objects

With directional complements and objects, there is much flexibility in the positioning of the object.

While there is a general tendency in Taiwanese to place the object *before* the main verb when there are directional complements, objects may also be placed *after* the complement or even *in between* the main verb and complement. However, not all types of objects have the same flexibility. Definite objects (the book, these pencils) can occur in all positions, but indefinite objects (a book, two pencils, some chairs) can only occur in the middle of the verb compound (see [4.9 Definite and indefinite nouns](#)).

11.3.3.1 Object comes before the verb compound

In Taiwanese there is a preference to place the object before the main verb. This may be done for both single and double-directional complements. In addition, the object may come before the subject as a topic set off by a comma or after the subject by employing the 共 **kā** construction (see [17.2 Topicalized objects](#), [17.4 共 kā construction](#)). However, note that only definite objects may occur in this position.

definite object + verb + directional complement(s)

恁 趁 的 錢，攞 提來。

Lín thàn ê chi̍t, lóng thèh--lâi.

你們 賺 的 錢，都 拿來。

Nǐmen zhuàn de qián, dōu nálái.

Give me all the money you've earned.

你 共 這 領 褲 穿落去。

Lí kā chit niá khò chhēng--lòh-khì.

你 把 這 件 褲 子 穿進去。

Nǐ bǎ zhè jiàn kùzi chuānjìnqù.

Put on these pants.

11.3.3.2 Object comes after the verb compound

Definite objects can be placed after the main verb and directional complement(s). However, this pattern is less common and does not sound natural for all verb and directional complement combinations. This placement of the object tends to be used when the object is also a location.

PATTERN 2

verb + directional complement(s) + definite object

爬起來 眠床頂。

Peh-khí-lâi bîn-chhêng-téng.

爬上去 床上。

Páshàngqù chuáng shàng.

Climb up onto the bed.

跳過去 溪仔。

Thiàu-kòe-khì khe-á.

跳過去 溪。

Tiàoguòqù xī.

Jump over the creek.

阿母 叫 我 提去 隔壁 這 兩 碗 菜。

A-bú kiò góa thèh-khì keh-piah chit n̄g óa chhài.

媽媽 叫 我 帶去 鄰居 這 兩 碗 菜。

Māmā jiào wǒ dàiqù línjū **zhè liǎng wǎn cài**.

Mom asked me to take **these two dishes** over to the neighbor's house.

你 袂使 穿入去 彼 雙 淺拖仔。

Lí bē-sái chhēng-jip-khì **hit siang chhián-thoa-á**.

你 不 可以 穿進去 那 雙 拖鞋。

Nǐ bù kěyǐ chuānjìnqù **nà shuāng tuōxié**.

You aren't allowed to go inside **wearing those sandals**.

With directional complements, Mandarin has much more flexibility in positioning the object than Taiwanese. An object may be placed *before*, *after*, or *in between* the verb and directional, or even *in between* double-directional complements.

BEFORE VERB COMPOUND

兩隻狗，他 帶回來 給我。

Liǎng zhī gǒu, tā dàihuílái gěi wǒ.

AFTER VERB COMPOUND

他 帶回來 兩隻狗 給我。

Tā dàihuílái **liǎng zhī gǒu** gěi wǒ.

BETWEEN VERB AND DIRECTIONALS

他 帶 兩隻狗 回來 給我。

Tā dài **liǎng zhī gǒu** huílái gěi wǒ.

BETWEEN DIRECTIONALS

他 帶回 兩隻狗 來 給我。

Tā dàihuí **liǎng zhī gǒu** lái gěi wǒ.

He brought back home **two dogs** for me.

11.3.3.3 Object comes in the middle of the verb compound

The object can also occur in the middle of the verb compound. If the object is indefinite, then it *must* be placed in this position between the main verb and the directional complement(s).

PATTERN 3

verb + ***indefinite / definite object*** + directional complement(s)

INDEFINITE

阿母叫我提兩碗菜去隔壁。

A-bú kiò góa thèh **nāg óaⁿ chhài** khì keh-piah.

媽媽叫我帶兩碗菜去隔壁。

Māmā jiào wǒ dài **liǎng wǎn cài** qù gébì.

Mom asked me to take **two dishes** over to the neighbor's house.

請你買一寡弓蕉轉來。

Chhiáⁿ lí bé **chit-kóa keng-chio** túg-lâi.

請你買一些香蕉回來。

Qǐng nǐ mǎi **yīxiē xiāngjiāo** huílái.

Please buy **some bananas** and bring them back.

DEFINITE

阿母叫我提這碗菜去隔壁。

A-bú kiò góa thèh chit **óⁿ chhài** khì keh-piah.

媽媽叫我帶這碗菜去隔壁。

Māmā jiào wǒ dài **zhè wǎn cài** qù gébì.

Mom asked me to take **this dish** over to the neighbor's house.

放伊去！

Pàng i khì!

放她去！

Fàng tā qù!

Let her go!

While definite objects can also occur in the middle of the verb compound, this is less common and does not sound natural with every verb and directional complement combination. In fact, there is some debate among linguists whether some of these expressions should be seen as two independent verbs in a series.

𪛗囡仔出去。

Chhōa **gín-á** chhut-khì

帶孩子出去。

Dài **háizi** chūqù

Take **the kids** out.

From this perspective, the verbs 𪛗 **chhōa** ‘to take’ and 出去 **chhut-khì** ‘to go out’ in the example above are two separate verbs that form a sequence of actions.

11.4 Potential complements

Potential complements include an additional syllable called an *infix* that indicates whether the verb is *capable* of achieving the outcome stated in the complement. Phase, resultative, and directional complements may all be made into potential complements by adding the potential infix, which is similar to a suffix but appears ‘inside’ a word instead of at the end.

verb + potential infix + complement

Taiwanese has two types of potential complements. One type, *actualized potential complements*, focuses on the past and indicates whether the main verb was able to achieve the complement. The other type, *unrealized potential complements*, is more present and future-oriented, suggesting that the main verb can or will be able to achieve the complement.

Mandarin has only one form of potential complement that does not make a distinction between actualized or unrealized.

11.4.1 Actualized potential complements

The actualized potential complement describes whether the main verb already succeeded or failed at fulfilling the complement. As a result, these potential complements are used to describe past-oriented contexts. This type of potential complement is constructed by placing the infix 有 *-ū-* in between the main verb and the complement. 無 *-bô-* is the negative form.

verb + 有 + complement

verb + -ū- + complement

阮 碰無著。

Gún pōng-bô-tiòh.

我們 碰不著。

Wǒmen pèngbuzháo.

We weren't able to touch it.

阿公 共 咱 講 的 故事， 你 敢 記有牢？

A-kong kā lán kóng ê kò-sū, lí kám kì-ū-tiâu?

爺爺 告訴 我們 的 故事， 你 記得住 嗎？

Yěyě gàosù wǒmen de gùshì, nǐ jìdezhù ma?

Were you able to memorize the story grandfather told us?

因為落雨，阮昨昏的比賽拍無了。

In-ūi lóh-hō, gún cha-hng ê pí-sài phah-bô-liáu.

因為下雨，我們昨天的比賽沒打完。

Yīnwèi xiàyǔ, wǒmen zuótiān de bǐsài méi dǎwán.

Because it rained, we couldn't finish playing yesterday's game.

Note that there is a distinction between the usage of the actualized potential complement and a phase, resultative, or directional complement placed in the perfective aspect.

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

伊電影看無著。

I tiān-iáⁿ khòaⁿ-bô-tiòh.

他看不到電影。

Tā kànbudào diànyǐng.

He wasn't able to see the film (*he tried but failed*).

NON-POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

伊電影無看著。

I tiān-iáⁿ bô khòaⁿ-tiòh.

他沒看到電影。

Tā méi kàndào diànyǐng.

He didn't see the film (*nothing more implied*).

In the examples above, the implication with the potential complement is that 'he wasn't able to see the film'—perhaps the showing was sold out, perhaps he got there too late, or perhaps he sat in the theater, but the patron sitting in front blocked his view. The non-potential complement in the perfective aspect does not suggest anything more beyond the simple fact that 'he didn't see the film'.

Below are more examples comparing usage of potential and non-potential complements.

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

門關無牢。

M̄ng koaiⁿ-bô-tiâu.

門關不住。

Mén guānbuzhù.

The door couldn't be closed (*perhaps the latch broke*).

NON-POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

門無關牢。

M̄ng bô koaiⁿ-tiâu.

門沒關住。

Mén méi guānzhù.

The door wasn't closed (*nothing more implied*).

阿公昨昏坐有起來。

A-kong cha-hng chē-ū-khí--lâi.

爺爺昨天坐得起來了。

Yěyě zuótiān zuòdeqǐlái le.

Grandpa was able to sit up yesterday.

阿公昨昏有坐起來。

A-kong cha-hng ū chē--khí--lâi.

爺爺昨天坐起來了。

Yěyě zuótiān zuòqǐlái le.

Grandpa sat up yesterday.

11.4.2 Unrealized potential complements

The other type of potential complement focuses on the actions that are unrealized. These potential complements are present and future-oriented indicating whether the main verb is or will be able to achieve the complement. This type of potential complement is constructed by placing the infix 會 *-ē-* in between the main verb and the complement. 袂 *-bē-* is the negative form.

verb + 會 + complement

verb + -ē- + complement

用餐巾敢拍會死？

Ēng chhan-kin kám phah-ē-sí ?

用餐巾打得死嗎？

Yòng cānjīn dǎdesǐ ma?

Can you kill it with a napkin?

阮教授真愛講話，所以講袂煞。

Gún kàu-siū chin ài kóng ōe, só-í kóng-bē-soah.

我們的教授很愛說話，所以說個不停。

Wǒmen de jiàoshòu hěn ài shuō huà, suǒyǐ shuōgèbùtíng.

Our professor loves talking, so he just won't stop.

我的牛仔褲傷絀，錢袋仔提袂出來。

Góa ê gû-á-khò'siūⁿ ân, chîⁿ-tē-á thèh-bē-chhut--lâi.

我的牛仔褲太緊，錢包拿不出來。

Wǒ de niúzǎikù tài jǐn, qiánbāo nábuchūlái.

My jeans are so tight that I can't take my wallet out.

Because Mandarin does not have separate potential complement forms for different tenses, Mandarin translations often use the generic potential complement infix 得 *-de-* to express events occurring in the past, present, or future.

Also note that use of the potential complement has a slightly different focus than the modal verbs which express ability such as 會當 *ē-tàng* or 會曉 *ē-hiáu* (see [12.3 Ability](#)). Modal verbs focus more on whether the entire action can even begin. On the other hand, potential complements shift the focus to whether the result is achievable after the main verb has already begun.

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT FORM

彼條椅子真大，你一個人提會起來無？

Hit liâu í-á chin tōa, lí chit ê lâng thèh-ē-khí--lâi--bô?

那把椅子很大，你一個人拿得起來嗎？

Nà bǎ yǐzi hěn dà, nǐ yī gè rén nádeqǐlái ma?

That chair is big. Are you able to lift it up by yourself (*once you start lifting will you be able to get it up*)?

MODAL VERB FORM

彼條椅子釘佇塗腳，會當提起來無？

Hit liâu í-á têng tī thô-kha, ē-tàng thèh--khí-lâi--bô?

那把椅子釘在地板，能不能拿起來？

Nà bǎ yǐzi dīng zài dìbǎn, néngbùnéng náqǐlái?

That chair is nailed to the ground. Can it be lifted off?

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT FORM

這條小路傷長，咱行袂了。

Chit tiâu sió-lō'siuⁿ tng, lán kiâⁿ-bē-liáu.

這條小道太長，我們走不完。

Zhè tiáo xiǎodào tài cháng, wǒmen zǒubuwán.

This trail is too long. We can't reach the end of it (*perhaps they are too tired to keep going*).

MODAL VERB FORM

這條小路的路尾無開方，咱袂當行了，所以咱來行別條。

Chit tiâu sió-lō'ê lô-bóe bô khai-hong, lán bē-tàng kiâⁿ liáu, só-í lán lâi kiâⁿ pát tiâu.

這條小道的終端不開放了，我們不能走完，所以我們來走別條吧。

Zhè tiáo xiǎodào de zhōngduān bù kāifàng le, wǒmen bù néng zǒuwán, suǒyǐ wǒmen lái zǒu bié tiáo ba.

The end of this trail is closed (*discovered before hike begins*). We can't walk it, so let's take a different one.

Some complements when put into the potential form take on a slightly different meaning.

COMPLEMENT	POTENTIAL FORM	MEANING
來 -lâi 'to come'	verb + 會來 verb + ē-lâi	to know how to do
去 -khì 'to go'	verb + 會去 verb + ē-khì	to be able to finish completely
贏 -iâ ⁿ 'to win'	verb + 會贏 verb + ē-iâ ⁿ	to be able to succeed at

你彼工共我講的笑話，我講袂來。

Lí hit kang kā góa kóng ê chhiò-ōe, góa kóng-bē-lâi.

你那天告訴我的笑話，我講不出來。

Nǐ nèitiān gàosù wǒ de xiàohuà, wǒ jiǎngbuchūlái.

That joke you told me the other day, I can't tell it like you do.

您 著愛 加班 才 做會去。

In tiòh-ài ka-pan chiah chò-ē-khì.

他們 得 加班 才 做得了。

Tāmen dēi jiābān cái zuòdeliǎo.

They will have to work overtime to be able to finish it completely.

這 件 行李 傷 重， 我 拖袂贏。

Chit kiāⁿ hêng-lí siuⁿ tâng, góa thoa-bē-iāⁿ.

這 件 行李 太 重， 我 拖不動。

Zhè jiàn xínglǐ tài zhòng, wǒ tuōbudòng.

This suitcase is too heavy. I can't pull it.

11.4.3 Potential complement with suffix 得 -tit

An alternative construction for the unrealized potential complement is through the use of the suffix 得 -**tit** (also pronounced -**eh**). This construction is formed by putting 會 ē- before the verb and placing 得 -**tit** after the verb.

This construction indicates the possibility (likelihood) of the verb to occur, and in some contexts permission may also be included in the interpretation. It should be noted that this construction is less common and tends to be used with only a small number of verbs. Pronunciation of 得 -**tit** may reduce to -**eh** for some speakers. When appearing at the end of a clause or sentence, the final syllable 得 --**tit** becomes neutralized and the previous syllable (the main verb) does not change tone. The negative form replaces 會 ē- with 袂 bē-.

This construction is similar to the Mandarin: *verb* + 得 **dé** and *verb* + 不得 **bùdé**.

Below is a table of the more common verbs using this construction.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
會記得 ē-kì-tit	記得 jìdé	to remember
會行得 ē-kiā ⁿ -tit	能走 néngzǒu	to be walkable
會認得 ē-jīn-tit	認得 rèndé	to be recognizable
會比得 ē-pí-tit	比得上 bǐdeshàng	to be comparable
會信得 ē-sìn-tit	能信 néngxìn	to be believable
會靠得 ē-khò-tit	靠得住 kàodezhù	to be reliable
會因得 ē-khng-tit	能放 néngfàng	able to put or place
會磕得 ē-kháp-tit	能碰 néngpèng	to be touchable
會堪得 ē-kham-tit	受得了 shòudeliǎo	to be endurable

會 + verb + 得

ē- + verb + -tit

‘verb can / will be able to occur’

這兩項代誌 袂比得。

Chit n̄g hāng t̄ai-chì bē-pí--tit.

這兩件事情 比不得。

Zhè liǎng jiàn shìqíng bǐbudé.

These two issues aren’t comparable.

我愛伊這個人，因為伊 會靠得。

Góa ài i chit ê lâng, in-ūi i ē-khò--tit.

我喜歡她這個人，因為她 靠得住。

Wǒ xǐhuān tā zhège rén, yīnwèi tā kàodezhù.

I like her because she is reliable.

伊的名我煞 袂記得，請你閣共我講一擺？

I ê miâ góa soah bē-kì--tit, chhiáⁿ lí koh kā góa kóng chit pái?

他的名字我突然 忘記了，請你再跟我說一次？

Tā de míngzì wǒ tūrán wàngjìle, qǐng nǐ zài gēn wǒ shuō yī cì?

I suddenly forgot his name. Can you please tell me again?

The verbs 會使得 ē-sài-tit and 會用得 ē-ēng-tit can also function as modal verbs expressing permission (see [12.4 Permission](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
會使得 ē-sài-tit	可行 kěxíng, 可以 kěyǐ	usable, allowed to use
會用得 ē-ēng-tit	可行 kěxíng, 可以 kěyǐ	usable, allowed to use

阮踎露台烤肉敢 會使得？

Gún tàt lō-tâi hang bah kám ē-sái--tit?

我們在陽台烤肉 行不行？

Wǒmen zài yángtái kǎo ròu xíngbùxíng?

Can we barbecue on the porch?

您上課的時 會使得 用手機仔。

In siōng-khò ê sî ē-sái-tit ēng chhiú-ki-á.

他們上課時 可以 用手機。

Tāmen shàngkè shí kěyǐ yòng shǒujī.

They are allowed to use mobile phones in class.

11.4.4 Potential complements and objects

With potential complements, objects may appear before, after, and in the middle of verb compounds. However, the most common placement of objects with potential complement verb structures is *before* the main verb.

object + verb + 會 / 有 + complement

object + verb + ē / ū + complement

這領褲，我穿袂入去。

Chit niá khò, góa chhēng-bē-jip--khì.

這件褲子，我穿不進去。

Zhè jiàn kùzi, wǒ chuānbujìnqù.

I can't fit into **these pants**.

彼齣電影，看兩點鐘就看會了。

Hit chhut tiān-iaⁿ, khò^a n̄g tiám-cheng tō khò^a-ē-liáu.

那部電影，看兩個小時就看得完。

Nà bù diànyǐng, kàn liǎng gè xiǎoshí jiù kàndewán.

That film can be seen in just two hours (*the film is capable of being completely watched in two hours*).

On occasion, the object can be placed *after* the complement. Note that linguistic research continues to be done in this area about what specific circumstances allow for the object to be placed in locations other than before the main verb.

verb + 會 / 有 + complement + **object**

verb + ē / ū + complement + **object**

服務員敢揣有著你的目鏡？

Hòk-bū-ôan kám chōe-ū-tiòh lí ê bák-kiàⁿ?

服務員找得到你的眼鏡嗎？

Fúwùyuán zhǎodedào nǐ de yǎnjìng ma?

Was the waiter able to find **your glasses**?

Additionally, there are exceptional cases (particularly when the objects are pronouns) in which the object occurs *in between* the main verb and potential infix.

verb + **object (personal pronoun)** + 會 / 有 + complement

verb + **object (personal pronoun)** + ē / ū + complement

四界 揣，我 揣 伊 無 著。

Sì-kè chhōe, góa chhōe i bô-tiòh.

到處 找，我 找 不到 他。

Dàochù zhǎo, wǒ zhǎobudào tā.

I've looked everywhere and can't find him.

The Mandarin verb compound cannot be split by a pronoun except when the complement is a directional complement (see [11.3.3 Directional complements and objects](#)).

11.5 Complements with question marker 敢 kám

When verb complements are part of a 敢 **kám**-type question, the question marker 敢 **kám** may optionally be placed in between the main verb and complement (see [20.1.2 敢 kám in verb compounds](#)). In this construction, the action of the main verb has already begun and the achievement of the complement becomes the focus of the question.

verb + 敢 + complement

verb + kám + complement

伊 彼 張 批 寫 敢 好 矣？

I hit tiuⁿ phoe siá-kám-hó--ah?

她 那 封 信 寫 好 了 嗎？

Tā nà fēng xìn xiěhǎo le ma?

Is she finished writing that letter?

佇 絞 踏 車 頂 的 包 裹 縛 敢 牢 矣？

Tī kha-tāh-chhia-téng ê pau-kó pák-kám-tiâu--ah?

在 腳 踏 車 上 的 包 裹 綁 住 了 嗎？

Zài jiǎotàchē shàng de bāoguǒ bǎngzhù le ma?

Is the package on the bike securely fastened?

11.6 Manner complements

Manner complements describe how a verb is performed or appears to be carried out. Essentially, they

are phrases that function like adverbs but appear after a verb.

11.6.1 Manner complements describing habitual actions

Manner complements are constructed by placing the grammatical particle 著 **-tiòh** after the main verb and then adding an adjective. An intensifier can optionally be added before the adjective. Manner complements with 著 **-tiòh** tend to be used to describe habitual actions. Note that 著 **-tiòh** does not change tone (see [2.6.3.5 Verb complements](#)).

verb + 著 + (intensifier) + adjective

verb + -tiòh + (intensifier) + adjective

頭家 罵著 誠 歹。

Thâu-ke mē-tiòh chiâⁿ pháiⁿ.

老闆 罵得 真 兇。

Lǎobǎn mà de zhēn xiōng.

The boss scolds quite fiercely.

恁 後生 學著 真 緊。

Lín hāu-seⁿ òh-tiòh chin kín.

你 兒子 學得 很 快。

Nǐ érzi xué de hěn kuài.

Your son learns very quickly.

Negation must come before the adjective but after the verb and grammatical particle 著 **tiòh**.

verb + 著 + negation + adjective

verb + -tiòh + negation + adjective

伊 駛著 無 緊。

I sái-tiòh bô kín.

他 開得 不 快。

Tā kāi de bù kuài.

He doesn't drive fast.

11.6.2 Manner complements describing specific instances

Manner complements can also be used to describe how a verb was performed in a particular instance. Note that the focus is the result of the action. This construction is created by placing the grammatical particle 了 **liáu** after the main verb and then adding an adjective. An intensifier can optionally be added before the adjective.

verb + 了 + (intensifier) + adjective

verb + liáu + (intensifier) + adjective

你 煮了真緊。

Lí chú liáu chìn kín.

你 煮得很快。

Nǐ zhǔ de hěn kuài.

You cooked it very fast.

阮阿姨 唱了足好聽。

Gún a-î chhiùⁿ liáu chiok hó-thiaⁿ.

我阿姨 唱得非常好聽。

Wǒ āyí chàng de fēicháng hǎotīng.

My aunt sang very well.

Negation must come before the adjective.

verb + 了 + negation + adjective

verb + liáu + negation + adjective

這篇報告，記者 寫了無準確。

Chit phiⁿ pò-kò, kì-chiá siá liáu bô chún-khak.

這篇報告，記者 寫得不準確。

Zhè piān bàogào, jìzhě xiě de bù zhǔnquè.

The journalist didn't write this article accurately.

Similar to manner complements, manner adverbs also describe *how* an action of a verb is performed (see [14.2.3 Manner adverbs](#)). However, there are a few distinctions to be made.

Manner complements appear *after* the verb, while manner adverbs appear *before* the verb. Moreover, manner complements tend to be external observations, while manner adverbs tend to incorporate the subject's attitude towards the action. Finally, manner complements cannot be used in commands, while manner adverbs can.

MANNER COMPLEMENTS

囡仔 坐了真怏。

Gín-á chē liáu chin tiām.

孩子 很安靜坐著。

Háizi hěn ānjìng zuòzhe.

The children sat quietly (*they appear to be this way*).

MANNER ADVERBS

囡仔 恬恬坐。

Gín-á tiām-tiām chē.

孩子 安安靜靜地坐。

Háizi ānānjìngjìng de zuò.

The children sat quietly (*they are making an effort*).

11.6.3 Manner complements with objects

With manner complements, if an object follows the verb, the verb is repeated (*verb copying*) before adding the particle 著 **-tiòh** / 了 **liáu** and adjective.

verb + object + verb + 著 / 了 + (intensifier) + adjective

verb + object + verb + -tiòh / liáu + (intensifier) + adjective

伊 行路行著真慢。

I kiâⁿ lōⁿ kiâⁿ-tiòh chin bān.

他 走路走得很慢。

Tā zǒu lù zǒu de hěn màn.

He walks slowly.

阮阿母 煮飯煮著足好食。

Gún a-bú chú pŋg chú-tiòh chiok hó-chiàh.

我媽媽 煮飯煮得非常好吃。

Wǒ māmā zhǔ fàn zhǔ de fēicháng hàochī.

My mom cooks really delicious food.

這個醫生 看我看了真緊。

Chit ê i-seng khòaⁿ góaⁿ khòaⁿ liáu chin kín.

這個醫生 看我看得很快。

Zhègè yīshēng kàn wǒ kàn de hěn kuài.

The doctor saw me quickly.

11.7 Extent complements

Extent complements can be used to describe a condition resulting from the main verb (similar to the function of resultative complements). They can also be used to describe the ‘extent’ or degree to which the main verb is carried out. This result or extent can be used to describe either the subject or the object.

11.7.1 Extent complements with 甲 kah

The particle 甲 **kah** can be placed after the verb and introduce a result or extent. This result or extent can be a phase complement, resultative complement, adjective, or even a whole phrase.

verb + 甲 + result or extent

verb + kah + result or extent

‘verb to the point of’

彼規支排骨，伊食甲了。

Hít kui ki pài-kut, i chiáh kah liáu.

那整個排骨，他吃到完。

Nà zhěng gè páigǔ, tā chī dào wán.

He ate up that entire pork chop.

我讀冊讀甲欲戇去矣。

Góa thák chheh thák kah beh gōng--khì--ah.

我讀書讀到變笨了。

Wǒ dú shū dú dào biàn bèn le.

I’ve been studying so much that I can’t think anymore.

伊走甲袂喘氣矣。

I cháu kah bē chhóan--khùi--ah.

她跑得不能呼吸了。

Tā pǎo de bùnéng hūxī le.

She ran so much she couldn’t breathe.

In Mandarin, generally 得 **de** is used as the extent complement. However, 到 **dào** can also be used in colloquial speech.

11.7.2 Extent complements with 予 hō'

予 hō' 'to allow' can also be used to introduce a result or extent. In contrast to 甲 kah, 予 hō' tends to be used in less extreme descriptions. Additionally, 予 hō' as a causative verb is generally used for actions that have not yet occurred, requests, and commands (see [19.4 Causative verbs](#), [21.8 Using causative verbs in commands](#)).

verb + 予 + result or extent

verb + hō' + result or extent

'verb to the point of'

食 予 袂 枵 就 好 矣。

Chiáh hó bē-iáu tō hó--ah.

吃 到 不 會 餓 就 好 了。

Chī dào bù huì è jiù hǎo le.

Eating until you aren't hungry is enough.

外 口 耍 了 後，手 愛 洗 予 清 氣。

Gōa-kháu sng liáu-āu, chhiú ài sé hó' chheng-khì.

外 面 玩 之 後，手 要 洗 乾 淨。

Wàimiàn wán zhīhòu, shǒu yào xǐgānjìng.

After playing outside, you must wash your hands until they're clean.

雞 肉 一 定 愛 煮 予 熟。

Ke-bah it-tēng ài chú hō'sék.

雞 肉 一 定 要 煮 熟。

Jīròu yīdìng yào zhǔshóu.

Chicken definitely needs to be cooked fully.

Taiwanese tends to use extent complements more often than Mandarin when indicating a resulting condition. As a result, in many circumstances Taiwanese prefers an extent complement, where Mandarin might use a resultative complement.

In addition, note that Mandarin uses 得 de to express both manner and extent complements, while Taiwanese has a more explicit distinction between the two complements by using different particle markers (manner: 著 -tiōh / 了 liáu, extent: 甲 kah / 予 hō').

11.7.3 Extent complements with objects

With extent complements, if an object follows the verb, the verb is repeated again (*verb copying*) before adding either the particles 甲 **kah** or 予 **hō** followed by an adjective or descriptive phrase.

*verb + **object** + verb + 甲 / 予 + result or extent*

*verb + **object** + verb + kah / hō + result or extent*

阮唱歌唱甲嚨喉痛。

Gún chhiùⁿ **koa** chhiùⁿ kah nâ-âu thiàⁿ.

我們唱歌唱到喉嚨痛。

Wǒmen chàng **gē** chàng dào hóulóng tòng.

We sang until our throats were sore.

你先講話講予了。

Lí seng kóng **ōe** kóng hó'liáu.

你先把話講完。

Nǐ xiān **bǎ huà** jiǎngwán.

Go ahead and finish what you want to say.

11.8 Duration and absolute frequency complements

Duration and absolute frequency complements can be used to quantify the duration of the main verb or provide an absolute frequency of the number of times the main verb occurs.

Note that the absolute frequency expression (e.g. ten times, six laps, two rounds, etc.) differs from the relative frequency adverb (e.g. sometimes, often, never, etc.), which occurs before the main verb (see [14.2.2 Relative frequency adverbs](#)).

11.8.1 Duration and absolute frequency complement placement

Both the duration and absolute frequency expressions describe a specific measurable quantity and are generally placed immediately after the main verb or verb phrase. Typically the duration or absolute frequency expression includes a number, measure word, and noun. For duration, sometimes 久 **kú** ‘long (*time*)’ is added at the end for emphasis.

number + measure word + noun + (久)

number + measure word + noun + (kú)

DURATION

伊 泅 水 四十 分鐘 久。

I siū chúi sì-cháp hun-cheng kú.

她 游了 四十 分鐘。

Tā yóule sìshí fēnzhōng.

She swam for 40 minutes.

ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY

伊 泅 水 八 輓。

I siū chúi peh liàn.

她 游了 八 圈。

Tā yóule bā quān.

She swam eight laps.

11.8.2 Duration and absolute frequency complements with objects

When an object is already present after the verb, there are several approaches to include duration or frequency.

One method is to topicalize the object phrase by moving it to the beginning of the sentence before the subject.

METHOD 1

object + *subject* + *verb* + *duration/frequency complement*

DURATION

這 本 冊， 我 看 三 點 鐘 久。

Chit pún chheh góa khòaⁿ saⁿ tiám-cheng kú.

這 本 書， 我 看 三 個 小 時。

Zhè běn shū, wǒ kàn sān gè xiǎoshí.

I read this book for three hours.

ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY

這 本 冊， 我 看 兩 擺。

Chit pún chheh, góa khòaⁿ n̄ng pái.

這 本 書， 我 看 兩 次。

Zhè běn shū, wǒ kàn liǎng cì.

I read this book two times.

Another method is to repeat the verb (*verb copying*) and follow it with the duration or frequency (see [7.1.5 Including both objects and duration](#), [7.1.6 Including both objects and frequency](#)).

METHOD 2

verb + **object** + *verb* + *duration / frequency*

DURATION

我看這本冊看三點鐘久。

Góa khòaⁿ **chit pún chheh** khòaⁿ saⁿ tiám-cheng kú.

我看這本書看三個小時。

Wǒ kàn zhè běn shū kàn sān gè xiǎoshí.

I read this book for three hours.

ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY

我看這本冊看兩擺。

Góa khòaⁿ **chit pún chheh** khòaⁿ n̄ng pái.

我看這本書看兩次。

Wǒ kàn zhè běn shū kàn liǎng cì.

I read this book two times.

An alternative format for verbs followed by both an object and duration is to construct a noun phrase by using the modifier 的 ê to join the duration and object (see [6.7 Noun phrases and the modifying particle 的 ê](#)). Note that this format cannot be used for absolute frequency.

METHOD 3

verb + *duration* + (久) + 的 + **noun**

verb + *duration* + (kú) + ê + **noun**

我看三點鐘久的冊。

Góa khòaⁿ saⁿ tiám-cheng kú ê **chheh**.

我看三個小時的書。

Wǒ kàn sān gè xiǎoshí de **shū**.

I read this book for 3 hours.

11.8.3 Duration and absolute frequency complements with negated verbs

When a duration or absolute frequency complement occurs in sentences with negated verbs, the expression is placed before the negated verb.

duration / frequency + negative + verb

DURATION

兩點鐘久矣，伊猶未轉來。

Nāng tiám-cheng kú--ah, i iáu-bōe tng--lâi.

兩個小時了，他還沒回來。

Liǎng gè xiǎoshí le, tā hái méi huílái.

It's been two hours, and he hasn't returned yet.

阮五冬無去美國矣。

Gún gō-tang bô khì Bí-kok--ah.

我們五年沒去美國了。

Wǒmen wǔ nián méi qù Měiguó le.

We haven't gone to America in five years.

ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY

伊考三擺猶考無著。

I khó saⁿ pái iáu khó-bô-tiòh.

她考三次還考不上。

Tā kǎo sān cì hái kǎobushàng.

After three times, she still hasn't passed the exam.

十擺去動物園，阮攏無看著虎。

Cháp pái khì tōng-bút-hng, gún lóng bô khòaⁿ-tiòh hó.

十次去動物園，我們都沒看到老虎。

Shí cì qù dòngwùyuán, wǒmen dōu méi kàndào lǎohǔ.

All ten times we went to the zoo, we didn't see the tiger.

If the actual duration or absolute frequency complement itself is negated, then the placement remains in the default position after the verb.

*verb + negative + **duration / frequency***

DURATION

伊轉來猶未兩點鐘。

I tng--lâi iáu-bōe nāng tiám-cheng.

他回來還沒兩個小時。

Tā huílái hái méi liǎng gè xiǎoshí.

He's returned, and it hasn't even been two hours.

阮去美國猶未五冬。

Gún khì Bí-kok iáu-bōe gō`tang.

我們去美國還沒五年了。

Wǒmen qù Měiguó hái méi wǔ nián.

We went to America, and it hasn't even been five years yet.

ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY

伊考猶未三擺。

I khò iáu-bōe saⁿ pái.

她考還沒三次。

Tā kǎo hái méi sān cì.

She's taken the exam not even three times yet.

阮看著虎攏總猶未十擺。

Gún khòaⁿ-tiòh hó lóng-chóng iáu-bōe cháp pái.

我們看到老虎一共還沒十次。

Wǒmen kàn dào lǎohǔ yīgòng hái méi shí cì.

We've seen the tiger not even ten times altogether.

When a duration or absolute frequency complement is used with a negated verb, the complement moves to a position before the main verb. Among the adverbs in this space, the duration/frequency complement has a flexible position and can appear before sentence-level adverbs or after reference and relative frequency adverbs. However, depending on the context of the sentence, some positions sound more natural than others. The duration/frequency complement must appear before the negation of the main verb of the sentence (see [14.3 Adverbs with other grammatical elements](#)).

ORDER 1

*subject + **duration/absolute frequency complement (when used with negative verb)** + sentence-level adverbs + reference/relative frequency adverbs + negative + modal verb + manner adverb + verb*

ORDER 2

*subject + sentence-level adverb + reference/relative frequency adverbs + **duration/absolute frequency complement (when used with negative verb)** + negative + modal verb + manner adverb + verb*

DURATION

以前伊二點鐘閣無夠, 這馬一點鐘就好矣。

Í-chêng i n̄ng tiám-cheng koh bô kàu, chit-má chit tiám-cheng tō hó--ah.

以前他兩個小時還不夠用, 現在一個小時就好了。

Yǐqián tā liǎng gè xiǎoshí hái bù gòu yòng, xiànzài yī gè xiǎoshí jiù hǎo le.

Before, two hours was never enough for him. Now, one hour is just right.

你十五分鐘一定看袂了。

Lí cháp-gō hun-cheng it-tēng khòaⁿ-bē-liáu.

你 十五分鐘 一定 看不完。

Nǐ shíwǔ fēnzhōng yīdìng kànbuán.

You definitely won't finish watching it in fifteen minutes.

FREQUENCY

可能 一個月兩擺 猶閣無夠予厝清氣。

Khó-lêng chít kò gòeh n̄g pái iáu-koh bô kàu hō'chhù chheng-khì.

可能 一個月兩次 還不夠讓房子乾淨。

Kěnéng yī gè yuè liǎng cì hái bùgòu ràng fángzi gānjìng.

Maybe twice a month still won't be enough to keep the house clean.

伊 罕得 三遍 攞做無好。

I hán-tit saⁿ piàn lóng chò-bô-hó.

他 難得 三遍 都做不好。

Tā nándé sān biàn dōu zuòbuhǎo.

He rarely does not do it well three times in a row.

11.9 Summary for object placement

Below is a summary table for the placement of objects with regards to the verb compound.

Verb compound (VC) = verb + complement

	BEFORE <i>object</i> + VC	BETWEEN V + <i>object</i> + C	AFTER VC + <i>object</i>
PHASE COMPLEMENTS			
Completion	Yes	Rare	No
Achievement/Potential	Yes	Rare	Yes
RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS			
Indefinite	No	Rare	Yes
Definite	Yes	Rare	Yes
Pronouns	Yes	No	No
DIRECTIONAL COMPLEMENTS			
Indefinite	No	Yes	No
Definite	Yes	Rare	Rare (<i>locations</i>)
POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS			
	Yes	Rare (<i>pronouns</i>)	No

MANNER COMPLEMENTSYes (*verb copying*)

No

No

EXTENT COMPLEMENTSYes (*verb copying*)

No

No

DURATION / ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY COMPLEMENTSYes (*verb copying / topicalize*)

No

Yes (*noun phrase*)

11.10 Summary of verb complements

Below is a summary table for all verb complements presented in this chapter.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
PHASE COMPLEMENTS		
Completion	了 liáu 完 ōan 煞 soah 好 hó	完 wán, 了 le 完 wán, 了 le 完 wán, 了 le 好 hǎo, 了 le
Achievement	著 -tióh 有 ū	到 dào, 著 zháo 到 dào, 著 zháo
Potential	有 ū	得 -de-
RESULTATIVE COMPLEMENTS		
	飽 -pá 開 -khui, --khui 牢 -tiâu 破 -phòah :	飽 bǎo 開 kāi 住 zhù 破 pò :
DIRECTIONAL COMPLEMENTS		
Speaker perspective	來 -lâi 去 -khì	來 lái 去 qù
Double-directional	起來 -khí-lâi 起去 -khí-khì 落來 -lòh-lâi 落去 -lòh-khì 入來 -jip-lâi 入去 -jip-khì 出來 -chhut-lâi 出去 -chhut-khì 轉來 -túg-lâi 轉去 -túg-khì 過來 -kòe-lâi 過去 -kòe-khì	起來 qǐlái — 下來 xiàlái 下去 xiàqù 進來 jìnlái 進去 jìnqù 出來 chūlái 出去 chūqù 回來 huílái 回去 huíqù 過來 guòlái 過去 guòqù
POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS		
Actualized	有 -ū-	得 -de-

Unrealized

會 -ē-
會 ē -verb- 得 tit

得 -de-
verb + 得 dé

MANNER COMPLEMENTS

著 -tiòh
了 liáu

得 de
得 de

EXTENT COMPLEMENTS

甲 kah
予 hō̍

到 dào
到 dào

DURATION / ABOLUTE FREQUENCY COMPLEMENTS

number + measure word + noun + (久
kú)

number + measure word +
noun

12 Modal verbs

Modal verbs express the subject's mood, intention, inclination, or attitude towards an action. They are a type of helping verb used in conjunction with the main verb. More specifically, modal verbs are used to express possibility, ability, desire, permission, obligation, and prohibition.

Tomorrow might snow heavily (*possibility*).

I can climb trees with one hand (*ability*).

We want to watch television (*desire*).

You may stay until midnight (*permission*).

They must take the test on Friday (*obligation*).

Do not dive here (*prohibition*).

12.1 Possibility

Possibility modal verbs express the likelihood of an action occurring in the future ('They will leave tomorrow' or 'I am going to sleep'). Because Taiwanese does not mark tense in its verbs, actions in the future are often preceded by the possibility modal verbs 會 **ē** 'will' or 欲 **beh** 'going to' (also pronounced **boeh**).

	TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
	AFFIRM	NEG	AFFIRM	NEG
will	會 ē	袂 bē	會 huì	不會 bù huì
going to	欲 beh	未 bōe	要 yào	還沒 hái méi

12.1.1 Modal verb 會 ē 'will'

會 **ē** 'will' is placed before a verb to indicate that an event is very likely to occur. The feeling is generally neutral but describes an event that appears inevitable or beyond the control of the subject. The negative form is 袂 **bē**.

會 + verb

ē + verb

‘will verb’

明仔載 會 落雨。

Bîn-á-chài ē lóh-hō.

明天 會 下雨。

Míngtiān huì xiàyǔ.

Tomorrow it will rain.

我 春天 袂 畢業。

Góa chhun-thiⁿ bē pit-giáp.

我 春天 不 會 畢業。

Wǒ chūntiān bù huì bìyè.

I won't graduate in the spring (*the circumstances won't allow for it*).

12.1.2 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to be going to’

欲 **beh** (also pronounced **boeh**) ‘to be going to’ stresses the possibility that an event will likely occur in the immediate future. However, there is much overlap in usage between 會 **ē** and 欲 **beh**, and in many contexts they are interchangeable.

欲 + verb

beh + verb

‘to be going to verb’

阮 阿兄 欲 去 台北。

Gún a-hiaⁿ beh khi Tâi-pak.

我 哥哥 要 去 台北。

Wǒ gēgē yào qù Táiběi.

My older brother is going to go to Taipei (*near future*).

阮 阿兄 會 去 台北。

Gún a-hiaⁿ ē khi Tâi-pak.

我 哥哥 會 去 台北。

Wǒ gēgē huì qù Táiběi.

My older brother will go to Taipei (*distant future*).

Because 欲 **beh** has another meaning ‘to want’, there is the possibility for ambiguity particularly when the subject is an animate being (see [12.2.1 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to want’](#)).

伊 欲 去 法國。

I beh khi Hoat-kok.

她 要 去 法國。

Tā yào qù Fàguó.

She is going to go to France (*possibility*).

She wants to go to France (*desire*).

阿母 欲 去 市場 來 買 物件 矣。

A-bú beh khi chhī-tiūⁿ lâi bé mih-kiāⁿ--ah.

媽媽 要 去 市場 來 買 東西 了。

Māmā yào qù shìchǎng lái mǎi dōngxī le.

Mom is going to go to the market to buy a few things (*possibility*).

Mom wants to go to the market to buy a few things (*desire*).

If the subject is inanimate (objects, non-living things), 欲 **beh** can only convey future possibility and not desire.

計程車 暗時 八 點 欲 來 矣。

Kè-thêng-chhia àm-sî peh tiám beh lâi--ah.

計程車 晚上 八 點 要 來 了。

Jìchéngchē wǎnshàng bā diǎn yào lái le.

The taxi is going to come at 8pm (*possibility*).

尪仔 欲 倒落去 矣， 用手 共 伊 扞。

Ang-á beh tó--lòh-khì--ah, ēng chhiú kā i hōaⁿ.

娃娃 要 倒下去了， 用手 把它 扶。

Wáwá yào dàoxiàqù le, yòng shǒu bǎ tā fú.

The doll is about to fall over. Use your hand to support it (*possibility*).

Additionally, because there is commonly a change in situation signaled to the listener when stating an event will happen in the immediate future, the anterior aspect marker 矣 --**ah** often appears at the end of the clause or sentence (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)).

The negative form for 欲 **beh** is (猶)未 (**iáu--bōe**) ‘not yet’ rather than 無欲 **bô beh** ‘not want’, which only negates 欲 **beh** when used in the sense of ‘to want’ (*desire*) (see [12.2 Desire](#)).

To indicate that an event will not occur at all in the future, 袂 **bē** ‘will not’ must be used.

伊 的 學生 猶未 清 教室。

I ê hák-seng iáu-bōe chheng kàu-sek.

他的學生還沒清教室。

Tā de xuéshēng háiméi qīng jiàoshì.

His students have not cleaned the classroom yet.

伊的學生袂清教室。

I ê hák-seng bē chheng kàu-sek.

他的學生不會清教室。

Tā de xuéshēng bù huì qīng jiàoshì.

His students will not clean the classroom.

12.1.3 Emphasizing that an action is ‘going to happen soon’

Placing the particle 咧 **teh** before 欲 **beh** forms 咧欲 **teh-beh** (also pronounced **tih-beh**) ‘just about to’, which stresses that an action is on the verge of occurring. An alternate form is 強欲 **kiōng-beh** (also pronounced **liōng-beh**).

我咧欲出門。

Góa teh-beh chhut-m̄ng.

我快要出門。

Wǒ kuàiyào chūmén.

I’m just about to run out the door.

李先生列欲睏去矣。

Lí--sian-siⁿ teh-beh khùn--khì--ah.

李先生快要睡覺了。

Lǐ xiānshēng kuàiyào shuìjiào le.

Mr. Li is just about to fall asleep.

12.2 Desire

Desire modal verbs express ‘wanting’ to do an action (‘He wants to run in the morning’ or ‘I would like to watch a movie’).

TAIWANESE

AFFIRM

NEG

AFFIRM

MANDARIN

NEG

want	欲 beh	毋 m̄, 無欲 bô beh	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	愛 ài	毋 m̄, 無愛 bô ài	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	欲愛 beh-ài	無欲愛 bô beh-ài	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	愛欲 ài-beh	無愛欲 bô ài-beh	要 yào	不要 bù yào
would like	想欲 siū ⁿ -beh	無想欲 bô siū ⁿ -beh	想要 xiǎng yào	不想要 bù xiǎng yào
	想愛 siū ⁿ -ài	無想愛 bô siū ⁿ -ài	想要 xiǎng yào	不想要 bù xiǎng yào

12.2.1 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to want’

To indicate ‘wanting’ to do an action, Taiwanese uses both modal verbs 欲 **beh** and 愛 **ài**. In general the two words are interchangeable when used as modal verbs, but there are some contexts in which one word is preferred over the other as well as differences in individual preference.

While 欲 **beh** is a modal verb for desire, 欲 **beh** also functions as a modal verb for future possibility (see [12.1.2 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to be going to’](#)). The negative form can be either 毋 **m̄** or 無欲 **bô beh**. 毋 **m̄** is currently declining in usage.

欲 + verb

beh + verb

‘to want to verb’

我食飽了後，就欲睏。

Góa chiáh-pá liáu-āu, tō beh khùn.

我吃飽之後，就要睡覺。

Wǒ chībǎo zhīhòu, jiù yào shuìjiào.

After I have eaten, I just want to sleep.

這隻貓仔毋按厝頂落來。

Chit chiah niau-á m̄ àn chhù-téng lóh--lâi.

這隻貓不要從屋頂下來。

Zhè zhī māo bù yào cóng wūdǐng xiàlái.

The cat won’t come down from the roof.

阿公無欲去購物中心。

A-kong bô beh khi kò-bùt tiong-sim.

爺爺不要去購物中心。

Yěyě bù yào qù gòuwù zhōngxīn.

Grandpa doesn’t want to go to the shopping center.

12.2.2 Modal verb 愛 ài ‘to want’

The modal verb 愛 ài ‘to want’ generally is preferred over 欲 beh when there are different subjects or before adjectives. The negative form can be either 毋 m̄ or 無愛 bô ài. 毋 m̄ is currently declining in usage.

愛 + verb

ài + verb

‘to want to verb’

阮阿爸愛我做醫生。

Gún a-pa ài góa chò i-seng.

我爸爸要我當醫生。

Wǒ bàba yào wǒ dāng yīshēng.

My father wants me to be a doctor.

這個查某囡仔愛嬌。

Chit ê cha-bó gín-á ài súi.

這個女孩子愛漂亮。

Zhège nǚháizi ài piàoliang.

This little girl wants to be pretty.

遮的衫褲，你閣愛捏無？

Chiah-ê saⁿ-khò, lí koh ài tih--bô?

這些衣服，你還要嗎？

Zhè xiē yīfú, nǐ hái yào ma?

Do you still want these clothes?

捏 tih is originally a verb meaning ‘to have’. However, 捏 tih is now commonly used to express ‘wanting’ of physical objects. 捏 tih is also commonly paired with 欲 beh and 愛 ài to form 欲捏 beh tih and 愛捏 ài tih.

12.2.3 Modal verbs 想欲 siūⁿ-beh and 想愛 siūⁿ-ài ‘would like, thinking of’

想 siūⁿ ‘to be thinking of’ is often placed before 欲 beh to ensure that 欲 beh gets interpreted with its sense of ‘to want’ instead of its future-oriented sense of ‘going to’. Because 想欲 siūⁿ-beh also retains

some of the meaning from 想 **siūⁿ** ‘to think’, the feeling is also slightly more tentative and polite with a meaning similar to ‘would like’ or ‘thinking of’. The negative form is 無 想欲 **bô siūⁿ-beh**.

想欲 + *verb*

siūⁿ-beh + *verb*

‘would like to *verb*’

伊 想欲 去 夜市 來 食 飯。

I siūⁿ-beh khì iā-chhī lâi chiáh p̄ng.

她 想 到 夜市 來 吃 飯。

Tā xiǎng dào yèshì lái chī fàn.

She is thinking of going to the night market to eat.

我 想欲 點 龍蝦。

Góa siūⁿ-beh tiám lêng-hê.

我 想要 點 龍蝦。

Wǒ xiǎngyào diǎn lóngxiā.

I would like to order the lobster.

劉 先生 無 想欲 出國。

Lâu--sian-siⁿ bô siūⁿ-beh chhut-kok.

劉 先生 不 想要 出國。

Liú xiānshēng bù xiǎngyào chūguó.

Mr. Lau is not thinking of leaving the country.

Note that in Mandarin, 想 **xiǎng** by itself can suggest ‘wanting’ to do an action. However, 想 **siūⁿ** in Taiwanese must be paired with 欲 **beh** to express desire.

The modal verb 想愛 **siūⁿ-ài** is also used but in fewer contexts than 想欲 **siūⁿ-beh**. Because 愛 **ài** has another reading (‘to need’), placing 想 **siūⁿ** before 愛 **ài** helps to remove any ambiguity. The negative form is 無 想愛 **bô siūⁿ-ài**.

想愛 + *verb*

siūⁿ-ài + *verb*

‘would like to *verb*’

伊 無 想愛 食 西餐。

I bô siūⁿ-ài chiáh se-chhan.

她 不 想 吃 西餐。

Tā bù xiǎng chī xīcān.

She would not like to eat western food.

囡仔一直想愛 坦坦。

Gín-á it-tit siūⁿ-ài chhit-thô.

孩子一直想要 玩。

Háizi yīzhí xiǎngyào wán.

Children always think of playing.

12.2.4 Expressing desire for nouns

The combination of 欲 **beh** and 愛 **ài** into 欲愛 **beh ài** ‘to want’ is often not used as a modal verb but to indicate desire for a noun.

你 欲愛 啥物 物件？

Lí beh ài siáⁿ-mih mih-kiāⁿ?

你 想要 什麼 東西？

Nǐ xiǎngyào shénme dōngxī?

What would you like?

Compared to the Mandarin 愛 **ài**, the Taiwanese 愛 **ài** covers a broader spectrum of meaning. While in both languages 愛 **ài** can mean ‘to love’, Taiwanese also uses 愛 **ài** to express the meanings of ‘to like’ (Mandarin typically uses 喜歡 **xǐhuān**) and also as a modal verb expressing necessity (see [12.5 Obligation](#)).

逐家 愛 食 冰。

Ták-ke ài chiáh peng.

大家 喜歡 吃 冰淇淋。

Dàjiā xǐhuān chī bīngqílín.

Everyone likes to eat ice cream.

囡仔 愛 睏 上 少 九 點 鐘。

Gín-á ài khùn siōng-chió káu tiám-cheng.

小 孩子 需要 睡 至少 九 個 小時。

Xiǎo háizi xūyào shuì zhìshǎo jiǔ gè xiǎoshí.

Little children need to sleep at least 9 hours.

12.3 Ability

Ability modal verbs can express either one's personal skills ('She can really sing!' or 'He knows German') or the ability to complete a task given a set of circumstances ('We can meet you after work' or 'I can't fit into these clothes').

	TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
	AFFIRM	NEG	AFFIRM	NEG
SKILLS				
can	會曉 ē-hiáu	袂曉 bē-hiáu	會 huì	不會 bùhuì
	會 ē	袂 bē	會 huì	不會 bùhuì
CIRCUMSTANCES				
can	會當 ē-tàng	袂當 bē-tàng	能 néng	不能 bùnéng

12.3.1 Modal verb 會曉 ē-hiáu 'can'

To express an ability that is an innate ability or an acquired skill through learning, use 會曉 **ē-hiáu** 'can'. The negative form is 袂曉 **bē-hiáu**. An alternate form is 會 **ē**. However, because 會 **ē** also has the future-oriented sense of 'will', 會曉 **ē-hiáu** is more commonly used.

會曉 + verb
ē-hiáu + verb
'can verb'

我會曉 泅水。
Góa ē-hiáu siū chúi.
我會 游泳。
Wǒ huì yóuyóǒng.
I can swim.

伊 袂曉 講 德文。
I bē-hiáu kóng Tik-bûn.
她 不會 說 德文。
Tā bù huì shuō Déwén.
She cannot speak German.

伊 會 駛 車。
I ē sái chhia.
他 會 開 車。
Tā huì kāi chē.
He can drive (ability).

He will drive (*possibility*).

12.3.2 Modal verb 會當 ē-tàng ‘can’

The modal verb 會當 **ē-tàng** is more often used to describe ability when external circumstances (physical or otherwise) allow an action to occur. The negative form is 袂當 **bē-tàng**.

會當 + *verb*

ē-tàng + *verb*

‘can *verb*’

阮五个人攏會當坐一台車袂？

Gún gō ē lâng lóng ē-tàng chē chit tâi chhia--bē?

我們五個人都能坐一台車嗎？

Wǒmen wǔ gè rén dōu néng zuò yī tái chē ma?

Can the five of us all fit into one car?

因為落雨，伊袂當外口運動。

In-ūi lōh-hō, i bē-tàng gōa-kháu ūn-tōng.

因為下雨，他不能外面運動。

Yīnwèi xiàyǔ, tā bù néng wàimiàn yùndòng.

Because it's raining, he can't exercise outside.

12.4 Permission

Permission modal verbs grant or allow an action to be done (‘You may eat first’ or ‘They are allowed to sit there’).

	TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
	AFFIRM	NEG	AFFIRM	NEG
GENERAL				
may	會使(得) ē-sái(-tit)	袂使(得) bē-sái(-tit)	可以 kěyǐ	不可以 bùkěyǐ
	會當 ē-tàng	袂當 bē-tàng	能 néng	不能 bùnéng
	會用得 ē-ēng-tit	袂用得 bē-ēng-tit	可以 kěyǐ	不可以 bùkěyǐ
POLITE				
may	通(好) thang(-hó)	--	--	--

12.4.1 Modal verb 會使(得) ē-sái(-tit) ‘may’

The main modal verb to indicate permission to perform an action is 會使(得) **ē-sái(-tit)**. In addition, other modal verbs are used including 會當 **ē-tàng** and 會用得 **ē-ēng-tit**. Note that for some speakers the 得 **-tit** suffix is also pronounced **-eh** (i.e. 會使得 **ē-sái-eh**, 會用得 **ē-ēng-eh**).

All of these modal verbs can be used interchangeably to express permission (‘may’ or ‘to be allowed’). However, 會當 **ē-tàng** also carries the meaning of ability (‘can’). In contrast, 會使(得) **ē-sái(-tit)** and 會用得 **ē-ēng-tit** only express permission.

The negative forms are 袂使(得) **bē-sái(-tit)**, 袂當 **bē-tàng**, 袂用得 **bē-ēng-tit**.

會使(得) + *verb*

ē-sái (-tit) + *verb*

‘allowed to *verb*’

囡仔 會使 看 四 點鐘 的 電視。

Gín-á ē-sái khòaⁿ sì tiám-cheng ê tiān-sī.

孩子 可以 看 四 個 小時 的 電視。

Háizi kěyǐ kàn sì gè xiǎoshí de diànshì.

The children may watch television for four hours.

阿爸 講 阮 會當 飼 狗仔。

A-pa kóng gún ē-tàng chhī káu-á.

爸爸 說 我們 能 養 狗。

Bàba shuō wǒmen néng yǎng gǒu.

Dad says we are allowed to get a dog.

老師 共 學生 講 哺 樹奶糖 袂用得。

Lāu-su kā hāk-seng kóng pō`chhiū-leng-thîng bē-ēng-tit.

老師 跟 學生 說 嚼 口香糖 不行。

Lǎoshī gēn xuéshēng shuō jué kǒuxiāngtáng bùxíng.

The teacher told the students that chewing gum is not permitted.

12.4.2 Modal verb 通(好) thang(-hó) ‘may’

The modal verb 通(好) **thang(-hó)** ‘may’ can also be used to convey permission and is generally used as a polite form.

通(好) + *verb*

thang(-hó) + *verb*

‘may *verb*’

阮 通好 坐 遐 無？

Gún thang-hó chē chiah--bô?

我們 可以 坐 這裡 嗎？

Wǒmen kěyǐ zuò zhèlǐ ma?

May we sit here?

Note that Mandarin does not have an exact equivalent for 通(好) **thang(-hó)** ‘may’ when used as a more polite way to ask for permission.

The negative form of 通 **thang** ‘may’ is 毋通 **m̄-thang**. However, when used in the negative, the meaning shifts from one of permission to prohibition and can only be used in the second person.

恁 毋通 佇 內底 食 煙。

Lín m̄-thang tī lâi-té chiáh hun.

你們 別 在 裡面 吸 菸。

Nǐmen bié zài lǐmiàn xīyān.

Do not smoke inside.

12.5 Obligation

Obligation modal verbs can express needs from both an internal standpoint (‘I need to eat’) and an external standpoint (‘You need to sit quietly’). Moreover, obligation can be understood in terms of degree. Weaker obligation comes from moral and ethical positions (‘should’ or ‘supposed to’), while stronger obligation comes from the authority of rules and laws (‘must’ or ‘have to’).

	TAIWANESE			MANDARIN	
	AFFIRM	NEG	AFFIRM	NEG	
GENERAL					
need	愛 ài	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng	
	著愛 tiòh-ài	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng	
	著 tiòh	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng	
FORMAL					
need	需要 su-iàu	無需要 bô su-iàu	需要 xūyào	不需要 bùxūyào	
ADVERBS					
should	應該 eng-kai	無應該 bô eng-kai	應該 yīnggāi	不應該 bù yīnggāi	
must	一定 it-tēng	無一定 bô it-tēng	一定 yīdìng	不一定 bù yīdìng	

12.5.1 Modal verb 愛 ài ‘to need’

To indicate an obligation or necessity to do an action, Taiwanese uses the modal verb 愛 ài ‘must’ or ‘need to’. However, because 愛 ài has other meanings such as ‘to want’ or ‘to like/love’, a two-syllable variation 著愛 **tiòh-ài** can also be used to help ensure the necessity reading (著 **tiòh** by itself may appear although this is less common).

The negative form is 免 **bián**, but 毋 **m̄** is often added for emphasis to form 毋免 **m̄-bián** (also contracted to **mián**). Note that 無愛 **bô ài** can only be used to mean ‘to not like/want’ (*desire*).

(著)愛 + *verb*
(tiòh-) ài + *verb*
‘need to *verb*’

我 愛 煮 菜。

Góa ài chú chhài.

我 愛 煮 菜。

Wǒ ài zhǔ cài

I must cook (*necessity*).

I love cooking (*desire*).

吳 小姐 著 愛 借 你 的 電 腦。

Gô`sió-chiá tiòh-ài chhih lí ê tiān-náu.

吳 小姐 需 要 借 你 的 電 腦。

Wú xiǎojiě xūyào jiè nǐ de diànnǎo.

Ms. Gou needs to borrow your computer.

咱 毋 免 中 晝 進 前 到。

Lán m̄-bián tiong-tàu chìn-chêng kàu.

我們 不 用 中 午 之 前 到。

Wǒmen bùyòng zhōngwǔ zhīqián dào.

We don't need to get there before noon.

需要 **su-iàu** in Taiwanese is more formal in tone and less common in daily speech than 愛 **ài** or 著愛 **tiòh-ài**. The negative form is 無需要 **bô su-iàu**.

需要 + *verb*
su-iàu + *verb*
‘need to *verb*’

你 無需要 簽名。

Lí bô su-iàu chhiam-miâ.

你 不需要 簽名。

Nǐ bù xūyào qiānmíng.

You do not have to sign your name.

Note the Mandarin equivalent 需要 xūyào ‘to need’ does not carry the same air of formality.

12.5.2 Degree of obligation

To distinguish between weaker obligation (*should*) and stronger obligation (*must*), Taiwanese makes use of adverbs for emphasis. Without the use of adverbs, the degree of obligation is left to interpretation and determined by context.

To emphasize weak obligation, place the adverb 應該 **eng-kai** ‘should’ before the main verb. A modal verb can be included or omitted.

應該 + (*modal verb*) + *verb*

eng-kai + (*modal verb*) + *verb*

‘should (*modal verb*) + *verb*’

阮食飯進前，應該洗手。

Gún chiáh pāng chìn-chêng, eng-kai sé chhiú.

我們吃飯之前，應該洗手。

Wǒmen chī fàn zhīqián, yīnggāi xǐ shǒu.

We should wash our hands before we eat.

這個錯誤，你應該愛共恁頭家講一下。

Chit ê chhò-gō, lí eng-kai ài kā lín thâu-ke kóng chit-ê.

這個錯誤，你應該要跟你的老闆說一下。

Zhègè cuòwù, nǐ yīnggāi yào gēn nǐ de lǎobǎn shuō yíxià.

You should tell your boss about this mistake.

To emphasize strong obligation, place the adverb 一定 **it-tēng** ‘definitely’ before the main verb. A modal verb can be included or omitted.

一定 + (*modal verb*) + *verb*

it-tēng + (*modal verb*) + *verb*

‘definitely (*modal verb*) + *verb*’

我 一定愛 拜六 上班。

Góa it-tēng ài pài-lák siōng-pān.

我 得 禮拜六 上班。

Wǒ děi lǐbàiliù shàngbān.

I definitely must work on Saturdays.

入去 游泳池 進前， 您 一定著愛 先 洗浴。

Jip-khi iû-éng-tí chìn-chêng, in it-tēng tiòh-ài seng sé-ék.

進入 游泳池 之前， 他們 必須 先 洗澡。

Jìnrù yóuyǒngchí zhīqián, tāmen bìxū xiān xǐzǎo.

They have to shower before entering the pool.

Note that the Mandarin verbs 得 **děi** or 必須 **bìxū** ‘must’ already indicate strong obligation without having to add adverbs.

12.6 Prohibition

In the negative form, some modal verbs change meaning and can be used as prohibitions. Prohibitions are commands that warn or instruct not to do an action such as the English ‘do not’.

	TAIWANESE			MANDARIN	
	<i>AFFIRM</i>	<i>NEG</i>	<i>AFFIRM</i>	<i>NEG</i>	
do not	--	莫 <i>mài</i>	--	別 <i>bié</i> , 不要 <i>bùyào</i>	
	--	毋通 <i>m̄-thang</i>	--	別 <i>bié</i> , 不要 <i>bùyào</i>	
	--	毋好 <i>m̄-hó</i>	--	別 <i>bié</i> , 不要 <i>bùyào</i>	

12.6.1 Modal verb 莫 *mài* ‘do not’

When 愛 **ài** is used as a modal verb expressing ‘to want’ or ‘to like’, the negation formed by 無 **bô** and 愛 **ài** produces 無愛 **bô ài** meaning ‘not to like’ or ‘not to want’.

伊 無愛 食 魚。

I bô ài chiáh hî.

他 不 喜歡 吃 魚。

Tā bù xǐhuan chī yú.

He doesn't like to eat fish.

He doesn't want to eat fish.

However, the combination of the negative 毋 **m̄** and 愛 **ài** produces a phonetic combination 莫 **mài** which shifts the meaning to ‘do not’. 莫 **mài** can only be used in the second person to prohibit or advise against an action.

莫 + verb

mài + verb

‘do not verb’

莫駛傷緊！

Mài sái siuⁿ kín!

不要開太快！

Bùyào kāi tài kuài!

Don't drive too fast!

莫關門。

Mài koaiⁿ m̄ng.

別關門。

Bié guān mén.

Don't close the door.

In Mandarin the negation of the modal verb 要 **yào** ‘to want’ creates the prohibition 不要 **bùyào** (and its contraction 別 **bié**) to mean ‘do not’ when used in the second person.

12.6.2 Modal verb 毋通 m̄-thang ‘do not’

The negative form of 通 **thang** ‘to be allowed’ can also be used as a modal verb for prohibition, 毋通 **m̄-thang** ‘do not’. Note that 毋通 **m̄-thang** is less emphatic in tone than 莫 **mài**.

毋通 + verb

m̄-thang + verb

‘do not verb’

你 毋通 啱酒駛車。

Lí m̄-thang lim chiú sái chhia.

你 別 喝酒開車。

Nǐ bié hē jiǔ kāichē.

Don't drink and drive.

佇圖書館 毋通 講話。

Tī tô-su-kóan m̄-thang kóng ōe.

在圖書館 別 說話。

Zài túshūguǎn bié shuō huà.

Don't talk in the library.

Note that Mandarin modal verbs for prohibition 不要 **bùyào** and 別 **bié** are similar in tone and only differentiated in strength by one's speech volume.

12.6.3 Modal verb 毋好 **m̄-hó** 'do not'

The negative form of the adjective 好 **hó** 'good' using 毋 **m̄** can be used as a modal verb for prohibition 毋好 **m̄-hó** 'do not'. The other negative form 無好 **bô hó** cannot serve as a modal verb (see [6.4.3 Negation based on adjective desirability](#)). Note that when contracted 毋好 **m̄-hó** may sometimes sound like '**m̄-mo**'. The overall tone of 毋好 **m̄-hó** is similar in strength to 毋通 **m̄-thang**.

毋好 + verb

m̄-hó + verb

'do not verb'

半暝 以後 毋好 出去。

Pòan-mê í-āu m̄-hó chhut-ì khì.

半夜 以後 不要 出去。

Bànyè yǐhòu bùyào chūqù.

Don't go out after midnight.

毋好 食油的物件。

M-hó chiáh iû ê mih-kiān.

別 吃油膩的食物。

Bié chī yóunì de shíwù.

Don't eat greasy foods.

12.7 Summary of modal verbs

	TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
	<i>AFFIRM</i>	<i>NEG</i>	<i>AFFIRM</i>	<i>NEG</i>
POSSIBILITY (FUTURE)				
will	會 ē	袂 bē	會 huì	不會 bùhuì
going to	欲 beh	未 bōe	要 yào	還沒 hái méi
DESIRE (VOLITION)				
want	欲 beh	毋 m̄, 無欲 bô beh	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	愛 ài	毋 m̄, 無愛 bô ài	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	欲愛 beh-ài	無欲愛 bô beh-ài	要 yào	不要 bù yào
	愛欲 ài-beh	無愛欲 bô ài-beh	要 yào	不要 bù yào
would like	想欲 siū ⁿ -beh	無想欲 bô siū ⁿ -beh	想要 xiǎng yào	不想要 bù xiǎng yào
	想愛 siū ⁿ -ài	無想愛 bô siū ⁿ -ài	想要 xiǎng yào	不想要 bù xiǎng yào
ABILITY				
SKILLS				
can	會曉 ē-hiáu	袂曉 bē-hiáu	會 huì	不會 bùhuì
	會 ē	袂 bē	會 huì	不會 bùhuì
CIRCUMSTANCES				
can	會當 ē-tàng	袂當 bē-tàng	能 néng	不能 bù néng
PERMISSION				
GENERAL				
may	會使(得) ē-sái(-tit)	袂使(得) bē-sái(-tit)	可以 kě yǐ	不可以 bù kě yǐ
	會當 ē-tàng	袂當 bē-tàng	能 néng	不能 bù néng
	會用得 ē-ēng-tit	袂用得 bē-ēng-tit	可以 kě yǐ	不可以 bù kě yǐ
POLITE				
may	通(好) thang(hó)	--	--	--
OBLIGATION				
GENERAL				
need	愛 ài	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng
	著愛 tiòh-ài	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng
	著 tiòh	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	要 yào	不用 bù yòng
FORMAL				
need	需要 su-iàu	無需要 bô su-iàu	需要 xū yào	不需要 bù xū yào
ADVERBS				
should	應該 eng-kai	無應該 bô eng-kai	應該 yīng gāi	不應該 bù yīng gāi
must	一定 it-tēng	無一定 bô it-tēng	一定 yī dìng	不一定 bù yī dìng
PROHIBITION				
do not	--	莫 mài	--	別 bié, 不要 bù yào
	--	毋通 m̄-thang	--	別 bié, 不要 bù yào
	--	毋好 m̄-hó	--	別 bié, 不要 bù yào

13 Negation

Taiwanese has five common negatives: 毋 **m̄**, 無 **bô**, 免 **bián**, 袂 **bē**, and 未 **bōe**. Their different usages are based on a combination of modality (possibility, desire, ability, permission, obligation, prohibition), aspect (perfective, continuous, experiential, anterior, habitual, tentative), and/or other attributes.

Additional negative forms in Taiwanese tend to be reserved for compound words or more formal terms such as with 不 **put** (不時 **put-sî** ‘frequently’ or 不孝 **put-hàu** ‘unfilial’).

Below is a table indicating the affirmative counterparts to the five negatives in Taiwanese. Note that the negative 毋 **m̄** has two versions that will be explained further in this chapter.

NEGATIVE		AFFIRMATIVE	
毋 m̄	not want, not	欲 beh	want
毋 m̄	not	--	--
無 bô	not have	有 ū	have
袂 bē	will not	會 ē	will
免 bián	need not	著 tiòh	must
未 bōe	not yet	了 le	have + <i>verb</i>

In contrast, Mandarin only uses two negatives for colloquial speech: 不 **bù** and 沒 **méi**. For the most part, 不 **bù** is the general method of negation, while 沒 **méi** applies to situations in which an action is not complete or has not occurred in the past. Additional negative forms in Mandarin such as 無 **wú**, 非 **fēi**, 勿 **wù** tend to be reserved for written or more formal contexts. Note that the correspondence between Taiwanese and Mandarin negatives is not so easily mapped.

Additionally, for some speakers 袂 **bē** and 未 **bōe** are not differentiated in pronunciation. In other words, both are pronounced either **bē** or **bōe**. Or, an individual speaker may shift between both pronunciations freely without considering the distinction as meaningful. This is similar to how some speakers of English may pronounce the grammatical article ‘a’ both like the ‘a’ in ‘sofa’ and the ‘a’ in ‘date’ without intending a difference in meaning. Because written Taiwanese has not been common or widespread, some speakers may not consider 袂 **bē** and 未 **bōe** as distinct words. Nevertheless, some speakers do maintain a distinction. In effort to fully illustrate the context and usage for negative particles, this text distinguishes between the use of 袂 **bē** and 未 **bōe** throughout.

13.1 Negative 毋 **m̄**

毋 **m̄** appears to have two distinct meanings in Taiwanese: one as a pure negative ‘not’, the other as a

volitional negative for modal verbs of desire ‘not want’. There is still debate among scholars whether there are actually two 毋 m̄’s or just one. This text will treat 毋 m̄ as having two distinct meanings.

PURE NEGATION

這個查埔人 毋 是阮朋友。

Chit ê cha-po-lâng m̄-sī gún pêng-iú.

這個男人 不 是我的朋友。

Zhègè nánrén bù shì wǒ de péngyǒu.

This man is not my friend.

VOLITIONAL NEGATION

阮阿姐 毋 洗碗。

Gún a-chí m̄ sé óaⁿ.

我姐姐 丕 洗碗。

Wǒ jiějiě bù xǐ wǎn.

My older sister does not want to wash dishes.

Below is a correspondence table between the usage of the Taiwanese 毋 m̄ and its Mandarin counterparts.

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
毋 M (PURE NEGATIVE)		
Negation (<i>word specific</i>)	毋 m̄	不 bù
Affirmative-negative (<i>question</i>)	毋 -m̄-	不 -bu-
End-of-sentence tag (<i>question</i>)	毋 m̄	--
Experiential for 捌 bat (<i>aspect</i>)	毋捌 m̄-bat	不曾 bùcéng
毋 M (VOLITIONAL NEGATIVE)		
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	毋 m̄	--
Desire (<i>mood</i>)	毋 m̄	不要 bù yào
Prohibition (<i>mood</i>)	莫 mài (毋愛 m̄-ài)	不要 bù yào
	毋通 m̄-thang	不要 bù yào
	毋好 m̄-hó	不要 bù yào

13.1.1 Pure negative 毋 m̄ ‘not’

In one sense, 毋 m̄ can function as a pure ‘not’ without any additional meaning. When used in this way, 毋 m̄ can only appear before a limited number of words.

Below is a table displaying some of the most common words that use 毋 *m̄* in its negative form. Note that the list is made up of stative verbs, modal verbs, adjectives, adverb, and conjunctions. There are no action verbs negated by the pure 毋 *m̄*.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
STATIVE VERBS		
毋是 <i>m̄ sī</i>	不是 <i>bùshì</i>	not be
毋驚 <i>m̄-kiaⁿ</i>	不怕 <i>bùpà</i>	not scared
毋捌 <i>m̄ bat</i>	不認識 <i>bùrènshì</i>	not recognize
毋知(影) <i>m̄ chai(-iáⁿ)</i>	不知道 <i>bùzhīdào</i>	not know
毋信 <i>m̄ sìn</i>	不相信 <i>bùxiāngxìn</i>	not believe
毋值 <i>m̄-tàt</i>	不如 <i>bùrú</i>	not equal to
MODAL VERBS		
毋免 <i>m̄-bián</i>	不用 <i>bùyòng</i>	no need
毋肯 <i>m̄ khéng</i>	不願意 <i>bùyuànyì</i>	not willing
毋願 <i>m̄ gōan</i>	不希望 <i>bùxīwàng</i>	not wishing for
毋敢 <i>m̄ káⁿ</i>	不敢 <i>bùgǎn</i>	not dare
ADJECTIVES		
毋著 <i>m̄-tiòh</i>	不對 <i>bùduì</i>	incorrect
毋值 <i>m̄-tàt</i>	不值得 <i>bùzhídé</i>	not worth it
毋好 <i>m̄ hó</i>	不好 <i>bùhǎo</i>	not good
毋(甘)願 <i>m̄ (kam-)gōan</i>	不甘心 <i>bùgānxīn</i>	not resigned to
ADVERBS AND CONJUNCTIONS		
毋捌 <i>m̄ bat</i>	不曾 <i>bùcéng</i>	never
毋甘 <i>m̄-kam</i>	捨不得 <i>shěbudé</i>	reluctant
毋管 <i>m̄-kóan</i>	無論 <i>wúlùn</i>	regardless
毋爾 <i>m̄-nā</i>	不只是 <i>bùzhǐshì</i>	not only
毋過 <i>m̄-koh</i>	不過 <i>bùguò</i>	but, however
毋才 <i>m̄-chiah</i>	才 <i>cái</i>	because of that

Words that use the pure 毋 *m̄* have a unique set of properties particularly in questions (see [20.3 Particle questions](#)).

13.1.2 Volitional 毋 *m̄* ‘not want’

The other sense of the negative 毋 **m̄** is to ‘not want’, which is the negative form of the modal verb 欲 **beh** ‘to want’ (see [12.2 Desire](#)). Because there is only a limited number of words which use the pure 毋 **m̄**, the volitional sense of 毋 **m̄** expressing ‘not wanting’ is much more common.

Additionally, note that because no action verbs can take the pure 毋 **m̄** for the negative form, they can only be negated by the volitional 毋 **m̄**.

Note that usage of 毋 **m̄** is also synonymous with 無愛 **bô ài** and 無欲 **bô-beh**.

ADJECTIVE

伊 毋 乖。

I **m̄** koai.

他 丕 乖。

Tā **bù** guài.

He will not behave himself.

STATIVE VERB

伊 毋 準備 明仔載 的 旅行。

I **m̄** chún-pī bîn-á-chài ê lú-hêng.

她 丕 準備 明天 的 旅行。

Tā **bù** zhǔnbèi míngtiān de lǚxíng.

She will not prepare for tomorrow’s trip.

ACTION VERB

阮 毋 去。

Gún **m̄** khì.

我們 丕 (要) 去。

Wǒmen **bù** (yào) qù.

We do not want to go.

Note that in Mandarin, volition (*desire*) can often be bound in the interpretation of the verb. As a result, 要 **yào** is often omitted.

13.1.3 毋 m̄ in questions

Both the pure and volitional 毋 **m̄** can be used in questions. However, there are slight differences in their usages.

13.1.3.1 Affirmative-negative questions (X-not-X format)

Only the pure negative 毋 *m̄* can form affirmative-negative questions in the X-not-X format (see [20.4.3 Affirmative-negative questions](#)). Moreover, only the limited number of adjectives, stative, and modal verbs that are negated by the pure negative 毋 *m̄* can use this construction for questions.

adjective / verb + 毋 + adjective / verb

adjective / verb + m̄ + adjective / verb

STATIVE VERB

伊 是毋是 你的學生？

I sī-m̄-sī lí ê hák-seng?

他 是不是 你的學生？

Tā shìbùshì nǐ de xuéshēng?

Is he your student?

ADJECTIVE

我下晡 恁恁 去遊樂園，好毋好？

Góa ē-po' chhōa lín khi iû-lòk-hîg, hó-m̄-hó?

我下午帶你們去遊樂園，好不好？

Wǒ xiàwǔ dài nǐmen qù yóulèyuán, hǎobùhǎo?

How about I take you all to the amusement park this afternoon?

MODAL VERB

你 敢毋敢 坐佇上頭前？

Lí káⁿ-m̄-káⁿ chē tī siōng thâu-chêng?

你 敢不敢 坐在最前面？

Nǐ gǎnbùgǎn zuò zài zuì qiánmiàn?

Do you dare sit in the very front?

Note that in Mandarin the X-not-X question format is much more commonly used and accepts a large variety of verbs and adjectives.

In responses to X-not-X questions, the pure 毋 *m̄* cannot stand alone. The main verb or adjective from the question must be restated with the negative 毋 *m̄* in the response.

QUESTION

你 信毋信 伊的故事？

Lí sìn-m̄-sìn i ê kò-sū?

你 相不相信 她的故事？

Nǐ xiāngbùxiāngxìn tā de gùshì?

Do you believe her story?

ANSWER

毋信。

M-sìn.

不 相信。

Bù xiāngxìn.

No (*I don't believe it*).

13.1.3.2 Tag questions with negatives

Tags are short phrases seeking confirmation that can be attached to the end of a declarative sentence transforming the sentence into a question ('This seat is yours, right?') (see [20.2 Tag questions](#)). The declarative sentence component preceding the tag can be referred to as the *proposition*.

While both the pure 毋 m̄ and volitional 毋 m̄ can form tag questions, there are some differences.

The pure 毋 m̄ can be used to form tag questions but must repeat the verb or adjective from the proposition in the tag. Additionally, the pure 毋 m̄ cannot stand independently and must always be bound to another verb or adjective.

PROPOSITION	TAG
<i>verb / adjective...</i>	<i>verb / adjective + 毋?</i>
<i>verb / adjective...</i>	<i>verb / adjective + m̄?</i>

PURE 毋 M

這碗麵是我的，是毋？Chit óaⁿ mī sī góa--ê, sī m̄?這碗麵 是不是 我的？Zhè wǎn miàn shìbùshì wǒ de?This bowl of noodles is mine, isn't it?恁知我細漢的時陣規工攞咧包水餃，知毋？Lín chai góa sè-hàn ê sī-chūn kui kang lóng teh pau chúí-kiáu, chai m̄?你們 知不知道 我小的時候整天都在包水餃？Nǐmen zhībùzhīdào wǒ xiǎo de shíhòu zhěngtiān dōu zài bāo shuǐjiǎo?Did you know that when I was young I wrapped dumplings all day?

In contrast, the volitional 毋 m̄ can appear independently without attaching to another verb or adjective. Repeating the adjective or verb before the question particle is optional.

PROPOSITION	QUESTION PARTICLE
<i>verb / adjective...</i>	<i>(verb / adjective) + 毋?</i>

verb / adjective..., (verb / adjective) + m̄?

VOLITIONAL 毋 M

你 欲 參加 婚禮， 毋？

Lí beh chham-ka hun-lé, m̄?

你 要不要 參加 婚禮？

Nǐ yàobùyào cānjiā hūnlǐ?

Do you want to attend the wedding?

你 欲 和 我 做伙 去 逛街， 欲 毋？

Lí beh hām góa chò-hóe khì seh-ke, beh m̄?

你 要不要 跟 我 一起 去 逛街？

Nǐ yàobùyào gēn wǒ yīqǐ qù guàngjiē?

Do you want to go shopping with me?

In responses to these questions, the pure 毋 m̄ cannot stand independently, while the volitional 毋 m̄ can.

PURE 毋 M

QUESTION

你 捌 食 王梨酥， 捌 毋？

Lí bat chiáh ông-lâi-so, bat m̄?

你 吃過 鳳梨酥 嗎？

Nǐ chīguò fènglísū ma?

Have you eaten pineapple cake before?

ANSWER

毋 捌。

M bat.

沒 吃過 (沒有)。

Méi chīguò (méiyǒu)

No (*I haven't*).

Note that the Mandarin response 沒有 méiyǒu does not require repeating the verb from the question.

VOLITIONAL 毋 M

QUESTION

你 欲 食 冰， (欲) 毋？

Lí beh chiáh peng, (beh) m̄?

你 要不要 吃 冰淇淋？

Nǐ yàobùyào chī bīngqílín?

Do you want to eat ice cream?

ANSWER

毋 (無愛) 。

M (bô-ài).

不要 。

Bùyào.

No (*I don't want to eat it*).

Note that in the Mandarin response, the negative 不 **bù** cannot stand alone but must include the modal verb 要 **yào**.

In Taiwanese, 無愛 **bô-ài** is an alternate form to negatively respond to a volitional 毋 **m̄** question.

13.1.4 毋 m̄ in prohibitions

毋 **m̄** is also used with prohibitions which warn or advise against an action (see [12.6 Prohibition](#)).

莫 **mài** (derived from the contraction of 毋愛 **m̄-ai**) is used as a negative command to express 'don't'.

莫駛傷緊啦！

Mài sái siuⁿ kín--lah!

別開太快啦！

Bié kāi tài kuài la!

Don't drive too fast!

毋通 **m̄-thang** and 毋好 **m̄-hó** (sometimes contracted to '**m̄-mo**') are also often used in commands to strongly discourage behavior. However, the tone is less emphatic than that of 莫 **mài**.

毋通食薰。

M-thang chiáh hun

不要吸菸。

Bù yào xīyān

Don't smoke (*it's better not to do so*).

毋好講遐爾大聲。

M-hó kóng hiah-nī tōa siaⁿ

不要講那麼大聲。

Bù yào jiǎng nàme dà shēng

Don't talk so loud (*it's better not to do so*).

Note that the Mandarin modal verb for prohibition 不要 **bù yào** and its contraction 別 **bié** are similar in tone and only differentiated in strength by one's speech volume.

13.1.5 Negating the experiential aspect marker 捌 **bat**

毋 **m̄** appears in the negative form of the experiential aspect marker 捌 **bat**, which indicates that an action has been experienced at some unspecified point in the past. 毋捌 **m̄ bat** therefore indicates that the action has not been experienced. Often adverbs such as 從來 **chêng-lâi** 'since always' are added to convey the meaning of 'never' (see [8.3.1 Experiential aspect with 捌 bat](#)).

阮翁從來 毋捌 送我珠寶。

Gún ang chêng-lâi **m̄ bat** sàng góa chu-pó.

我先生從來 沒送我過飾品。

Wǒ xiānshēng cónglái **méi** sòngguò wǒ shìpǐn.

My husband has never given me jewelry.

Mandarin does not have an experiential aspect marker occurring before the verb. Instead, the experiential aspect is marked by placing the suffix 過 **-guò** after the verb.

Taiwanese can also mark the experiential aspect 過 **-kòe** after the verb or both 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe**. If only 過 **-kòe** appears, then 無 **bô** negates the verb phrase (see [13.2.3 無 bô negating the experiential aspect suffix 過 -kòe](#)). When both 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe** are used, 毋捌 **m̄ bat** is used to negate the verb phrase.

13.2 Negative 無 **bô**

The negative particle 無 **bô** has a multitude of roles within the language. Working both as a verb and a grammatical element, 無 **bô** can be used as a negative for possession, existence, perfective aspect, experiential aspect, habitual aspect, emphasis, potential verb complements, and before adjectives with desirable attributes.

Below is a correspondence table between the usage of the Taiwanese 無 **bô** and its Mandarin counterparts.

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Possession (<i>verb</i>)	無 bô	沒有 měiyǒu
Existence (<i>verb</i>)	無 bô	沒有 měiyǒu
Perfective (<i>aspect</i>)	無 bô	沒有 měiyǒu

Experiential for 過 kòe (<i>aspect</i>)	無 bô	沒有 měiyǒu
Habitual (<i>aspect</i>)	無 bô	不 bù
Emphasis marker	無 bô	確實 不 quèshí bù
Potential verb complement	無 -bô-	不 -bù-
General-purpose tag (<i>question</i>)	無 --bô	對不對 duìbùduì
Perfective question particle (<i>question</i>)	無 --bô	了沒(有) le měi(yǒu)
Universal question particle (<i>question</i>)	無 --bô	嗎 ma
Adjectives (<i>desirable</i>)	無 bô	不 bù

13.2.1 無 bô negating possession and existence

As an independent verb, 無 **bô**, the negative form of the verb 有 **ū**, indicates both possession ‘to not have’ and existence ‘there is/are not’ (see [10.2 有 ū](#)). In general, 無 **bô** functions as a verb when a noun immediately follows. When the subject is a location, the meaning shifts from possession to existence.

POSSESSION

張小姐 無 顧客 的 名片。

Tiūⁿ sió-chiá bô kò-kheh ê bêng-phìⁿ.

張小姐 沒有 顧客 的 名片。

Zhāng xiǎojiě méiyǒu gùkè de míngpiàn.

Ms. Tiunn does not have her client’s business card.

EXISTENCE

這 個 市 場 無 弓 蕉。

Chit ê chhī-tiūⁿ bô keng-chio.

這 個 市 場 沒有 香 蕉。

Zhègè shìchǎng méiyǒu xiāngjiāo.

There are no bananas in this market.

13.2.2 無 bô in the perfective aspect

無 **bô** is the negative form of the aspect marker 有 **ū** that is used to indicate a completed action (see [8.1.1 Perfective aspect with 有 ū](#), [10.2.3 有 ū as a perfective aspect maker](#)). 無 **bô** in this context shows that an action did not take place or occur.

阮昨暗佇舞會無跳舞。

Gún cha-àm tī bú-hōe bô thiàu-bú.

我們昨晚在舞會沒有跳舞。

Wǒmen zuówǎn zài wǔhuì méiyǒu tiàowǔ.

We didn't dance at the party last night.

13.2.3 無 **bô** negating the experiential aspect suffix 過 -kòe

無 **bô** negates the experiential aspect marker 過 -kòe, which indicates an action that has been experienced at some unspecified point in the past (see [8.3.2 Experiential aspect with 過 -kòe](#)). Experiential aspect sentences in the negative often include adverbs such as 從來 **chêng-lâi** ‘since always’ to convey the meaning of ‘never’.

這個查某囡仔從來無看過雪。

Chit ê cha-bó gín-á chêng-lâi bô khòaⁿ-kòe seh.

這個女孩從來沒看過雪。

Zhège nǚhái cónglái méi kànguò xuě.

The girl has never seen snow before.

The experiential aspect may also be indicated in Taiwanese by the marker 捌 **bat**, which occurs before the verb, or a combination of both 捌 **bat** and 過 **kòe**. In both these cases, the negative form is 毋捌 **m̄ bat** (see [13.1.5 Experiential aspect with 捌 bat](#)).

Mandarin only has the single experiential aspect marker 過 -guò, which occurs after the verb.

13.2.4 無 **bô** in the habitual aspect

無 **bô** is the negative form of 有咧 **ū teh** when used in the habitual aspect. 無咧 **bô teh** is placed before the verb phrase to indicate that the subject does not regularly perform the action (see [8.5 Habitual aspect](#), [10.2.5 有 ū as a habitual aspect marker](#)).

伊無咧食薰。

I bô teh chiáh-hun.

她不抽煙。

Tā bù chōuyān.

She doesn't smoke.

In Mandarin, no special marker needs to be used to allow for a reading in the habitual aspect.

13.2.5 無 bô as an emphasis marker

無 **bô** is the negative form of 有 **ū** when used to emphasize that an action did occur or is indeed happening. 無 **bô** in this context underscores that an action did not take place or is not occurring (see [10.2.4 有 ū as an emphasis marker](#)).

阮這馬無咧看電視！

Gún chit-má bô teh khòaⁿ tiān-sī!

我們現在確實沒有在看電視啊！

Wǒmen xiànzài quèshí méiyǒu zài kàn diànshì a!

We are not watching television right now!

Note that Mandarin does not have an exact equivalent to 無 **bô** as an emphasis marker, but can use adverbs such as 確實 **quèshí** ‘indeed’ and end-of-sentence particles such as 啊 **a** to show emphasis.

13.2.6 無 bô in verb complements

無 **bô** is the negative form of 有 **ū** when used as part of a verb complement. With phase complements, 無 **bô** indicates that a verb is unable to be completed successfully. In actualized potential complement constructions, 無 **bô** indicates that the main verb is unable to attain the outcome specified by the complement (see [11.1.2 Phase complements indicating achievement](#), [11.4.1 Actualized potential complements](#)).

PHASE COMPLEMENT ACHIEVEMENT

現做的麵包，伊買無。

Hiān-chò ê mī-pau, i bé bô.

他買不到現烤的麵包。

Tā mǎibùdào xiànkǎo de miànbāo.

He failed to buy fresh bread.

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

黃先生的工課做無了。

Ng--sian-siⁿ ê khang-khòe chò-bô-liáu.

黃先生 做不完 他的工作。

Huáng xiānshēng zuòbùwán tā de gōngzuò.

Mr. Ng was unable to finish his work.

13.2.7 無 --bô in questions

無 --bô appears in many question constructions both as part of a question tag and as an independent question particle.

13.2.7.1 無 --bô as a general-purpose question tag

無 --bô is part of the construction of the general-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô ‘is that right?’. Because this tag only seeks a yes-no confirmation, it can be appended to most declarative sentences to change them into questions. Alternate forms of this tag include 著無 tiòh--bô and 是無 sī--bô (see [20.2.1 General-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô](#)).

咱應該坐下早九點的班機，是著無？

Lán eng-kai chē e-chái káu tiám ê pan-ki, sī tiòh--bô?

我們應該坐早上九點的航班，對不對？

Wǒmen yīnggāi zuò zǎoshang jiǔ diǎn de hángbān, duìbùduì?

We are supposed to be on the 9 AM flight, right?

13.2.7.2 無 --bô as perfective aspect question particle

A declarative statement using 有 ū as a perfective aspect marker can be changed into a question by adding the negative particle 無 --bô. 有 ū can be repeated before the question particle 無 --bô or omitted (see [20.3.1 Negative question particles](#)).

你有開窗仔，(有) 無？

Lí ū khui thang-á, (ū)--bô?

你開了窗戶 沒有？

Nǐ kāile chuānghù méiyǒu?

You opened the window, didn't you?

13.2.7.3 無 --bô as a universal question particle

For some speakers, 無 --bô is becoming a universal question particle that can be appended to any sentence as a question marker similar to the Mandarin question particle 嗎 **ma** (see [20.3.2 無 --bô as a universal question particle](#)). This linguistic change may be due to the continued influence from Mandarin.

伊欲去德國讀冊無？

I beh khi Tek-kok thák chheh--bô?

她要去德國讀書嗎？

Tā yào qù Déguó dú shū ma?

Does she want to go study in Germany?

13.2.8 無 bô negating desirable adjectives

無 **bô** is the negative form of 有 **ū** when used before desirable adjectives. 無 **bô** in this context indicates that the object described does not possess a desirable quality or attribute (see [6.4.3 Negation based on adjective desirability](#), [10.2.7 有 ū with desirable adjectives](#)).

彼塊肉無軟。

Hit tè bah bô nńg.

那塊肉不嫩。

Nà kuài ròu bù nèn.

That piece of meat is not tender.

13.3 Negative 袂 bē

The negative particle 袂 **bē** can form negation for some modal verbs (possibility, ability, permission), undesirable adjectives, and unrealized potential complements.

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Possibility (<i>mood</i>)	袂 bē	不會 bùhuì
Ability (<i>mood</i>)	袂 bē	不會 bùhuì
	袂曉 bē-híau	不會 bùhuì

	袂當 bē-tàng	不能 bùnéng
Permission (<i>mood</i>)	袂當 bē-tàng	不能 bùnéng
	袂使(得) bē-sái(-tit)	不可以 bùkěyǐ
	袂用得 bē-ēng-tit	不可以 bùkěyǐ
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	袂 --bē	--
Potential verb complement	袂 bē	不 -bu-
Adjectives (<i>undesirable</i>)	袂 bē	不 bù

13.3.1 袂 bē as a modal verb

袂 **bē** is the negative form of the modal verb 會 **ē** which is used in several compounds to express possibility, ability, and permission.

13.3.1.1 袂 bē negating possibility

袂 **bē** ‘will not’ is the negative form of the modal verb 會 **ē** ‘will’ which indicates a high likelihood that an event will occur (see [12.1.1 Modal verb 會 ē ‘will’](#)).

阮老師 袂 參加 舞會。

Gún lāu-su bē chham-ka bú-hōe.

我們 的 老師 不會 參加 舞會。

Wǒmen de lǎoshī bù huì cānjiā wǔhuì.

Our teacher won’t come to the dance.

13.3.1.2 袂 bē negating ability

袂 **bē** ‘cannot’ is the negative form of 會 **ē** which forms compounds for modal verbs expressing ability. 袂 **bē** and 袂曉 **bē-hiáu** both indicate the lack of a learned ability or acquired skill, while 袂當 **bē-tàng** indicates an inability to complete a task due to physical or situational constraints (see [12.3 Ability](#)).

阮 阿媽 袂曉 上網。

Gún a-má bē-hiáu chiūn-bāng.

我奶奶 不會 上網。

Wǒ nǎinǎi bù huì shàngwǎng.

My grandma doesn't know how to get online.

劉先生 後禮拜 袂當 去北京。

Lâu--sian-siⁿ āu lé-pài bē-tàng khi Pak-kiaⁿ.

劉先生 下禮拜 不能 去北京。

Liú xiānshēng xià lǐbài bù néng qù Běijīng.

Mr. Lau can't go to Beijing next week.

13.3.1.3 袂 bē negating permission

袂 **bē** ‘may not’ is the negative form of 會 **ē** which forms compounds for modal verbs expressing permission: 袂當 **bē-tàng**, 袂使(得) **bē-sái(-tit)**, and 袂用得 **bē-ēng-tit** (see [12.4 Permission](#)). Note that for some speakers the 得 **-tit** suffix is also pronounced **-eh** (e.g. 袂使得 **bē-sái-eh**, 袂用得 **bē-ēng-eh**).

周先生 袂當 直接 敲 電話 予 顧客。

Chiu--sian-siⁿ bē-tàng tit-chiap khà tiān-ōe hō kò-kheh.

周先生 不能 直接 打 電話 給 顧客。

Zhōu xiānshēng bù néng zhíjiē dǎ diànhuà gěi gùkè.

Mr. Chiu is not permitted to call clients directly.

阮小妹 袂使得 家己 看 電影。

Gún sió-mōe bē-sài-tit ka-tī khòaⁿ tiān-iaⁿ.

我妹妹 不可以 自己 看 電影。

Wǒ mèimei bù kěyǐ zìjǐ kàn diànyǐng.

My younger sister isn't allowed to watch movies alone.

13.3.2 袂 bē as question particle

A declarative statement using the modal verb 會 **ē** (or any compounds constructed from 會 **ē** such as 會曉 **ē-hiáu**, 會當 **ē-tàng**, 會使 **ē-sái**, etc.) can be changed into a question by adding the negative particle 袂 **--bē** (see [20.3.1 Negative question particles](#)).

你下晡會去購物中心袂？

Lí ē-po ē khì kò-bút tiong-sim--bē?

你下午會不會去購物中心？

Nǐ xiàwǔ huìbùhuì qù gòuwù zhòngxīn?

Will you go to the mall this afternoon?

阮會使看電影袂？

Gún ē-sái khòaⁿ tiān-iáⁿ--bē?

我們可不可以看電影？

Wǒmen kěbùkěyǐ kàn diànyǐng?

May we watch a movie?

Note that some speakers will replace the question tag 袂 **bē** with 無 **bô** regardless of the verb used in the sentence.

13.3.3 袂 **bē** in verb complements

袂 **-bē-** appears as an infix in the negative form of the unrealized potential complement, which indicates the inability of the main verb to achieve the complement (see [11.4.2 Unrealized potential complements](#)). The action takes place either in the present or the future.

就算有三點鐘，伊考券嘛寫袂了。

Chiū sng ū saⁿ tiám-cheng, i khó-kng mā siá-bē-liáu.

即使有三個小時，他也寫不完考卷。

Jíshǐ yǒu sān gè xiǎoshí, tā yě xiěbùwán kǎojiàn.

Even if he has 3 hours, he can't finish this test.

連游泳池的一輓，我嘛游袂了。

Liàn iû-éng-tī ê chit liàn, góa mā siû-bē-liáu.

連游泳池的一圈，我也游不完。

Lián yóuyǒngchí de yī quān, wǒ yě yóubùwán.

Even one lap in the pool, I can't swim.

Mandarin does not make a distinction between actualized or unrealized potential complements. All potential complements are negated with the infix 不 **-bu-**.

13.3.4 袂 bē negating undesirable adjectives

袂 **bē** is the negative form of 會 **ē** when used before adjectives describing undesirable qualities. 袂 **bē** in this context indicates that the object described does not possess the undesirable quality or attribute (see [6.4.3 Negating adjectives](#), [10.2.7 有 ū with desirable adjectives](#)).

坐 踏 傘 的 下 跔 袂 熱。

Chē tàt sòaⁿ ê ē-kha bē jóah.

坐 在 陽 傘 的 下 面 不 熱。

Zuò zài yángsǎn de xiàmiàn bù rè.

It isn't hot sitting beneath the umbrella.

Mandarin does not make a distinction in negation between desirable or undesirable adjectives. All adjectives are negated with 不 **bù**.

13.4 Negative 未 bōe

The negative particle 未 **bōe** serves as the negation for the anterior aspect and can function as a question particle.

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Anterior (<i>aspect</i>)	(猶)未 (iáu-)bōe	還沒 hái měi
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	未 --bōe	了沒(有) le měi(yǒu)

13.4.1 未 bōe in the anterior aspect

未 **bōe** (also pronounced **bē**) ‘not yet’ is the negative form of the anterior aspect marker 矣 --**ah**, which indicates that the clause or sentence has some relevance to the current situation (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)). 猶未 **iáu-bōe** ‘not yet’ is the form when occurring before the verb, while 未 --**bōe** only appears independently within a question tag.

我 猶 未 買 票。

Góa iáu-bōe bé phiàu.

我 還 沒 買 票。

Wǒ hái méi mǎi piào.

I haven't bought tickets yet.

13.4.2 未 bōe as question particle

A declarative statement can be changed into a question by adding the negative particle 未 --bōe ‘yet’. This puts the sentence into the anterior aspect (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#), [20.3.1 Negative question particles](#)).

恁食飽未?

Lín chiáh pá--bōe?

你們吃飽了沒?

Nǐmen chī bǎo le méi?

Have you eaten yet?

13.5 Negative 免 bián

The negative particle 免 bián serves as the negation for the modal verbs for necessity or obligation and can also function as a question particle.

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Obligation (<i>mood</i>)	(毋)免 (m̄-)bián	不用 bù yòng
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	抑免 iah bián	還是不用 hái shì bù yòng

13.5.1 免 bián negating obligation

免 bián ‘no need’ is the negative form of the modal verbs for necessity or obligation: 著 tiōh, 著愛 tiōh-ài, and 愛 ài (see [12.5 Obligation](#)). For emphasis, some speakers also include 毋 m̄ to form the compound 毋免 m̄-bián (often contracted to mián).

你免帶你的護照。

Lí bián tòà lí ê hō-chiàu.

你 不用 帶你的護照。

Nǐ bù yòng dài nǐ de hùzhào.

You don't need to bring your passport.

(毋) 免啦！

(M-) Bián--lah!

不用 啦！

Bù yòng la!

There's no need!

13.5.2 免 bián as question particle

免 **bián** is less commonly used as a negative question particle but can be placed at the end of declarative sentences with obligation modal verbs to form a question (see [12.5 Obligation](#), [20.3.1 Negative question particles](#)). Generally, 免 **bián** is preceded by 抑 **iah** 'or'.

我著愛袋錢，抑免？

Góa tiōh-ài tē chiⁿ, iah bián?

我得帶錢，還是不用？

Wǒ děi dài qián, háishì bùyòng?

Do I need to take money?

13.6 Summary of negation

FUNCTION	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
毋 M (PURE NEGATIVE)		
Negation (<i>word specific</i>)	毋 m̄	不 bù
Affirmative-negative (<i>question</i>)	毋 -m̄-	不 -bu-
End-of-sentence tag (<i>question</i>)	毋 m̄	---
Experiential for 捌 bat (<i>aspect</i>)	毋捌 m̄-bat	沒有 měiyǒu
毋 M (VOLITIONAL NEGATIVE)		
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	毋 m̄	---
Desire (<i>mood</i>)	毋 m̄	不要 bù yào
Prohibition (<i>mood</i>)	莫 mài (毋愛 m̄-ài)	不要 bù yào
	毋通 m̄-thang	不要 bù yào
	毋好 m̄-hó	不要 bù yào

無 *BŌ*

Possession (<i>verb</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	沒有 <i>měiyǒu</i>
Existence (<i>verb</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	沒有 <i>měiyǒu</i>
Perfective (<i>aspect</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	沒有 <i>měiyǒu</i>
Experiential for 過 <i>kòe</i> (<i>aspect</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	沒有 <i>měiyǒu</i>
Habitual (<i>aspect</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	不 <i>bù</i>
Emphasis marker	無 <i>bō</i>	不 (啊) <i>bù (a)</i>
Potential verb complement	無 <i>-bō-</i>	不 <i>-bu-</i>
General-purpose tag (<i>question</i>)	無 <i>--bō</i>	對不對 <i>duìbùduì</i>
Perfective question particle (<i>question</i>)	無 <i>--bō</i>	了沒(有) <i>le měi(yǒu)</i>
Universal question particle (<i>question</i>)	無 <i>--bō</i>	嗎 <i>ma</i>
Adjectives (<i>desirable</i>)	無 <i>bō</i>	不 <i>bù</i>

袂 *BĒ*

Possibility (<i>mood</i>)	袂 <i>bē</i>	不會 <i>bùhuì</i>
Ability (<i>mood</i>)	袂 <i>bē</i>	不會 <i>bùhuì</i>
	袂曉 <i>bē-hiáu</i>	不會 <i>bùhuì</i>
	袂當 <i>bē-tàng</i>	不能 <i>bùnéng</i>
Permission (<i>mood</i>)	袂當 <i>bē-tàng</i>	不能 <i>bùnéng</i>
	袂使(得) <i>bē-sái(-tit)</i>	不可以 <i>bùkěyǐ</i>
	袂用得 <i>bē-ēng-tit</i>	不可以 <i>bùkěyǐ</i>
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	袂 <i>--bē</i>	--
Potential verb complement	袂 <i>bē</i>	不 <i>-bu-</i>
Adjectives (<i>undesirable</i>)	袂 <i>bē</i>	不 <i>bù</i>

未 *BŌE*

Anterior (<i>aspect</i>)	(猶)未 <i>(iáu-)-bōe</i>	還沒 <i>háiměi</i>
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	未 <i>--bōe</i>	了沒(有) <i>le měi(yǒu)</i>

免 *BIÁN*

Obligation (<i>mood</i>)	(毋)免 <i>(m̄-)-bián</i>	不用 <i>bùyòng</i>
Question particle (<i>question</i>)	抑 免 <i>iah bián</i>	還是不用 <i>háishì bùyòng</i>

14 Adverbs

Adverbs can modify verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs. Not all, but many adverbs in English are words that end in ‘-ly’.

MODIFYING VERBS

The children walked quietly down the hall.

He still brings his teddy bear.

MODIFYING ADJECTIVES

It was such a brightly lit room.

We ate some numbingly spicy chicken.

MODIFYING OTHER ADVERBS

You ran extremely quickly.

She came unusually late.

In Taiwanese, adverbs can broadly be grouped into three types: intensifiers, sentence-level adverbs, and verb-level adverbs.

Intensifiers are a special type of adverb that specifies the degree (such as barely, very, extremely) or intensity of adjectives. These are given special treatment in the Adjectives chapter (see [6.1 Intensifiers](#)).

伊 足 肥。

I chiok pûi.

他 非常 胖。

Tā fēicháng pàng.

He is very fat.

Aside from intensifiers, there are two other main types of adverbs that will be discussed in this chapter: sentence-level adverbs and verb-level adverbs.

Sentence-level adverbs impact the entire sentence by providing both an overall temporal framework and an understanding of the speaker’s attitude and confidence towards the main action/event in the sentence.

Verb-level adverbs focus more on modifying the verb phrase itself or relating elements within the sentence to the main verb.

14.1 Sentence-level adverbs

Sentence-level adverbs affect the entire sentence. As such, they all have the flexibility of being placed at the beginning of the sentence before the subject or immediately after the subject. In addition, sentence-level adverbs always precede negation and modal verbs.

ORDER 1

sentence-level adverbs + *subject* + *negation* + *modal verbs* + *main verb*

ORDER 2

subject + **sentence-level adverbs** + *negation* + *modal verbs* + *main verb*

Sentence-level adverbs can be subdivided into three categories of adverbs:

- Attitude
- Time
- Confidence

14.1.1 Attitude adverbs

Attitude adverbs reflect the speaker's view of the statement that is made in the rest of the sentence. While these adverbs do not impact the truth of the statement, they help convey the mood or tone of the speaker towards what follows.

明明伊的狗比你的走較緊。

Bêng-bêng i ê káu pí lí--ê cháu khah kín.

明明她的狗比你的跑得快。

Míngmíng tā de gǒu bǐ nǐ de pǎo de kuài.

Obviously, her dog runs faster than yours.

In the above example, the truth of the statement 'her dog runs faster than yours' is not impacted by the attitude adverb. Rather, the adverb reveals that the speaker's attitude is that this fact is 'obvious'. Additionally, note that the attitude adverb does not necessarily describe the attitude of the subject of the sentence (which is 'her dog' in this example), but in fact describes the attitude of the speaker of the sentence.

Below is a table of some common attitude adverbs loosely grouped by meaning.

TRUTH AND APPEARANCES

老實講 láu-sit-kóng	老實說 lǎoshíshuō	frankly, honestly
明明 bēng-bēng	明明 míngmíng	obviously, clearly
其實 kī-sit	其實 qíshí	actually
(若)親像 (ná-)chhin-chhiū ⁿ	好像 hǎoxiàng	to seem like, as if
袂輸 bē-su	好像 hǎoxiàng	to seem like, as if
敢若 ká ⁿ -ná	好像 hǎoxiàng	to seem like, as if

SURPRISE

雄雄 hiông-hiông	忽然 hūrán	abruptly
竟然 kèng-jiân	竟然 jìngrán	unexpectedly
煞 soah	竟然 jìngrán	unexpectedly
顛倒 tian-tó	反而 fǎn'ér	on the contrary (<i>second clause only</i>)

ANYWAY

橫直 hôai ⁿ -tit	反正 fǎnzhèng	anyway, in any case
反正 hóan-chèng	反正 fǎnzhèng	anyway, in any case
無彩 bô-chhái	枉費 wǎngfèi	What a waste!

LUCK

拄好 tú-hó	剛好 gānghǎo	coincidentally
(好)佳哉 (hó-)ka-chài	幸虧 xìngkuī	luckily, fortunately
無拄好 bô-tú-hó	不巧 bù qiǎo	unfortunately
偏偏 phian-phian	不巧 bù qiǎo	unfortunately

IN THE END

早慢 chá-bān	遲早 chízǎo	eventually
到底 tài-tē	到底 dàođǐ	ultimately
不得已 put-tek-í	不得已 bùdényǐ	reluctantly

老實講 你的手筆真歹讀。

Láu-sit-kóng lí ê chhiú-pit chin pháiⁿ-thák.

老實說 你的筆跡很難看。

Lǎoshíshuō nǐ de bǐjī hěn nánkàn.

Honestly, your handwriting is hard to read.

伊 竟然 行過來，然後 共我抱。

I kèng-jiân kiâⁿ--kòe-lâi, jiân-āu kā góa phō.

她 竟然 跑過來，然後 給我抱。

Tā jìngrán zǒuguòlái, ránhòu gěi wǒ bào.

She unexpectedly walked over and gave me a big hug.

反正你猶閣愛趁錢。

Hóan-chèng lí iáu-koh ài thàn-chhī.

反正你還需要賺錢。

Fǎnzhèng nǐ hái xūyào zhuànqián.

In any case, you still have to earn money.

好佳哉我有袋較濟錢。

Hó-ka-chài góa ū tē khah chē chhī.

幸虧我帶了比較多錢。

Xìngkuī wǒ dài le bǐjiào duō qián.

Luckily, I brought extra money.

恁到底食物仔，就著愛出錢。

In tàu-té chiah mih-á, tō tiòh-ài chhut chhī.

他們到底吃東西，就需要出錢。

Tāmen dàodǐ chī dōngxī, jiù xūyào chū qián.

They ultimately will need to pay for the food they ate.

14.1.2 Time adverbs

Time adverbs and expressions are used to provide a temporal framework in which the action or event of the sentence occurs. Time expressions refer to a specific time (e.g. June 21, 8:00 in the morning, next weekend, etc.), while time adverbs refer to the present or a specific event (in the past, soon, next time, etc.). However, note that when discussing time in terms of duration or frequency, the placement is generally after the verb (see [11.8 Duration and absolute frequency complements](#)).

Below is a table of some common time adverbs. They are roughly divided into two categories: time-based and event-based.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
TIME-BASED		
從來 chiông-lâi (chêng-lâi)	從來 cónglái	from the beginning
從到今 chêng-kàu-ta ⁿ	從來 cónglái	from the beginning
本底 pún-té	本來 běnlái	originally
本來 pún-lâi	本來 běnlái	originally

以前 í-chêng	以前 yǐqián	prior (<i>specified time</i>)
古早 kó-chá	以前 yǐqián	earlier, in the past
較早 khah-chá	早一點 zǎoyīdiǎn	earlier, in the past
最近 chòe-kīn	最近 zuìjìn	recently
拄(仔) tú(-á)	剛才 gāngcái	to have just
拄才 tú-chiah	剛才 gāngcái	to have just
頭拄仔 thâu-tú-á	剛才 gāngcái	to have just
這馬 chit-má	現在 xiànzài	now
這陣 chit-chūn	現在 xiànzài	now
這站 chit-chām	現在 xiànzài	now
眼前 gán-chiân (-chêng)	目前 mùqián	currently, presently
目前 bók-chiân (-chêng)	目前 mùqián	currently, presently
面前 bīn-chêng	目前 mùqián	currently, presently
連鞭 liām-mi	馬上 mǎshàng	immediately
馬上 má-siōng	馬上 mǎshàng	immediately
咧欲 teh-beh (tih-beh)	快要 kuàiyào	just about to, soon
強欲 kiōng-beh (liong-beh)	快要 kuàiyào	just about to, soon
較停仔 khah-thêng-á	待會兒 dài-huì'er	a moment later
等一下 tán--chit-ē	等一下 děng yīxià	a little later
較晏 khah-òan	晚一點 wǎnyīdiǎn	later on
較暗 khah-àm	晚一點 wǎnyīdiǎn	later on
後日 āu-jit	以後 yǐhòu	someday
另日 lēng-jit	改天 gǎitiān	another day
別日(仔) pát-jit(-á)	改天 gǎitiān	another day
以後 í-āu	以後 yǐhòu	after (<i>specified time</i>)
將來 chiong-lâi	將來 jiānglái	in the future
未來 bī-lâi	未來 wèilái	in the future

EVENT-BASED

頂擺 téng-pái	上次 shàngcì	last time
頂過 téng-kòe	上次 shàngcì	last time
頂改 téng-kái	上次 shàngcì	last time
進前 chìn-chêng	之前 zhīqián	prior (<i>specific event</i>)
先 seng	先 xiān	first, beforehand
上頭仔 siōng-thâu-á	一開始 yī kāishǐ	initially, at first
頭仔 thâu--á	一開始 yī kāishǐ	initially, at first
繼落去 sòa--lòh-khì	接下來 jiēxiàlái	next, following

然後 jiân-āu (lian-āu)	然後 ránhòu	and then
後來 āu--lâi	後來 hòulái	afterwards, later on
了後 liáu-āu	之後 zhīhòu	after (<i>specific event</i>)
路尾 lô-bóe	最後 zuìhòu	finally
已經 í-keng	已經 yǐjīng	already
後擺 āu-pái	下次 xiàcì	next time
下擺 ē-pái	下次 xiàcì	next time
下改 ē-kái	下次 xiàcì	next time

阮查較早佇市長的辦公室上班。

Gún chá-kiáⁿ khah-chá tī chhī-tiūⁿ ê pān-kong-sek siōng-pan.

我女兒以前在市長的辦公室上班。

Wǒ nǚ'ér yǐqián zài shìzhǎng de bàngōngshì shàngbān.

My daughter previously worked at the mayor's office.

我頭拄仔按海邊轉來。

Góa thâu-tú-á àn hái-piⁿ túg--lâi.

我剛剛從海灘回來。

Wǒ gānggāng cóng hǎitān huílái.

I just returned from the beach.

將來你的頭家應該對你較好。

Chiong-lâi lí ê thâu-ke eng-kai tùi lí khah hó.

未來你的老闆應該對你比較好。

Wèilái nǐ de lǎobǎn yīnggāi duì nǐ bǐjiào hǎo.

In the future, your boss should treat you better.

阮路尾佇樹仔頂揣著貓仔。

Gún lō-bóe tī chhiū-á-téng chhōe-tiōh niau-á.

我們最後在樹上找到貓。

Wǒmen zuìhòu zài shù shàng zhǎodào māo.

We finally found the cat in the tree.

14.1.3 Confidence adverbs

Confidence adverbs refer to the speaker's confidence of how likely the statement made in the sentence is true. In other words, the confidence adverb expresses how certain the speaker is that the events of the sentence may or may not occur.

可能 張先生會過來食飯。

Khó-lêng Tiuⁿ--sian-siⁿ ē kòe-lâi chiáh p̄ng.

可能 張先生會過來吃飯。

Kěnéng Zhāng xiānshēng huì guòlái chī fàn.

Maybe Mr. Tiunn will come over to eat.

Below is a table of some common confidence adverbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
UNCERTAINTY		
可能 khó-lêng	可能 kěnéng	maybe, probably
無定著 bô-tiā ⁿ -tiòh	說不定 shuōbùdìng	can't say for sure, maybe
無一定 bô-it-tēng	不一定 bùyīdìng	not necessarily, possibly
大概 tāi-khài	大概 dàgài	most likely, probably
CERTAINTY		
定著 tiā ⁿ -tiòh	一定 yīdìng	definitely, certainly
一定 it-tēng	一定 yīdìng	definitely, certainly
的確 tek-khak	確定 quèdìng	definitely, certainly
必然 pit-jiân	確定 quèdìng	definitely, certainly
絕對 chòat-tùi	絕對 juéduì	absolutely, definitely

無一定 服務生偷提你的信用卡。

Bô-it-tēng hòk-bū-seng thau-thèh lí ê sìn-iōng-khah.

不一定 服務員偷拿你的信用卡。

Bùyīdìng fúwùyuán tōu ná nǐ de xìnyòngkǎ.

The waiter didn't necessarily steal your credit card.

無定著 咱會當共這台車坐六个人。

Bô-tiāⁿ-tiòh lán ē-tàng kā chit tâi chhia chē lák ê lâng.

說不定 我們能把這台車坐六個人。

Shuōbùdìng wǒmen néng bǎ zhè tái chē zuò liù gè rén.

It's not certain if we can fit six people in this car.

伊 絕對 袂行到車頭。

I chòat-tùi bē kiāⁿ kàu chhia-thâu.

她絕對不會走到車站。

Tā juéduì bù huì zǒu dào chēzhàn.

She absolutely won't walk to the train station.

這家的確較好的餐廳。

Chit ke tek-khak khah hó ê chhan-thiaⁿ.

這家確定的比較好的餐廳。

Zhè jiā quèdìng de bǐjiào hǎo de cāntīng.

This one is definitely the better restaurant.

14.1.4 Co-occurring sentence-level adverbs

When sentence-level adverbs co-occur in the same sentence, attitude adverbs come first while the position of confidence and time adverbs are interchangeable. The subject may be placed in any position before, after, or in between adverbs.

ORDER 1

attitude + time + confidence

其實後擺可能伊會去東京。

Kî-sit āu-pái khó-lêng i ē khì Tang-kiaⁿ.

其實下次可能她會去東京。

Qíshí xiàcì kěnéng tā huì qù Dōngjīng.

Actually, next time maybe she will go to Tokyo.

ORDER 2

attitude + confidence + time

其實可能後擺伊會去東京。

Kî-sit khó-lêng āu-pái i ē khì Tang-kiaⁿ.

其實可能下次她會去東京。

Qíshí kěnéng xiàcì tā huì qù Dōngjīng.

Actually, maybe next time she will go to Tokyo.

14.2 Verb-level adverbs

Verb-level adverbs only affect the main verb or verb phrase in the sentence. They are placed in the space between the subject and the main verb.

subject + verb-level adverb + main verb

In addition, this space can also contain other grammatical elements such as negatives, modal verbs, and prepositional phrases. The following sections will explain how the adverbs interact with these other elements.

Verb-level adverbs can be subdivided into three categories of adverbs:

- Reference
- Relative frequency
- Manner

14.2.1 Reference adverbs

Reference adverbs refer to another person, time, or thing that appears earlier or later in the sentence and relates it to the main verb. These adverbs generally indicate inclusion, repetition, continuation, exclusivity, or promptness.

Below is a table of some common reference adverbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
<i>INCLUSION</i>		
攞 lóng	都 dōu	all, both
嘛 mā	也 yě	also
也 iā(ā)	也 yě	also
<i>REPETITION</i>		
閣 koh	再 zài, 又 yòu	again
又閣 iū-koh	再 zài, 又 yòu	again
閣再 koh-chài	再 zài, 又 yòu	again
才閣 chiah-koh	再 zài	again (<i>future</i>)
<i>CONTINUATION</i>		
猶 iáu (iah, ah, á, íá)	還 hái, 依然 yīrán	still, yet
猶閣 iáu-koh	還 hái, 依然 yīrán	still, yet

猶原 iû-gôan	仍然 réngrán	still, yet
EXCLUSIVITY		
干焦 kan-na	只 zhǐ, 只有 zhǐyǒu	only, only have
才 chiah (khah)	才 cái	only, only have
爾爾 niā-niā	而已 éryǐ	only (<i>end of sentence</i>)
PROMPTNESS		
就 tō (chiū, tiōh)	就 jiù	just, then
都 to	已經 yǐjīng, 完全 wánquán	already, completely
才 chiah (khah)	才 cái	just, only then

The sections that follow provide additional notes on usage for a few reference adverbs.

14.2.1.1 Inclusion

14.2.1.1.1 All, both

The reference adverb 攏 **lóng** refers to a plural subject or object that precedes it and indicates ‘all, both’ or ‘each case, entirely’. If referring to a plural object, the object is generally topicalized at the beginning of the sentence or omitted altogether and implied.

阮阿兄 佢阿嫂 下昏暗 攏欲食 日本料理。

Gún a-hiaⁿ kah a-só e-hng-àm lóng beh chiáh Jit-pún liáu-lí.

我哥哥和嫂嫂今晚 都 要吃 日本料理。

Wǒ gēgē hé sāosǎo jīnwǎn dōu yào chī Rìběn liàolǐ.

My older brother and his wife both want to eat Japanese food tonight.

六罐麥仔酒，謝先生 攏 咁 了 矣。

Lák kòan bēh-á-chiú, Siā--sian-siⁿ lóng lim liáu--ah.

六罐啤酒，謝先生 都 喝 完了。

Liù guàn píjiǔ, Xiè xiānshēng dōu hē wán le.

Mr. Sia finished drinking all six cans of beer.

我 攏 愛。

Góa lóng ài.

我 都 喜歡。

Wǒ dōu xǐhuān.

I like them all (*the object is implied*).

If there is both a plural subject and object, the sentence becomes ambiguous and can be interpreted in multiple ways.

遮的 柳丁，阮 攏 買起來。

Chia-ê liú-teng, gún lóng bé--khí-lâi.

這裡 的 柳丁，我們 都 買起來。

Zhèlǐ de liǔdīng, wǒmen dōu mǎiqǐlái.

We all bought up oranges.

We bought up all the oranges.

We all bought up all the oranges.

攏 **lóng** can also be used to refer to the ‘whole part’ or ‘each/every case’ of the preceding noun.

阮 三 頓 攏 食 無 肉 的。

Gún saⁿ tòng lóng chiáh bô bah--ê.

我們 三 餐 都 吃 沒 肉 的。

Wǒmen sān cān dōu chī méi ròu de.

For each of our three meals, we didn’t eat meat.

伊 規 日 攏 看 電視。

I kui jīt lóng khòaⁿ tiān-sī.

他 整天 都 看 電視。

Tā zhěngtiān dōu kàn diànshì.

He watched television the entire day.

Additionally, 攏 **lóng** can appear before or after negation but the meaning potentially changes depending on placement.

阮 無 攏 愛 恐怖片。

Gún bô lóng ài khióng-pò`phìⁿ.

我們 丕 都 喜歡 恐怖片。

Wǒmen bù dōu xǐhuān kǒngbù piàn.

We don’t all like horror movies (*only some of us like them*).

阮 攏 無 愛 恐怖片。

Gún lóng bô ài khióng-pò`phìⁿ.

我們 都 丕 喜歡 恐怖片。

Wǒmen dōu bù xǐhuān kǒngbù piàn.

We all don't like horror movies (*everyone doesn't like them*).

14.2.1.1.2 Also

嘛 **mā** is used to express that the subject ‘also’ (in addition to another subject stated or implied) performs the action of the main verb.

阮 小弟 嘛 欲 參加 聚會。

Gún sió-tī mā beh chham-ka chū-hōe.

我 弟弟 也 要 參加 聚會。

Wǒ dìdì yě yào cānjiā jùhuì.

My younger brother also wants to attend the party.

伊 嘛 算 羊。

I mā sòng iūⁿ.

她 也 屬 羊。

Tā yě shǔ yáng.

She is also born in the year of the goat.

14.2.1.1.3 Sentences with both 嘛 **mā** and 攞 **lóng**

嘛 **mā** ‘also’ can co-occur with 攞 **lóng** ‘all, both’. The ordering is grammatically acceptable either way, but the emphasis changes slightly.

恁 攞 嘛 無 想欲 去 泅 水。

In lóng mā bô siuⁿ-beh khì siū chúì.

他們 都 也 不 想 去 游泳。

Tāmen dōu yě bù xiǎng qù yóuyóǒng.

They also don't feel like going to swim (*all of this group in addition to other groups*).

恁 嘛 攞 無 想欲 去 泅 水。

In mā lóng bô siuⁿ-beh khì siū chúì.

他們 也 都 不 想 去 游泳。

Tāmen yě dōu bù xiǎng qù yóuyóǒng.

They also don't feel like going to swim (*this group in addition to the speaker*).

14.2.1.2 Repetition

To express the idea of ‘again’ or ‘to repeat’, use 閣 **koh**, 又閣 **iū-koh**, 閣再 **koh-chài**. These three terms are generally interchangeable. 才閣 **chiah-koh**, on the other hand, tends to only occur in future contexts.

我頂禮拜 閣 打毋見 鎖匙!

Góa téng lé-pài koh phah-m̄-kìⁿ só-sî!

我上禮拜 又 不見了 鑰匙!

Wǒ shàng lǐbài yòu bùjiànle yàoshi!

Last week I lost my keys again!

明年阮會 閣再 去韓國。

Mê-nî gún ē koh-chài khì Hân-kok.

明年我們會 再 去韓國。

Míngnián wǒmen huì zài qù Hánguó.

Next year we will go again to Korea.

你得工課了後，才閣 講。

Lí tit khang-khòe liáu-āu, chiah-koh kóng.

你獲得工作之後，再 說。

Nǐ huòdé gōngzuò zhīhòu, zài shuō.

Let's talk about it again after you get a job.

Taiwanese differs from Mandarin in that 閣 **koh**, 又閣 **iū-koh**, 閣再 **koh-chài** can be used for both the past and present, unlike the distinction between the Mandarin 再 **zài** (*future*) and 又 **yòu** (*past*). In Taiwanese 才閣 **chiah-koh** is an exception and is generally reserved for future contexts.

14.2.1.3 Continuation

猶 **iáu** (also pronounced **iah**, **ah**, **á**, **ia**) and 猶閣 **iáu-koh** can be used to indicate continuation of an action by expressing ‘still’ or ‘yet’. They are generally interchangeable.

伊的女朋友猶閣和伊受氣矣。

I ê lú pêng-iú iáu-koh hām i siū-khì--ah.

他的女朋友還跟他生氣了。

Tā de nǚ péngyǒu hái gēn tā shēngqì le.

His girlfriend is still angry with him.

政府猶提供免錢的教育。

Chèng-hú iáu thê-kiong bián-chhīn ê kàu-iók.

政府還提供免費的教育。

Zhèngfǔ hái tígōng miǎnfèi de jiàoyù.

The government still provides free education.

14.2.1.4 Exclusivity

The adverbs 干焦 **kan-na**, 才 **chiah**, 爾爾 **niā-niā** can be used to indicate exclusivity or uniqueness in performing an action.

阮王焦看阮後生的比賽。

Gún kan-na khòaⁿ gún hāu-seⁿ ê pí-sài.

我們只看我們兒子的比賽。

Wǒmen zhǐ kàn wǒmen érzi de bǐsài.

We only watched our son's match.

我佇巴黎才有三工。

Góa tī Pa-lê chiah ū saⁿ kang.

我在巴黎只有三天。

Wǒ zài Bālí zhǐ yǒu sān tiān.

I only have three days in Paris.

爾爾 **niā-niā** ‘nothing more’ can only be placed at the end of the sentence and may co-occur with other adverbs expressing ‘only’. Note that 爾爾 **niā-niā** can only refer to quantities and not actions.

楊小姐有兩個顧客爾爾。

Iūⁿ sió-chiá ū n̄g ê kò-kheh niā-niā.

楊小姐有兩個顧客而已。

Yáng xiǎojiě yǒu liǎng gè gùkè éryǐ.

Ms. Iunn only has two clients.

遮干焦有三个位爾爾。

Chia kan-na ū saⁿ ê ūi niā-niā.

這裡只有三個位子而已。

Zhèlǐ zhǐ yǒu sān gè wèizi éryǐ.

There are only three seats here.

14.2.1.5 Promptness

Both 才 **chiah** and 就 **tō** (also pronounced **chiū** or **tioh**) have multiple meanings depending on context and whether or not they belong to a one- or two-clause sentence.

	才 CHIAH	就 TŌ
ONE-CLAUSE SENTENCE		
	only, only after	precisely, just
	later than expected	earlier than expected
TWO-CLAUSE SENTENCE (SEQUENCE)		
	only then	then

14.2.1.5.1 Only, only after

When there is only one clause with a single verb or verb phrase, 才 **chiah** takes on the meaning of ‘only, just’ expressing exclusivity. Along with this, is the additional connotation of not meeting expectations or a sense of lacking.

伊才有一領褲。

I chiah ū chit niá khò.

他只有一件褲子。

Tā zhǐ yǒu yī jiàn kùzi.

He only has one pair of pants (*he really should own more than just one*).

伊才讀英文一年。

I chiah thák Eng-bûn chit nî.

她才讀英文一年。

Tā cái dú Yīngwén yī nián.

She's just studied English for one year (*she should study much longer*).

Additionally, 才 **chiah** signals that ‘after some effort’ a particular outcome was realized.

這馬 我才 知影 百貨 公司 按怎 關起來 矣。

Chit-má góa chiah chai-iáⁿ pah-hòe kong-si án-chóaⁿ koaiⁿ--khí-lâi--ah.

現在 我才 知道 百貨 公司 為何 倒閉 了。

Xiànzài wǒ cái zhīdào bǎihuò gōngsī wèihé dǎobì le.

Now I (*after some effort*) know why the department store closed down.

我 坐 公車，結果 九點 才 轉來 矣。

Góa chē kong-chhia, kiāt-kó káu tiám chiah tng--lâi--ah.

我 坐 公車，結果 九點 才 回來 了。

Wǒ zuò gōngchē, jiéguǒ jiǔ diǎn cái huílái le.

I took the bus and (*finally*) got home at nine.

14.2.1.5.2 Precisely, just

When 就 **tō** appears in a single clause, the meaning is ‘precisely’, ‘just’, or ‘right’ and reconfirms or offers certainty to whatever follows.

頭前的 厝 就是 阮 的。

Thâu-chêng ê chhù tō sī gún--ê.

前面的 房子 就是 我的。

Qiánmiàn de fángzi jiù shì wǒ de.

The house in front (*precisely that one*) is mine.

停 遮 就好 矣。

Thêng chia tō hó--ah.

聽 這裡 就好了。

Tīng zhèlǐ jiù hǎo le.

Stopping here is (*just*) fine.

Note that unlike the Mandarin 就 **jiù**, the Taiwanese 就 **tō** cannot be used to express the meaning of ‘only’ (*exclusivity*).

14.2.1.5.3 Following time expressions

When following a time expression, 才 **chiah** and 就 **tō** indicate opposing expectations as to when the verb occurs. 才 **chiah** implies that the action takes place ‘earlier than expected’ while 就 **tō** implies that the action takes place ‘later than expected’.

阮七點 就 起來 矣。

Gún chhit tiám tō khí-lâi--ah.

我們七點 就 起床 了。

Wǒmen qī diǎn jiù qǐchuáng le.

We woke up at 7 o'clock (*earlier than expected*).

阮七點 才 起來 矣。

Gún chhit tiám chiah khí-lâi--ah.

我們七點 才 起床 了。

Wǒmen qī diǎn cái qǐchuáng le.

We woke up at 7 o'clock (*later than expected*).

14.2.1.5.4 Two clauses (sequence)

Both 就 **tō** and 才 **chiah** are commonly used in sentences indicating a sequence of events. When there are two clauses present, 就 **tō** and 才 **chiah** can function as connectors to show the relationship between each clause (see [32.1.3 Reference adverbs 就 tō and 才 chiah](#)).

In a sequence of events, 就 **tō** or 才 **chiah** is placed before the second action to underscore that one action happens after another.

食十碗麵了後，我 就 想欲吐 矣。

Chiáh chap óaⁿ mī liáu-āu, góa tō siūⁿ-beh thò--ah.

吃十碗麵之後，我 就 想要吐 了。

Chī shí wǎn miàn zhīhòu, wǒ jiù xiǎngyào tǔ le.

After eating ten bowls of noodles, I just wanted to throw up.

才 **chiah** similarly is used in a sequence of events but stresses that the second action will occur ‘only after’ the first action has already happened.

練琴幾年後，才 會當彈這條歌。

Liān khīm kúi nī liáu-āu, chiah ē-tàng tôaⁿ chit tiâu koa.

練琴幾年之後，才會彈這首歌。

Liàn qín jǐ nián zhīhòu, cái huì dàn zhè shǒu gē.

Only after you practice for years will you be able to play this song.

伊睏醒了後，咱才出去食早頓。

I khùn-chhéⁿ liáu-āu, lán chiah chhut-khì chiáh chá-tng.

她睡醒之後，我們再出去吃早餐。

Tā shuìxǐng zhīhòu, wǒmen zài chūqù chī zǎocān.

Once she wakes up, let's (then) go out for breakfast.

Note that Mandarin often uses 再 zài in suggestions and requests to indicate a sequence that similarly emphasizes ‘only after’ a condition is fulfilled.

14.2.2 Relative frequency adverbs

Relative frequency adverbs describe how frequently an action occurs, not with exact numbers but in relative terms (e.g. often, sometimes, always). Absolute terms of frequency appear after the verb (see [11.8 Duration and absolute frequency complements](#), [7.1.6 Including both objects and frequency](#)).

Below is a table of some common relative frequency adverbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
逐擺 tàk-pái	每次 měi cì	each/every time
逐改 tàk-kái	每次 měi cì	each/every time
逐遍 tàk-piàn	每次 měi cì	each/every time
每一擺 múi chit pái	每次 měi cì	each/every time
每一改 múi chit kái	每次 měi cì	each/every time
每一遍 múi chit piàn	每次 měi cì	each/every time
攏是 lóng sī	都是 dōu shì	always, in every case
直直 tit-tit	一直 yīzhí	always, continuously
一直 it-tit	一直 yīzhí	always, continuously
定定 tiā ⁿ -tiā ⁿ	常常 chángcháng	constantly, frequently
常常 siōng-siōng	常常 chángcháng	constantly, frequently
不時 put-sī	經常 jīngcháng	constantly, frequently
四常 sù-siōng	時常 shícháng	constantly, frequently
通常 thong-siōng	通常 tōngcháng	usually, normally
普通 phó-thong	通常 tōngcháng	usually, normally

平常 pêng-siông	平常 píngcháng	ordinarily, occasionally
有時 ū-sī	有時候 yǒu shíhòu	sometimes, occasionally
有時仔 ū-sī-á	有時候 yǒu shíhòu	sometimes, occasionally
有時陣 ū-sī-chūn	有時候 yǒu shíhòu	sometimes, occasionally
有棠時(仔) ū-tang-sī(-á)	偶爾 ǒu'ěr	sometimes, occasionally
罕得 hán-tit	難得 nándé	rarely
難得 lân-tit	難得 nándé	rarely

頭家 逐擺 記得 我的 名。

Thâu-ke ták-pái kì-tit góa ê miâ.

老闆 每次 記得 我的 名字。

Lǎobǎn měi cì jìdé wǒ de míngzì.

The shop owner remembers my name every time.

阮 阿爸 直直 叫 我 拍拚。

Gún a-pa tit-tit kiò góa phah-piàⁿ.

我 爸爸 一直 叫 我 努力 工作。

Wǒ bàba yīzhí jiào wǒ nǚlì gōngzuò.

My father always tells me to work hard.

許 小姐 不時 咧 換 頭路。

Khó'sió-chiá put-sī teh ōaⁿ thâu-lō.

許 小姐 經常 換 工作。

Xǔ xiǎojiě jīngcháng huàn gōngzuò.

Ms. Khou is constantly changing jobs.

公車 有當時仔 無 準時。

Kong-chhia ū-tang-sī-á bô chún-sī.

公車 有的時候 不 準時。

Gōngchē yǒu de shíhòu bù zhǔnshí.

Sometimes the bus is not on time.

伊 罕得 食薰。

I hán-tit chiáh-hun.

她 難得 抽煙。

Tā nándé chōuyān.

She rarely smokes cigarettes.

14.2.3 Manner adverbs

Manner adverbs describe how an action is performed by focusing on the bodily senses (‘We loudly chatted’, ‘I firmly held’) and intentions of the subject (‘She secretly read’, ‘He slowly drank’). Many manner adverbs are derived from adjectives. Short one-syllable adjectives generally are duplicated before being used as manner adverbs. Multi-syllabic adjectives may but do not need to be reduplicated.

14.2.3.1 Short one-syllable adjectives

Manner adverbs can be constructed from reduplicated short one-syllable adjectives (緊 **kín** ‘fast’, 恬 **tiām** ‘quiet’). Often an optional particle 仔 **-á** is added for euphony. Note that when given an adjective reading, reduplicated adjectives have a lesser intensity than the original adjective (see [6.7 Repetition](#)).

reduplicated adjective + (仔) + verb

reduplicated adjective + (-á) + verb

‘adjective + -ly’

ADJECTIVE	REDUPLICATED ADJECTIVE	ADJECTIVE READING	ADVERB READING
緊 kín	緊緊 kín-kín	a little fast	fast
俗 siók	俗俗 siók-siók	a little cheap	cheaply
輕 khin	輕輕 khin-khin	a little light	lightly, carefully
直 tit	直直 tit-tit	a little straight	continuously
短 té	短短 té-té	a little short	briefly
慢 bān	慢慢 bān-bān	a little slow	slowly
漸 chiām	漸漸 chiām-chiām	gradual	gradually
好 hó	好好 hó-hó	well	properly, carefully
勻 ûn	勻勻 ûn-ûn	——	cautiously

囡仔 恬恬 聽 阿公 講 故事。

Gín-á tiām-tiām thia^a a-kong kóng kò-sū.

孩子 靜靜地 聽 爺爺 說 故事。

Háizi jìngjìng de tīng yěyě shuō gùshì.

The children quietly listen to grandpa tell a story.

車禍了後，伊 慢慢仔 行。

Chhia-hō liáu-āu, i bān-bān-á kiâⁿ.

車禍之後，他 慢慢地 走。

Chēhuò zhīhòu, tā mànman de zǒu.

After the car accident, he walks slowly.

In Mandarin, manner adverbs generally are followed by the 地 de particle except when used in commands or with adverbs beginning with 一 yī (一起 yīqǐ ‘together’, 一味 yīwèi ‘blindly’, etc.).

Additionally, note that manner adverbs, which occur before the verb, differ from manner complements, which occur after the verb. Manner adverbs tend to include more of the subject’s attitude or intentions towards the action, while manner complements tend to be observations made by an outside party. Moreover, manner adverbs may be used in commands, while manner complements may not (see [11.6 Manner complements](#)).

MANNER ADVERB

伊 慢慢 行。

I bān-bān kiâⁿ.

他 慢慢地 走。

Tā mànman de zǒu.

He walked slowly (*he doesn’t want to slip*).

MANNER COMPLEMENT

伊 行著真慢。

I kiâⁿ-tiòh chìn bān.

他 走得很慢。

Tā zǒu de hěn màn.

He walked slowly (*appeared to walk slowly*).

14.2.3.2 Multi-syllable adverbs

Some adjectives that are more than one syllable can also be reduplicated and used as adverbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
歡歡喜喜 <i>hoanⁿ-hoanⁿ-hí-hí</i>	高高興興 <i>gāogāoxìngxìng</i>	happily
馬馬虎虎 <i>má-má-hu-hu</i>	馬馬虎虎 <i>mǎmǎhǔhǔ</i>	casually
輕輕鬆鬆 <i>khin-khin-sang-sang</i>	輕輕鬆鬆 <i>qīngqīngsōngsōng</i>	relaxed
清清楚楚 <i>chheng-chheng-chhó-chhó</i>	清清楚楚 <i>qīngqīngchǔchǔ</i>	clearly
時時刻刻 <i>sî-sî-khik-khik</i>	無時無刻 <i>wúshíwúkè</i>	all the time, incessantly

彼个查某囡仔 歡歡喜喜 咧騎碌碌馬。

Hit ê cha-bó gín-á hoanⁿ-hoanⁿ-hí-hí-á teh khiâ lók-khók-bé.

那個女孩子 高高興興 地騎木馬。

Nàge nǚháizi gāogāoxìngxìng de qí mùmǎ.

That little girl is happily riding the rocking horse.

學生考試 考了 的 時陣， 您 攏 輕輕鬆鬆 開講。

Hák-seng khó-chhì khó liáu ê sî-chūn, in lóng khin-khin-sang-sang khai-káng.

學生考試 考了 的 時候， 他們 都 輕輕鬆鬆地 聊天。

Xuéshēng kǎoshì kǎole de shíhòu, tāmen dōu qīngqīngsōngsōng de liáotiān.

After the students finished their exams, they casually chatted.

Some multi-syllabic adverbs are not derived from adjectives.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
強強 kiông-kiông	幾乎 jīhū	almost
大部分 tōa-pō-hūn	大部份 dàbùfèn	mostly
做伙 chò-hóe	一起 yīqǐ	together
烏白 o-pèh	亂來 luànlái	chaotically, randomly
另外 lēng-gōa	另外 lìngwài	separately
刁工 tiaú-kang	專程 zhuānchéng	specifically, intentionally
無細膩 bô-sè-jī	不小心 bù xiǎoxīn	accidentally, inadvertently
直接 tit-chiap	直接 zhíjiē	directly
順繼 sūn-sòa	順便 shùnbìan	in passing, conveniently

因為 阮 回收， 你 愛 共 玻璃 另外 囤。

In-ūi gún hôe-siu, lí ài kā po-lê lēng-gōa khng.

因為 我們 回收， 你 需要 把 玻璃 另外 放。

Yīnwèi wǒmen huíshōu, nǐ xūyào bǎ bōlí lìngwài fàng.

Because we recycle, you need to dispose of the glass separately.

這 个 櫃台 暫時 停止 服務。

Chit ê kūi-tai chām-sî thêng-chí hók-bū.

這個 櫃台 暫時 停止 服務。

Zhège guìtái zhànshí tíngzhǐ fúwù.

This counter is temporarily closed.

14.2.3.3 Manner adverbs in commands

When occurring in commands (see [21 Requests and commands](#)), one-syllable adverbs are optionally reduplicated.

adverb + (adverb)

緊(緊) 過來！

Kín(-kín) kòe--lâi!

快(快) 過來！

Kuài(-kuài) guòlái!

Hurry come over!

慢(慢) 行。

Bān(-bān) kiâⁿ.

慢(慢) 走。

Màn(-màn) zǒu.

Walk slowly.

While both Mandarin and Taiwanese can double adverbs within commands, this is less commonly done in Taiwanese.

14.2.4 Co-occurring verb-level adverbs

When verb-level adverbs (reference, relative frequency, manner) co-occur in the same sentence, the manner adverbs generally come last while the position of the reference and relative frequency adverbs are interchangeable with little to no change in meaning.

ORDER 1

reference + relative frequency + manner

伊 嘛 定定 予 朋友 和 伊 做伙 免錢 入去。

I mā tiān-tiān hō pêng-iú hām i chò-hóe bián-chîⁿ jip--khì.

他 也 常常 讓 朋友 和 他 一起 免費 進去。

Tā yě chángcháng ràng péngyǒu hé tā yīqǐ miǎnfèi jìnqù.

He also often lets his friend go in together with him for free.

ORDER 2

relative frequency + reference + manner

伊 定定 嘛 予 朋友 和 伊 做伙 免錢 入去。

I tiān-tiān mā hō pêng-iú hām i chò-hóe bián-chîⁿ jip--khì.

他 常常 也 讓 朋友 和 他 一起 免費 進去。

Tā chángcháng yě ràng péngyǒu hé tā yīqǐ miǎnfèi jìnqù.

He often also lets his friend go in together with him for free.

14.3 Adverbs with other grammatical elements

While the subject may appear before or after sentence-level adverbs (attitude, time, confidence), all other grammatical elements (verb-level adverbs, negatives, modal verbs, prepositional phrases) generally follow sentence-level adverbs. Note that there are a few sentence-level confidence adverbs expressing uncertainty that have negatives built-in as part of the word such as 無一定 *bô-it-tēng* or 無定著 *bô-tiān-tiòh*.

ORDER 1

subject + sentence-level adverbs (attitude, confidence, time) + other elements

ORDER 2

sentence-level adverbs (attitude, confidence, time) + subject + other elements

Verb-level adverbs (reference, relative frequency, and manner) must appear in the space *between* the subject and the main verb. However, there is some degree of flexibility with placement of the verb-level adverbs among negatives, modal verbs, and prepositional phrases. Often differing placements can give a slightly different meaning.

Among the non-adverb grammatical elements, the general order is:

subject + negatives + modal verbs + prepositional phrases + main verb

When including the verb-level adverbs, the general order is:

*subject + **reference** + **relative frequency** + negatives + modal verbs + prepositional phrases + **manner** + main verb*

Depending on the context, this ordering can be flexible. The following sections examine more closely the interaction between adverbs and other grammatical elements.

14.3.1 Negation and adverbs

Even if they occur after the subject, negatives cannot appear before sentence-level adverbs (attitude, time, confidence).

*sentence-level adverb + **negative** + verb*

ATTITUDE ADVERB

伊 親像 毋敢 家己 唱歌。

I chhin-chhiūⁿ m̄-káⁿ ka-tī chhiūⁿ koa.

好像他不敢自己唱歌。

Hǎoxiàng tā bù gǎn zìjǐ chàng gē.

Seems like he **does not dare sing** by himself.

TIME ADVERB

阮本底無想著阮會當較早離開。

Gún pún-té bô siūⁿ-tiòh gún ē-tàng khah-chá lī-khui.

我們本來沒想到我們能早一點離開。

Wǒmen běnlái méi xiǎngdào wǒmen néng zǎo yīdiǎn líkai.

We originally **did not think** we could leave early.

CONFIDENCE ADVERB

你絕對毋通家己一個人轉去！

Lí chóat-tùi m̄-thang ka-tī chit ê lâng trúg--khì !

你絕對不要自己一個人回家！

Nǐ juéduì bù yào zìjǐ yī gè rén huí jiā !

You absolutely **must not go home** by yourself!

However, when it comes to verb-level adverbs (reference, relative frequency, and manner), the position of the negative can come *before* or *after* the adverb. The negative negates whatever follows immediately afterwards, so the placement of the negative can change the meaning of the sentence as seen in the examples below. In general, negative sentence constructions more often negate the verb instead of the adverb. Additionally, many adverbs make less sense negated and are not considered acceptable. As a result, the more typical placement of the negative is *after* the verb-level adverb.

TYPICAL PLACEMENT

*verb-level adverb + **negative** + verb*

LESS COMMON PLACEMENT

***negative** + verb-level adverb + verb*

MANNER ADVERB

您刁工無佇伊的邊仔坐咧。

In tiau-kang bô tī i ê pīⁿ-á chē--leh.

她們故意不在她的旁邊坐著。

Tāmen gùyì bù zài tā de pángbiān zuòzhe.

They deliberately **didn't sit** by her (*perhaps they didn't like her*).

您無刁工佇伊的邊仔坐咧。

In bô tiau-kang tī i ê pīⁿ-á chē--leh.

她們不故意在她的旁邊坐著。

Tāmen **bù** gùyì zài tā de pángbiān zuòzhe.

They **didn't** deliberately sit by her (*perhaps they didn't recognize her before sitting down, so they just happened to sit next to her*).

RELATIVE FREQUENCY ADVERB

蔡小姐 定定 無 去 病院。

Chhòa sió-chiá tiān-tiān **bô** khì pēn-īn.

蔡小姐 常常 不 去 醫院。

Cài xiǎojiě chángcháng **bù** qù yīyuàn.

Ms. Chhoa often **doesn't** go to the hospital (*implies she is supposed to go more often, perhaps to volunteer or to visit someone*).

蔡小姐 無 定定 去 病院。

Chhòa sió-chiá **bô** tiān-tiān khì pēn-īn.

蔡小姐 不 常常 去 醫院。

Cài xiǎojiě **bù** chángcháng qù yīyuàn.

Ms. Chhoa **doesn't** frequently go to the hospital (*implies she is healthy and does not need to go often*).

REFERENCE ADVERB

伊 閣 無 清 便所。

I koh **bô** chheng piān-só.

他 又 不 清 廁所。

Tā yòu **bù** qīng cèsuǒ.

Again he **didn't** clean the bathrooms.

伊 無 閣 清 便所。

I **bô** koh chheng piān-só.

他 不 再 清 廁所。

Tā **bù** zài qīng cèsuǒ.

He **doesn't** clean bathrooms anymore (*perhaps he has changed jobs*).

14.3.2 Modal verbs and adverbs

Some verb-level adverbs can appear before or after modal verbs, but placement sometimes may change the meaning or emphasis.

verb-level adverb + **modal verb** + *verb*

ORDER 2

modal verb + *verb-level adverb* + *verb*

MANNER

伊 直接 會 參 你 聯絡。

I tít-chiap ē chhām lí liân-lòk.

他 直接 會 跟 你 聯絡。

Tā zhíjiē **huì** gēn nǐ liánluò.

He **will** contact you directly.

伊 會 直接 參 你 連絡。

I ē tít-chiap chhām lí liân-lòk.

他 會 直接 跟 你 聯絡。

Tā **huì** zhíjiē gēn nǐ liánluò.

He **will** contact you directly.

In the examples above, there is no significant difference in meaning.

RELATIVE FREQUENCY

這隻狗 不時 會 吠。

Che chiah káu put-sî ē pūi.

這隻狗 隨時 會 吠。

Zhè zhī gǒu suíshí **huì** fèi.

This dog barks all the time (*emphasizing that the barking is frequent*).

這隻狗 會 不時 吠。

Che chiah káu ē put-sî pūi.

這隻狗 會 隨時 吠。

Zhè zhī gǒu **huì** suíshí fèi.

This dog **will** bark at any time (*emphasizing that barking can occur at any instant*).

REFERENCE

伊 王焦 會當 講話。

I kan-na ē-tàng kóng ōe.

他 只能 講話。

Tā zhǐ **néng** jiǎng huà.

All he **can** do is talk.

伊 會當 王焦 講話。

I ē-tàng kan-na kóng ōe.

他能只講話。

Tā néng zhǐ jiǎng huà.

It's acceptable that he only has to talk.

14.3.3 Prepositional phrases and adverbs

When prepositional phrases occur before the verb, they serve as a backdrop against which the main verb occurs. For the purpose of word order, prepositional phrases can be subdivided into *location expressions* ('in the tree', 'at the park', etc.) and *non-location expressions* ('with my sister', 'using a knife', etc.) (see [15 Prepositions](#), [16 Location and directional expressions](#)). If both types of prepositional phrases co-occur, the non-location expression comes before the location expression.

non-location expression + *location expression*

伊和恁大家佇露台啉茶。

I hām in ta-ke tī lō-tâi lim tê.

她和她婆婆在陽台喝茶。

Tā hé tā pópo zài yángtái hē chá.

She drank tea **with her mother-in-law** on the balcony.

Reference and relative frequency adverbs generally appear *before* prepositional phrases. However, manner adverbs may occur *before* or *after* the prepositional phrases. It is also possible for manner adverbs to appear *in between* the non-location expression and location expression.

ORDER 1

reference + *relative frequency* + *manner* + **prepositional phrase(s)**

ORDER 2

reference + *relative frequency* + **prepositional phrase(s)** + *manner*

ORDER 3

reference + *relative frequency* + **non-location expression** + *manner* + **location expression**

If the manner adverb focuses more on the subject's feelings and intentions, then the manner adverb comes *before* the prepositional phrases.

manner (intention) + **prepositional phrases**

伊慫慫和恁大家佇露台啉茶。

I tiām-tiām hām in ta-ke tī lō-tâi lim tê.

她 靜靜地 和她婆婆在陽台喝茶。

Tā jìngjìng de hé tā pópo zài yángtái hē chá.

She quietly drank tea **with her mother-in-law on the balcony** (*perhaps she is nervous and shy*).

On the other hand, if the manner adverb focuses more on a physical description of the how the action is carried out, the manner adverb appears *after* the prepositional phrase(s) or *in between* a non-location expression and location expression.

prepositional phrases + manner adverb (physical description)

伊和慁大家佇露台 恬恬 啲茶。

I hām in ta-ke tī lō-tâi tiām-tiām lim tê.

她和她婆婆在陽台 靜靜地 喝茶。

Tā hé tā pópo zài yángtái jìngjìng de hē chá.

She drank tea **with her mother-in-law in silence on the balcony**.

non-location expression + manner adverb + location expression

伊和慁大家 恬恬 佇露台啲茶。

I hām in ta-ke tiām-tiām tī lō-tâi lim tê.

她和她婆婆 靜靜地 在陽台喝茶。

Tā hé tā pópo jìngjìng de zài yángtái hē chá.

She drank tea **with her mother-in-law in silence on the balcony**.

For longer prepositional phrases or where emphasis is needed, the prepositional phrase can also appear at the beginning of the sentence.

佇海邊彼个舊的細間厝，我有揣著一臺鋼琴。

Tī hái-piⁿ hit ê kū ê sè keng chhù, góa ū chhōe-tiōh chit tâi kng-khîm.

在海邊那個舊的小房子，我找到了一臺鋼琴。

Zài hǎibiān nàge jiù de xiǎo fángzi, wǒ zhǎodàole yī tái gāngqín.

In that small, old house by the sea, I found an old piano.

照慁阿爸講的方向，咱應該已經到矣。

Chiàu in a-pa kóng ê hong-hiòng, lán eng-kai í-keng kàu--ah.

照他爸爸講的方向，我們應該已經到了。

Zhào tā bàba jiǎng de fāngxiàng, wǒmen yīnggāi yǐjīng dào le.

According to his father's directions, we should already have arrived.

14.4 Summary of word order for adverbs

While word order of adverbs and other grammatical elements have some degree of flexibility according to emphasis and individual preference, the ordering presented below is the most neutral:

*subject + **attitude** + **confidence** / **time** + **reference** / **relative frequency** + negative + modal verb + preposition (non-location) + 共 *kā* construction / 予 *hō* (benefactive marker) + prepositional phrase (location) + **manner** + verb + duration / absolute frequency complement*

If a negative verb is used with a duration/absolute frequency complement, then the complement is moved to a position before the verb (see [11.8.3 Duration and absolute frequency with negated verbs](#)).

*subject + **attitude** + **confidence** / **time** + duration / absolute frequency complement (when used with negative verb) + **reference** / **relative frequency** + negative + modal verb + prepositional phrase (non-location) + 共 *kā* construction / 予 *hō* (benefactive marker) + prepositional phrase (location) + **manner** + verb*

Note that if a 共 *kā* construction or benefactive phrase is used, the placement occurs between the non-location and location prepositional phrases (see [17.4 共 *kā* construction](#), [18.3 Benefactives](#)).

15 Prepositions

Prepositions introduce a noun phrase and relate it to the main verb of the sentence explaining details such as for whom, with whom, how, when, and where.

I cooked dinner for my mom (*for whom*).

My sister went to dinner with my aunt (*with whom*).

The children ate spaghetti with their hands (*how*).

We have an appointment at four o'clock (*when*).

They are eating lunch on the balcony (*where*).

In general, prepositional phrases come before the main verb of the sentence helping to set the background context for the main verb.

陳小姐和伊的朋友啍茶。

Tân sió-chiá hām i ê pêng-iú lim tê.

陳小姐和她的朋友喝茶。

Chén xiǎojiě hé tā de péngyǒu hē chá.

Ms. Tan drank tea with her friend.

阮小弟愛用攞仔食麵。

Gún sió-tī ài ēng chhiám-á chiáh mī.

我弟弟喜歡用叉子吃麵。

Wǒ dìdì xǐhuān yòng chāzi chī miàn.

My younger brother likes using a fork to eat noodles.

When the prepositional phrase is not providing background information but rather a target destination or location, the placement of the prepositional phrase comes after the main verb.

您開到巴黎。

In khui kàu Pa-lê.

他們開到巴黎。

Tāmen kāi dào Bālí.

They drove to Paris (*the driving had to occur before reaching Paris*).

這個查某囡仔共雞卵糕園跔伊家己的面頂。

Chit ê cha-bó' gín-á kā ke-nng-ko khng tàm i ka-tī ê bīn-téng.

這個女孩子把蛋糕放在她自己的臉上。

Zhègè nǚháizi bǎ dàngāo fàng zài tā zìjǐ de liǎn shàng.

The little girl put the cake onto her face (*picking up the cake had to occur before placing it on her face*).

Prepositions concerning locations are discussed more in detail in the next chapter (see [16 Location and directional expressions](#)).

15.1 Prepositions of movement

Prepositions of movement clarify points along a trajectory from a start point to an end point. Those prepositions that introduce a destination are placed after the verb and form a *directional expression* (see [16.4 Directional expressions](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
按 àn	從 cóng	starting from
對...來 (t)ùi...lâi	從 cóng	coming from
對...去 (t)ùi...khì	向 xiàng	going towards (<i>after verb</i>)
順 sūn	順著 shùnzhe	following along
甲 kah	到 dào	up to a certain location
到 kàu	到 dào	arriving at

高鐵 按 高雄 開到 台北。

Ko-thih àn Ko-hiông khui kàu Tâi-pak.

高鐵行駛 高雄 到 臺北。

Gāotiě xíngshǐ Gāoxióng dào Táiběi.

The high-speed rail runs from Kaohsiung to Taipei.

你 順 彼條路行，就會看著藥房。

Lí sūn hit tiâu lô-kiâⁿ, tō ē khòaⁿ-tiōh iōh-pâng.

你 順著 那條路走，就可以看到藥局。

Nǐ shùnzhe nà tiáo lù zǒu, jiù kěyǐ kàndào yàojú.

If you walk along that road, you will see a pharmacy.

阮爸母對東京來。

Gún pē-bú ùi Tang-kiaⁿ lâi.

我父母從東京來。

Wǒ fùmǔ cóng Dōngjīng lái.

My parents are coming from Tokyo.

您阿兄開對機場去。

In a-hiaⁿ khai tùi ki-tiūⁿ khì.

他哥哥向機場方向開去。

Tā gēgē xiàng jīchǎng fāngxiàng kāi qù.

His older brother is driving towards the airport.

Note that when appearing before the main verb, the Taiwanese preposition 對 (**t**)ùi means ‘coming from’ and is followed by the speaker perspective 來 **lái** (*towards the speaker*). However, the same preposition 對 (**t**)ùi means ‘towards’ when occurring after the main verb and is followed by the speaker perspective 去 **khì** (*away from the speaker*).

15.2 Prepositions of orientation

Prepositions of orientation provide more information about which direction a verb is facing.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
對 (t) <u>ùi</u>	對 <u>dùì</u> / 向 <u>xiàng</u>	facing, towards, to
共 <u>kā</u>	對 <u>dùì</u> / 向 <u>xiàng</u>	facing, towards
當 <u>tng</u>	對 <u>dùì</u>	facing, in front of

伊對阿母咒誓後擺袂拍小弟。

I tùi a-bú chiù-chōa āu-pái bē phah sió-tī.

他對媽媽發誓下次不會打弟弟。

Tā duì māmā fāshì xià cì bù huì dǎ dìdì.

He swore to his mom that next time he would not hit his younger brother.

我的老師共我講我的毛筆字歹讀。

Góa ê lāu-su kā góa kóng góa ê mô-pit jī pháiⁿ-thák.

我的老師跟我說我的書法難看。

Wǒ de lǎoshī gēn wǒ shuō wǒ de shūfǎ nánkàn.

My teacher said to me that my handwriting is hard to read.

15.3 Prepositions of location

Prepositions of location placed *before* the main verb introduce *location expressions*, prepositional phrases specifying where the action of the main verb occurs (see [16.1 Prepositions for location expressions](#)). Prepositions of location can also occur *after* the main verb when indicating a location resulting from an action (see [16.3.3 Placement after the verb](#)) or when introducing *directional expressions*, prepositional phrases specifying a destination (see [16.4 Directional expressions](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
佇 tī	在 zài	at, on, in
跔 tà̍	在 zài	at, on, in
踫 tōa	在 zài	at, on, in
離 lī	離 lí	set apart from

大學 離 阮 厝 無 傷 遠。

Tāi-hák lī gún chhù bô siuⁿ hng.

大學 離 我 家 不 太 遠。

Dàxué lí wǒ jiā bù tài yuǎn.

The university is not very far from my house.

阮 阿叔 佇 附近 的 湖 釣 魚。

Gún a-chek tī hù-kīn ê ô-tiò hī.

我 叔叔 在 附近 的 湖 釣 魚。

Wǒ shūshu zài fùjìn de hú diào yú.

My uncle is at a nearby lake fishing.

伊 跔 遐 坐 咧 無 代 誌 通 做。

I tàm hia chē--leh bô tãi-chì thang chò.

他 在 那裡 坐著 沒有 事 可以 做。

Tā zài nàlǐ zuòzhe méiyǒu shì kěyǐ zuò.

He is sitting there with nothing to do.

15.4 Prepositions of time

Prepositions of time specify either the endpoints of a time period or a precise point in time.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
佇 tī	在 zài	at
按 àn	從 cóng	from
對 tuì	從 cóng	from
從 chêng	從 cóng	from, since (<i>time specified</i>)
到 kàu	到 dào	to, until a point in time
甲 kah	到 dào	to, until a point in time
至 chì	至 zhì	to (<i>time specified</i>)

咱佇兩點有業務會議。

Lán tī n̄ng tiám ū giáp-bū hōe-gī.

我們在兩點有銷售會議。

Wǒmen zài liǎng diǎn yǒu xiāoshòu huìyì.

At 2 o'clock we have a sales meeting.

彼齣電影按暗時八點搬到十點。

Hit chhut tiān-íáⁿ àn àm-sī peh tiám poaⁿ kàu chap tiám.

那部電影從晚上八點演到十點。

Nà bù diànyǐng cóng wǎnshàng bā diǎn yǎn dào shí diǎn.

That movie plays from 8pm to 10pm.

我從高中時開始佇外口走。

Góa chhng ko-tiong sī khai-sí tī gōa-kháu cháu.

我從高中時開始在戶外跑步。

Wǒ cóng gāozhòng shí kāishǐ zài hùwài pǎobù.

Since I was in high school, I have always run outside.

15.5 Prepositions of accompaniment and interaction

Prepositions of accompaniment and interaction introduce nouns as companions or involved parties.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
佱 kah (kap)	跟 gēn / 和 hé	with, and, from (<i>source</i>)
和 hām	跟 gēn / 和 hé	with, and
參 chham	跟 gēn / 和 hé	with, and
共 kā	跟 gēn	to (<i>one-sided</i>)

綴 tòe (tè) 隨 suí to follow along

阿公 佢 阿媽 做伙 行 去 公園。

A-kong kah a-má chò-hóe kiâⁿ khi kong-hng.

爺爺 和 奶奶 一起 走 到 公園。

Yéyé hé nǎinai yīqǐ zǒu dào gōngyuán.

Grandpa and grandma walked to the park together.

伊 共 我 罵 一 睬。

I kā góa mē chit-khùn.

他 跟 我 罵 一 頓。

Tā gēn wǒ mà yī dùn.

He gave me a scolding.

和 阮 阿姊 討論 週末 旅行。

Hām gún a-chí thó-lūn chiu-bóat lú-hêng.

跟 我 姐姐 討論 週末 旅行。

Gēn wǒ jiějiě tāolùn zhōumò lǚxíng.

Discuss with my older sister about the weekend trip.

頭家 參 客戶 做伙 去 拍 網球。

Thâu-ke chham kheh-hō chò-hóe khi phah bāng-kiû.

老闆 和 客戶 一起 去 打 網球。

Lǎobǎn hé kèhù yīqǐ qù dǎ wǎngqiú.

The boss went with the clients to play tennis.

15.6 Prepositions of manner

Prepositions of manner introduce nouns as instruments or vehicles that are used to accomplish the main verb.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
坐 chē	坐 zuò	by means of (<i>a vehicle</i>), via
開 chāh	搭 dā, 攔 lán	by means of (<i>a vehicle</i>), via
用 ēng	用 yòng	with (<i>an instrument or appliance</i>)

咱 欲 坐 火車 到 台東。

Lán beh chē hóe-chhia kàu Tâi-tang.

我們要坐火車到台東。

Wǒmen yào zuò huǒchē dào Táidōng.

We will take the train to Taitung.

趕時間的時，圍計程車。

Kóaⁿ sî-kan ê sî, chāh kè-thêng-chhia.

趕時間的時候，搭計程車。

Gǎn shíjiān de shíhòu, dā jìchéngchē.

If you are in a rush, take a taxi.

用鉛筆寫數學考試單。

Ēng iân-pit siá sò-hák khó-chhi-toaⁿ.

用鉛筆寫數學考試卷。

Yòng qiānbǐ xiě shùxué kǎoshìjuàn.

Write with a pencil on your math test.

15.7 Prepositions for benefactives

Benefactives are prepositional phrases that introduce nouns benefitting from the action of the main verb (see [18.3 Benefactives](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
共 kā	幫 bāng, 給 gěi	for (to help do)
替 thè	替 tì	to stand in for
為 ūi	為 wèi	because of, for

這本冊，你敢會當共我包起來？

Che pún chheh, lí kám ē-tàng kā góa pau--khí-lâi?

這本書，你能不能幫我包起來？

Zhè běn shū, nǐ néngbùnéng bāng wǒ bāoqǐlái?

Can you wrap this book for me?

阮查罔欲替我領受獎品。

Gún cha-kiáⁿ beh thè góa niá-siū chióng-phín.

我女兒要替我領獎品。

Wǒ nǚ'ér yào tì wǒ lǐng jiǎngpǐn.

My daughter will accept the award for me.

我欲為伊做生日。

Góa beh ūi i chò-seⁿ-jit.

我要為她過生日。

Wǒ yào wèi tā guò shēngrì.

I am going to throw a birthday party for her.

While not originally used as a preposition, the Taiwanese verb 幫 **pang** has recently expanded into a usage similar to its Mandarin counterpart 幫 **bāng**.

凡勢彼个服務員會當幫阮翕相。

Hōan-sè hit ê hòk-bū-ōan ē-tàng pang lán hip-siòng.

也許那個服務員能幫我們拍照。

Yěxǔ nàgè fúwùyuán néng bāng wǒmen pāizhào.

Maybe that waiter can take a picture for us.

15.8 Prepositions with grammatical function

Some prepositions have specific grammatical functions.

15.8.1 予 **hō** marking indirect objects

Unlike direct objects, which receive the action of the verb, indirect objects represent the ‘goal’ for which actions are done (‘She blew a kiss to me’, ‘I sent a postcard to him’). Typically, indirect objects are people, animals, or institutions (universities, hospitals, etc.). In Taiwanese, the preposition 予 **hō** is used to mark indirect objects. Note that some verbs do not require a preposition to mark indirect objects (see [18.2 Dative verbs](#)).

verb + 予 + indirect object

*verb + **hō** + indirect object*

阮阿爸寫這張批予我。

Gún a-pa siá chit tiuⁿ phoe hō góa.

我爸爸寫這封信給我。

Wǒ bàba xiě zhè fēng xìn gěi wǒ.

My father wrote this letter to me.

恁 提 雞卵糕 予 伊。

In teh ke-nŋg-ko hō i.

他們 拿 蛋糕 給 她。

Tāmen ná dàngāo gěi tā.

They brought a cake to her.

15.8.2 共 kā marking direct objects

Direct objects receive the action from the verb ('I threw the ball', 'She dropped her glasses'). In some instances, direct objects must be moved from the typical position after the verb to a position before the verb. The preposition 共 **kā** allows this to occur with the 共 **kā** construction (see [17.4 共 kā construction](#)). In some cases, a preposition is not required and the object is simply *pre-posed*, placed before the verb (see [17.1 Pre-posed objects](#)).

subject + 共 + direct object + verb

subject + kā + direct object + verb

伊 共 我的手機 擊 踏 水內。

I kā góa ê chhiú-ki khian tàm chúi-lāi.

他 把 我的手機 丟 在水裡。

Tā bǎ wǒ de shǒujī diū zài shuǐ lǐ.

He threw my mobile phone into the water.

恁 共 果子園 佇 桌仔頂。

In kā kóe-chí khng tī toh-á-téng.

他們 把 水果 放 在 桌子上。

Tāmen bǎ shuǐguǒ fàng zài zhuōzi shàng.

They put the fruit onto the table.

15.8.3 予 hō marking passive voice constructions

In a passive sentence, the direct object (recipient of the action) becomes the subject of the sentence. The

preposition 予 *hō* is placed before the main verb to indicate the passive voice. Sometimes the passive marker 予 *hō* is preceded by the verb 去 *khì* (see [19 Passive voice](#)).

direct object + (去) + 予 + *verb*

direct object + (khì) + *hō* + *verb*

伊 予 伊 的 同 學 笑。

I *hō* i ê tông-hàk *chhiò*.

她 被 她 的 同 學 笑。

Tā *bèi* tā de tóngxué *xiào*.

She was laughed at by her classmates.

我 的 朋 友 予 球 棒 槓 著。

Góa ê pêng-iú *hō* kiû-pāng *kòng-tiòh*.

我 的 朋 友 被 球 棒 打 到。

Wǒ de péngyǒu *bèi* qiúbàng *dǎ dào*.

My friend was hit by a baseball bat.

15.9 Prepositions doubling as verbs

Some prepositions may also function as verbs. Because historically many prepositions in Chinese were derived from verbs, a few prepositions still retain capabilities as a verb.

PREPOSITION	VERB
到 <i>KÀU</i> <i>TO (DESTINATION)</i>	<i>TO ARRIVE</i>
到 機 場 愛 偌 久 ？	阮 機 場 到 矣。
<i>Kàu</i> ki-tiû ⁿ ài jōa-kú?	Gún ki-tiû ⁿ <i>kàu</i> --ah.
到 機 場 要 多 久 ？	我 們 到 機 場 了。
<i>Dào</i> jīchǎng yào duōjiǔ?	Wǒmen <i>dào</i> jīchǎng le.
How long is it <u>to</u> the airport?	We <u>arrived</u> at the airport.
佇 <i>TĪ</i> <i>AT, ON, IN</i>	<i>TO BE LOCATED AT</i>
阮 阿 兄 佇 眠 床 倒 咧。	阮 阿 兄 佇 眠 床 頂。
Gún a-hia ⁿ <i>tī</i> bîn-chhîng tó--leh.	Gún a-hia ⁿ <i>tī</i> bîn-chhîng-téng.
我 哥 哥 在 床 上 躺 著。	我 哥 哥 在 床 上。
Wǒ gēgē <i>zài</i> chuáng shàng tǎngzhe.	Wǒ gēgē <i>zài</i> chuáng shàng.
My brother is lying <u>on</u> the bed.	My brother <u>is</u> on the bed.

坐 *CHĒ* *BY MEANS OF (A VEHICLE)*

我 坐 計程車 去 遐。

Góa chē kè-thêng-chhia khi hia.

我 坐 計程車 去 那裡。

Wǒ zuò jìchéngchē qù nàlǐ.

I will take a taxi there.

TO SIT

我 佇 計程車 坐咧。

Góa tī kè-thêng-chhia chē--leh.

我 在 計程車 坐著。

wǒ zài jìchéngchē zuòzhe.

I am sitting in a taxi.

16 Location and directional expressions

Location expressions are a type of prepositional phrase that specifies where the action of the main verb occurs (see [15.3 Prepositions of location](#)).

Directional expressions are a type of prepositional phrase that introduces a destination and are placed *after* the main verb.

16.1 Prepositions for location expressions

Location expressions typically begin with one of three prepositions: 佇 **tī**, 踅 **tàm**, or 跔 **tòa** signifying ‘on’, ‘at’, or ‘in’.

佇 **tī** is more general in purpose and can be used in both location and time expressions. An alternative form is 佇咧 **tī-leh**.

阮佇厝的頭前拍籃球。

Gún tī chhù ê thâu-chêng phah nâ-kiû.

我們在房子的前面打籃球。

Wǒmen zài fángzi de qiánmiàn dǎ lánqiú.

We played basketball in front of the house.

導遊佇兩點會共咱接。

Tō-iû tī n̄ng tiám ē kā lán chiap.

導遊在兩點會接我們。

Dǎoyóu zài liǎng diǎn huì jiē wǒmen.

The tour guide will pick us up at 2 o'clock.

踅 **tàm** (also pronounced **tiám**) is commonly used but limited to location expressions.

阮敢會使踅遮奕牌仔？

Gún kám ē-sái tàm chia ī pài-á?

我們可以在這裡玩牌？

Wǒmen kěyǐ zài zhèlǐ wán pái?

Can we play cards here?

蹠 **tòa** tends to be used more for situations in the future along with commands or requests. However, because 蹠 **tòa** also means ‘to stay’ or ‘to live’, some speakers prefer to use 佇 **tī** or 蹠 **tàm**.

伊 明仔載 欲 蹠 灶跤 做 肉粽。

I bîn-á-chài beh tòa chàu-kha chò bah-chàng.

她 明天 要 在 廚房 做 粽子。

Tā míngtiān yào zài chúfáng zuò zòngzi.

Tomorrow she will make sticky rice dumplings in the kitchen.

莫 蹠 電視前 食 物件。

Mài tòa tiān-sī-chêng chiáh mih-kiāⁿ.

不要 在 電視 前 吃 東西。

Bùyào zài diànshì qián chī dōngxī.

Don't eat in front of the television.

16.2 Location participles

The most basic form of a location expression comprises a preposition and a noun / noun phrase. Together they indicate where the main verb occurs. However, often more specific location information is given by the addition of a location participle. The *location participle* (on top of, below, next to, etc.) further specifies a position that is relative to the noun itself.

preposition + noun / noun phrase + (location participle)

弓蕉 佇 桌仔頂 咧 生菇。

Keng-chio tī toh-á-téng teh seⁿ-ko.

香蕉 在 桌子上 在 發霉。

Xiāngjiāo zài zhuōzi shàng zài fāméi.

The bananas are rotting on the table.

伊 的朋友 佇 公園內 睏。

I ê pêng-iú tī kong-hûg-lāi khùn.

他 的朋友 在 公園 裡 睡覺。

Tā de péngyǒu zài gōngyuán lǐ shuìjiào.

His friend slept in the park.

16.2.1 Common location participles

There are five common location participles in Taiwanese that specify a position relative to the noun in the location expression. Note that the location participles are suffixed to the preceding noun.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
頂 -téng	上 shàng	on top of
跤 -kha	下 xià	below of
外 -gōa	外 wài	outside of
內 -lāi	內 nèi, 裡 lǐ	inside of, within
前 -chêng	前 qián	in front of

囡仔佇厝內咧耍迺迺物仔。

Gín-á tī chhù-lāi teh sng chhit-thô-mih-á.

孩子在家裡在玩玩具。

Háizi zài jiā lǐ zài wán wánjù.

The children are playing with toys in the house.

我跔膨椅跤揣著一雙舊鞋仔。

Góa tàm phòng-í-kha chhōe-tiòh chit siang kū ê-á.

我在沙發下找到一雙舊鞋子。

Wǒ zài shāfā xià zhǎodào yī shuāng jiù xiézi.

I found an old pair of shoes under the sofa.

Note that Mandarin has a distinction between 內 **nèi** ‘inside’ and 裡 **lǐ** ‘in, within’. In contrast, Taiwanese generally uses 內 **-lāi** for both cases. In a small number of expressions, 裡 **-lí (nìh)** may be used although 內 **-lāi** is also considered acceptable.

阮佇厝裡攏講台語。

Gún tī chhù-lí lóng kóng Tâi-gí.

我們在家裡都講台語。

Wǒmen zài jiā lǐ dōu jiǎng Táiyǔ.

We always speak Taiwanese at home.

阮佇厝內攏講台語。

Gún tī chhù-lāi lóng kóng Tâi-gí.

我們在家裡都講台語。

Wǒmen zài jiā lǐ dōu jiǎng Táiyǔ.

We always speak Taiwanese at home.

16.2.2 Location participles with noun suffixes 面 -bīn and 頭 -thâu

Location participles themselves can be suffixed with 面 -bīn ‘face’ or 頭 -thâu ‘head’ to form nouns. However, not every combination is deemed acceptable for all speakers. By using the modifying particle 的 ê, this noun form of the location participle can also be used within location expressions. Note the modifying particle 的 ê can be omitted.

noun or noun phrase + (的) + location participle + noun suffix

noun or noun phrase + (ê) + location participle + noun suffix

貓仔 佇 桌仔 的 下面。

Niau-á tī toh-á ê ē-bīn.

貓 在 桌子 的 下面。

Māo zài zhuōzi de xiàmiàn.

The cats are underneath the table.

Below is a table exhibiting combinations of location participles with the noun suffixes 面 -bīn ‘face’ and 頭 -thâu ‘head’. In addition, some common alternatives have been provided. Note that the order of the noun suffix and location participle is switched for ‘front, front side’.

面 -BĪN ‘FACE’	頭 -THÂU ‘HEAD’	ALTERNATIVES	MEANING
頂面 téng-bīn 上面 shàngmiàn	頂頭 téng-thâu 上頭 shàngtou	頂懸 téng-kôan	top
下面 ē-bīn 下面 xiàmiàn	下頭 ē-thâu 下頭 xiàtou	下跤 ē-kha, 下底 ē-té	underneath, underside
外面 gōa-bīn 外面 wàimiàn	外頭 gōa-thâu 外頭 wàitou	外口 gōa-kháu	outside
內面 lāi-bīn 裡面 lǐmiàn	內頭 lāi-thâu 裡頭 lītou	內底 lāi-té	inside
後面 āu-bīn 後面 hòumiàn	後頭 āu-thâu 後頭 hòutou	後壁 āu-piah	back, back side
面前 bīn-chêng 面前 miànqián	頭前 thâu-chêng —	面頭前 bīn-thâu-chêng	front, front side

Below is a table of additional terms commonly used in location expressions.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
對面 tui-bīn	對面 duìmiàn	opposite side
邊(仔) pi ⁿ (-á)	邊 biān	side
中央 tiong-ng	中間 zhōngjiān	middle

正𠂔 chià ⁿ -pêng	右邊 yòubiān	right side
正手𠂔 chià ⁿ -chhiú-pêng	右手邊 yòushǒubiān	right-hand side
到𠂔 tò-pêng	左邊 zuóbiān	left side
到手𠂔 tò-chhiú-pêng	左手邊 zuóshǒubiān	left-hand side

16.2.3 Cardinal directions

Cardinal directions can also be used within location expressions. Generally, cardinal directions are given in the order 東 **tang** ‘east’, 西 **sai** ‘west’, 南 **lâm** ‘south’, 北 **pak** ‘north’ in more casual speech. However, in more poetic or formal speech, the order changes to 東 **tang** ‘east’, 南 **lâm** ‘south’, 西 **sai** ‘west’, 北 **pak** ‘north’.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
東 tang	東 dōng	east
南 lâi	南 nán	south
西 sai	西 xī	west
北 pak	北 běi	north

Intermediate (ordinal) directions are stated in the reverse order of their English counterparts (i.e. east or west is stated first).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
東北 tang-pak	東北 dōngběi	northeast
東南 tang-lâm	東南 dōngnán	southeast
西北 sai-pak	西北 xīběi	northwest
西南 sai-lâm	西南 xīnán	southwest

When describing a geographic region in relationship to cardinal directions, the cardinal direction may be placed before 部 **pō** ‘region’ and 𠂔 **pêng** ‘side’.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
東部 tang-pō	東部 dōngbù	eastern region
南部 lâi-pō	南部 nánbù	southern region
西部 sai-pō	西部 xībù	western region
北部 pak-pō	北部 běibù	northern region

東𠂔 tang-pêng	東方 dōngfāng	east side
南𠂔 lâi-pêng	南方 nánfāng	south side

西片 sai-pêng 西方 xīfāng west side
 北片 pak-pêng 北方 běifāng north side

我是佇台灣的南部大漢矣。

Góa sī tī Tâi-oân ê lâm-pō tōa-hàn--ah.

我是在台灣的南部長大了。

Wǒ shì zài Táiwān de nánbù zhǎngdà le.

I grew up in the southern part of Taiwan.

In Taiwan, speakers sometimes use 頂港 **téng-káng** ‘northern port’ or 下港 **ē-káng** ‘southern port’ to refer to the northern and southern parts of the island. In Mandarin, only the terms 北部 **běibù** ‘northern part’ and 南部 **nánbù** ‘southern part’ are used to refer to these regions in Taiwan.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
頂港 téng-káng	北部 běibù	northern part of Taiwan
下港 ē-káng	南部 nánbù	southern part of Taiwan

16.3 Placement of location expressions

While the general placement of location expressions is between the subject and verb of a sentence, there are also circumstances in which the location expression can appear before the subject or even after the verb.

16.3.1 Placement between the subject and verb

16.3.1.1 Single prepositional phrase

If the location expression is the only prepositional phrase, the typical placement is between the subject and the verb.

subject + location expression + verb

In this position, the location specifies the background setting for where the main verb occurs or

happens.

同事 佇 公園 食 中晝頓。

Tông-sū tī kong-hng chiáh tiong-tàu-tng.

同事 在 公園 吃 午餐。

Tóngshì zài gōngyuán chī wǔcān.

The coworkers ate their lunches in the park.

姐妹 佇 塗跤 包 禮物。

Chí-mōe tī thô-kha pau lé-bùt.

姐妹 在 地上 包 禮物。

Jiěmèi zài dìshàng bāo lǐwù.

The sisters wrapped the gifts on the floor.

16.3.1.2 Location expressions with other prepositional phrases

Location expressions are just one type of prepositional phrase. Non-location prepositional phrases (with my friend, using a pencil, for my mother, etc.), which can explain other types of relationships between a noun and the main verb, also appear between the subject and verb of a sentence (see [15 Prepositions](#)). If both types of prepositional phrases co-occur within a sentence, the location expression is placed after the non-location prepositional phrase (see [14.3.3 Prepositional phrases and adverbs](#)).

subject + non-location prepositional phrase + location expression + verb

洪先生 參 客戶 佇 高級 的 餐廳 咧 食 中晝頓。

Âng--sian-siⁿ chham kheh-hō tī ko-kip ê chhan-thiaⁿ teh chiáh tiong-tàu-tng.

洪先生 跟 客戶 在 高級 的 餐廳 在 吃 午餐。

Hóng xiānshēng gēn kèhù zài gāojí de cāntīng zài chī wǔcān.

Mr. Ang is having lunch with his clients in a fancy restaurant.

阮 阿兄 為 阮 的 狗仔 佇 後花園 起厝。

Gún a-hiaⁿ ūi gún ê káu-á tī āu-hoe-hng khí-chhù.

我 哥哥 為 我們 的 狗 在 後院 蓋 房子。

Wǒ gēgē wèi wǒmen de gǒu zài hòuyuán gài fángzi.

My older brother is building a house in the backyard for our dog.

16.3.2 Placement before the subject

A location expression can occur before the subject if additional emphasis is placed on the location.

location expression + subject + verb

佇厝仔頂恁後生咧行！

Tī chhù-á-téng lín hāu-seⁿ teh kiān!

在屋頂你的兒子在走！

Zài wūdǐng nǐ de érzi zài zǒu!

Your son is walking on the roof!

佇機場恁會當予退稅。

Tī ki-tiūⁿ lín ē-tàng hō thè-sòe.

在機場你們能退稅。

Zài jīchǎng nǐmen néng tuìshuì.

You can get a tax refund at the airport.

If the sentence is used to describe the existence of something with the verb 有 ū, then the preposition 佇 tī is generally omitted unless additional emphasis is desired.

(佇) + *location expression* + 有

(tī) + *location expression* + ū

佇桌仔頂有真濟蚶蟻！

Tī toh-á-téng ū chin chē káu-hiā!

在桌子上有很多蚶蟻！

Zài zhuōzi shàng yǒu hěn duō mǎyǐ !

On the table there are lots of ants !

墓仔埔有鬼。

Bōng-á-po ū kúi.

墓地有鬼。

Mùdì yǒu guǐ.

There are ghosts in the cemetery.

16.3.3 Placement after the verb

Location expressions generally appear before the verb. However, there are some verbs that allow for location expressions to occur after the verb. Most of these verbs indicate where the subject or object ends up as a result of the action of the verb. Typically, this involves changes in positioning, arranging, appearance, or posture.

This text loosely categorizes this group of verbs into four types: displacement, placement, appearance, and posture. Bear in mind that this categorization is not exhaustive, and that there may be some verbs that accept post-verb location expressions yet still do not fit neatly within these categories.

Additionally, some of these verbs accept placement of the location expression both *before* and *after* the verb.

In some contexts, the meaning can change depending on placement.

BEFORE THE VERB

您共罐仔 佇路邊 擲。

In kā kòan-á tī lō·piⁿ tàn.

他們把罐子 在路邊 丟。

Tāmen bǎ guànzǐ zài lù biān diū.

They threw the can while on the road (*they are directly on the road itself, possibly walking on it*).

AFTER THE VERB

您共罐仔 擲 佇路邊。

In kā kòan-á tàn tī lō·piⁿ.

他們把罐子 丟 在路邊。

Tāmen bǎ guànzǐ diū zài lù biān.

They threw the can onto the road (*they are not directly on the road, perhaps in a vehicle*).

While other contexts, the meaning remains the same regardless of placement.

BEFORE THE VERB

阮老師 佇車頭後壁 蹣。

Gún lāu-su tī chhia-thâu āu-piah tò.

我的老師 在車站後面 住。

Wǒ de lǎoshī zài chēzhàn hòumiàn zhù.

My teacher lives behind the train station.

AFTER THE VERB

阮老師 蹣 佇車頭後壁。

Gún lāu-su tò tī chhia-thâu āu-piah.

我的老師 住 在車站後面。

Wǒ de lǎoshī zhù zài chēzhàn hòumiàn.

My teacher lives behind the train station.

16.3.3.1 Displacement verbs

Verbs of displacement include actions that result in a local change in position. If the location expression is placed before the verb, there can be a difference in meaning.

BEFORE THE VERB

伊 佇露台 落著 伊 的 鎖匙。

I tī lô-tâi lak-tiòh i ê só-sî.

他 在陽台 掉落 他 的 鑰匙。

Tā zài yángtái diàoluò tā de yàoshi.

He dropped his keys on the balcony (*he was standing on the balcony*).

AFTER THE VERB

伊 的 鎖匙 落著 佇露台。

I ê só-sî lak-tiòh tī lô-tâi.

他 的 鑰匙 掉落 在陽台。

Tā de yàoshi diàoluò zài yángtái.

His keys dropped onto the balcony (*he was standing above the balcony, perhaps a higher floor*).

Below is a table of some common displacement verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
倒 tò	倒 dào	to pour out
落 lak	掉落 diàoluò	to drop
偃倒 ián-tó	推倒 tuīdǎo	to push over; knock over
跋倒 pòah-tó	跌倒 diédǎo	to stumble; to fall
摔倒 siák-tó	摔倒 shuāidǎo	to slip and fall
擲 khian	丟 diū	to throw
擲 tàn	丟 diū	to toss casually

阿媽 佇塗跤 跋倒。

A-má tī thô-kha pòah-tó.

奶奶 在地上 跌倒。

Nǎinǎi zài dìshàng diédǎo.

Grandma fell on the floor.

共 牛奶 倒 踹碗仔內。

Kā gû-leng tò tàm óaⁿ-á-lāi.

把牛奶倒在碗裡。

Bǎ niúǎi dào zài wǎn lǐ.

Take the milk and pour it into the bowl.

Verbs that involve movement to a new destination (such as ‘run’ or ‘swim’) cannot use the preposition 佇 *tī* to express this destination. Instead, the prepositions 到 *kàu* ‘until, to’ is used to form a directional expression (see [16.4 Directional expression](#)).

伊走到郵局。

I cháu kàu iû-kiók.

她跑到郵局。

Tā pǎo dào yóujú.

She ran to the post office.

16.3.3.2 Placement verbs

Placement verbs are concerned with the putting, arranging, creating, and wearing of physical objects or images. The location expression may be placed before or after the verb without any change in meaning.

BEFORE THE VERB

伊佇椅子腳 園淺拖仔。

I tī í-á-kha khng chhián-thoa-á.

她在椅子下 放拖鞋。

Tā zài yǐzi xià fàng tuōxié.

She put the sandals under the chair.

AFTER THE VERB

伊 園淺拖仔 佇椅子腳。

I khng chhián-thoa-á tī í-á-kha.

她 放拖鞋 在椅子下。

Tā fàng tuōxié zài yǐzi xià.

She put the sandals under the chair.

Below is a table of some common placement verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
掛 kòa	掛 guà	to hang up
園 khng	放 fàng	to put, to place

下 hē	放 fàng	to put, to place
寫 siá	寫 xiě	to write down
畫 ōe	畫 huà	to draw on
排 pāi	排 pái	to line up
穿 chhēng	穿 chuān	to put on (<i>below the neck</i>)
戴 tì	戴 dài	to put on (<i>above the neck</i>)

請共恁澹的洗浴巾囵佇籠仔。

Chhiáⁿ kā lín tâm ê sé-èk-kin khng tī lóng-á.

請把你們的濕浴巾放在籠子。

Qǐng bǎ nǐmen de shī yùjīn fàng zài lóngzi.

Please put your wet towels in the basket.

希望，囡仔共恁寫跼細張的紙頂。

Hi-bāng, gín-á kā in siá tām sè tiuⁿ ê chóa-téng.

希望，小孩子寫在小張的紙上。

Xīwàng, xiǎo háizi xiě zài xiǎo zhāng de zhǐ shàng.

The children wrote their wishes on small pieces of paper.

16.3.3.3 Appearance verbs

Appearance verbs include actions that describe the appearance or disappearance of the subject. The location expression may be placed before or after the verb without any change in meaning.

BEFORE THE VERB

海龜佇動物園死矣。

Hái-ku tī tōng-bút-hûg sí--ah.

海龜在動物園死了。

Hǎiguī zài dòngwùyuán sǐ le.

The sea turtles died in the zoo.

AFTER THE VERB

海龜死佇動物園矣。

Hái-ku sí tī tōng-bút-hûg--ah.

海龜死在動物園了。

Hǎiguī sǐ zài dòngwùyuán le.

The sea turtles died in the zoo.

Below is a table of some common appearance verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
消失 siau-sit	消失 xiāoshī	to disappear
無去 bô--khì	不見 bù jiàn	to be missing, to disappear
死 sí	死 sǐ	to die
出世 chhut-sì	出生 chūshēng	to be born
大漢 tōa-hàn	長大 zhǎngdà	to grow up
發生 hoat-seng	發生 fāshēng	to occur, to happen

阮囡仔敢若消失佇您迺迺的所在。

Gún gín-á kán-ná siau-sit tī in chhit-thô ê só-chāi.

我孩子好像消失在他們玩的地方。

Wǒ háizi hǎoxiàng xiāoshī zài tāmen wán de dìfāng.

My children always seem to disappear in play areas.

我佇澳洲大漢。

Góa tī Ò-chiu tōa-hàn.

我在澳洲長大。

Wǒ zài Àozhōu zhǎngdà.

I grew up in Australia.

16.3.3.4 Posture verbs

Posture verbs include actions that describe changes in pose or stance of the subject. The location expression may be placed before or after the verb without any change in meaning. However, when the location expression is placed before the verb, the verb often takes on the static continuative aspect marker 咧 --**leh** (see [8.2.2.2 Describing a continued posture](#)). When the location expression occurs after the verb, there are two choices: 1) the static continuative aspect marker 咧 **-leh** is omitted, or 2) the static continuative aspect marker 咧 **-leh** remains, but the preposition 佇 **tī** is omitted.

BEFORE THE VERB

location expression + verb + 咧

location expression + verb + --leh

彼个老阿伯佇路邊跼咧。

Hit ê láu-á-peh tī lō-piⁿ khû--leh.

那個老伯伯在路邊蹲著。

Nàge lǎo bóbo zài lùbiān dūnzhe.

The old man is squatting by the side of the road.

AFTER THE VERB

METHOD 1

verb + 佇 + noun or noun phrase

verb + tī + noun or noun phrase

彼个老阿伯 跔 佇 路邊。

Hit ê lǎu-á-peh khū tī lō-piⁿ.

那個老伯伯 蹲 在 路邊。

Nàge lǎo bóbo dūn zài lùbiān.

The old man is squatting by the side of the road.

METHOD 2

verb + 咧 + noun or noun phrase

verb + --leh + noun or noun phrase

彼个老阿伯 跔 咧 路邊。

Hit ê lǎu-á-peh khū--leh lō-piⁿ.

那個老伯伯 蹲 在 路邊。

Nàge lǎo bóbo dūn zài lùbiān.

The old man is squatting by the side of the road.

Below is a table of some common posture verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
坐 chē	坐 zuò	to sit
倚 khiā	站 zhàn	to stand
覆 phak	趴 pā	to lie face down
跔 khū	蹲 dūn	to squat
靠 khò	靠 kào	to lean on

伊 攞 覆 咧 外 口 曝 日。

In lóng phak--leh gōa-kháu phák-jit.

她們都 趴 在 外面 曬 太陽。

Tāmen dōu pā zài wàimiàn shài tàiyáng.

They are all lying outside sunbathing.

火車 動 的 時 陣 莫 靠 跔 門。

Hóe-chhia tâng ê sī-chūn mài khò tàm m̄ng.

火車動的時候不要靠門。

Huǒchē dòng de shíhòu bù yào kào mén.

Don't lean on the door when the train is moving.

16.4 Directional expressions

Directional expressions are prepositional phrases that introduce a destination. Generally they begin with prepositions like 到 **kàu** ‘until, to’ and are followed by a location. In some cases, a speaker perspective complement 去 **khì** ‘away from the speaker’ or 來 **lâi** ‘towards the speaker’ is added after the location (see [11.3.1 Directional complements indicating speaker perspective](#)).

preposition + location + (speaker perspective complement 去 / 來)

preposition + location + (speaker perspective complement khì / lâi)

These directional expressions are only used with verbs that involve movement to a new destination (such as ‘run’ or ‘swim’). Such *destination verbs* cannot use the preposition 佇 **tī** to express this destination as a location expression.

16.4.1 Destination verbs

Destination verbs are verbs involving movement that imply a destination not in the immediate vicinity of the subject (see [16.3.3.1 Displacement verbs](#)). The target location of these destination verbs can be specified through a directional expression.

These directional expressions may only occur after the verb.

destination verb + directional expression

周先生行到郵局。

Chiu--sian-siⁿ kiâⁿ kàu iû-kiók.

周先生走到郵局。

Zhōu xiānshēng zǒu dào yóujú.

Mr. Chiu walked to the post office.

Below is a table of some common destination verbs.

行 kiâ ⁿ	走 zǒu	to walk
走 cháu	跑 pǎo	to run
騎 khiâ	騎 qí	to ride
飛 poe	飛 fēi	to fly
駛 sái	開 kāi	to drive
泅 siû	游泳 yóuyóǒng	to swim
轉 tíg	回 huí	to return

我下早走甲廟寺彼𠵿。

Góa e-chái cháu kah biō-sī hit-pêng.

我早上跑到寺廟那邊。

Wǒ zǎoshang pǎo dào sìmiào nà biān.

This morning I ran over to the temple.

您騎車到阮兜。

In khiâ chhia kàu gún tau.

他們騎車到我們家。

Tāmen qí chē dào wǒmen jiā.

They rode their bicycles to our house.

Note that Mandarin allows for directional expressions before the verb.

16.4.2 Speaker perspective with directional expressions

Directional expressions may also include the speaker perspective directional complements 來 -lâi ‘come’ and 去 -khì ‘go’, which refer to the direction of movement with reference to the speaker. These can co-occur with destination verbs and are optionally added after the location.

verb + 到 + location + (speaker perspective complement 去 / 來)

verb + kàu + location + (speaker perspective complement khì / lâi)

伊騎車到便利商店去。

I khiâ chhia kàu piān-lī siong-tiām--khì.

他騎車到便利商店去。

Tā qí chē dào biànlì shāngdiàn qù.

He rode his scooter over to the convenience store.

伊的同事會飛到台北來。

I ê tông-sū ē poe kàu Tâi-pak--lâi.

她的同事會飛到台北來。

Tā de tóngshì huì fēi dào Táiběi lái.

Her colleague will fly to Taipei (*speaker is in Taipei*).

Note that destination verbs can still append speaker perspective complements without a directional expression (see [11.3.1 Directional complements indicating speaker perspective](#)). In this case, the target location is not introduced by a preposition.

verb + (speaker perspective complement 去 / 來) + location

verb + (speaker perspective complement khi / lâi) + location

林先生駛去海邊。

Lîm--sian-siⁿ sái-khi hái-piⁿ.

林先生開去海邊。

Lín xiānshēng kāiqù hǎibiān.

Mr. Lim drove to the beach.

伊轉去韓國。

I tng-khi Hân-kok.

他回去韓國。

Tā huíqù Hánguó.

He returned to Korea.

去 **khi** ‘go’ and 來 **lâi** ‘come’ can also function as destination verbs themselves occurring with directional expressions. Unlike other destination verbs, the directional expression can be placed before or after 去 **khi** ‘go’ or 來 **lâi** ‘come’.

BEFORE THE VERB

directional expression + 去 / 來

directional expression + khi / lâi

伊的學生到病院去。

I ê hák-seng kàu pēⁿ-īⁿ khi.

他的學生到醫院去。

Tā de xuéshēng dào yīyuàn qù.

His student went to the hospital.

阮所有的親戚攏到加州來。

Gún só-ū ê chhin-chiâⁿ lóng kàu Ka-chiu lâi.

我們所有的親戚都到加州來。

Wǒmen suǒyǒu de qīnqī dōu dào Jiāzhōu lái.

All of our relatives came to California.

AFTER THE VERB

去 / 來 + *directional expression*

khì / lâi + *directional expression*

伊的學生 去到 病院。

I ê hāk-seng khì kàu pēⁿ-īⁿ.

他的學生 去到 醫院。

Tā de xuéshēng qù dào yīyuàn.

His student went to the hospital.

阮所有的親戚 來到 加州。

Gún só-ū ê chhin-chiâⁿ lóng lâi kàu Ka-chiu.

我們所有的親戚都 來到 加州。

Wǒmen suǒyǒu de qīnqī dōu lái dào Jiāzhōu.

All of our relatives came to California.

17 Direct objects

Direct objects are nouns or noun phrases that receive the action of a verb.

She kicks the chair.

In the sentence above, ‘the chair’ is a direct object that receives the action from ‘kicks’.

In Taiwanese, the ordering for simple sentences is similar to English:

subject + verb + object

伊 踢 椅仔。

I that í-á.

她 踢 椅子。

Tā tī yǐzi.

She kicks the chair.

Typically, objects come after the main verb. However, in some cases due to emphasis or grammatical requirements, the object is placed before the verb or verb phrase. For example, in Taiwanese if the verb adds a complement (phase, resultative, directional, etc.) to form a more complex verb compound, there are some cases when the direct object must be moved to the front or placed in a repeated verb sentence pattern, also known as *verb copying* (see [11 Verb complements](#)).

There are four ways to move a direct object before the verb.

METHOD 1

PRE-POSE DIRECT OBJECT BEFORE THE VERB

伊 椅仔 踢倒去 矣。

I í-á that-tó--khì--ah.

她 椅子 踢倒 了。

Tā yǐzi tīdǎo le.

She kicked over the chair.

METHOD 2

TOPICALIZE THE OBJECT

椅仔，伊 踢倒去 矣。

Í-á, i that-tó--khì--ah.

椅子，她 踢倒 了。

Yǐzi, tā tīdǎo le.

She kicked over the chair.

METHOD 3

COPYING OF THE VERB PHRASE

伊 踢 椅子 踢倒去 矣。

I that í-á that-tó--khì--ah.

她 踢 椅子 踢倒 了。

Tā tī yǐzi tīdǎo le.

She kicked over the chair.

METHOD 4

USE THE 共 KĀ CONSTRUCTION

伊 共 椅子 踢倒去 矣。

I kă í-á that-tó--khì--ah.

她 把 椅子 踢倒 了。

Tā bǎ yǐzi tīdǎo le.

She kicked over the chair.

Mandarin differs with Taiwanese in that direct objects are permitted to follow verb compounds in more circumstances. As a result, Taiwanese tends to more frequently place objects before the verb than Mandarin. The above example can also be written in Mandarin with the direct object after the verb.

MANDARIN

她 踢倒 了 椅子。

Tā tīdǎo le yǐzi.

She kicked over the chair.

17.1 Pre-posed objects

A *pre-posed object* is a direct object placed before the verb but after the subject without the use of a preposition. Generally, pronouns are restricted from this repositioning and can only be moved before the verb with the 共 *kā* construction (see [17.4 共 kā construction](#)).

subject + direct object + verb

阿公 狗仔 會 拍。

A-kong káu-á ē phah.

爺爺 狗 會 打。

Yěyě gǒu huì dǎ.

Grandpa will hit dogs.

彼个查埔囝仔雞卵糕攏食了去矣。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á ke-n̄g-ko lóng chiáh-liáu--khì--ah.

那個男孩子蛋糕都吃完了。

Nàge nánháizi dàngāo dōu chīwán le.

That boy ate the entire cake.

17.2 Topicalized objects

When direct objects are placed at the beginning of the sentence or immediately before the subject in the topic position, the direct objects are referred to as having been *topicalized*.

direct object + subject + verb

狗仔，阿公會拍。

Káu-á, a-kong ē phah.

狗，爺爺會打。

Gǒu, yěyě huì dǎ.

As for dogs, Grandpa will hit them.

雞卵糕，彼个查埔囝仔攏食了去矣。

Ke-n̄g-ko, hit ê cha-po' gín-á lóng chiáh-liáu--khì--ah.

蛋糕，那個男孩子都吃完了。

Dàngāo, nàge nánháizi dōu chīwán le.

As for the cake, that boy ate all of it.

17.3 Verb copying

Direct objects can also be moved to a position before the verb by being placed in a verb copying sentence pattern. This method essentially repeats the verb with the first instance followed by the direct object, and the second instance followed by the verb complements.

subject + verb + direct object + verb + verb complements

阿公會拍狗仔拍予您走去。

A-kong ē phah káu-á phah hō'ín cháu--khì.

爺爺會打狗打到它們跑掉。

Yěyě huì dǎ gǒu dǎ dào tāmen pǎodiào.

Grandpa will hit dogs until they run away.

彼个查埔囡仔食雞卵糕攏食了去矣。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á chiáh ke-nŋg-ko lóng chiáh-liáu--khì--ah.

那個男孩子吃蛋糕都吃完了。

Nàge nánháizi chī dàngāo dōu chīwán le.

That boy ate the entire cake.

17.4 共 kǎ construction

While the preposition 共 **kǎ** has several uses, one particular usage, called the 共 **kǎ** construction, involves moving a direct object from the typical position after the verb to a position before the verb. The reason for moving a direct object to a position before the verb can arise from either a grammatical constraint on the number of elements after a verb or from a desire to emphasize the action that is performed on the object.

17.4.1 Setting up the 共 kǎ construction

By placing the preposition 共 **kǎ** in front of the direct object, the prepositional phrase can be moved before the main verb.

subject + 共 + direct object + verb

subject + kǎ + direct object + verb

阿公會共狗仔拍。

A-kong ē kǎ káu-á phah.

爺爺會把狗打。

Yěyě huì bǎ gǒu dǎ.

Grandpa will hit dogs.

彼个查埔囡仔共雞卵糕攏食了去矣。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á kā ke-n̄ng-ko lóng chiáh-liáu--khì--ah.

那個男孩子把蛋糕都吃完了。

Nàge nánháizi bǎ dàngāo dōu chīwán le.

That little boy ate the entire cake.

因為伊袂記得掛目鏡，所以伊就共我撞著。

In-ūi i bē-kì-tit kòa bák-kiàⁿ, só-í i tō kā góa lòng--tiòh.

因為他忘記戴眼鏡，所以他撞到我。

Yīnwèi tā wàngjì dài yǎnjìng, suǒyǐ tā jiù zhuàngdǎo wǒ.

Because he forgot to wear his glasses, he crashed into me.

Note that speakers of Taiwan Mandarin use 把 **bǎ** less frequently than do speakers in other Mandarin-speaking areas. The example above can also be written in Standard Mandarin as follows:

STANDARD MANDARIN

因為他忘記戴眼鏡，所以他就把我撞倒。

Yīnwèi tā wàngjì dài yǎnjìng, suǒyǐ tā jiù bǎ wǒ zhuàngdǎo.

Because he forgot to wear his glasses, he crashed into me.

17.4.2 Comparisons to the Mandarin 把 bǎ construction

The 共 **kā** construction is similar to the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** construction but is less restricted in its usage. While the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** and Taiwanese 共 **kā** function similarly in bringing forward a direct object to a position before the main verb, the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** is more restricted in the following ways:

The noun phrase that follows the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** generally must be *definite* (known to the listener) such as ‘the car’ or ‘this girl’ or *generic* (a class or category of items) such as ‘cars’ or ‘girls’ (see [4.9 Definite and indefinite nouns](#)).

An *indefinite* (not known to the listener) object such as ‘a car’ or ‘three girls’ is not acceptable in the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** construction. The Taiwanese 共 **kā** does not have this restriction.

老師共兩的學生罵。

Lāu-su kā n̄ng ê hák-seng mē.

老師罵兩個學生。

Lǎoshī mà liǎng gè xuéshēng.

The teacher scolded two students.

In the above example, a direct Mandarin translation of the Taiwanese sentence would be unacceptable.

UNACCEPTABLE MANDARIN USAGE

老師 把兩個學生 罵。

Lǎoshī bǎ liǎng gè xuéshēng mà.

The teacher scolded two students.

Additionally, the main verb within Mandarin 把 **bǎ** sentences must show completion. In other words, the 把 **bǎ** construction puts emphasis on the how the object was disposed or handled. In general, a perfective aspect marker, a verb complement, or duration/frequency quantity must be used to mark completion of the verb in Mandarin 把 **bǎ** constructions. On the other hand, the Taiwanese 共 **kā** construction does not have this restriction.

伊 共門 一直 搥。

I kā m̄ng it-tit lònġ.

他 一直 敲門。

Tā yīzhí qiāo mén.

He kept knocking on the door.

In the above example, a direct Mandarin translation of the Taiwanese sentence is not acceptable. The verb is in the continuative aspect and so is not a completed action. As a result, the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** construction is not permitted.

UNACCEPTABLE MANDARIN USAGE

他 把門 一直 敲。

Tā bǎ mén yīzhí qiāo.

He kept knocking on the door.

17.4.3 Traditional usage of 共 kâ and 將 chiong

Among more traditional speakers of Taiwanese, nouns and noun phrases after the preposition 共 **kā** are restricted to pronouns. As a result, non-pronoun direct objects are topicalized and then later echoed by a *trace pronoun* representing the topicalized direct object. Additionally, note that for some speakers, the preposition and trace pronoun combination 共伊 **kā i** is contracted to 共 **kā**.

direct object + subject + 共 + trace pronoun + verb

direct object + subject + kā + trace pronoun + verb

我的衫褲，阮阿母攏 共(您) 洗清氣矣。

Góa ê saⁿ-khò, gún a-bú lóng kā (in) sé chheng-khì--ah.

我的衣服，我媽媽都洗乾淨了。

Wǒ de yīfú, wǒ māmā dōu xǐ gānjìng le.

As for my clothes, my mother has washed them all.

這隻狗，李小姐會共(伊)飼予健康。

Chit chiah káu, Lí sió-chiá ē kā (i) chhī hō kiān-khong.

這隻狗，李小姐會養到健康。

Zhè zhī gǒu, Lǐ xiǎojiě huì yǎng dào jiànkāng.

As for this dog, Ms. Li will raise it until it is healthy.

貓仔，伊共(伊)趕出去。

Niau-á, i kā (i) kóaⁿ--chhut-khì.

貓，他把它趕出去。

Māo, tā bǎ tā gǎnchūqù.

He shooed the cat away.

Because of the strong influence of the Mandarin 把 **bǎ** construction, more recent generations of Taiwanese speakers do not restrict the nouns and noun phrases that follow 共 **kā** to only pronouns. Rather, they allow all types of nouns to follow.

將 **chiong** is a preposition from the literary register of Taiwanese with a similar grammatical function to 共 **kā**. While 將 **chiong** is not restricted to pronouns, the usage tends to focus on inanimate objects. A distinction between 共 **kā** for people and pronouns and 將 **chiong** for objects was traditionally made. However, many speakers no longer strictly uphold this distinction.

王子將花園佇桌仔。

Ông-chú chiong hoe khng tī toh-á.

王子將花放在桌子。

Wángzǐ jiāng huā fàng zài zhuōzi.

The prince put the flowers on the table.

The Mandarin cognate 將 **jiāng** is generally reserved for more formal contexts.

17.4.4 Placement with other grammatical elements

With regards to positioning within a sentence, the 共 **kā** construction has some restrictions when co-occurring with other grammatical elements. Modal verbs and negation must occur before the 共 **kā** construction. However, if the 共 **kā** construction is not used, a pre-posed object can appear before negation and modal verbs.

ORDER 1 with 共 **kā construction**

*negation + modal verbs + 共 **kā** construction + verb*

伊 袂當 共 行李 關咧。

I bē-tàng kā hêng-lí koaiⁿ--leh.

她 不能 把 行李 關上。

Tā bùnég bǎ xínglǐ guānshàng.

She cannot close her suitcase.

阮 小弟 袂曉 共 紅嬰仔 抱。

Gún sió-tī bē-hiáu kā âng-eⁿ-á phō.

我 弟弟 不會 把 嬰兒 抱。

Wǒ dìdì bù huì bǎ yīng'ér bào.

My younger brother doesn't know how to hold a baby.

ORDER 2 with pre-posed object

pre-posed object + negation + modal verbs + verb

伊 行李 袂當 關咧。

I hêng-lí bē-tàng koaiⁿ--leh.

她 行李 不能 關著。

Tā xínglǐ bùnég guānzhe.

She cannot close her suitcase.

阮 小弟 紅嬰仔 袂曉 抱。

Gún sió-tī âng-eⁿ-á bē-hiáu phō.

我 弟弟 不會 抱 嬰兒。

Wǒ dìdì bù huì bào yīng'ér.

My younger brother doesn't know how to hold a baby.

Among adverbs and prepositions, the 共 **kā** construction generally occurs before manner adverbs and location expressions but after non-location prepositional phrases and relative frequency / reference adverbs (see [14.3 Adverbs with other grammatical elements](#)).

*subject + reference + relative frequency + non-location expression + 共 **kā construction** + manner + location expression + verb*

我有當時仔 和 朋友 共 囡仔 去 遊樂園。

Góa ū-tang-sī-á hām pêng-iú kā gín-á chhōa-khì iû-lòk-hng.

我 有的時候 和 朋友 帶 孩子 去 遊樂園。

Wǒ yǒu de shíhòu hé péngyǒu dài háizi qù yóulèyuán.

I occasionally go with my friend to take the kids to the amusement park.

伊 共 篋仔 直接 園 跔 我的 跔指頭仔。

I kā kheh-á tit-chiap khng tàm góa ê kha-chéng-thâu-á.

他把盒子直接放在我的腳指頭。

Tā bǎ hézi zhíjiē fàng zài wǒ de jiǎozhǐtou.

He put the box directly onto my toes.

17.4.5 共 kā construction in commands

With the emphasis on performing an action on an object, there is a natural tendency to use the 共 kā construction in commands and requests (see [21.9 Using the 共 kā construction in commands](#)).

共糞埤提出去。

Kā pùn-sò theh--chhut-khì.

把垃圾拿出去。

Bǎ lèsè náchūqù.

Take out the garbage.

共報紙提予我。

Kā pò-chóa theh hō`góa.

把報紙拿給我。

Bǎ bàozhǐ ná gěi wǒ.

Hand me the newspaper.

共門關咧！

Kā m̄ng koaiⁿ--leh!

把門關了！

Bǎ mén guān le!

Shut the door!

18 Indirect objects

While direct objects receive the action from the verb, *indirect objects* can often be thought of as the ‘goal’ of the action. Typically, indirect objects are people, animals, or institutions (universities, hospitals, etc.).

He throws the ball to his brother.

In the example above, the indirect object ‘his brother’ is the goal of the action ‘throws’.

18.1 Using 予 hō to mark indirect objects

While 予 hō has several meanings in Taiwanese, one function is as a preposition to introduce indirect objects. These indirect object prepositional phrases occur after the main verb.

verb + 予 + indirect object

verb + hō + indirect object

伊寫予他阿爸。

I siá hō in a-pa.

他寫給他爸爸。

Tā xiě gěi tā bàba.

He wrote to his dad.

If both a direct object and an indirect object co-occur, then the ordering of the two objects depends on the context. The object that is the new piece of information to the listener is presented last.

ORDER 1

verb + indirect object + direct object (new to listener)

伊寫予他老師一張感謝批。

I siá hō in lāu-su chit tiuⁿ kám-siā phoe.

他寫給他的老師一張感謝信。

Tā xiě gěi tā de lǎoshī yī zhāng gǎnxiè xìn.

He is writing a thank you letter to his teacher (*perhaps the listener knew he wanted to thank his*

teacher but didn't yet know how).

ORDER 2

verb + direct object + indirect object (new to listener)

伊寫一張感謝批予您老師。

I siá chit tiuⁿ kám-siā phoe hō`in lāu-su.

他寫一張感謝信給他的老師。

Tā xiě yī zhāng gǎnxiè xìn gěi tā de lǎoshī.

He is writing a thank you letter to his teacher (*perhaps the listener could tell that he is writing a thank you letter but didn't know yet to whom*).

18.2 Dative verbs

Dative verbs are special verbs that can take both an indirect and direct object. These verbs inherently include the idea of transferring a direct object between parties (such as sending, giving, receiving, transporting, paying, returning, hitting, or throwing).

Some of these verbs require the preposition 予 **hō`** to be placed before the indirect object, while other verbs including the 予 **hō`** is optional. Still others are restricted from using 予 **hō`** before the indirect object. Moreover, depending on these groupings, the ordering of indirect object and direct object may also be restricted.

18.2.1 Dative verbs that require 予 **hō`**

For dative verbs that require the use of 予 **hō`** before the indirect object, the ordering of the indirect object and direct object depends on which object is new information to the listener.

ORDER 1

verb + 予 + indirect object + direct object (new information)

*verb + **hō`** + indirect object + direct object (new information)*

伊的秘書會寄予我文件。

I ê pì-su ē kià **hō`góa** bûn-kiāⁿ.

她的秘書會寄給我文件。

Tā de mìshū huì jì **gěi wǒ** wénjiàn.

Her secretary will send **me** the documents (*perhaps the listener did not know what would be sent*).

ORDER 2

verb + direct object + 予 + **indirect object (new information)**

verb + direct object + **hō'** + **indirect object (new information)**

伊的秘書會寄文件予我。

I ê pì-su ē kià bûn-kiāⁿ **hō' góa**.

她的秘書會寄文件給我。

Tā de mìshū huì jì wénjiàn **gěi wǒ**.

Her secretary will send the documents **to me** (*perhaps the listener did not know to whom the documents would be sent*).

Below is a table of some common dative verbs that require 予 **hō'**.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
TRANSPORT		
提 thèh	拿 ná	to take (<i>to someone</i>)
紮 chah	攜帶 xiédài	to carry (<i>to someone</i>)
帶 tòā	帶 dài	to carry (<i>to someone</i>)
交 kau	交 jiāo	to hand over (<i>to someone</i>)
搬 poa ⁿ	搬 bān	to move (<i>to someone</i>)
擲 tən	丟 diū	to throw (<i>to someone</i>)
寄 kià	寄 jì	to mail (<i>to someone</i>)
COMMUNICATION		
寫 siá	寫 xiě	to write (<i>to someone</i>)
解說 kái-soeh	解釋 jiěshì	to explain (<i>to someone</i>)
敲 khà	打 dǎ	to call (by telephone) (<i>to someone</i>)
TRANSACTION		
買 bé	買 mǎi	to buy (<i>for someone</i>)
PHYSICAL		
擲 khian	扔 rēng	to throw (<i>to someone</i>)
踢 that	踢 tī	to kick (<i>to someone</i>)
留 lâū	留 liú	to save, to keep behind (<i>for someone</i>)

伊紮予我一枝雨傘。

I chah **hō' góa** chit ki hō'-sòaⁿ.

他攜帶給我一枝雨傘。

Tā xiédài **gěi wǒ** yī zhī yǔsǎn.

He brought an umbrella **to me**.

導遊解說予阮廟寺的歷史。

Tō-iū kái-soeh **hō'gún** biō-sī ê lèk-sú.

導遊解釋給我們寺廟的歷史。

Dǎoyóu jiěshì **gěi wǒmen** sìmiào de lìshǐ.

The tour guide explained **to us** the history of the temple.

恁小妹踢球予我。

In sió-mōe that kiū **hō'góa**.

她妹妹踢球給我。

Tā mèimei tī qiú **gěi wǒ**.

His younger sister kicked the ball **to me**.

18.2.2 Dative verbs that optionally use 予 hō'

For dative verbs that optionally use 予 **hō'** before the indirect object, the ordering of the indirect object and direct object also depends on which object is considered new information to the listener. However, if the indirect object comes after the direct object (i.e. the indirect object does not immediately follow the verb), then 予 **hō'** must be used.

ORDER 1

verb + (予) + **indirect object** + direct object (new information)

verb + (**hō**) + **indirect object** + direct object (new information)

阮公司欲送恁這個細紀念品。

Gún kong-si beh sàng **lín** chit ê sè kì-liām-phín.

我們的公司要送你們這個小紀念品。

Wǒmen de gōngsī yào sòng **nǐmen** zhègè xiǎo jìniànpǐn.

Our company would like to give **you** a small souvenir (*perhaps the listeners did not know what was being offered to them*).

ORDER 2

verb + direct object + 予 + **indirect object** (new information)

verb + direct object + **hō** + **indirect object** (new information)

阮公司欲送這個細紀念品予恁。

Gún kong-si beh sàng chit ê sè kì-liām-phín **hō' lín**.

我們的公司要送這個小紀念品給你們。

Wǒmen de gōngsī yào sòng zhège xiǎo jìniànpǐn **gěi nǐmen**.

Our company would like to give a small souvenir **to you** (*perhaps the listeners did not know for whom the souvenirs were intended*).

Additionally, some verbs that optionally use 予 **hō'** before the indirect object shift slightly in meaning depending on the inclusion or absence of 予 **hō'**:

黃先生欲介紹恁某一個老朋友。

Ng--sian-siⁿ beh kài-siāu in bó'chit ê láu pêng-iú.

黃先生要介紹他太太一個老朋友。

Huáng xiānshēng yào jièshào tā tàitai yī gè lǎo péngyǒu.

Mr. Ng wants to introduce an old friend of his wife (*to whom is unstated*).

黃先生欲介紹予恁某一個老朋友。

Ng--sian-siⁿ beh kài-siāu **hō' in** bó'chit ê láu pêng-iú.

黃先生要介紹給他太太一個老朋友。

Huáng xiānshēng yào jièshào **gěi tā** tàitai yī gè lǎo péngyǒu.

Mr. Ng wants to introduce an old friend **to his wife**.

Below is a table of some common dative verbs that optionally use 予 **hō'**:

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
TRANSPORT		
送 sàng	送 sòng	to send (<i>to someone</i>), to give as a gift
COMMUNICATION		
教 kà	教 jiāo	to teach (<i>to someone</i>)
回覆 hôe-hok	回復 huífù	to respond, to reply (<i>to someone</i>)
答應 tah-èng	答應 dāyìng	to promise (<i>to someone</i>)
介紹 kài-siāu	介紹 jièshào	to give an introduction (<i>to someone</i>)
TRANSACTION		
賣 bē	賣 mài	to sell (<i>to someone</i>)
還 hêng	還 huán	to return (<i>to someone</i>), to give back (<i>to someone</i>)
賠 pōe	賠 péi	to compensate (<i>to someone</i>)

我的室友袂記得還鎖匙予我。

Góa ê sek-iú bē-kì-tit hêng só-sī **hō' góa**.

我的室友忘記還鑰匙給我。

Wǒ de shìyǒu wàngjì huán yàoshi **gěi wǒ**.

My roommate forgot to return the keys **to me**.

您父母教伊麻雀。

In pē-bú kà **i** môa-chhiok.

她的父母教她麻將。

Tā de fùmǔ jiào **tā** májiàng.

Her parents taught **her** how to play mahjong.

您父母教予伊您厝的招牌醬。

In pē-bú kà **hō** **i** in chhù ê chiau-pâi chiùⁿ.

她的父母教給她家庭的招牌醬。

Tā de fùmǔ jiào **gěi tā** jiāting de zhāopái jiàng.

Her parents taught **her** how to make the family's secret sauce.

In the examples above, 教 **kà** and 教予 **kà hò** differ slightly in meaning. While both mean 'to teach', 教予 **kà hò** suggests passing down a tradition or secret to younger generations.

18.2.3 Dative verbs that cannot use 予 **hō**

For dative verbs that cannot use 予 **hō** before the indirect object, the ordering of the indirect object and direct object is restricted. The indirect object must occur before the direct object.

verb + indirect object + direct object

你明仔載應該收我兩本冊。

Lí bîn-á-chài eng-kai siu **góa** n̄ng pún chheh.

你明天應該收我兩本書。

Nǐ míngtiān yīnggāi shōu **wǒ** liǎng běn shū.

Tomorrow you should receive two books **from me**.

Below is a table of some common dative verbs that cannot use 予 **hō**:

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
<i>TRANSPORT</i>		
予 hō	給 gěi	to give (<i>to someone</i>)
收 siu	收 shōu	to receive (<i>from someone</i>)

COMMUNICATION

問 m̄ng 問 wèn to ask
 恭喜 kiong-hí 祝賀 zhùhè to congratulate

TRANSACTION

贏 iān 贏 yǐng to win (*from someone*)
 搶 chhiúⁿ 搶 qiǎng to rob (*from someone*), to steal (*from someone*)

你若射著，會當贏我五百箍。

Lí nā siā--tiòh, ē-tàng iān góa gō pah kho.

如果中的，你能贏我五百塊。

Rúguǒ zhòngdì, nǐ néng yíng wǒ wǔ bǎi kuài.

If you can hit the target, you can win 500 dollars **from me**.

伊問我一寡我袂曉的。

I m̄ng góa chit-kóa góa bē-hiáu--ê.

他問我一些我不會的。

Tā wèn wǒ yīxiē wǒ bù huì de.

He asked **me** a few questions I didn't know how to answer.

Note that some of these dative verbs can accept 予 **hō** if the preposition is used to express 'on behalf of' someone else. This can offer a similar meaning to benefactive phrases (see [18.3 Benefactives](#)).

你明仔載敢會當收予我兩領衫？

Lí bîn-á-chài kám ē-tàng siu **hō** góa n̄ng niá saⁿ ?

你明天能不能收給我兩件衣服？

Nǐ míngtiān néngbùnéng shōu gěi wǒ liǎng jiàn yīfú?

Can you accept two pieces of clothing **for me** tomorrow?

18.2.4 Dual-direction dative verbs

Two verbs 借 **chhih** 'to borrow / to lend' and 租 **cho** 'to rent to / to rent from' can be used to express movement of direct objects in both directions between parties. However, the distinction in direction must be made clear by the addition of the prepositions 予 **hō** 'to' or 共 **kā** to 'from'.

Without prepositions the meaning of these two verbs is ambiguous without the proper context. The English word 'rent' is similarly ambiguous without context or prepositions to clarify.

伊 借 兩 百 箍。
 I chioh nāg pah kho.

她 借 兩 百 塊。
 Tā jiè liǎng bǎi kuài.

She lent two hundred dollars.

She borrowed two hundred dollars.

我 這 馬 咧 租 房 間。
 Góa chit-má teh cho pāng-keng.

我 現 在 在 租 房 間。
 Wǒ xiànzài zài zū fángjiān.

I am renting a room right now (renting to someone or renting from someone are both possible interpretations without context).

With the addition of prepositions, the direction of transfer becomes much clearer.

To unambiguously express 'to lend' and 'to rent to' the preposition 予 hō is placed before the indirect object (the recipient of the direct object). The ordering of the indirect object and direct object can still be switched according to whether the information is new to the listener.

ORDER 1

借 + 予 + **indirect object** + direct object (new information)

chioh + **hō** + **indirect object** + direct object (new information)

'to lend/rent **to indirect object** direct object'

伊 昨 昏 借 予 您 阿 姊 一 領 膨 紗 衫。
 I cha-hng chioh **hō in a-chí** chit niá phòng-se-saⁿ.

她 昨 天 借 給 她 姐 姐 一 件 毛 衣。
 Tā zuótiān jiè **gěi tā jiějiě** yī jiàn máoyī.

She lent **to her older sister** a sweater yesterday (perhaps the listener did not know what was lent to the sister).

阮 朋 友 熱 天 的 時 陣 欲 租 予 阮 小 弟 一 間 房 間。
 Gún pêng-iú jóah-thiⁿ ê sî-chūn beh cho **hō gún sió-tī** chit keng pāng-keng.

我 的 朋 友 夏 天 的 時 候 要 租 給 我 弟 弟 一 間 房 間。
 Wǒ de péngyǒu xiàtiān de shíhòu yào zū **gěi wǒ dìdì** yī jiān fángjiān.

My friend will rent **to my younger brother** a room over the summer (perhaps the listener did not know what was being rented).

ORDER 2

借 / 租 + direct object + 予 + **indirect object** (new information)

chioh / cho + direct object + **hō** + **indirect object** (new information)

‘to lend / rent *direct object* **to indirect object**’

伊昨昏 借 一領 膨紗衫 予 您 阿姊。

I cha-hng chìoh chit niá phòng-se-saⁿ **hō`in a-chí**.

她昨天 借 一件 毛衣 給 她 姐姐。

Tā zuótiān jiè yī jiàn máoyī **gěi tā jiějiě**.

She lent a sweater **to her older sister** yesterday (*perhaps the listener did not know to whom the sweater was lent*).

阮朋友 熱天的 時陣 欲 租 一間 房間 阮 予 小弟。

Gún pêng-iú jóah-thiⁿ ê sî-chūn beh cho` chit keng pâng-keng **hō`gún sió-tī**.

我的朋友 夏天的 時候 要 租 一間 房間 給 我 弟弟。

Wǒ de péngyǒu xiàtiān de shíhòu yào zū yī jiān fángjiān **gěi wǒ dìdì**.

My friend will rent a room **to my younger brother** over the summer (*perhaps the listener did not know to whom the room was being rented*).

To express ‘to borrow from’ and ‘to rent from’, the preposition 共 **kā** is placed before the indirect object or source from whom the entity is transferred. Note that this prepositional phrase occurs before the verb.

共 + *indirect object* + 借 / 租 + *direct object*

kā + *indirect object* + chìoh / cho` + *direct object*

‘to borrow/rent *direct object* **from indirect object**’

伊昨昏 共 您 阿姊 借 一領 膨紗衫。

I cha-hng **kā in a-chí** chìoh chit niá phòng-se-saⁿ.

她昨天 跟 她 姐姐 借 一件 毛衣。

Tā zuótiān **gēn tā jiějiě** jiè yī jiàn máoyī.

She borrowed a sweater **from her older sister** yesterday.

阮朋友 熱天的 時陣 欲 共 阮 小弟 租 一間 房間。

Gún pêng-iú jóah-thiⁿ ê sî-chūn beh **kā gún sió-tī** cho` chit keng pâng-keng.

我的朋友 夏天的 時候 跟 我 弟弟 要 租 一間 房間。

Wǒ de péngyǒu xiàtiān de shíhòu **gēn wǒ dìdì** yào zū yī jiān fángjiān.

My friend will rent a room **from my younger brother** over the summer.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
借 <u>chìoh</u>	借 <u>jiè</u>	to lend / to borrow
租 <u>cho`</u>	租 <u>zū</u>	to rent to / to rent from
借 予 <u>chìoh hō`</u>	借 給 <u>jiè gěi</u>	to lend

租 予 cho' hō' 租 給 zū gěi to rent to

共...借 kā...chiah 跟...借 gēn...jiè to borrow

共...租 kā...cho' 跟...租 gēn...zū to rent from

18.3 Benefactives

Benefactives are prepositional phrases that indicate that the main verb is performed ‘for the benefit of’ or done ‘on behalf of’ someone or something. In English, the preposition ‘for’ is typically used as a benefactive preposition.

My husband cooked dinner for me.

The doctor wrote a prescription for the patient.

18.3.1 Prepositions marking benefactives

In Taiwanese, there are a few prepositions (共 *kā*, 替 *thè*, 為 *ūi*) that may be used to begin a benefactive phrase. In contrast to indirect object phrases, benefactive phrases occur before the main verb and can be used with many types of verbs aside from dative verbs.

preposition + someone / something + verb

‘*verb for the benefit of someone / something*’

阮翁 為我 做 暗頓。

Gún ang ūi góa chò àm-tng.

我 先生 為我 做 晚飯。

Wǒ xiānshēng wèi wǒ zuò wǎnfàn.

My husband cooked dinner for me.

醫生 共病人 開 藥單。

I-seng kā pēn-lâng khai ióh-toaⁿ.

醫生 替病人 開 藥單。

Yīshēng tì bìngrén kāi yàodān.

The doctor wrote a prescription for the patient.

Below is a table of some common prepositions indicating benefactive phrases.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
共 kā	幫 bāng, 給 gěi	for (<i>to help do</i>)
替 thè	替 tì	to stand in for
為 ūi	為 wèi	because of, for

我替阮阿媽佇網頂買飛行機票。

Góa thè gún a-má tī bāng-téng bé hoe-lêng-ki phiò.

我替我奶奶在網上買飛機票。

Wǒ tì wǒ nǎinai zài wǎngshàng mǎi fēijī piào.

I bought plane tickets online for my grandma (*on her behalf*).

張先生想欲為您某減肥。

Tiunn--sian-siⁿ siūⁿ-beh ūi in bóⁿ kiám-pûi.

張先生想要為他太太減肥。

Zhāng xiānshēng xiǎngyào wèi tā tàitai jiǎnféi.

Mr. Tiunn is thinking of losing weight for his wife.

While not originally used as a preposition, the Taiwanese verb 幫 **pang** has recently expanded into a usage similar to its Mandarin counterpart 幫 **bāng**.

我幫阮阿媽佇網頂買飛龍機票。

Góa pang gún a-má tī bāng-téng bé hui-lêng-ki phiò.

我幫我奶奶在網上買飛機票。

Wǒ bāng wǒ nǎinai zài wǎngshàng mǎi fēijī piào.

I helped my grandma buy plane tickets online.

In addition to a benefactive meaning, the preposition 共 **kā** can also express ‘from’. As a result there may be ambiguity in some contexts.

伊共我買兩張票。

I kā góa bé nng tiuⁿ phiò.

BENEFACTIVE INTERPRETATION

他替我買兩張票。

Tā tì wǒ mǎi liǎng zhāng piào.

He bought two tickets for me.

NON-BENEFACTIVE INTERPRETATION

他跟我買兩張票。

Tā gēn wǒ mǎi liǎng zhāng piào.

He bought two tickets from me.

Note that in Mandarin there is less ambiguity as different prepositions are used to distinguish between ‘from’ and ‘for’. To be less ambiguous in Taiwanese, other prepositions can be used such as 按 àn ‘from’ or 替 thè ‘for’.

18.3.2 Benefactive and indirect object phrases

Depending on the circumstances, a distinction can be made between benefactive and indirect object phrases. Benefactive phrases, which emphasize someone or something benefitting from an action, are always placed before the verb. In contrast, indirect object phrases, which emphasize the recipients of an action, occur after the verb.

BENEFACTIVE PHRASE

恁阿母 共伊 寄一張批。

In a-bú kā i kìà chit tiuⁿ phoe.

他媽媽 幫他 寄一封信。

Tā māmā bāng tā jì yī fēng xìn.

His mother sent a letter for him (*perhaps he was unable to send it himself*).

INDIRECT OBJECT PHRASE

恁阿母 寄 共伊 一張批。

In a-bú kìà hō i chit tiuⁿ phoe.

他媽媽 寄 給他 一封信。

Tā māmā jì gěi tā yī fēng xìn.

His mother sent a letter to him (*he was the recipient of the letter*).

In some cases the benefactive interpretation and indirect object interpretation are, practically speaking, equivalent in meaning.

BENEFACTIVE INTERPRETATION

伊个服務員 共我 畫一張圖。

Hit ê hók-bū-ôan kā góa ôe chit tiuⁿ tô.

那個服務員 給我 畫一張圖。

Nàge fúwùyuán gěi wǒ huà yī zhāng tú.

The waiter drew a map for me (*he drew it to help me*).

INDIRECT OBJECT INTERPRETATION

伊个服務員 畫 予我 一張圖。

Hit ê hók-bū-ôan ôe hō góa chit tiuⁿ tô.

那個服務員畫給我一張圖。

Nàge fúwùyuán huà gěi wǒ yī zhāng tú.

The waiter drew a map for me (*he drew it to give to me*).

In the example above, the context makes the slight distinction in meaning between the two phrases negligible. For all intents and purposes, either phrase may be used to describe the situation.

Note that in Mandarin, 給 **gěi** may serve as a preposition for both benefactive phrases (placed before the verb) and indirect object phrases (placed after the verb). However, a linguistic shift in contemporary Mandarin has allowed indirect object phrases to occur before the verb with a small number of verbs. As a result, 給 **gěi** before a verb can be interpreted as either a benefactive phrase or indirect object phrase.

MANDARIN

林小姐給顧客送一個包裹。

Lín xiǎojiě gěi gùkè sòng yī gè bāoguǒ.

Ms. Lin sent a package on behalf of her clients (*benefactive reading*).

Ms. Lin set a package to her clients (*indirect object reading*).

19 Passive voice

Before discussing passive voice, it is perhaps helpful to examine a typical sentence that is described in the active voice.

A sentence in active voice has the *agent*, or performer of the action, as the subject of the sentence. In the example below, ‘Ms. Tan’ is the agent and also the subject of the sentence.

Ms. Tan	watered	the plants.
<i>agent</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>direct object (recipient of action)</i>

In the *passive voice* sentence, the direct object (recipient of action) becomes the subject of the sentence and the agent may or may not be included.

The plants	were watered	(by Ms. Tan).
<i>direct object</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>agent</i>

The passive voice helps focus attention on the object or describe actions in which the agent is unknown or not desired to be disclosed. However, the passive voice in Taiwanese is generally used in negative situations when facing adversity or hearing unfortunate news. As a result, the usage of the passive voice is less common than in English. Note that even neutral verbs will imply negative contexts.

植物 予 陳小姐 沃著 水。

Sit-bút hō Tân sió-chiá ak-tiòh chúí.

植物 被 陳小姐 澆水 了。

Zhíwù bèi Chén xiǎojiě jiāo shuǐ le.

The plants were watered by Ms. Tan (*they should not have been watered*).

To focus on the object or action in more positive situations, topicalization (see [17.2 Topicalized object](#)) can be used instead of the passive voice.

TOPICALIZED OBJECT

植物，有 沃著 水。

Sit-bút, ū ak-tiòh chúí.

植物，澆水 了。

Zhíwù, jiāo shuǐ le.

As for the plants, they were watered.

Additionally, some contexts which use the passive voice in English use the 是 sī...的 --ê focusing construction in Taiwanese (see [10.1.2 是 sī in the focusing construction](#)).

咱的課本是咱的老師寫的。

Lán ê khò-pún sī lán ê lāu-su siá--ê.

我們的課本是我們的老師寫的。

Wǒmen de kèběn shì wǒmen de lǎoshī xiě de.

Our textbook is written by our teacher.

19.1 Passive marker 予 hō'

In a passive sentence, the direct object (recipient of the action) becomes the subject of the sentence. The passive marker 予 hō' is placed before the agent (see [19.2 Stating the agent](#)) and the main verb to indicate the passive voice. Additionally, the verb 去 khì can optionally precede 予 hō':

object + (去) + 予 + agent + verb

object + (khì) + hō' + agent + verb

'object to be verb-ed by agent'

Note that phonetic contractions often occur with hō' in the passive voice. In the preceding example, hō' **lâng** is often pronounced as **hông**.

咱的話有予人聽著矣。

Lán ê ôe ū hō' lâng thia^a--tiòh--ah.

我們的話被聽到了。

Wǒmen de huà bèi tīngdào le.

We've been overheard.

伊的錢去予賊仔偷提去矣。

I ê chhiⁿ khì hō' chhát-á thau-thèh--khì--ah.

他的錢被小偷偷走了。

Tā de qián bèi xiǎotōu tōuzǒu le.

His money was stolen by a thief.

Mandarin uses 被 bèi as a general passive marker. However, informal contexts may also include the use of 讓 ràng, 叫 jiào, or 給 gěi to mark the passive.

19.2 Stating the agent

The agent (the doer of the action) may be revealed by being placed directly after the passive marker 予 **hō̍**. In English, the preposition ‘by’ is used to mark the agent. Note that the agent can be either an animate or inanimate object.

object + (去) + 予 + agent + verb

object + (khì) + hō̍ + agent + verb

‘object to be verb-ed by agent’

植物	予	陳小姐	沃著水
sit-bút	hō̍	Tân sió-chiá	ak-tiòh chúí
植物	被	陳小姐	澆水了
zhíwù	bèi	Chén xiǎojiě	jiāo shuǐ le
<i>object</i>	<i>passive marker</i>	<i>agent</i>	<i>action</i>

The plants	were watered	by Ms. Tan
<i>object</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>agent</i>

植物 予 陳小姐 沃著水。

Sit-bút hō̍ Tân sió-chiá ak-tiòh chúí.

植物 被 陳小姐 澆水了。

Zhíwù bèi Chén xiǎojiě jiāo shuǐ le.

The plants were watered by Ms. Tan.

Note that unlike Mandarin, Taiwanese technically always requires an agent to be placed after the passive marker 予 **hō̍**. However, when the agent is the third person singular pronoun 伊 **i**, phonetic contraction reduces the syllables to **hō̍**. In effect, the sentence appears to have no explicit agent stated.

咱的話有予 (伊) 聽著矣。

Lán ê ôe ū hō̍ (i) thiaⁿ--tiòh--ah.

我們的話被聽到了。

Wǒmen de huà bèi tīngdào le.

We’ve been overheard (by him / her).

In addition, generally passive sentences in Chinese describe events that have occurred and reflect a change in situation. As a result, the particle 矣 **--ah** marking the anterior aspect commonly appears at the end of the sentence (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#), [29.3.1 Indicating a change of state with adjectives and](#)

particle 矣 --ah).

19.3 The use of 共 kǎ in the passive voice

In passive sentences, the subject of the sentence is the direct object (recipient of the action). However, in some cases, only a part of the subject is affected by the action, and the affected part of the subject can be set off through the use of the 共 kǎ construction.

object (whole) + 予 + agent + 共 + object (part) + verb

object (whole) + hō + agent + kǎ + object (part) + verb

'object (whole) to be verb-ed object (part) by agent'

劉先生 予 賊仔 共 錢 偷提去 矣。

Lāu--sian-siⁿ hō' chhāt-á kā chîⁿ thau-thèh--khì--ah.

劉先生的錢被小偷偷走了。

Liú xiānshēng de qián bèi xiǎotōu tōuzǒu le.

Mr. Lau had his money stolen by a thief (*money is a 'part' of Mr. Lau*).

阮小妹 予 邊仔人 共 伊的 跤 撞著 矣。

Gún sió-mōe hō' pīⁿ-á-lâng kā i ê kha tōng--tiòh--ah.

我妹妹的腳被旁邊人撞到了。

Wǒ mèimei de jiǎo bèi pángbiānrén zhuàngdào le.

The person next to us bumped into my younger sister's leg.

李先生 予 薰枝 共 手 燒著 矣。

Lí--sian-siⁿ hō' hun-ki kā chhiú sio--tiòh--ah.

李先生的手被香菸燒到了。

Lǐ xiānshēng de shǒu bèi xiāngyān shāodào le.

Mr. Li was burned on his hand by a cigarette.

In the sentence above, 'Mr. Li' and 'his hand' have a whole-to-part relationship in which only 'his hand' is directly affected by the main action. Note that Taiwan Mandarin speakers are more likely to omit the use of the 把 bǎ construction in passive voice sentences and instead join 'Mr. Li' and 'his hand' with the modifying particle 的 de. In contrast, in other Mandarin-speaking areas, the 把 bǎ construction is more likely to be used.

STANDARD MANDARIN

李先生被香菸把手燒到了。

Lǐ xiānshēng bèi xiāngyān bǎ shǒu shāodào le.

Mr. Li was burned on his hand by a cigarette.

劉先生被小偷把錢偷走了。

Liú xiānshēng bèi xiǎotōu bǎ qián tōuzǒu le.

Mr. Lau had his money stolen by a thief (*money is a 'part' of Mr. Lau*).

我妹妹被旁邊人把她的腳撞到了。

Wǒ mèimei bèi pángbiānrén bǎ tā de jiǎo zhuàngdào le.

The person next to us bumped into my younger sister's leg.

19.4 Causative verbs

Causative verbs indicate that the subject of the sentence causes, makes, or allows someone to perform an action.

I made my younger brother vacuum the floor.

My mom allowed me to watch the horror film.

The police requested that I not park here.

As opposed to passive sentences, the subject of the sentence is understood to have been the initiator of the action in the sentence.

Because in Taiwanese 予 *hō* can function as both a passive marker and a causative verb ‘to allow’, in some cases, the only difference between a causative and passive sentence is interpretation.

劉先生予賊仔共錢偷提去矣。

Lâu--sian-siⁿ hō chhàt-á kā chîⁿ thau-thèh--khì--ah.

PASSIVE VOICE READING

劉先生被小偷把錢偷走了。

Liú xiānshēng bèi xiǎotōu bǎ qián tōuzǒu le.

Mr. Lau had his money stolen by a thief.

CAUSATIVE READING

劉先生讓小偷把錢偷走了。

Liú xiānshēng ràng xiǎotōu bǎ qián tōuzǒu le.

Mr. Lau allowed his money to be stolen by a thief.

While 被 **bèi** in Mandarin is the general passive marker, 讓 **ràng** and 叫 **jiào** can both have causative and passive interpretations.

In Taiwanese, there is a range of causative verbs in addition to 予 **hō** ‘to allow’. Below is a table of some common causative verbs.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
予 hō	讓 ràng	to allow
叫 kiò	叫 jiào	to ask or request
請 chhiáⁿ	請 qīng	to request (<i>polite</i>)
討 thó	要求 yàوقي	to beg or request
逼 pek	逼 bì	to compel or force
勞煩 lô-hôan	麻煩 máfán	to bother someone to do
派 phài	派 pài	to dispatch someone to do

subject + causative verb + subject (recipient) + verb (‘caused’)

我 逼 阮 小弟 軟 塗跤。

Góa pek gún sió-tī suh thô-kha.

我 逼 我 弟弟 吸 地板。

Wǒ bī wǒ dìdì xī dìbǎn.

I made my younger brother vacuum the floor.

阮 阿母 予 我看 恐怖片。

Gún a-bú hō góa khòaⁿ khióng-pò`phìⁿ.

我 媽媽 讓 我看 恐怖片。

Wǒ māmā ràng wǒ kàn kǒngbù piàn.

My mom allowed me to watch the horror film.

警察 叫 咱 停車 佇 遐。

Kéng-chhat kiò lán thêng chia tī hia.

警察 叫 我們 把 車 停 在那裡。

Jǐngchá jiào wǒmen bǎ chē tíng zài nàlǐ.

The police asked that we park over there.

20 Questions

In English, questions can be formed by raising the intonation at the end of a sentence, inverting the subject and verb word order, or adding a question word.

DECLARATIVE	QUESTION FORMAT	TYPE
She went home.	<u>She went home?</u>	Rising intonation
They are students.	<u>Are they</u> students?	Inverted subject-verb
The hotel is here.	<u>Where</u> is the hotel?	Question word

Unlike English, Taiwanese does not invert the order of the subject and verb to create a question from a statement. However, in shorter utterances, it is possible to ask a question with just a change in intonation. The final syllable is lighter, higher in pitch, and slightly drawn out. Typically, this is used for confirmation.

DECLARATIVE	QUESTION
你食飽。	你食 <u>飽</u> ?
Lí chiáh-pá.	Lí chiáh- <u>pá</u> ?
You are full (<i>from eating</i>).	You are full?

In the example above, 飽 **pá** ‘full’ is the final syllable and is higher in pitch, lighter, and slightly drawn out.

In addition to using question words, Taiwanese has a few other grammatical elements and sentence patterns to formulate a question.

The following chapter will discuss five basic methods of formulating questions in Taiwanese:

- 敢 kám question marker questions
- Tag questions
- Particle questions
- Disjunctive questions
- Content questions

Note that while there are several ways to ask a question, some speakers prefer some methods to others.

20.1 敢 kám question marker

The use of the 敢 **kám** (also pronounced **kaⁿ**) question marker is a neutral and fairly common method of transforming a declarative statement into a question. A question is formed by inserting the question marker 敢 **kám** directly before the word in question.

DECLARATIVE STATEMENT

伊明仔載欲𡇗囡仔去公園。

I bîn-á-chài beh chhōa gín-á khi kong-hîng.

她明天要帶孩子去公園。

Tā míngtiān yào dài háizi qù gōngyuán.

She will take the children to the park tomorrow.

QUESTIONS WITH DIFFERING FOCUS

敢伊明仔載欲𡇗囡仔去公園？

Kám i bîn-á-chài beh chhōa gín-á khi kong-hîng?

是她明天要帶孩子去公園嗎？

Shì tā míngtiān yào dài háizi qù gōngyuán ma?

Is it she who will take the children to the park tomorrow?

伊敢明仔載欲𡇗囡仔去公園？

I kám bîn-á-chài beh chhōa gín-á khi kong-hîng?

她是明天要帶孩子去公園嗎？

Tā shì míngtiān yào dài háizi qù gōngyuán ma?

Is it tomorrow when she will take the children to the park?

伊明仔載敢欲𡇗囡仔去公園？

I bîn-á-chài kám beh chhōa gín-á khi kong-hîng?

她明天是要帶孩子去公園嗎？

Tā míngtiān shì yào dài háizi qù gōngyuán ma?

Will she be taking the children to the park tomorrow?

Note that Mandarin does not have a direct equivalent with the Taiwanese question marker 敢 **kám**. As 敢 **kám** is fairly neutral, corresponding translations into Mandarin often make use of the 嗎 **ma** question marker. In order to shift emphasis within a question, Mandarin can use the 是 **shì** ... (的 **de**) focusing construction.

20.1.1 敢 kám placement restrictions

While 敢 **kám** can be placed in several positions, there are some restrictions. 敢 **kám** must come before the verb phrase including those with negation. Negative particles cannot appear before 敢 **kám**.

敢 + *negation* + *verb phrase*

kám + *negation* + *verb phrase*

伊 敢 毋捌 咱 老師？

I kám m̄-bat lán lāu-su?

他 不 認識 我們 的 老師 嗎？

Tā bù rènshí wǒmen de lǎoshī ma?

Doesn't he know our teacher?

In addition, 敢 **kám** must also come before the 是 **sī** in the focusing construction 是 **sī** ... (的 --ê). Note the end-of-sentence particle 的 --ê is in the neutral tone and may be omitted (see [10.1.2 是 **sī** in the focusing construction](#)).

敢 + 是 + *item of focus* + (的)

kám + sī + *item of focus* + (--ê)

敢 是 伊 欲 載 咱 去 機場 (的)？

Kám sī i beh chài lán khi ki-tiûn(--ê)?

是 他 要 載 我們 去 機場 (的)？

Shì tā yào zài wǒmen qù jīchǎng (de)?

Is it he who will drive us to the airport?

20.1.2 敢 **kám** in verb compounds

敢 **kám** on occasion can appear inside verb compounds between the main verb and the complement. The emphasis of the question asks whether the complement has succeeded given that the action from the main verb has already begun.

main verb + 敢 + *complement*

main verb + kám + *complement*

伊 做 敢 好 矣？

I chò kám hó--ah?

他 做 好 了 嗎？

Tā zuò hǎo le ma?

Did he finish making it?

紅嬰仔 坐敢起來 未？

Âng-eⁿ-á chē-kám-khí-lâi--bōe?

嬰兒 還沒 坐得起來 嗎？

Yīng'ér hái méi zuòdeqǐlái ma?

Isn't the baby able to sit up yet?

20.1.3 Responding to 敢 kám questions

Because 敢 **kám** questions are essentially yes-no questions, the general response in the affirmative can be 是 **sī** or 嘿 **hèⁿ**. For a negative response, the response is 無 **bô**.

QUESTION

敢 是 佇 遮 排隊？

Kám sī tī chia pâi-tūi?

是 這裡 排隊 嗎？

Shì zhèlǐ páiduì ma?

Is this where we stand in line?

RESPONSE

AFFIRMATIVE

是 / 嘿。

Sī / Hèⁿ.

是。

Shì.

Yes.

NEGATIVE

無。

Bô.

不是。

Bù shì.

No.

20.2 Tag questions

Tag questions are a type of question formed by attaching a *question tag*, a short phrase or word seeking confirmation, to the end of a declarative sentence. The tag transforms the statement into a question. The component of the question that precedes the tag can be referred to as the *proposition*.

In English, a tag is often constructed by taking the main verb and posing the opposite form whether positive or negative followed by the subject.

This bag is yours, isn't it?

They don't have a television, do they?

Another method is to attach a single word seeking confirmation.

We can sit here, right?

I should sign my name here, correct?

Taiwanese uses three types of tag questions to seek confirmation of the proposition:

- General-purpose tag 是著無 **sī tiòh--bô**
- Affirmative tags
- Pure negative 毋 **m̄** tag

Mandarin similarly has question tags, but tends to use an affirmative-negative (X-not-X) format to confirm the proposition (such as 對不對 **duìbùduì** 'right?', 好不好 **hǎobùhǎo** 'okay?', 是不是 **shìbùshì** 'is it?', or 行不行 **xíngbùxíng** 'does that work?').

20.2.1 General-purpose tag 是著無 **sī tiòh--bô** 'is that right?'

The general-purpose tag 是著無 **sī tiòh--bô** 'is that right?' can be appended to most declarative statements. With this tag, the speaker assumes that the proposition made is true and searches for confirmation. Because the tag is only looking for a yes-no confirmation, the tag does not need to match the verb in the proposition. 是著無 **sī tiòh--bô** is usually abbreviated to either 是無 **sī--bô** '...isn't it' or 著無 **tiòh--bô** '...right?'.

proposition + 是著無 ?

proposition + **sī tiòh--bô**?

'*proposition*, isn't it? / is that right?'

你明仔載八點愛上班，是著無？

Lí bîn-á-chài peh tiám ài siōng-pan, **sī tiòh--bô**?

你明天八點得上班，對不對？

Nǐ míngtiān bā diǎn děi shàngbān, **duìbùduì**?

You have to go to work tomorrow at 8 o'clock, is that right?

伊 係 伊 的 男 朋 友，是 無？

I chhōa i ê lâm pêng-iú, sī--bô?

她 帶 她 的 男 朋 友，是 不 是？

Tā dài tā de nán péngyǒu, shìbùshì?

She is bringing her boyfriend, isn't she?

林 先 生 捌 去 過 德 國，著 無？

Lîm--sian-siⁿ bat khi-kòe Tek-kok, tiòh--bô?

林 先 生 去 過 德 國，對 不 對？

Lín xiānshēng qùguò Déguó, duìbùduì?

Mr. Lim has already been to Germany, right?

20.2.2 Responding to the general-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô?

The response to a question using the general-purpose tag 是著無 sī tiòh--bô tag depends on which form is used. Affirmative responses require either a corresponding 是 sī 'yes' or 著 tiòh 'correct', while negative responses use the negative forms 毋是 m̄-sī 'no' or 毋著 m̄-tiòh 'incorrect'.

PATTERN 1

咱 拜 五 下 早 有 考 試，是 著 無？

Lán pài-gō'e-chái ū khó-chhi, sī tiòh--bô?

我們 禮 拜 五 早 上 有 考 試，是 不 是？

Wǒmen lǐbàiwǔ zǎoshang yǒu kǎoshì, shìbùshì?

We have an exam Friday morning, is that right?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE

是 / 著。

Sī / Tiòh.

是 / 對。

Shì / Duì.

Yes / Right.

NEGATIVE RESPONSE

毋是 / 毋著。

M-sī / M-tiòh.

不是 / 不對。

Bù shì / Bù duì.

No / Incorrect.

PATTERN 2

咱 拜 五 下 早 有 考 試，是 無？

Lán pài-gō'ê-chái ū khó-chhi, sī--bô?

我們 禮 拜 五 早 上 有 考 試，是 不 是？

Wǒmen lǐbàiwǔ zǎoshang yǒu kǎoshì, shìbùshì?

We have an exam Friday morning, don't we?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE	NEGATIVE RESPONSE
是。	毋是。
Sī.	M-sī.
是。	不是。
Shì.	Bù shì.
Yes.	No.

PATTERN 3

咱 拜五 下早 有 考試，著無？

Lán pài-gō̍ e-chái ū khó-chhi, tiòh--bô?

我們 禮拜五 早上 有 考試，對不對？

Wǒmen lǐbàiwǔ zǎoshang yǒu kǎoshì, duìbùduì?

We have an exam Friday morning, right?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE	NEGATIVE RESPONSE
著。	毋著。
Tiòh.	M-tiòh.
對。	不對。
Duì.	Bù duì.
Right.	Incorrect.

20.2.3 Affirmative tags

Affirmative tags, formed with particles indicating affirmation (乎 --**ho̍h**, 呢 --**nih**), can also be used to form questions seeking confirmation of statements made in the proposition. These tags appear at the end of a sentence and express a meaning similar to ‘right?’. Because the tag is only looking for a yes-no confirmation, the tag does not need to match the verb in the proposition. Note that usage of these tags varies by region and individual preference.

proposition + 乎 / 呢 ？

proposition + --ho̍h / --nih ？

‘*proposition*, right?’

咱 欲 做伙 食 暗飯 乎？

Lán beh chò-hóe chiáh àm-png--ho̍h?

我們 要 一起 吃 晚飯 吧？

Wǒmen yào yīqǐ chī wǎnfàn ba?

We’re going to have dinner together, right?

你後禮拜會敲電話予我呢？

Lí āu lé-pài ē khà tiān-ōe hō'góa--nih?

你下禮拜會打電話給我, 是不是？

Nǐ xià lǐbài huì dǎ diànhuà gěi wǒ, shìbùshì?

You will call me next week, right?

20.2.4 Pure negative 毋 m̄ tags

The negative 毋 m̄ has two meanings as both a pure negative ‘not’ and as a volitional (*desire*) negative ‘not want’ (see [13.1 Negative 毋 m̄](#)). Only the pure negative 毋 m̄ can be included as part of a question tag. The volitional 毋 m̄ functions instead as an end-of-sentence particle (see [20.3 Particle questions](#)).

Pure 毋 m̄

Only a limited number of verbs and adjectives can accept the pure 毋 m̄ for negation (see [13.1.1 Pure negative 毋 m̄ ‘not’](#)). These few verbs and adjectives can form a question tag when followed by 毋 m̄. The verb or adjective used in the proposition does not need to match the verb or adjective used in the tag. Like other tag questions, the tags formed with the pure 毋 m̄ seek confirmation of the proposition made.

QUESTION TAG

pure 毋 m̄ verb / adjective + 毋

pure 毋 m̄ verb / adjective + --m̄

陳小姐愛去海邊, 是毋？

Tân sió-chiá ài khì hái-piⁿ, sī--m̄?

陳小姐喜歡去海邊, 是不是？

Chén xiǎojiě xǐhuān qù hǎibiān, shìbùshì?

Ms. Tan likes to go to the seaside, doesn't she?

我無愛閣駛車, 好毋？

Góa bô ài koh sái chhia, hó--m̄?

我不要繼續開車, 好不好？

Wǒ bù yào jìxù kāi chē, hǎobùhǎo?

I don't want to drive anymore, okay?

咱著愛佇遮幹倒𠵼, 著毋？

Lán tiòh-ài tī chia oat tò-pêng, tiòh--m̄?

我們需要在這裡左轉, 對不對？

Wǒmen xūyào zài zhèlǐ zuǒ zhuǎn, duìbùduì?

We have to turn left here, right?

下昏暗 毋通 淋 酒, 知 毋?

E-hng-àm m̄-thang lim chiú, chai--m̄?

今晚 不要 喝 酒, 知不知道?

Jīnwǎn bù yào hē jiǔ, zhībùzhīdào?

There must be no drinking alcohol tonight, understand?

Volitional 毋 m̄

The volitional 毋 **m̄** is the negative form of the modal verb 欲 **beh**. In contrast to the pure negative 毋 **m̄**, the volitional 毋 **m̄** can only function as an end-of-sentence particle (see [20.3 Particle questions](#)). If the modal verb 欲 **beh** is part of the proposition, only then can the volitional 毋 **m̄** be used as a question particle to change the declarative sentence into a question. The modal verb 欲 **beh** does not need to be repeated before the particle 毋 **m̄**. Rather than seeking confirmation, particle questions are more neutral in tone.

proposition with modal verb 欲 + 毋

proposition with modal verb beh + --m̄

你 欲 食 日本 料理 毋?

Lí beh chiáh Jit-pún liáu-lí--m̄?

你 要不要 吃 日本 料理?

Nǐ yàobùyào chī Rìběn liàolǐ?

Do you want to eat Japanese food?

恁 欲 和 阮 做伙 去 唱歌 毋?

Lín beh hām gún chò-hóe khì chhiù^a koa--m̄?

你們 要不要 和 我們 一起 去 唱歌?

Nǐmen yàobùyào hé wǒmen yīqǐ qù chàng gē?

Do you want to go singing with us?

20.3 Particle questions

Particle questions make use of end-of-sentence grammatical particles to indicate that the sentence is a question. The usage of some particles relies on which verb or adjective is part of the proposition. Taiwanese can form particle questions from the five negative particles. Note that the tone is generally neutral.

20.3.1 Negative question particles

The five negative particles in Taiwanese 毋 --**m̄**, 無 --**bô**, 袂 --**bē**, 未 --**bōe**, and 免 --**bián** can be used to form particle questions. Because negatives in Taiwanese are differentiated according to a mixture of aspect and mood, the choice of negative particle for questions also depends on the aspect and mood of the proposition (see [13 Negation](#), [12 Modal verbs](#), [8 Aspect](#)).

Below is a summary table of the five negatives in Taiwanese along with their affirmative counterparts and aspect/mood categorization.

ASPECT/MOOD	NEGATIVE	AFFIRMATIVE
Volition (<i>mood</i>)	毋 m̄ ‘not want’	欲 beh ‘want’
Perfective (<i>aspect</i>)	無 bô ‘not have’	有 ū ‘have’
Possibility (<i>mood</i>)	袂 bē ‘will not’	會 ē ‘will’
Obligation (<i>mood</i>)	免 bián ‘need not’	著愛 tiòh-ài ‘must’
Anterior (<i>aspect</i>)	未 bōe ‘not yet’	了 le ‘have + verb’

Particle questions are formed by adding the negative particle that matches the aspect and mood of the proposition.

proposition + negative particle?

Note that the pure negative 毋 **m̄** cannot be used as a question particle but only as a question tag (see [20.2.4 Pure negative 毋 **m̄** tags](#)).

ASPECT/MOOD	EXAMPLE
VOLITION (MOOD)	
毋 -- m̄	伊欲泅水毋? I beh siû chúí-- m̄ ? 他 要不要 游泳? Tā yàobùyào yóuyǒng? Does he want to swim?
PERFECTIVE (ASPECT)	
無 -- bô	伊有泅水無? I ū siû chúí-- bô ? 他 游泳 了沒有? Tā yóuyǒng le méiyǒu? Did he swim?
POSSIBILITY (MOOD)	
袂 -- bē	伊會泅水袂? I ē siû chúí-- bē ?

他 會不會 游泳？

Tā huìbùhuì yóuyóǒng?

Will he swim?

ANTERIOR (ASPECT)

未--bōe

伊 泅 水 矣 未？

I siû chúí--ah--bōe?

他 游泳 了 嗎？

Tā yóuyóǒng le ma?

Has he swum yet?

OBLIGATION (MOOD)

免 bián

伊 愛 泅 水 抑 免？

I ài siû chúí iáh bián?

他 需要 游泳 還是 不用？

Tā xūyào yóuyóǒng háishì bù yòng?

Does he need to swim (or not)?

免 **bián** is often preceded by 抑 **iáh** ‘or’ but is less commonly used as a question particle.

你 欲 看 電影 毋？

Lí beh khòaⁿ tiān-iáⁿ--m̄?

你 要不要 看 電影？

Nǐ yàobùyào kàn diànyǐng?

Do you want to watch a movie?

咱 有 關 車庫 無？

Lán ū koaiⁿ chhia-khòⁿ--bô?

我們 關了 車庫 沒有？

Wǒmen guānle chēkù méiyǒu?

Did we close the garage?

伊 會 讀 大學 袂？

I ē thák tāi-hák--bē?

他 會不會 讀 大學？

Tā huìbùhuì dú dàxué?

Will he attend university?

您 開 冷氣 矣 未？

In khui léng-khì--ah--bōe?

他們 開 冷氣機 了 嗎？

Tāmen kāi lěngqìjī le ma?

Have they turned on the air conditioner yet?

咱愛買較濟飲料抑免？

Lán ài bé khah chē ím-liâu iáh bián?

我們需要買多一點飲料還是不用？

Wǒmen xūyào mǎi duō yī diǎn yǐnliào háishì bù yòng?

Do we need to buy extra drinks (or not)?

20.3.2 無 --bô as a universal question particle

For some speakers 無 --bô can be used as a question particle regardless of the mood or aspect in the proposition. This appears to be a contemporary linguistic change within Taiwanese in which 無 --bô is becoming a universal question particle similar to the Mandarin 嗎 **ma**. Additionally, some younger speakers are beginning to use 嘛 **māh** as a phonetic and functional analog to the Mandarin 嗎 **ma**.

In the examples below, the corresponding negative question particle to verbs in the proposition has been replaced in all cases by 無 --bô including sentences using the pure negative 毋 **m̃**.

VOLITION (MOOD)

您欲去高雄無？

In beh khì Ko-hiông--bô?

他們要去高雄嗎？

Tāmen yào qù Gāoxióng ma?

Do they want to go to Kaohsiung?

PERFECTIVE (ASPECT)

您有去高雄無？

In ū khì Ko-hiông--bô?

他們去了高雄嗎？

Tāmen qùle Gāoxióng ma?

Did they go to Kaohsiung?

POSSIBILITY (MOOD)

您會去高雄無？

In ē khì Ko-hiông--bô?

他們會去高雄嗎？

Tāmen huì qù Gāoxióng ma?

Will they go to Kaohsiung?

ANTERIOR (ASPECT)

您已經去高雄矣無？

In í-keng khì Ko-hiông--ah--bô?

他們已經去高雄了嗎？

Tāmen yǐjīng qù Gāoxióng le ma?

Have they gone to Kaohsiung yet?

OBLIGATION (MOOD)

您著愛去高雄無？

In tiòh-ài khì Ko-hiông--bô?

他們需要去高雄嗎？

Tāmen xūyào qù Gāoxióng ma?

Did they need to go to Kaohsiung?

PURE 毋 M

您捌去高雄無？

In bat khì Ko-hiông--bô?

他們去過高雄嗎？

Tāmen qùguò Gāoxióng ma?

Have they gone to Kaohsiung before?

20.4 Disjunctive questions

Disjunctive questions provide two options that are joined by the conjunction ‘or’. Each argument on either side of ‘or’ is occupied by the same parts of speech.

Would you like to drink tea or coffee? (*nouns*)

Can we swim or jog in the park? (*verbs*)

Should I read a book or watch television? (*verbs with objects*)

Is it better to write quickly or precisely? (*adverbs*)

20.4.1 The conjunction 抑是 iáh-sī ‘or’

Taiwanese uses 抑是 **iah-sī** (alternate pronunciations include **iah-sī**, **ah-sī**, **ah-sī**) to express the conjunction ‘or’. Note that 抑是 **iah-sī** is commonly abbreviated to 抑 **iah**. Nouns, verbs, or adjectives can all serve as arguments for the disjunctive question.

noun/verb/adjective + 抑(是) + noun/verb/adjective

noun/verb/adjective + iah(-sī) + noun/verb/adjective

‘noun/verb/adjective or noun/verb/adjective’

NOUNS

你想欲食梨仔抑是弓蕉？

Lí siuⁿ-beh chiáh lâi-á iah-sī keng-chio?

你想要吃梨子還是香蕉？

Nǐ xiǎngyào chī lízi háishì xiāngjiāo?

Would you like to eat a pear or banana?

VERBS

你想欲看冊抑看報紙？

Lí siuⁿ-beh khòanⁿ chheh iah khòanⁿ pò-chóa?

你想要看書還是看報紙？

Nǐ xiǎngyào kàn shū háishì kàn bàozhǐ?

Would you like to read a book or newspaper?

ADJECTIVES

這領裙有好看抑是會歹看？

Chit niá kûn ū hó-khòanⁿ iah-sī ē pháiⁿ-khòanⁿ?

這件裙子好看還是難看？

Zhè jiàn qúnzi hǎokàn háishì nánkàn?

Is this skirt pretty or ugly?

20.4.2 Affirmative-negative disjunctive question (X-or-not-X)

In contrast to disjunctive questions that offer two distinct choices, the affirmative-negative disjunctive question (X-or-not-X) focuses on whether a single choice is true or not. While it is more common to use the 敢 **kám** question method for yes/no questions, affirmative-negative disjunctive questions are often used for emphasis or rhetorical effect.

The affirmative-negative disjunctive question uses the format X-or-not-X, which is formed with a verb or adjective followed by the conjunction 抑是 **iah-sī** ‘or’ and then the negative form of the initial verb or adjective. If an object follows the verb as part of a verb phrase, the object is not repeated after the negated verb/adjective.

verb/adjective + (object) + 抑(是) + negative + verb/adjective

verb/adjective + (object) + iàh(-sī) + negative + verb/adjective

VERB

伊哭抑是無哭？

I khàu iàh-sī bô khàu?

他有沒有哭？

Tā yǒuméiyǒu kū?

Did he cry (or not)?

VERB PHRASE (OBJECT)

你下早食飯抑無食？

Lí e-chái chiáh p̄ng iàh-sī bô chiáh?

你早上吃飯了沒有？

Nǐ zǎoshang chī fàn le méiyǒu?

Did you eat this morning (or not)?

ADJECTIVE

這塊柳丁甜抑無甜？

Chit tè liú-teng tīⁿ iàh bô tīⁿ?

這塊柳丁甜不甜？

Zhè kuài liǔdīng tiánbùtián?

Is this orange sweet (or not)?

This question format can be further abbreviated by omitting the repeated verb or adjective after the negative.

verb/adjective + 抑(是) + negative

verb/adjective + iàh(-sī) + negative

VERB

伊哭抑是無？

I khàu iàh-sī bô?

他有沒有哭？

Tā yǒuméiyǒu kū?

Did he cry (or not)?

VERB PHRASE (OBJECT)

你下早食飯抑是無？

Lí e-chái chiáh p̄ng iàh-sī bô?

你早上吃飯了沒有？

Nǐ zǎoshang chī fàn le méiyǒu?

Did you eat this morning (or not)?

ADJECTIVE

這塊柳丁甜抑無?

Chit tè liú-teng tīⁿ iah bô?

這塊柳丁甜不甜?

Zhè kuài liǔdīng tiánbùtián?

Is this orange sweet (or not)?

20.4.3 Affirmative-negative questions (X-not-X)

Affirmative-negative questions (X-not-X) are essentially disjunctive questions without the conjunction ‘or’. In this format, the affirmative verb or adjective is immediately followed by the negated verb or adjective.

Taiwanese only permits the X-not-X format for the limited verbs and adjectives that can be negated by the pure negative 毋 m̄ (see [13.1.1 Pure negative 毋 m̄ ‘not’](#)). Note that for some speakers only the verb 是 sī ‘to be’ is acceptable in this construction.

verb/adjective + 毋 + verb/adjective

verb/adjective + -m̄- + verb/adjective

伊 是毋是 你的狗仔?

I sī-m̄-sī lí ê káu-á?

牠 是不是 你的狗?

Tā shìbùshì nǐ de gǒu?

Is it (or isn’t it) your dog?

我 是毋是 後日愛加班?

Góa sī-m̄-sī āu-jit ài ka-pan?

我 是不是 後天得加班?

Wǒ shìbùshì hòutiān děi jiābān?

Is it (or isn’t it) the day after tomorrow that I have to work overtime?

您 捌毋捌 去過中國?

In bat-m̄-bat khi-kòe Tiong-kok?

他們 有沒有 去過中國?

Tāmen yǒuméiyǒu qùguò Zhōngguó?

Have (or haven't) they ever gone to China?

你 驚毋驚 鬼？

Lí kiaⁿ-m̄-kiaⁿ kúi?

你 怕不怕 鬼？

Nǐ pàbùpà guǐ?

Are you scared (or not) of ghosts?

Note that Mandarin is less restrictive with the affirmative-negative question (X-not-X) format than Taiwanese and allows many types of verbs and adjectives to serve as arguments in the construction.

20.5 Question words

For questions seeking content instead of a yes/no response, question words such as ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘which’ can be used.

Where are the bathrooms?

When is dinner?

Who is the man in the yellow hat?

In general, the word order for declarative sentences and content questions remain the same in Taiwanese.

DECLARATIVE SENTENCE

便所 佇 一樓。

Piān-só tī it lâu.

廁所在 一樓。

Cèsuǒ zài yī lóu.

The bathrooms are on the 1st floor.

QUESTION

便所 佇 佗位？

Piān-só tī tó-ūi?

廁所在 哪裡？

Cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ?

Where are the bathrooms?

暗飯 是 六點。

Àm-png sī lák tiám.

晚餐 是 六點。

Wǎncān shì liù diǎn.

Dinner is at six o'clock.

暗飯 是 幾點？

Àm-png sī kúi tiám?

晚餐 是 幾點？

Wǎncān shì jǐ diǎn?

When is dinner?

戴黃帽子是吳先生。

Tì ng bō-á sī Gô--sian-siⁿ.

戴黃帽子是吳先生。

Dài huáng màozi shì Wú xiānshēng.

Mr. Gou is the man in the yellow hat.

戴黃帽子是啥人？

Tì ng bō-á sī siáⁿ-lâng?

戴黃帽子是誰？

Dài huáng màozi shì shéi?

Who is the man in the yellow hat?

20.5.1 What

In Taiwanese, the single character 啥 **siáⁿ** can serve as the interrogative pronoun ‘what’.

他是啥？

He sī siáⁿ?

那是甚麼？

Nà shì shénme?

What is that?

共我講你欲啥。

Kā góa kóng lí beh siáⁿ.

跟我講你要什麼。

Gēn wǒ jiǎng nǐ yào shénme.

Tell me what you want.

啥遐爾仔芳？

Siáⁿ hia-nī-á phang?

什麼那麼香？

Shénme nàme xiāng?

What smells so good?

However, 啥 **siáⁿ** is often paired with 物 **mih** ‘thing’ or 貨 **hòe** ‘product’ to form a two-syllable version of ‘what’. Despite the component characters, these versions of ‘what’ are not limited to concrete objects. Abstract ideas can also be replaced by both of these two-syllable versions. Another alternate form is 甚物 **sīm-mih**.

VERSION 1

他是啥物？

He sī siáⁿ-mih?

VERSION 2

他是啥貨？

He sī siáⁿ-hòe?

VERSION 3

他是甚物？

He sī sīm-mih?

那是甚麼？

Nà shì shénme?

What is that?

When 啥 **siáⁿ** appears before a noun, it can function as an adjective indicating ‘what kind’.

這是啥物狗仔？

Che sī siáⁿ-mih káu-á?

這是什麼狗？

Zhè shì shénme gǒu?

What kind of dog is this?

20.5.2 Who

For questions inquiring about identity, the question word 啥 **siáⁿ** ‘what’ is placed before 人 **lâng** ‘person’ to form the interrogative pronoun 啥人 **siáⁿ-lâng** ‘who, whom’, or literally ‘what person’. Often 啥人 **siáⁿ-lâng** is contracted and pronounced as a single syllable 啥人 **siâng**.

佇門口是啥人？

Tī m̄ng-kháu sī siáⁿ-lâng (siâng)?

在門口是誰？

Zài ménkǒu shì shéi?

Who is outside the door?

In Taiwanese, there is no distinction in case. As a result, 啥人 **siáⁿ-lâng** can appear both as subject or object within a sentence.

這張批，啥人欲共你寄？

Chit tiuⁿ phoe, siáⁿ-lâng beh kā lí kìà?

這封信，誰要幫你寄？

Zhè fēng xìn, shéi yào bāng nǐ jì?

Who is going to send this letter for you?

這張批，我應該寄予啥人？

Chit tiuⁿ phoe, góa eng-kai kìà hō siáⁿ-lâng?

這封信，我應該寄到誰？

Zhè fēng xìn, wǒ yīnggāi jì dào shéi?

To whom should I send this letter?

The two-syllable 啥物 **siáⁿ-mih** ‘what’ can also be paired with 人 **lâng** ‘person’ to form 啥物 人 **siáⁿ-mih lâng**. While 甚物 人 **sīm-mih lâng** is also acceptable, 啥貨 人 **siáⁿ-hòe lâng** cannot be used to form ‘who, whom’.

佇門口是啥物人？

Tī m̄ng-kháu sī siáⁿ-mih lâng?

在門口是誰？

Zài ménkǒu shì shéi?

Who is outside the door?

20.5.3 Where

For questions inquiring about location, the question word 啥物 **siáⁿ-mih** ‘what’ is placed before 所在 **só[·]-chāi** ‘place’ to form the interrogative pronoun 啥物 所在 **siáⁿ-mih só[·]-chāi** ‘where’, or literally ‘what place’.

你上愛的餐廳佇啥物所在？

Lí siōng ài ê chhan-thiaⁿ tī siáⁿ-mih só[·]-chāi?

你最愛的餐廳在什麼地方？

Nǐ zuì ài de cāntīng zài shénme dìfāng?

Where is your favorite restaurant?

Additionally, Taiwanese uses another term for the question word ‘where’, 佗位 **tó-ūi**, which literally means ‘which position’. 佗位 **tó-ūi** is also commonly contracted to 佗 **toeh** and **toh** (note the slight changes in pronunciation).

阮的行李佇佗位？

Gún ê hêng-lí tī tó-ūi?

我們的行李在哪裡？

Wǒmen de xínglǐ zài nǎlǐ?

Where is our luggage?

20.5.4 When

For questions inquiring about the time, the question word 啥物 **siáⁿ-mih** ‘what’ is placed before 時間 **sî-kan** ‘time’ to form the interrogative pronouns 啥物 時間 **siáⁿ-mih sî-kan** ‘when’, or literally ‘what time’. 啥物 時間 **siáⁿ-mih sî-kan** can also be abbreviated to 啥物 時 **siáⁿ-mih sî**. Additionally, alternate forms can be constructed by combining 啥物 **siáⁿ-mih** ‘what’ with other words for ‘time’ including 時陣 **sî-chūn** and 時後 **sî-hāu**.

伊 啥物 時間 欲 去 馬來西亞？

I siáⁿ-mih sî-kan beh khì Má-lâi-se-a?

他 什麼 時間 要 去 馬來西亞？

Tā shénme shíjiān yào qù Mǎláixīyà?

When is he going to Malaysia?

你 啥物 時陣 和 朋友 講 話？

Lí siáⁿ-mih sî-chūn hām pêng-iú kóng ōe?

你 什麼 時候 跟 朋友 講 話？

Nǐ shénme shíhòu gēn péngyǒu jiǎng huà?

When do you talk to your friends?

Moreover, other words for ‘when’ include 當時 **tang-sî** (also pronounced **tiang-sî**) and 底時 **tī-sî**.

恁 爸母 當時 欲 來？

Lín pē-bú tang-sî beh lâi?

你們 父母 何時 要來？

Nǐmen fùmǔ héshí yào lái?

When are your parents coming?

For questions inquiring about the time on the clock, the expression 幾點 **kúi tiám** ‘what time (clock)’ can be used.

你 訂 幾點 的 位？

Lí teng kúi tiám ê ūi?

你 訂 幾點 的 位子？

Nǐ dìng jǐ diǎn de wèizi?

What time did you make a reservation?

Note the Mandarin equivalent to ask the time 幾點鐘 **jǐ diǎn zhōng** ‘What time is it?’ asks a different question in Taiwanese, 幾點鐘 **kúi tiám-cheng**, ‘How many hours?’.

請問，這馬 幾點？

Chhiáⁿ-m̄ng, chit-má kúi tiám?

請問，現在 幾點(鐘)？

Qǐngwèn, xiànzài jǐ diǎn(zhōng)?

Excuse me, may I ask what time it is?

猶閣 幾點鐘 才會到？

Iáu-koh kúi tiám-cheng chiah ē kàu?

還有 幾個小時 才會到？

Háiyǒu jǐ gè xiǎoshí cái huì dào?

How many hours are left before we arrive?

20.5.5 Which

When inquiring about a selection out of a larger set of items, the question word 佗 **tó** is followed by a number and measure word to form the expression for ‘which’.

佗 + *number* + *measure word*

tó + *number* + *measure word*

‘which’

佗一个眠床 是我的？

Tó chit ê bîn-chhîng sī góa--ê?

哪(一)張床 是我的？

Nǎ (yī) zhāng chuáng shì wǒ de?

Which is my bed?

佗三本冊 是你的？

Tó saⁿ pún chheh sī lí--ê?

哪三本書 是你的？

Nǎ sān běn shū shì nǐ de?

Which three books are yours?

Note that in Mandarin if the selection is a single item, 一 **yī** can be left out of the expression 哪(一) **nǎ(yī)** + *measure word*. However, in Taiwanese a number must always form part of the expression.

For an indeterminate plural number of items in the selection, the plural measure word 寡 **kóa** ‘some’ can be used in the ‘which’ expression.

佗一寡是熟的？

Tó chhit kóa sī sèk--ê?

哪(一)些是熟的？

Nǎ (yī) xiē shì shóu de?

Which ones are ripe?

20.5.6 Why

For questions inquiring about a reason, the question word 哪 **ná** ‘why’ generally appears after the subject but before the verb.

subject + 哪 + verb

subject + ná + verb

你 哪 欲 去 病院？

Lí ná beh khì pēⁿ-īⁿ?

你 為甚麼 要 去 醫院？

Nǐ wèishènme yào qù yīyuàn?

Why are you going to the hospital?

Alternate forms to express ‘why’ include 是按怎 **sī-án-chóaⁿ** (also pronounced **sī-án-noá** and **sī-án-ná**), 為甚物 **ūi-sīm-mih**, and 為啥物 **ūi-siáⁿ-mih**. These question words can be placed either before or after the subject but must occur before the verb. In other contexts, note that 按怎 **án-chóaⁿ** can also mean ‘how’ (see [20.5.7 How](#)).

ORDER 1

是按怎 + *subject + verb*

sī-án-chóaⁿ + *subject + verb*

你 是按怎 愛 共 伊 拍？

Lí sī-án-chóaⁿ ài ká i phah?

你 為甚麼 要 打 他？

Nǐ wèishènme yào dǎ tā?

Why did you need to hit him?

ORDER 2

是按怎 + *subject + verb*

sī-án-chóaⁿ + *subject + verb*

是按怎你愛共伊拍？

Sī-án-chóa^a lí ài kā i phah?

為甚麼你要打他？

Wèishènme nǐ yào dǎ tā?

Why did you need to hit him?

In addition, there is a difference in the usage for the character 哪 **ná** ‘why’ in Taiwanese and 哪 **nǎ** ‘where’ in Mandarin. In Taiwanese, 哪 **ná** has a broader latitude of uses and meanings. In some expressions, it still retains the idea of ‘location’.

哪有？

Ná ū?

哪有？

Nǎ yǒu?

Please, you are too kind (*lit. Where is there any? — A phrase used to deflect praise*).

Beyond asking for a simple reason, 哪 **ná** can also convey a strong sense of doubt. In these cases, it is often paired with additional words.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
哪會 ná-ē	怎麼會 zěnmě huì	Why would?
哪毋 ná-m̄	為什麼不 wèishéme bù	Why wouldn't?
哪末 ná-bōe	為何還沒 wèihé hái méi	Why haven't?
哪著 ná-tiōh	何須 héxū	Why should?

伊 哪毋 提錢？

I ná-m̄ theh chiⁿ?

他 為甚麼 不 拿錢？

Tā wèishènme bù ná qián?

Why wouldn't he take the money?

你 哪末 共我 敲電話？

Lí ná-bōe kā góa khà tiān-ōe?

你 為何 還沒 打 電話 給我？

Nǐ wèihé hái méi dǎ diànhuà gěi wǒ?

Why haven't you called me?

For an even stronger sense of disbelief, the word 盍 **khah** ‘Why would... / How could it be?’ may be used in questions seeking a reason.

伊 盍 會 按呢？

I khah ē án-ne?

他 怎麼 會 這樣？

Tā zěnmē huì zhèyàng?

Why would he do that? How could it be this way?

20.5.7 How

For questions inquiring about the manner in which an event occurs, the question word 按怎 **án-chóaⁿ** (also pronounced **án-nóa** or **án-ná**) ‘how’ can be used. Alternate forms include 按怎樣 **án-chóaⁿ-iūⁿ** and 怎樣 **chóaⁿ-iūⁿ**.

你 按怎 做 餅？

Lí án-chóaⁿ chò piáⁿ?

你 怎麼 做 餅乾？

Nǐ zěnmē zuò bǐnggān?

How do you make cookies?

你 今仔日 上班 按怎樣？

Lí kin-á-jit síong-pan án-chóaⁿ-iūⁿ?

你 今天 上班 怎麼樣？

Nǐ jīntiān shàngbān zěnmē yàng?

How was work today?

電影 怎樣？

Tiān-iaⁿ chóaⁿ-iūⁿ?

電影 怎樣？

Diànyǐng zěnyàng?

How was the movie?

20.5.8 How much / how many

For questions inquiring about quantity, the question word 偌濟 **gōa-chē** (also pronounced **lōa-chē** and **jōa-chē**) ‘how much, how many’ is used for non-countable items and countable items in larger numbers.

彼台電視偌濟錢？

Hít tái tiān-sī gōa-chē chhī?

那台電視多少錢？

Nà tái diànshì duōshǎo qián?

How much money is that television set?

台北有偌濟人？

Tâi-pak ū gōa-chē lâng?

台北有多少人？

Táiběi yǒu duōshǎo rén?

How many people does Taipei have?

For countable items and smaller quantities (generally under ten) or within an ordered and fixed range of numbers, 幾 **kúi** is used with an appropriate measure word.

幾 + *measure word*

kúi + *measure word*

你有幾枝筆？

Lí ū kúi kī pít?

你有幾枝筆？

Nǐ yǒu jǐ zhī bǐ?

How many pens do you have?

這馬幾點？

Chit-má kúi tiám?

現在幾點？

Xiànzài jǐ diǎn?

What time is it?

20.5.9 How long / how big

For questions inquiring about the duration of time, the question word 偌久 **gōa-kú** (also pronounced **lōa-kú** and **jōa-kú**) 'how long (*time*)' is used.

愛偌久才到後一站？

Ài gōa-kú chiah kàu āu chit chām?

要多久才到下一站？

Yào duōjiǔ cái dào xià yī zhàn?

How long until we reach the next station?

For questions inquiring about the physical length of an object, the question word 偌長 **gōa-tŋg** (also pronounced **lōa-tŋg** and **jōa-tŋg**) ‘how long (*length*)’ is used.

這塊膨椅 偌長?

Chit tè phòng-í gōa-tŋg?

這張沙發 多長?

Zhè zhāng shāfā duō cháng?

How long is this sofa?

For questions inquiring about the overall physical size of an object, the question word 偌大 **gōa-tōa** (also pronounced **lōa-tōa** and **jōa-tōa**) ‘how big’ is used.

恁厝 偌大?

Lín chhù gōa-tōa?

你房子 多大?

Nǐ fángzi duō dà?

How big is your house?

20.5.10 Whose

To change any of the question words for ‘who’ into the possessive form ‘whose’, the possessive marker **ê** can be added to form 啥人的 **siáⁿ-lâng (siâng) ê** or 啥物人的 **siáⁿ-mih lâng ê**.

啥人的 翕相機 佇 遮?

Siáⁿ-lâng (siâng) ê hip-siōng-ki tī chia?

誰的 照相機 在 這裡?

Shéi de zhàoxiàngjī zài zhèlǐ?

Whose camera is this?

彼塊雞卵糕 是 啥物人的?

Hit tè ke-nŋg-ko sī siáⁿ-mih lâng--ê?

這塊蛋糕 是 誰的?

Zhè kuài dànāo shì shéi de?

Whose piece of cake is this?

20.5.11 Summary of question words

TAIWANESE

WHAT

啥 siáⁿ

啥物 siáⁿ-mih

啥貨 siáⁿ-hòe

甚物 sīm-mih

MANDARIN

甚麼 shénme

甚麼 shénme

甚麼 shénme

甚麼 shénme

WHO / WHOM

啥人 siáⁿ-lâng (siâng)

啥物 人 siáⁿ-mih lâng

甚物 人 sīm-mih lâng

誰 shéi

誰 shéi

誰 shéi

WHERE

啥物所在 siáⁿ-mih só-chāi

甚物所在 sīm-mih só-chāi

佢位 tó-ūi

佢 toeh / toh

什麼地方 shénme dìfāng

什麼地方 shénme dìfāng

哪裡 nǎlǐ

哪裡 nǎlǐ

WHEN (GENERAL)

啥物時(間) siáⁿ-mih sî(-kan)

甚物時(間) sīm-mih sî(-kan)

啥物時(陣) siáⁿ-mih sî(-chūn)

甚物時(陣) sīm-mih sî(-chūn)

啥物時(後) siáⁿ-mih sî(-hāu)

甚物時(後) sīm-mih sî(-hāu)

當時 tang-sî

底時 tī-sî

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

什麼時候 shénme shíhòu

何時 héshí

何時 héshí

WHEN (CLOCK TIME)

幾點 kúi tiám

幾點 jǐ diǎn

WHICH ONE

佢 tó + *number* + *measure word*

哪 nǎ + *number* + *measure word*

WHICH ONES

佢一寡 tó chit-kóa

哪些 nǎxiē

WHY (REASON)

哪 ná	為甚麼 wèishènmè
是按怎 sī-án-chóa ⁿ (sī-án-noá, sī-án-ná)	為甚麼 wèishènmè
為甚物 ūi-sīm-mih	為甚麼 wèishènmè
為啥物 ūi-siá ⁿ -mih	為甚麼 wèishènmè

WHY (DISBELIEF)

哪會 ná-ē	怎麼會 zěnmè huì
哪毋 ná m̄	為什麼不 wèishéme bù
哪末 ná-bōe	為何還沒 wèihé hái méi
哪著 ná-tiòh	何須 héxū
盍 khah	怎麼 zěnmè

HOW (MANNER)

按怎 án-chóa ⁿ (án-nóa, án-ná)	怎麼 zěnmè
按怎樣 án-chóa ⁿ -iū ⁿ	怎麼樣 zěnmè yàng
怎樣 chóa ⁿ -iū ⁿ	怎樣 zěnyàng

HOW MUCH / MANY

佢濟 gōa-chē (lōa-chē, jōa-chē)	多少 duōshǎo
幾 kúi + <i>measure word</i>	幾 jǐ + <i>measure word</i>

HOW LONG (TIME)

佢久 gōa-kú (lōa-kú, jōa-kú)	多久 duōjiǔ
----------------------------	-----------

HOW LONG (LENGTH)

佢長 gōa-tîg (lōa-tîg, jōa-tîg)	多長 duōcháng
-------------------------------	-------------

HOW BIG (SIZE)

佢大 gōa-tōa (lōa-tōa, jōa-tōa)	多大 duōdà
-------------------------------	----------

21 Requests and commands

Requests and commands in Taiwanese can be constructed in a number of ways using particles, aspect markers, modal verbs, polite phrases, and special grammatical constructions.

21.1 Particle 咧 --leh

The static continuous aspect marker 咧 --**leh** can be suffixed to verbs in commands in which the listener is requested to maintain a current or imminent state (see [8.2.2 Static continuous aspect](#)). When used within commands, the particle 咧 --**leh** does not need to occur at the end of a clause or sentence.

verb + 咧

verb + --leh

共我手牽咧。

Kā góa chhiú khan--leh.

把我手握著。

Bǎ wǒ shǒu wòzhe.

Take my hand.

遮園咧就好。

Chia khng--leh tō hó.

這裡放著就好。

Zhèlǐ fàngzhe jiù hǎo.

Just put it here.

乖咧！

Koai--leh！

你乖乖！

Nǐ guāiguāi!

Be good!

Note that Mandarin similarly uses the particle 著 -**zhe** in commands.

For adjectives, 較 **khah** ‘more’ is often added before the adjective to express ‘be a little more *adjective*’.

較 + *adjective* + 咧

khah + *adjective* + --leh

‘be a little more *adjective*’

較 細聲咧！

Khah sè-siaⁿ--leh!

小 聲 一點！

Xiǎo shēng yīdiǎn!

Be a little quieter!

較 清氣咧！

Khah chheng-khì--leh!

乾淨 一點！

Gānjìng yīdiǎn!

Be a little cleaner!

Note that in Mandarin, the equivalent expression places 一點 **yīdiǎn** ‘a little bit’ after the adjective.

21.2 Using 去 **khì** ‘to go’ in commands

The verb 去 **khì** ‘to go’ can be placed before action or active stative verbs to command or suggest doing an action (see [7 Action verbs](#), [9.3 Stative verbs and continuous aspect](#)). Adjectives and passive stative verbs cannot be made into commands with this form.

去 + *action / stative (active) verb*

khì + *action / stative (active) verb*

‘go *action / stative (active) verb*’

你 看起來 真 忝， 緊 去 睏。

Lí khòaⁿ-khí-lâi chin thiám, kín khì khùn.

你 看起來 很 累， 快 去 睡。

Nǐ kànqǐlái hěn lèi, kuài qù shuì.

You look very tired. Go to sleep now.

去 想著 別的 辦法。

Khì siūⁿ-tiòh pát ê pān-hoat.

去想到別的辦法。

Qù xiǎngdào bié de bànfǎ.

Go think of another way to do it.

21.3 Using the tentative aspect

The tentative aspect can describe actions that are done ‘for a little while’ or ‘to try out and see’ (see [8.6 Tentative aspect](#)). As a result, the tentative aspect is often used as a polite way to make commands. Two of the methods for indicating the tentative aspect are often employed in commands: reduplicating the verb and adding the phrase 一下 --**chit-ē** ‘a little bit’.

21.3.1 Verb reduplication

Reduplication has the effect of putting a verb into the tentative aspect, which can indicate that a verb is performed for a short period of time. Note that when verbs are repeated in a command, the second verb is put in the neutral tone.

verb + verb

‘doing *verb* for a while’

你的手 洗洗 予清氣！

Lí ê chhiú sé--sé hō`chheng-khì !

你的手 洗洗 乾淨！

Nǐ de shǒu xǐxǐ gānjìng !

Wash your hands until they’re clean!

先 哺哺 才吞落去。

Seng pō--pō`chiah thun--lòh-khì.

先 咬咬 才吞下去。

Xiān yǎoyǎo cái tūnxiàqù.

First chew, and then swallow.

The particle 咧 --**leh** may also be added to reduplicated verbs for additional emphasis.

verb + *verb* + 咧

verb + *verb* + --leh

青菜 食食 咧！

Chheⁿ-chhài chiáh--chiáh--leh!

青菜 吃吃 吧！

Qīngcài chīchī ba!

Eat up the vegetables!

咱 先 遮 坐坐 咧。

Lán seng chia chē--chē--leh.

我們 先 這裡 坐坐 吧。

Wǒmen xiān zhèlǐ zuòzuò ba.

Let's sit here first.

Note that in Mandarin if the verb is reduplicated for a command, the particle 吧 **ba** is used instead of the suffix 著 **-zhe**.

21.3.2 Adding the phrase 一下 --chit-ē ‘a little bit’

The phrase 一下 --**chit-ē** ‘a little bit’ is used as a softener for commands and may be placed after a verb. The phrase 一下 --**chit-ē** is put in the neutral tone.

verb + 一下

verb + --chit-ē

‘*verb* a little bit’

等 一下。

Tán--chit-ē.

等 一下。

Děng yīxià.

Wait a little bit.

看 一下！

Khòaⁿ--chit-ē!

看 一下！

Kàn yīxià!

Take a quick look!

小 **sió** ‘small’ may be added before the verb to further diminish the size of the request.

小 + *verb* + 一下

sió + *verb* + --chit-ē

小 等 一下。

Sió tán--chit-ē.

稍 等 一下。

Shāo děng yīxià.

Please wait briefly.

恁 小 歇 睏 一下。

Lín sió hioh-khùn--chit-ē.

你們 稍 休息 一下。

Nǐmen shāo xiūxi yīxià.

You should all rest a bit.

21.4 Polite words and phrases

Additional words and phrases may be added to make requests more polite.

21.4.1 請 **chhiáⁿ** ‘please’

請 **chhiáⁿ** ‘please’ can be placed at the beginning of the sentence. A second person pronoun may also be used or omitted when making a request.

請 + (*second person pronoun*) + *verb*

chhiáⁿ + (*second person pronoun*) + *verb*

‘Please *verb*’

請 坐 跔 遮 等 一下。

Chhiáⁿ chē tàt chia tán--chit-ē.

請 坐 在 這裡 等 一下。

Qǐng zuò zài zhèlǐ děng yīxià.

Please sit here for a moment.

請 大家 排隊。

Chhiáⁿ ta-ke pâi-tūi.

請 大家 排隊。

Qǐng dàjiā páiduì.

Everyone please make a line.

請問 **chhiá**ⁿ-**m̄ng** ‘May I ask’ is a common phrase to begin an inquiry.

請問 便所 佇 佗位?

Chhiáⁿ-m̄ng piān-só tī tó-ūi?

請問 廁所在 哪裡?

Qǐngwèn cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ?

May I ask where the bathrooms are?

Note that 請 **chhiá**ⁿ can be used to mean ‘to invite’, ‘to pay for (someone else)’, or ‘to ask someone to do something’. When used with these meanings, 請 **chhiá**ⁿ often appears in the middle of the sentence.

您 請 阮 食 飯 佇 真 高級 的 餐廳。

In chhiáⁿ gún chiàh p̄ng tī chin ko-kip ê chhan-thiaⁿ.

他們 請 我們 吃 飯 在 很 高級 的 餐廳。

Tāmen qǐng wǒmen chī fàn zài hěn gāojí de cāntīng.

They invited us to eat at a very fancy restaurant.

你敢 會 當 請 恁 小妹 共 我 提 便當?

Lí kám ē-tàng chhiáⁿ lín sió-mōe kā góa thèh piān-tong?

你能 請 你的 妹妹 幫 我 拿 便當 嗎?

Nǐ néng qǐng nǐ de mèimei bāng wǒ ná biàndāng ma?

Can you ask your younger sister to bring a lunchbox for me?

請教 **chhéng-kàu** ‘May I ask (for your advice)?’ is another polite expression used to inquire about advice, suggestions, comments, or directions.

請教 一下， 阮 按怎 去 博物館?

Chhéng-kàu chit-ē, gún án-chóaⁿ khì phok-bùt-kóan?

請教 一下， 我們 怎麼 去 博物館?

Qǐngjiào yīxià, wǒmen zěnmē qù bówùguǎn?

May I ask how we can get to the museum?

21.4.2 麻煩你 Mâ-hôan lí ‘May I trouble you’

麻煩 **mâ-hôan** ‘troublesome’ can be placed before a second person pronoun to create the phrase 麻煩你 **Mâ-hôan lí** ‘May I trouble you’. This phrase is used in situations where the speaker requests the listener to do something that benefits someone other than the listener. An alternate form is 勞煩 **lô-hôan**.

麻煩 + *second person pronoun* + *verb*

mâ-hôan + *second person pronoun* + *verb*

‘May I trouble you to *verb*’

麻煩 你去 郵局 寄 這 張 批？

Mâ-hôan lí khi iû-kiòk kià chit tiuⁿ phoe?

麻煩 你去 郵局 寄 這 封 信？

Máfan nǐ qù yóujú jì zhè fēng xìn?

May I trouble you to go to the post office to mail this letter?

麻煩 恁 阮 後 生 去 學 校？

Mâ-hôan lín chhōa gún hāu-seⁿ khi hāk-hāu?

麻煩 你們 帶 我 兒 子 去 學 校？

Máfan nǐmen dài wǒ érzi qù xuéxiào?

May I trouble you to take my son to school?

21.4.3 拜託 pài-thok ‘please’

拜託 **pài-thok** ‘please’ is a polite way to begin a request similar to 請 **chhiáⁿ** ‘please’. However, 拜託 **pài-thok** at times can have a slightly stronger sense of urgency.

拜託 + (*second person pronoun*) + *verb*

pài-thok + (*second person pronoun*) + *verb*

‘Please, *verb*’

拜託 你 共 阮 鬥 搬 厝。

Pài-thok lí kā gún tau poaⁿ-chhù.

拜託 你 幫 我們 搬家。

Bàituō nǐ bāng wǒmen bānjiā.

Please help us move.

拜託 你共你的車借予我。

Pài-thok lí kā lí ê chhia chioh hō' góa.

拜託 你借給我你的車。

Bàituō nǐ jiè gěi wǒ nǐ de chē.

Please lend me your car.

Additionally, 拜託 **pài-thok** can appear independently. In this case, the meaning is more akin to pleading, 'I'm begging you' or 'Please!'. At times this can be done in a sarcastic tone as in, 'Come on!' or 'Please!'.

我的錢包拍毋見，你敢會當予我上車？拜託！

Góa ê chiⁿ-pau pah-m̄-kiⁿ, lí kám ē-tàng hō' góa chiūⁿ-chhia? Pài-thok !

我的錢包不見了，你能不能讓我上車？拜託！

Wǒ de qiánbāo bùjiàn le, nǐ néngbùnéng ràng wǒ shàngchē? Bàituō!

I lost my wallet. Can you just let me ride the bus? Please!

拜託！你敢真正想我會信這個藉口？

Pài-thok ! Lí kám chin-chhiàⁿ siūⁿ góa ē sìn chit ê chioh-kháu ?

拜託！你真是想我會相信這個藉口嗎？

Bàituō! Nǐ zhēnshi xiǎng wǒ huì xiāngxìn zhège jièkǒu ma?

Please! Do you really expect me to believe this excuse?

21.4.4 歹勢 **pháiⁿ-sè** 'apologies'

歹勢 **pháiⁿ-sè** which means 'sorry' and 'my apologies' indicates embarrassment and remorse. However, 歹勢 **pháiⁿ-sè** can be used to politely make a request by asking to be excused beforehand.

歹勢 + *verb*

pháiⁿ-sè + *verb*

'I'm sorry to ask you to *verb*'

歹勢 叫你和我換位。

Pháiⁿ-sè kiò lí hām góa ōaⁿ ūi.

不好意思 叫你和我換位子。

Bùhǎoyìsi jiào nǐ hé wǒ huàn wèizi.

I'm sorry to ask you to switch seats with me.

歹勢 叫你替我用中文共文件寫好。

Pháiⁿ-sè kiò lí theh góa ēng Tiong-bûn ká bûn-kiāⁿ siá-hó.

不好意思 叫你幫我用中文把文件寫好。

Bùhǎoyìsi jiào nǐ bāng wǒ yòng Zhōngwén bǎ wénjiàn xiěhǎo.

Excuse me. I'm embarrassed to ask you to help me fill out this form in Chinese.

歹勢 **pháiⁿ-sè** does not have an exact Mandarin equivalent but can be used in contexts where 不好意思 **bùhǎoyìsi**, 對不起 **duìbùqǐ**, and 抱歉 **bàoqiàn** are often used.

21.5 Modal verbs in requests

The modal verbs expressing ‘permission’ (會當 **ē-tàng**, 會使(得) **ē-sái(-tit)**, 會用得 **ē-ēng-tit**) can be used in questions to make polite requests (see [12.4. Permission](#)).

我敢會使 一个朋友來和咱食飯？

Góa kám ē-sài chhōa chit ê pêng-iú lâi hām lân chiáh p̄ng?

我可不可以 帶一個朋友來跟我們一起吃飯？

Wǒ kěbùkěyǐ dài yī gè péngyǒu lái gēn wǒmen yīqǐ chī fàn?

May I bring a friend to dinner with us?

你敢會當 紮你的 翕相機？

Lí kám ē-tàng chah lí ê hip-siōng-ki?

你能不能 帶你的 照相機？

Nǐ néngbùnéng dài nǐ de zhàoxiàngjī?

Can you take your camera with you?

阮拜五 會用得 去游泳池無？

Gún pài-gō ē-ēng-tit khì iû-éng-tī--bô?

我們禮拜五 能去游泳池嗎？

Wǒmen lǐbàiwǔ néng qù yóuyǒngchí ma?

Can we go to the pool on Friday?

21.6 Group proposals

For proposals to a group including the speaker, the phrase 咱來(去) **lán lâi(-khì)** ‘Let’s.....’ can be placed before the verb.

咱來(去) + *verb*

lán lâi(-khì) + *verb*

‘Let’s *verb*’

咱 下晡 來去 動物園！

Lán ē-po lâi-khì tōng-bút-hîng!

我們 下午 去 動物園 吧！

Wǒmen xiàwǔ qù dòngwùyuán ba!

Let’s go to the zoo this afternoon!

咱 來 歇睏。

Lán lâi hioh-khùn.

我們 來 休息 吧。

Wǒmen lái xiūxi ba.

Let’s take a break.

Mandarin only needs to use the end-of-sentence particle 吧 **ba** to make a group suggestion. Taiwanese does not have an exact equivalent particle to 吧 **ba** when used in this manner. At the same time, Mandarin does have an equivalent to the Taiwanese phrase and can also use 我們來 **wǒmen lái** to convey the group suggestion ‘Let’s...’

21.7 Negative commands

Negative modal verbs are often used in negative commands, which demand or request an action not to happen. Taiwanese has three modal verbs that can be used to prohibit an action (see [12.6 Prohibition](#)).

The combination of the negative 毋 **m̄** and 愛 **ài** produces a phonetic blend 莫 **mài** with only the prohibitive meaning ‘do not’. 莫 **mài** can only be used in the second person to prohibit or advise against an action.

莫 + *verb*

mài + *verb*

‘do not *verb*’

莫 拍 狗！

Mài phah káu!

別打狗！

Bié dǎ gǒu !

Don't hit the dog!

毋通 **m̄-thang** is the negative form of the polite permission modal verb 通 **thang** ‘may’. However, when used in the negative the modal verb can only function as a negative command. Note that 毋通 **m̄-thang** is less emphatic in tone than 莫 **mài**.

毋通 + *verb*

m̄-thang + *verb*

‘do not *verb*’

你 毋通 掛 電話！

Lí m̄-thang kòu tiān-ōe!

你 別 掛 電話！

Nǐ bié guà diànhuà!

Don't hang up the phone!

毋好 **m̄-hó** also means ‘do not’ and is generally interchangeable with 毋通 **m̄-thang**. Sometimes contracted 毋好 **m̄-hó** may sound like ‘**m̄-mo**’.

毋好 + *verb*

m̄-hó + *verb*

‘do not *verb*’

毋好 淋 酒。

M-hó lim chiú.

不要 喝 酒。

Bùyào hē jiǔ.

Don't drink alcohol.

Note that Mandarin modal verbs for prohibition 不要 **bùyào** and 別 **bié** are similar in tone and only differentiated in strength by one’s speech volume.

21.8 Using causative verbs in commands

Because causative verbs cause (by request, command, or allowance) someone to perform an action, causative verbs naturally lend themselves to be used in commands (see [19.4 Causative verbs](#)). In English, the verbs ‘make’ or ‘have’ are commonly used to convey that an action was ‘caused’ to

happen ('My mom made me clean my room' or 'We had the bellboy take the luggage to our room'). In Taiwanese, the verb 予 *hō* 'to give' or 'to allow' is a causative verb that can be used as a command. With this usage, 予 *hō* precedes an outcome or extent that is desired and roughly conveys 'such that...' or 'to the point of'. Note that 予 *hō* can also be used in non-commands for extent complements (see [11.7.2 Extent complements with 予 *hō*](#)).

verb + 予 + desired outcome

verb + hō + desired outcome

'verb such that desired outcome'

功課 寫 予 了!

Kong-khò siá hō liáu!

功課 寫 完!

Gōngkè xiěwán!

Finish your homework!

窗仔 拭 予 清氣!

Thang-á chhit hō chheng-khì!

窗戶 擦 乾淨!

Chuānghù cā gānjìng!

Wipe the windows clean!

Note that Mandarin tends to use a resultative complement to indicate an outcome or extent.

21.9 Using the 共 *kā* construction in commands

The 共 *kā* construction can be used to indicate how an object is handled or manipulated (see [17.4 共 *kā* construction](#)). As a result, this construction is often used in commands.

共 + *object* + *verb*

kā + object + verb

'take the object and verb'

共 遮的 冊 還 圖書館。

Kā chia-ê chheh hêng tô-su-kóan.

把 這些書 還 圖書館。

Bǎ zhè xiē shū huán túshūguǎn.

Take these books back to the library.

共雞卵 囵 跔 冰箱內。

Kā ke-nāg khng tám peng-siuⁿ-lāi.

把雞蛋 放 在 冰箱 裡。

Bǎ jīdàn fàng zài bīngxiāng lǐ.

Put the eggs in the refrigerator.

22 Particles

Some particles help to convey the speaker's attitude or tone, while other particles have grammatical functions such as marking aspect or question type.

Particles can also be subdivided according to their placement within a sentence. End-of-sentence particles can indicate tone, aspect, and question type. On the other hand, exclamatory particles occur at the beginning of sentences or as stand-alone exclamations. These particles tend to only indicate the speaker's attitude or tone.

Moreover, a few particles can function both as an end-of-sentence particle and exclamatory particle. However, note that the meaning conveyed may differ depending on the position within the sentence.

22.1 End-of-sentence particles

End-of-sentence particles appear at the end of a clause or sentence and can convey the speaker's tone, mark aspect, or indicate question type.

Generally, these particles are placed in the neutral tone. Additionally, note that it is possible to have several particles in succession at the end of a sentence—all in the neutral tone.

22.1.1 Single particles

Below is a table of some common end-of-sentence particles. Particles in this table have been subcategorized into those used primarily to mark tone, aspect, or question type (see [8 Aspect](#), [20 Questions](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING	EXAMPLE
矣 --ah	了 le	new or relevant situation (<i>anterior aspect</i>)	我 看著 矣。 Góa khòa ⁿ --tiòh-- <u>ah</u> . 我 感冒 了。

Wǒ gǎnmào le.

I've caught a cold.

啊 --ah

啊 a

affirmation, approval (*tone*)

揀上細的就好阿。

Kéng sīōng sè--ê tō hó--ah.

挑最小的就好啊。

Tiāo zuì xiǎo de jiù hǎo a.

Picking the smallest one will be fine.

袂 --bē

會不會 huìbùhuì

possible or future action (*question*)

阿爸會去買菜袂？

A-pa ē khì bé chhài--bē?

爸爸會不會去買菜？

Bàba huìbùhuì qù mǎi cài?

Will dad go buy the vegetables?

(抑)免
(iah-)bián

還是不用 háishì
bùyòng

obligation (*question*)

咱愛加油抑免？

Lán ài ka-iû iah-bián?

我們需要加油還是不用？

Wǒmen xūyào jiāyóu háishì
bùyòng?

Do we need to fill gas or
not?

無 --bô

了沒有 le
méiyǒu

completed action (*perfective aspect*)

伊有食藥仔無？

I ū chiáh iòh-á--bô?

他吃了藥沒有？

Tā chīle yào méiyǒu?

			Did he take his medicine?
	嗎 ma	neutral (<i>question</i>)	你 啉 酒 無 ? Lí lim chiú--bô ? 你 喝 酒 嗎 ? Nǐ hē jiǔ <u>ma</u> ? Do you drink alcohol?
未 --bōe (bē)	了 嗎 le ma	relevant situation (<i>anterior aspect</i>)	彼 間 新 餐 廳 開 門 未 ? Hit keng sin chhan-thia ⁿ khui-mîg--bōe? 那 間 新 餐 廳 開 門 了 嗎 ? Nà jiān xīn cāntīng kāimén le <u>ma</u> ? Has that new restaurant opened <u>yet</u> ?
乎 --ho ^h	吧 ba	seeking confirmation (<i>question</i>)	你 講 欲 草 莓 乎 ? Lí kóng beh chháu-m̄--ho ^h ? 你 說 要 草 莓 吧 ? Nǐ shuō yào cǎoméi <u>ba</u> ? You said you wanted strawberries, <u>right</u> ?
啦 --lah	啦 la	contentment or impatience (<i>tone</i>)	停 遮 就 好 啦 ! Thêng chia tō hó--lah! 停 這 裡 就 好 啦 ! Tíng zhèlǐ jiù hǎo <u>la</u> ! Stopping here is good enough!

咧 --leh	呢 ne	‘What about....’ (<i>question</i>)	恁 小妹 咧？ Lín sió-mōe--<u>leh</u>? 你 妹妹 呢？ Nǐ mèimei <u>ne</u>? <u>What about</u> your younger sister?
	著 zhe	holding a posture (<i>continuous aspect</i>)	伊 佇 遐 坐咧。 I tī hia chē--<u>leh</u>. 她 在 那裡 坐著。 Tā zài nàlǐ zuò<u>zhe</u>. She’s sitting over there.
囉 --loh	囉 luo	affirmation, obviousness (<i>tone</i>)	伊 做完 囉。 I chò-ôan--<u>loh</u>. 她 做完 囉。 Tā zuòwán <u>luō</u>. She’s done.
毋 --m̄	要不要 yàobùyào	volition (<i>question</i>)	伊 啲 果汁 毋？ I lim kó-chiap--<u>m̄</u>? 她 喝不喝 果汁？ Tā <u>hēbùhē</u> guǒzhī? <u>Does</u> she <u>want</u> to drink juice?
嘛 --mah	嘛 ma	exasperation, impatience (<i>tone</i>)	伊 袂 接, 你 莫 閣 敲 嘛！

			I bē chiap, lí mài koh khà--<u>mah</u>! 他 不 會 接，你 不 要 再 打 嘛！ Tā bù huì jiē, nǐ bù yào zài dǎ <u>ma</u>! He won't answer, stop calling!
	嗎 ma	neutral (<i>question</i>)	你 欸 酒 嘛？ Lí lim chiú--<u>mah</u>? 你 喝 酒 嗎？ Nǐ hē jiǔ <u>ma</u>? <u>Do</u> you drink alcohol?
呢 --neh	耶 ye	enthusiasm, praise, encouragement (<i>tone</i>)	伊 足 嬌 呢! I chiok súi--<u>neh</u>! 她 非 常 漂 亮 耶！ Tā fēicháng piàoliang <u>ye</u>! She's so pretty!
--nih	對吧 duì ba	confirmation (<i>question</i>)	您 踮 遮 呢？ In tòà chia--<u>nih</u>? 他 們 住 這 裡 對 吧？ Tāmen zhù zhèlǐ <u>duì ba</u>? They live here, right?
喔 --oh	喔 wō	reminding, urging (<i>tone</i>)	恁 較 早 轉 來 喔。 Lín khah chá tng--lài--<u>oh</u>. 你 們 早 一 點 回 來 喔。 Nǐmen zǎo yīdiǎn huílái <u>wō</u>.

You should come home earlier.

22.1.2 Double particles

In some cases, it is possible to have two end-of-sentence particles appended to the end of a clause or sentence. For this to occur, the first particle is generally an aspect marker (矣 --**ah**, 咧 --**leh**), while the second particle is a tone or question particle. Note that both particles are placed in the neutral tone.

aspect particle + tone/question particle

較緊咧啦！

Khah kín--leh--lah!

快一點啦！

Kuài yīdiǎn la!

Hurry up!

好矣啦！

Hó--ah--lah!

好了啦！

Hǎo le la!

That's enough!

22.2 Exclamatory particles

Some particles can appear as an exclamation at the beginning of the sentence or as a stand-alone exclamation. In general, exclamatory particles only convey the speaker's tone or attitude.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING	EXAMPLE
啊 ah	啊 ā	surprise ('Ah!' 'Oh!')	啊！你贏錢！ <u>Ah</u> ! Lí iâ ⁿ chî ⁿ ! 啊！你贏錢！ <u>Ā</u> ! Nǐ yíng qián !

			<u>Oh!</u> You won money!
	啊 à	recognition ('Oh, it's you!'), reluctance ('Oh, okay')	<u>啊!</u> 是你寫的!
			<u>Ah!</u> Sī lí siá--ê!
			<u>啊!</u> 是你寫的!
			<u>Ā!</u> Shì nǐ xiě de!
			<u>Oh,</u> you wrote it!
噯 aih	哎 āi	sadness, regret, (<i>sigh</i>)	<u>噯</u> ，團隊閣輸去。
			<u>Aih</u> , thōan-tūi koh su--khì.
			<u>哎</u> ，團隊又輸了。
			<u>Āi</u> , tuándùi yòu shūle.
			<u>Ah</u> , the team lost again.
哎唷 aih- ioh	哎唷 āi yō	pain or surprise ('Oh no!')	<u>哎唷!</u> 我的錢拍毋見矣!
			<u>Aih-ioh!</u> Góa ê chhiⁿ phah-m̄-kìⁿ--ah!
			<u>哎唷!</u> 我的錢不見了!
			<u>Āi yō!</u> Wǒ de qián bùjiàn le!
			<u>Oh no!</u> My money is missing!
欸 eh	咦 yí	contrary to expectation ('Huh?')	<u>欸?</u> 是按怎愛做按呢?
			<u>Eh?</u> Sī-án-chóaⁿ ài chò án-ne?
			<u>咦?</u> 為甚麼要做這樣?
			<u>Yí?</u> Wèishènme yào zuò zhèyàng?
			<u>Huh?</u> Why is it done like this?
喂 eh (oeh)	喂 wèi	calling attention ('Hey!')	<u>喂!</u> 過來!
			<u>Eh!</u> Kòe--lâi!
			<u>喂!</u> 過來!
			<u>Wèi!</u> Guòlái!

唉 haih 哎 āi sadness, regret, (*gasp*)

Hey! Come over!

唉, 團隊 閣 輸去 !

Haih, thōan-tūi koh su--khì!

哎, 團隊 又 輸了 !

Āi, tuándùi yòu shūle!

Ah, the team lost again!

啥 ha^h 啊 a surprise ('What?', 'Huh?')

啥? 伊 和 總統 講話 ?

Ha^h? I hām chóng-thóng kóng ōe?

啊? 她 跟 總統 講話 ?

A? Tā gēn zǒngtǒng jiǎng huà?

What? She spoke to the president?

嘿 he^h (heh) 是 shì acknowledgement

嘿, 嘿, 嘿, 我 知影 啦。

He^h, he^h, he^h, góa chai-iáⁿ--lah.

是, 是, 是, 我 知道 啦。

Shì, shì, shì, wǒ zhīdào la.

Yes, yes, yes, I know, I know.

諾 hioh 哦 ò realization, understanding ('Oh')

諾, 是 按呢 才 會 當 拍開。

Hioh, sī án-ne chiah ē-tàng phah-khui.

哦, 是 這樣 才能 打開。

Ò, shì zhèyàng cái néng dǎkāi.

Oh, it needs to be like this to open.

哼 hng^h (hmh) 哼 hēng disdain, contempt ('Hmph!')

哼! 遮 我 袂 閣 來。

			<u>Hngh!</u> Chia góa bē koh lâi. 哼！這裡我不會再來。
			<u>Hēng!</u> Zhèlǐ wǒ bù huì zài lái. 哼！這裡我不會再來。
			<u>Hmph!</u> I will never come here again. 哼？是按怎愛做按呢？
			<u>Hngh?</u> Sī-án-chóa ^a ài chò án-ne? 哼？為甚麼要做這樣？
			<u>Hēng?</u> Wèishènmè yào zuò zhèyàng? 哼？為什麼要做這樣？
			<u>Huh?</u> Why is it done like this? 乎，是按呢才會當拍開。
乎 ho ^h	哦 ò	realization, understanding ('Oh')	<u>Ho^h,</u> sī án-ne chiah ē-tàng phah-khui. 哦，是這樣才能打開。
			<u>Ò,</u> shì zhèyàng cái néng dǎkāi. 哦，是這樣才能打開。
			<u>Oh,</u> it needs to be like this to open. 諄，袂使超過一點鐘。
諄 hoh	喔 ò	resentment	<u>Hoh,</u> bē-sái chhiau-kòe chit tiám-cheng. 喔，不可以超過一個小時。
			<u>Ò,</u> bù kěyǐ chāoguò yī gè xiǎoshí. 喔，不可以超過一個小時。
			<u>Fine,</u> no more than one hour. 諄，伊食遐爾濟！
			<u>Hoh,</u> i chiáh hiah-nī chē ! 喔，他吃那麼多！
			<u>Ò,</u> tā chī nàme duō! 喔，他吃那麼多！
	喔 ò	astonishment	

喂 oeh 喂 wéi answering phone ('Hello?')

Oh, he ate that much!

喂？你好。

Oeh? Lí hó.

喂？你好。

Wéi? Nǐ hǎo.

Hello? How are you?

喔 oh 喔 ō reluctance ('Ugh!')

喔，莫叫我食菜！

Oh, mài kiò góa chiáh chhài!

喔，不要叫我吃菜！

Ō, bù yào jiào wǒ chī cài!

Ugh, don't make me eat vegetables!

哦 ò surprise, realization ('Oh')

喔，是按呢才會當拍開。

Oh, sī án-ne chiah ē-tàng phah-khui.

哦，是這樣才能打開。

Ò, shì zhèyàng cái néng dǎkāi.

Oh, it needs to be like this to open.

23 Terms of address

Terms of address vary according to degree of familiarity and level of respect. Through the use of a combination of title, kinship term, surname, and/or given name, terms of address can be adjusted to reflect the appropriate degree of formality and familiarity.

23.1 Social niceties

23.1.1 Greetings

The general greeting 你好 **Lí hó** ‘Hello’ can be used with both strangers and acquaintances and is either stated with a slight bow or repeated with multiple quick nods of the head. A more polite method of greeting can be formed with an appropriate term of address followed by 好 **hó**.

term of address + 好

term of address + hó

‘Hello, *term of address*’

老師好。	王小姐好。	大叔好。
Lāu-su hó.	Ông sió-chiá hó.	Tōa chek hó.
老師好。	王小姐好。	大叔好。
Lǎoshī hǎo.	Wáng xiǎojiě hǎo.	Dàshū hǎo.
Hello, Teacher.	Hello, Ms. Ong.	Hello, Uncle.

The phrase 食飽未? **Chiáh-pá--bōe?** ‘Have you eaten yet?’ is a traditional way of greeting a guest. This greeting originates from the cultural tradition of a host ensuring that his or her guests are well-fed and looked after. Other variations on the question can be used such as ‘你敢食飽? **Lí kám chiáh-pá?**’ or ‘你食好未? **Lí chiáh-hó--bōe?**’ Similar to the greeting in English, ‘How are you?’, the question generally is asked out of politeness and custom rather than truly inquiring about one’s state of hunger. Typically, a response to the question is a simple affirmation of having already eaten such as ‘有矣, 食飽 **ū--ah, chiáh-pá**’.

歡迎 **Hoan-gêng** ‘Welcome’ is the general expression to welcome a guest. The two traditional expressions 失敬 **Sit-kèng** and 失迎 **Sit-gêng** now find limited usage in more formal contexts.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
你好。 Lí hó.	你好。 Nǐ hǎo.	Hello.
喂？ Oeh?	喂？ Wéi?	Hello? (<i>telephone</i>).
你好無？ Lí hó--bô?	你好？ Nǐ hǎo ma?	How are you?
食飽未？ Chiáh-pá--bōe?	吃飽了嗎？ Chībǎo le ma?	How are you? (<i>lit. Have you eaten?</i>)
歡迎。 Hoan-gêng.	歡迎。 Huānyíng.	Welcome.
失敬。 Sit-kèng.	失敬。 Shī jìng.	Welcome (<i>polite</i>) (<i>lit. Excuse me for being disrespectful</i>).
失迎。 Sit-gêng.	失迎。 Shī yíng.	Welcome (<i>polite</i>) (<i>lit. Excuse me for not greeting you personally</i>).
賢早。 Gâu-chá.	早安。 Zǎo ān.	Good morning.
午安。 Ngó-an.	午安。 Wǔ ān.	Good afternoon.

Note that Taiwanese does not have a direct equivalent of the Mandarin polite form of the singular second person pronoun 您 **nín** ‘you (*polite*)’ to form the expression 您好 **Nín hǎo** ‘Hello (*polite*)’.

23.1.2 Giving thanks

多謝 **to-siā** ‘Thank you’ is the most common form of expressing gratitude, while 感恩 **kám-un** and 感謝 **kám-siā** are slightly more formal in tone. These terms can be used independently or followed by the reason for offering thanks.

非常 感謝 你來機場共我接。

Hui-siông **kám-siā** lí lâi ki-tiûⁿ kā góa chiap.

非常 感謝 你來機場接我。

Fēicháng **gǎnxiè** nǐ lái jīchǎng jiē wǒ.

Thank you very much for picking me up at the airport.

Responses to offerings of thanks play down the importance or magnitude of the gesture generally with meanings like 免客氣 **Bián-kheh-khì** ‘Don’t be polite,’ or 無啥物 **Bô-siāⁿ-mih** ‘It’s nothing’.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
SHOWING APPRECIATION		
多謝。 To-siā.	謝謝。 Xièxiè.	Thank you.

感謝。Kám-siā.	謝謝。Xièxiè.	Thank you.
感恩。Kám-un.	感謝。Gǎnxiè.	I'm very grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

免客氣。Bián-kheh-khì.	不客氣。Bù kèqì.	You're welcome (<i>lit. Don't be polite</i>).
無啥物。Bô-siá ⁿ -mih.	沒什麼。Méishénme.	It's nothing.
無代誌。Bô-tāi-chì.	沒事。Méishì.	It's nothing.

23.1.3 Apologies

The expression 失禮 **sit-lé** 'excuse me, sorry' is generally used in instances where one unintentionally wrongs or disrespects another party. 歹勢 **pháiⁿ-sè**, which conveys both embarrassment and awkwardness, is more often used for situations in which a mistake or error has knowingly been made. However, note that many speakers disregard this distinction and use them interchangeably.

對不住 **Tùi-put-chū** comes from the literary register, and its usage is limited to more formal contexts.

Responses to apologies vary but generally play down the importance or magnitude of the offense.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
APOLOGIZING		
失禮。Sit-lé.	對不起。Duìbùqǐ.	Sorry (<i>disrespect</i>). Excuse me.
歹勢。Phái ⁿ -sè.	不好意思。Bùhǎo yìsi.	Sorry (<i>embarrassment, mistake</i>). Apologies.
對不住。Tùi-put-chū.	抱歉。Bàoqiàn.	Sorry (<i>formal</i>). Apologies.
FORGIVING		
無要緊。Bô-iàu-kín.	不要緊。Bùyàojǐn.	It's not important.
無打緊。Bô-tá ⁿ -kín.	不要緊。Bùyàojǐn.	It's not important.
無關係。Bô-koan-hē.	沒關係。Méiguānxì.	It doesn't matter.
無啥物。Bô-siá ⁿ -mih.	沒什麼。Méishénme.	It's nothing.
無代誌。Bô-tāi-chì.	沒事。Méishì.	It's nothing.
無代無誌。Bô-tāi-bô-chì.	沒事。Méishì.	It's nothing.

23.1.4 Salutations

再見 **Chài-kiàn** and 再會 **Chài-hòe**, both meaning ‘Goodbye’, may be used by either party. However, 閣再來 **koh-chài-lâi** ‘Come again’ and 順行 **sūn-kiâⁿ** ‘Take care’ are stated by the host sending off a guest.

一路平安 **Chit-lō pêng-an** and 一路順風 **Chit-lō sūn-hong** ‘Have a good trip!’ are two proverbs offering well wishes to anyone about to embark on a journey.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
再見。Chài-kiàn.	再見。Zàijiàn.	Goodbye.
再會。Chài-hòe.	再見。Zàijiàn.	Goodbye.
閣再來。Koh-chài-lâi.	再來。Zàilái.	Come again.
失陪。Sit-pôe.	先走了。Xiān zǒu le.	Excuse me for leaving early.
順行。Sūn-kiâ ⁿ .	慢走。Màn zǒu.	Take care.
暗安。Àm-an.	晚安。Wǎn ān.	Good evening/night.
晚安。Bóan-an.	晚安。Wǎn ān.	Good evening/night.
一路平安。Chit-lō pêng-an.	一路平安。Yīlù píng'ān.	Have a good trip!
一路順風。Chit-lō sūn-hong.	一路順風。Yīlù shùnfēng.	Have a good trip!

23.2 Introductions

23.2.1 Surnames

When meeting someone for the first time, it is customary to inquire about his or her surname. Once the surname has been established, a title relating to gender, marital status, or profession can be used to form a direct term of address (see [23.2.3 Titles](#)).

surname + title

SURNAME	TITLE	TERM OF ADDRESS
劉	先生	劉先生
Lâu	sian-si ⁿ	Lâu--sian-si ⁿ
劉	先生	劉先生
Liú	xiānshēng	Liú xiānshēng
Lau	Mr.	Mr. Lau

蔡	醫師	蔡 醫師
Chhòa	i-su	Chhòa i-su
蔡	醫師	蔡 醫師
Cài	yīshī	Cài yīshī
Chhoa	Dr.	Dr. Chhoa

洪	太太	洪 太太
Âng	thài-thài	Âng thài-thài
洪	太太	洪 太太
Hóng	tàitài	Hóng tàitài
Ang	Mrs.	Mrs. Ang

To politely ask for someone's surname, the polite term 貴 **kùi** 'honorable' can be used. Additionally, a response can include 小 **sió** 'lowly' to suggest humility.

你 貴 姓？

Lí kùi sèⁿ?

您 貴 姓？

Nín guì xìng?

What is your surname (*polite*)?

我 小 姓 林。

Góa sió sèⁿ Lâm.

我 敝 姓 林。

Wǒ bì xìng Lín.

My surname is Lim (*polite*).

Note that Taiwanese does not have an equivalent polite form of the second person pronoun 您 **nín** 'you (*polite*)'. However, another polite way to ask someone's surname is to include the first person plural-inclusive pronoun 咱 **lán** 'we (*inclusive*)' suggesting a more friendly tone.

咱 貴 姓？

Lán kùi sèⁿ?

What is your surname (*polite*)?

(lit. What are we surnamed?)

In less formal settings, the question and response can be more direct.

你 姓 啥 物？

Lí sèⁿ siáⁿ-mih?

你 姓 什麼？

Nǐ xìng shénme?

What is your surname?

我 姓 張。

Góo sèⁿ Tiūⁿ.

我 姓 張。

Wǒ xìng Zhāng.

My surname is Tiunn.

23.2.2 Given names

In circumstances where additional interaction may not be expected or in more respectful contexts, a surname followed by the appropriate title suffices for a term of address. In other formal contexts, the full name, which includes both the surname and given name, can be used. Note that the surname always precedes the given name.

surname + given name

SURNAME	GIVEN NAME	TERM OF ADDRESS
陳	嘉明	陳 嘉明
Tân	Ka-bêng	Tân Ka-bêng
陳	嘉明	陳 嘉明
Chén	Jiāmíng	Chén Jiāmíng
Tan	Ka-beng	Ka-beng Tan
楊	玫黎	楊 玫黎
Iû ⁿ	Mûi-lê	Iû ⁿ Mûi-lê
楊	玫黎	楊 玫黎
Yáng	Méilí	Yáng Méilí
Iunn	Mui-le	Mui-le Iunn

If asking about the full name or just the given name, the verbs 叫(做) **kiò(-chò)** or 號(做) **hō(-chò)**, both meaning ‘to be called by’, can be used. Note that 做 **-chò** may be omitted.

你 號做 / 叫做 啥物 名？

Lí hō-chò / kiò-chò siáⁿ-mih miâ?

What is your name (*full or given name*)?

Depending on whether the surname has already been established or on the preference of the person addressed, the response can include the full name or just the given name.

Below are variations on how to respond with the full name or just the given name.

VARIATION 1

我姓楊，叫玫黎。

Góa sèⁿ Iūⁿ, kiò Mûi-lê.

我姓楊，叫玫黎。

Wǒ xìng Yáng, jiào Méilí.

My surname is Iunn, and my given name is Mui-le.

VARIATION 2

我是楊玫黎。

Góa sī Iūⁿ Mûi-lê.

我是楊玫黎。

Wǒ shì Yáng Méilí.

I am Mui-le Iunn.

VARIATION 3

我的名是玫黎。

Góa ê miâ sī Mûi-lê.

我的名字是玫黎。

Wǒ de míngzì shì Méilí.

My name is Mui-le.

VARIATION 4

我叫(做)玫黎。

Góa kiò(-chò) Mûi-lê.

我叫玫黎。

Wǒ jiào Méilí.

I am called Mui-le.

In more informal contexts among peers, a person may introduce himself or herself by only a given name or nickname (see [23.2.7 Adding the prefix 阿 A- to mark endearment](#)).

我叫嘉明 / 我叫阿明。

Góa kiò Ka-bêng / Góa kiò A-bêng.

我叫嘉明 / 我叫阿明。

Wǒ jiào Jiāmíng / Wǒ jiào Amíng.

I am called Ka-beng (*given name*) / I am called A-beng (*nickname*).

23.2.3 Titles

Titles can be given based on gender/marital status or profession. Both in direct address and in reference to a person, the surname is first given followed by the title.

SURNAME	TITLE	TERM OF ADDRESS
林	先生	林 先生
Lîm	sian-si ⁿ	Lîm--sian-si ⁿ
林	先生	林 先生
Lín	xiānshēng	Lín xiānshēng
Lim	Mr.	Mr. Lim
黃	經理	黃 經理
Ng	keng-lí	Ng keng-lí
黃	經理	黃 經理
Huáng	jīnglǐ	Huáng jīnglǐ
Ng	Manager	Manager Ng

When the surname is not known, the title can be used on its own in direct address.

先生，小等一下。

Sian-siⁿ, sió tán--chit-ē.

先生，稍等一下。

Xiānshēng, shāo děng yīxià.

Sir, please wait a moment.

For a more polite form of address without the surname, the professional title can be followed by the gender/marital status title.

title (professional) + title (gender/marital status)

TITLE (PROFESSION)	TITLE (GENDER/MARITAL STATUS)	TERM OF ADDRESS
總統	小姐	總統 小姐
chóng-thóng	sió-chiá	chóng-thóng sió-chiá
總統	小姐	總統 小姐
Zǒngtǒng	xiǎojiě	Zǒngtǒng xiǎojiě
President	Ms. / Madam	Madam President

Married women generally use their maiden names when giving full names or addressed with the title 小

姐 **sió-chiá** ‘Ms.’. Only when addressed with the title 太太 **thài-thài** ‘Mrs.’ do women use their husbands’ surnames.

Note that the title 先生 **sian-siⁿ** ‘Mr.’ is placed in the neutral tone when following a surname.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
GENDER/MARITAL STATUS		
先生 sian-si ⁿ (sian-se ⁿ)	先生 xiānshēng	Mr., Sir
小姐 sió-chiá	小姐 xiǎojiě	Ms., Miss, Madam
太太 thài-thài	太太 tàitài	Mrs., Madam
PROFESSION		
醫師 i-su	醫師 yīshī	Dr. (<i>medical</i>)
護士 hō-sū	護士 hùshì	nurse
律師 lùt-su	律師 lùshī	lawyer
法官 hoat-koa ⁿ	法官 fǎguān	judge
老師 lāu-su	老師 lǎoshī	teacher
教授 kàu-siū	教授 jiàoshòu	professor
博士 phok-sū	博士 bóshì	Dr. (<i>PhD</i>)
校長 hāu-tiú ⁿ	校長 xiàozhǎng	principal
秘書 pì-su	秘書 mìshū	secretary
經理 keng-lí	經理 jīnglǐ	manager
主任 chú-jīm (chú-līm)	主任 zhǔrèn	director
總經理 chóng-keng-lí	總經理 zǒngjīnglǐ	general manager (CEO)
董事長 táng-sū-tiú ⁿ	董事長 dǒngshìzhǎng	chairman
市長 chhī-tiú ⁿ	市長 shìzhǎng	mayor
總統 chóng-thóng	總統 zǒngtǒng	president
師傅 sai-hū	師傅 shīfu	master craftsman, expert
師父 su-hū	師父 shīfu	mentor, teacher, monk

23.2.4 Adding the suffix 姓 --sèⁿ to a surname

The suffix 姓 --sèⁿ can be added to a surname as a polite way to both directly address or refer to a man. This appellation is acceptable to use with strangers as well as with those one has already acquainted. Note that the suffix 姓 --sèⁿ is placed in the neutral tone.

surname + 姓

surname + --sèⁿ

SURNAME	PREFIX/TITLE	SUFFIX	TERM OF ADDRESS
李	-	姓	張姓
Lí	-	--sè ⁿ	Lí--sè ⁿ
李	老	-	老李
Lì	lǎo	-	Lǎo Lì
Li	Mr.	-	Mr. Li

This is similar to the Mandarin practice of adding the prefix 老 **lǎo-** before a surname to politely refer to a man.

23.2.5 Adding the suffix 的 --ê to a surname

The suffix 的 --ê can be added to a surname as a polite way to both directly address or refer to a man with whom one is already familiar. A few professional titles (such as 董事長 **táng-sū-tiúⁿ** ‘chairman’ and 總經理 **chóng-keng-lí** ‘CEO’) can also be abbreviated by the suffix. Note that the suffix 的 --ê is in the neutral tone.

surname + 的

surname + --ê

SURNAME	PREFIX/TITLE	SUFFIX	TERM OF ADDRESS
吳	-	的	吳的
Ngô ^ˊ	-	--ê	Ngô--ê
吳	老	-	老吳
Wú	lǎo	-	Lǎo Wú
Ngou	Mr.	-	Mr. Ngou
曾	董事長	的	曾 董的
Chan	Táng-sū-tiú ⁿ	--ê	Chan táng--ê
曾	董事長	-	曾 董事長
Zēng	dǒngshìzhǎng	-	Zēng dǒngshìzhǎng
Chan	Chairman	-	Chairman Chan

This is similar to the Mandarin practice of adding the prefix 老 **lǎo-** before a man's surname.

23.2.6 Adding the suffix 仔 --á to a surname

The suffix 仔 --á can be added to a surname as a polite way to both directly address or refer to a man with whom one is already familiar. Note that the suffix 仔 --á is placed in the neutral tone.

surname + 仔
surname + --á

SURNAME	PREFIX/TITLE	SUFFIX	TERM OF ADDRESS
張	-	仔	張仔
Tiu ⁿ	-	--á	Tiu ⁿ --á
張	老	-	老張
Zhāng	lǎo	-	Lǎo Zhāng
Tiunn	Mr.	-	Mr. Tiunn

This is similar to the Mandarin practice of adding the prefix 老 **lǎo-** before a man's surname.

23.2.7 Adding the prefix 阿 A- to mark endearment

The prefix 阿 **A-** is often paired with one character from the given name to suggest familiarity and as a term of endearment. This nickname is often used among friends and to refer to family members by name.

SURNAME	GIVEN NAME	NICKNAME 1	NICKNAME 2
陳	嘉明	阿嘉	阿明
Tân	Ka-bêng	A-ka	A-bêng

Moreover, this prefix has also been incorporated as part of many kinship terms.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
-----------	----------	---------

阿母 a-bú	媽媽 māmā	mother
阿兄 a-hia ⁿ	哥哥 gēgē	older brother
阿姊 a-chí	姊姊 jiějiě	older sister

23.2.8 Referencing a family with the suffix 家 --ka

The suffix 家 --**ka** can be added to a surname to refer to a family collectively. Note that the suffix 家 --**ka** is placed in the neutral tone.

surname + 家
surname + --ka
 ‘the *surname* family’

SURNAME	SUFFIX	TERM OF REFERENCE
王	家	王家
Ông	--ka	Ông--ka
王	家	王家
Wáng	jiā	Wáng jiā
Ong	family	the Ong family / the Ongs

恁 劉家 攏 對 咱 足 好。

In Lâu--ka lóng tùi lán chiok hó.

他們 劉 家 都 對 我們 非常 好。

Tāmen Liú jiā dōu duì wǒmen fēicháng hǎo.

The Laus always treat us very well.

23.3 Kinship terms

Kinship terms are special terms used to either directly address or indirectly refer to another family member. The kinship term system is quite extensive in Chinese culture and specifies what type of familial relationship exists between two individuals.

Generally relatives who are of the same generation address each other by his or her given name. Relatives who belong to a younger generation are also addressed by their given name, while relatives who are of an older generation are addressed by a kinship term denoting the relationship.

Differentiation within the kinship term system is based on lineage (blood relation), gender, relative age, and generation. While there is some degree of variance in usage, a few principles guide the system of nomenclature.

The Chinese kinship term system is patrilineal and privileges relations along the paternal side. Traditionally, only males with a blood relation through the father could continue the familial line. Once a woman marries, she is considered part of her husband's family. Some kinship terms have prefixes such as 外 **gōe, gōa** 'outside' or 表 **piáu** 'via female relations' to explicitly indicate that the relation is non-patrilineal.

There is also a strong emphasis placed on relative age and generation. More respect is accorded to relatives older than oneself in the same generation. Additionally, this level of respect based on relative age carries across generations. For example, more respect should be given to one's father's older brother than one's father's younger brother.

Note that there is quite a degree of variance among families in the usage of kinship terms. Due to its complexity and traditional nature, some families are less strict in adhering to the proper terminology. Moreover, with contemporary Taiwanese families smaller and more dispersed, younger generations may not be as familiar with the terms for more distant relatives.

Finally, note that in less formal contexts, the same term used in direct address can also be casually used to refer to one's family member.

23.3.1 Immediate family

There is significant variety in how one can address immediate family members. Note that younger siblings and children are generally addressed by their given names.

TAIWANESE REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS	MANDARIN REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS
FATHER			
老爸 lāu-pē	阿爸 a-pa 爸爸 pa-pa (pá-pah) 爸 pâ*	父親 fùqīn	爸爸 bàba 爸 bà
MOTHER			
老母 lāu-bú	阿母 a-bú (a-bó) 媽媽 ma-ma (má-mah) 媽 mâ*	母親 mǔqīn 媽 mā	媽媽 māmā
OLDER BROTHER			
兄哥 hia ⁿ -ko	阿兄 a-hia ⁿ 哥哥 ko-ko 哥 kô*	哥哥 gēgē 兄 xiōng	哥哥 gēgē 哥 gē
OLDER SISTER			

阿姊 a-chí (a-ché)	阿姊 a-chí (a-ché) 姊姊 ché-ché 姊 chî*	姊姊 jiějie 姊 jiě	<i>same as reference</i>
YOUNGER BROTHER			
小弟 sió-tī	<i>given name</i>	弟(弟) dì(dì)	<i>given name</i>
YOUNGER SISTER			
小妹 sió-mōe (sió-bē)	<i>given name</i>	妹(妹) mèi(mèi)	<i>given name</i>
HUSBAND			
翁 ang	<i>given name</i>	丈夫 zhàngfū	<i>given name</i>
頭家 thâu-ke	翁的 ang--ê	先生 xiānshēng	老公 lǎogōng
先生 sian-si ⁿ			
WIFE			
某 bó ^ˊ	<i>given name</i>	妻子 qīzi	<i>given name</i>
太太 thài-thài	某的 bó--ê	太太 tàitài	老婆 lǎopó
牽手 khan-chhiú			
家後 ke-āu			
SON			
後生 hāu-se ⁿ	<i>given name</i>	兒子 érzi	<i>given name</i>
ㄟ kiá ⁿ	後生 hāu-se ⁿ	兒子 érzi	兒子 érzi
DAUGHTER			
查某ㄟ cha-bó-kiá ⁿ	<i>given name</i>	女兒 nüér	<i>given name</i>
查ㄟ cha-kiá ⁿ	查ㄟ cha-kiá ⁿ	女兒 nüér	女兒 nüér

*Some Taiwanese speakers informally address immediate family members with a one-syllable term that is quickly but smoothly drawn out over two tones. The sound is somewhat like a rising fifth tone that is then followed by a short falling third tone.

STANDARD TERM	INFORMAL TERM	MEANING
阿爸	爸	father
a-pa	pa* (pâ → à)	
阿母	媽	mother
a-bú	ma* (mâ → à)	
阿兄	哥	older brother
a-hia ⁿ	ko* (kô → ò)	
阿姊	姊	older sister
a-chí	chi* (chî → ì)	

23.3.2 Paternal side

On the paternal side, uncles are differentiated by relative age to one's father while no distinction is made for aunts. The spouses of paternal uncles and aunts have special terms as well. Cousins who are children of paternal uncles are prefixed with 叔伯 **chek-peh** 'via male relations' before adding the proper sibling term according to one's relative age. On the other hand, the cousins who are children of aunts follow the same appellation as all cousins on one's maternal side, which are prefixed 表 **piáu** 'via female relations' before adding the appropriate sibling term relative to one's age. For cousins, 叔伯 **chek-peh** and 表 **piáu** are typically used only in reference and not direct address. Instead, the terms for 'older brother' and 'older sister' are used to directly address older cousins.

TAIWANESE REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS	MANDARIN REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS
GRANDFATHER FATHER'S FATHER			
阿公 a-kong	阿公 a-kong	祖父 zǔfù	爺爺 yéyé
內公 lāi-kong			
GRANDMOTHER FATHER'S MOTHER			
阿媽 a-má	阿媽 a-má	祖母 zǔmǔ	奶奶 nǎinai
內媽 lāi-má			
UNCLE FATHER'S OLDER BROTHER			
阿伯 a-peh	same as reference	伯父 bófù	伯伯 bóbo
伯仔 peh-á			
AUNT FATHER'S OLDER BROTHER'S WIFE			
阿姆 a-m̃	same as reference	伯母 bómǔ	伯母 bómǔ
姆仔 m̃--á		伯娘 bóniáng	
UNCLE FATHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER			
阿叔 a-chek	same as reference	叔父 shūfù	叔叔 shūshu
AUNT FATHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER'S WIFE			
阿嬲 a-chím	same as reference	嬸嬸 shěnshe	嬸嬸 shěnshe
		嬸母 shěnmǔ	
		叔母 shūmǔ	
AUNT FATHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER			
阿姑 a-koˊ	阿姑 a-koˊ	姑媽 gūmā	姑媽 gūmā
	姑姑 koˊ-koˊ	姑母 gūmǔ	姑姑 gūgū
UNCLE FATHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER'S HUSBAND			
姑丈 koˊ-tiūˊ	same as reference	姑丈 gūzhàng	姑丈 gūzhàng
		姑夫 gūfū	
COUSIN FATHER'S BROTHER'S SON OLDER THAN ONESELF			
叔伯阿兄 chek-peh-a-hiaˊ	阿兄 a-hiaˊ	堂兄 tángxiōng	哥哥 gēgē
叔伯大兄 chek-peh-tōa-hiaˊ		堂哥 tánggē	堂哥 tánggē
COUSIN FATHER'S BROTHER'S DAUGHTER OLDER THAN ONESELF			
叔伯大姊 chek-peh-tōa-chí	阿姊 a-chí	堂姊 tángjiě	姊姊 jiějiě

COUSIN | FATHER'S BROTHER'S SON YOUNGER THAN ONESELF

叔伯小弟 chek-peh-sió-tī	<i>given name</i>	堂弟 tángdì	<i>given name</i>
----------------------	-------------------	-----------	-------------------

COUSIN | FATHER'S BROTHER'S DAUGHTER YOUNGER THAN ONESELF

叔伯小妹 chek-peh-sió-mōe	<i>given name</i>	堂妹 tángmèi	<i>given name</i>
-----------------------	-------------------	------------	-------------------

COUSIN | FATHER'S SISTER'S SON OLDER THAN ONESELF

表兄 piáu-hia ⁿ	阿兄 a-hia ⁿ	表哥 biǎogē	哥哥 gēgē
--------------------------	-----------------------	-----------	---------

COUSIN | FATHER'S SISTER'S DAUGHTER OLDER THAN ONESELF

表姊 piáu-chí	阿姊 a-chí	表姊 biǎojiě	姊姊 jiějiě
-------------	----------	------------	-----------

COUSIN | FATHER'S SISTER'S SON YOUNGER THAN ONESELF

表小弟 piáu-sió-tī	<i>given name</i>	表弟 biǎodì	<i>given name</i>
-----------------	-------------------	-----------	-------------------

COUSIN | FATHER'S SISTER'S DAUGHTER YOUNGER THAN ONESELF

表妹 piáu-mōe (piáu-bē)	<i>given name</i>	表妹 biǎomèi	<i>given name</i>
-----------------------	-------------------	------------	-------------------

23.3.3 Maternal side

On the maternal side, grandparents are prefixed by 外 **gōa-** ‘outside’ in indirect address but in direct address follow the same terms as those on the paternal side. Additionally, on the maternal side neither uncles nor aunts are differentiated by relative age to one’s mother. All cousins on the maternal side are prefixed by 表 **piáu** followed by the appropriate sibling term relative to one’s age.

TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS	REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS
GRANDFATHER MOTHER'S FATHER			
外公 gōa-kong	阿公 a-kong	外祖父 wàizǔfù	姥爺 lǎoyé
		外租公 wàizǔgōng	外公 wàigōng
		外父 wàifù	
GRANDMOTHER MOTHER'S MOTHER			
外媽 gōa-má	阿媽 a-má	外祖母 wàizǔmǔ	姥姥 lǎolǎo
		外婆 wàipó	外婆 wàipó
UNCLE MOTHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER BROTHER			
阿舅 a-kū	阿舅 a-kū	舅舅 jiùjiu	舅舅 jiùjiu
母舅 bú-kū (bó-kū)		舅父 jiùfù	
UNCLE MOTHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER BROTHER'S WIFE			
阿姪 a-kīm	阿姪 a-kīm	舅媽 jiùmā	舅媽 jiùmā
母姪 bú-kīm (bó-kīm)		舅母 jiùmǔ	姪母 jìnmǔ
			姪子 jìnzi
AUNT MOTHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER			
阿姨 a-î	<i>same as reference</i>	姨媽 yímā	姨媽 yímā

		姨母 yímǔ	阿姨 āyí
UNCLE MOTHER'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER'S HUSBAND			
姨丈 î-tiū ^a	same as reference	姨丈 yízhàng 姨夫 yífū	姨丈 yízhàng
COUSIN MOTHER'S BROTHER/SISTER'S SON OLDER THAN ONESELF			
表兄 piáu-hia ^a	阿兄 a-hia ^a	表哥 biǎogē	哥哥 gēgē
COUSIN MOTHER'S BROTHER/SISTER'S DAUGHTER OLDER THAN ONESELF			
表姊 piáu-chí	阿姊 a-chí	表姊 biǎojiě	姊姊 jiějiě
COUSIN MOTHER'S BROTHER/SISTER'S SON YOUNGER THAN ONESELF			
表小弟 piáu-sió-tī	given name	表弟 biǎodì	given name
COUSIN MOTHER'S BROTHER/SISTER'S DAUGHTER YOUNGER THAN ONESELF			
表妹 piáu-mōe (piáu-bē)	given name	表妹 biǎomèi	given name

Note that Mandarin uses different terms for direct address between maternal and paternal grandparents.

23.3.4 In-laws

While English adds ‘-in-law’ to a kinship term to refer to family through marriage, Taiwanese has specific kinship terms for each spouse depending on relative age, gender, and bloodline. Note the kinship terms for the siblings of one’s spouse resemble closely the terms that one’s children would use to address them.

TAIWANESE REFERENCE	DIRECT	MANDARIN REFERENCE	DIRECT
IMMEDIATE FAMILY (SPOUSE OF A BLOOD RELATION)			
SISTER-IN-LAW OLDER BROTHER'S WIFE			
阿嫂 a-só	same as reference	嫂 sǎo	嫂嫂 sǎosǎo 嫂子 sǎozi
SISTER-IN-LAW YOUNGER BROTHER'S WIFE			
弟婦仔 tē-hū-á	same as reference	弟媳 dìxí	弟妹 dìmèi 弟婦 dìfù
小嬲 sió-chím			
姪仔 kīm-á			
BROTHER-IN-LAW OLDER SISTER'S HUSBAND			
姊夫 chí-hu	same as reference	姊夫 jiěfū	same as reference
BROTHER-IN-LAW YOUNGER SISTER'S HUSBAND			
妹婿 mōe-sài (bē-sài)	same as reference	妹夫 mèifū	same as reference
SON-IN-LAW			
女婿 kiá ^a -sài	same as reference	女婿 nǚxù	same as reference

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

新婦 sin-pū	same as reference	兒媳 érxí	媳婦 xífù
-----------	-------------------	---------	---------

HUSBAND'S SIDE**FATHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S FATHER**

大官 ta-koa ⁿ	same as reference	公公 gōnggōng	same as reference
------------------------	-------------------	-------------	-------------------

MOTHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S MOTHER

大家 ta-ke	same as reference	婆婆 pópo	same as reference
----------	-------------------	---------	-------------------

BROTHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S OLDER BROTHER

大伯(仔) tōa-peh(-á)	same as reference	大伯 dàbó	大伯(子) dàbó(zì)
-------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------

SISTER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S OLDER BROTHER'S WIFE

大嫂 tōa-só	same as reference	大嫂 dàsǎo	大嫂 dàsǎo
大姆 tōa-m̃			嫂嫂 sǎosǎo

BROTHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S YOUNGER BROTHER

細叔 sè-chek	same as reference	小叔 xiǎoshū	same as reference
小叔 sió-chek			
阿叔仔 a-chek-á			

SISTER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S YOUNGER BROTHER'S WIFE

小嬸 sió-chím	same as reference	小嬸 xiǎoshěn	same as reference
弟妹 dìmèi			

SISTER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S OLDER SISTER

大娘姑 tōa-niū-ko ^ˊ	same as reference	大姑 dàgū	大姑(子) dàgū(zì)
-----------------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------

BROTHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S OLDER SISTER'S HUSBAND

姊夫 chí-hu	same as reference	姊夫 jiěfū	same as reference
-----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

SISTER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S YOUNGER SISTER

小姑 sió-ko ^ˊ	same as reference	小姑 xiǎogū	小姑(子) xiǎogū(zì)
------------------------	-------------------	-----------	------------------

BROTHER-IN-LAW | HUSBAND'S YOUNGER SISTER'S HUSBAND

妹婿 mōe-sài (bē-sài)	same as reference	妹夫 mèifū	same as reference
---------------------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

WIFE'S SIDE**FATHER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S FATHER**

丈人(爸) tiū ⁿ -lâng(-pâ)	same as reference	岳父 yuèfù	岳父 yuèzhàng
-----------------------------------	-------------------	----------	-------------

MOTHER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S MOTHER

丈姆(婆) tiū ⁿ -m̃(-pô)	same as reference	岳母 yuèmǔ	丈母(娘) zhàngmǔ(niáng)
---------------------------------	-------------------	----------	----------------------

BROTHER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S OLDER BROTHER

大舅(仔) tōa-kū(-á)	same as reference	內兄 nèixiōng	大舅(子) dàjiù(zì)
------------------	-------------------	-------------	-----------------

SISTER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S OLDER BROTHER'S WIFE

兄嫂 hia ⁿ -só	same as reference	大舅嫂 dàjiùsǎo	大舅嫂 dàjiùsǎo
阿嫂 a-só			嫂嫂 sǎosǎo

BROTHER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S YOUNGER BROTHER

舅仔 kū-á	same as reference	內娣 nèidì	小舅(子) xiǎojiù(zì)
---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

SISTER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S YOUNGER BROTHER'S WIFE

姪仔 kīm-á	same as reference	小舅嫂 xiǎojiùsǎo	小舅嫂 xiǎojiùsǎo
		內娣婦 nèidífù	

SISTER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER

姨仔 î-á	same as reference	姨姐 yíjiě (older)	大姨(子) dàyí(zì) (older)
		姨妹 yímèi (younger)	小姨(子) xiǎoyí(zì) (younger)

BROTHER-IN-LAW | WIFE'S OLDER/YOUNGER SISTER'S HUSBAND

大細仙 tōa-sòe-sian	same as reference	襟兄 jīnxiōng (older)	same as reference
大細丈 tōa-sòe-tiū ⁿ		襟弟 jīndì (younger)	
同門的 tâng-mîg--ê		連襟 liánjīn	

23.3.5 Children of relatives

Note that the character 孫 **sun** ‘descendant’ is used in varying combinations of terms to represent not only grandchildren but also nephews and nieces.

Additionally, the terms that are used to refer to one's sister's children depends on one's own gender. Because the kinship term system is patrilineal, children of one's sister are outside of the family and prefixed with 外 **gōe-** if the speaker is male. If the speaker is female, the children of one's sister are prefixed with 姨 **î** ‘aunt’ indicating sisterhood on the maternal side.

TAIWANESE REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS	MANDARIN REFERENCE	DIRECT ADDRESS
IMMEDIATE FAMILY			
NEPHEW BROTHER'S SON			
孫仔 sun-á	given name	姪子 zhízi	given name
姪仔 tít-á		姪兒 zhí'ér	
NIECE BROTHER'S DAUGHTER			
查某孫仔 cha-bó-sun-á	given name	姪女 zhínǚ	given name
姪女 tít-lú			
NEPHEW SISTER'S SON AND ONE IS MALE			
外甥(仔) gōe-seng(-á)	given name	外甥 wàishēng	given name
NIECE SISTER'S DAUGHTER AND ONE IS MALE			
外甥女(仔) gōe-seng-lí(-á)	given name	外姪女 wàizhínǚ	given name
NEPHEW SISTER'S SON AND ONE IS FEMALE			
姨甥 î-seng	given name	姨甥 yíshēng	given name
NIECE SISTER'S DAUGHTER AND ONE IS FEMALE			
姨甥女 î-seng-lú	given name	姨甥女 yíshēngnǚ	given name
HUSBAND'S SIDE			

NEPHEW | HUSBAND'S BROTHER'S SON

姪仔 tit-á	<i>given name</i>	姪兒 zhí'ér	<i>given name</i>
孫仔 sun-á		姪子 zhízi	

NIECE | HUSBAND'S BROTHER'S DAUGHTER

查某孫仔 cha-bó-sun-á	<i>given name</i>	姪女 zhínǚ	<i>given name</i>
-------------------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

NEPHEW | HUSBAND'S SISTER'S SON

外甥(仔) gōe-seng(-á)	<i>given name</i>	外甥 wàishēng	<i>given name</i>
--------------------	-------------------	-------------	-------------------

NIECE | HUSBAND'S SISTER'S DAUGHTER

外甥女(仔) gōe-seng-lí(-á)	<i>given name</i>	外姪女 wàizhínǚ	<i>given name</i>
------------------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------------

WIFE'S SIDE**NEPHEW | WIFE'S BROTHER/SISTER'S SON**

外甥(仔) gōe-seng(-á)	<i>given name</i>	外甥 wàishēng	<i>given name</i>
--------------------	-------------------	-------------	-------------------

NIECE | WIFE'S BROTHER/SISTER'S DAUGHTER

外甥女(仔) gōe-seng-lí(-á)	<i>given name</i>	外姪女 wàizhínǚ	<i>given name</i>
------------------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------------

GRANDCHILDREN**GRANDSON | SON'S SON**

孫 sun	<i>given name</i>	孫兒 sūnér	<i>given name</i>
內孫 lāi-sun		內孫 nèisūn	
		孫子 sūnzi	

GRANDDAUGHTER | SON'S DAUGHTER

查某孫 cha-bó-sun	<i>given name</i>	孫女 sūnnǚ	<i>given name</i>
		內孫女 nèisūnnǚ	

GRANDSON | DAUGHTER'S SON

外孫 gōa-sun	<i>given name</i>	外孫(兒) wàisūn(ér)	<i>given name</i>
------------	-------------------	------------------	-------------------

GRANDDAUGHTER | DAUGHTER'S DAUGHTER

外查某孫 gōa-cha-bó-sun	<i>given name</i>	外孫女 wàisūnnǚ	<i>given name</i>
---------------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------------

23.3.6 Multiple siblings

If there are multiple siblings, a number representing the order of birth is often appended before the proper kinship term. The oldest generally has the prefix 大 *tōa* 'eldest'.

太叔	<i>tōa</i> chek	<u>eldest</u> uncle (<i>paternal side</i>)
二叔	<i>ī</i> chek	<u>2nd</u> oldest uncle (<i>paternal side</i>)
三叔	<i>saⁿ</i> chek	<u>3rd</u> oldest uncle (<i>paternal side</i>)
:	:	:
<u>number</u> 叔	<u>number</u> chek	<u>order of birth</u> oldest uncle (<i>paternal side</i>)

23.3.7 Group kinship terms

Group kinship terms generally are formed by stating the constituent members (爸母 **pē-bú** ‘parents’ or lit. ‘father-mother’) or adding a suffix indicating familial relations (表親 **piáu-chhin** ‘mother’s and father’s sisters’ families).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
爸母 pē-bú	父母 fùmǔ	parents
囡 kiáⁿ	孩子 háizi	children
兄弟 hiaⁿ-tī	兄弟 xiōngdì	brothers
姊妹 chí-mōe (chí-bē)	姐妹 jiěmèi	sisters
兄弟姊妹 hiaⁿ-tī-chí-mōe (hiaⁿ-tī-chí-bē)	兄弟姐妹 xiōngdìjiěmèi	siblings
阿公(佗)阿媽 a-kong (kah) a-má	祖父母 zǔfùmǔ	grandparents
阿祖 a-chó^ˊ	曾祖父母 zēngzǔfùmǔ	great-grandparents
叔伯的 chek-peh--ê	堂兄弟姐妹 tángxiōngdìjiěmèi	cousins (father’s brothers’ children)
親堂 chhin-tông	堂兄弟姐妹 tángxiōngdìjiěmèi	cousins (father’s brothers’ children)
表親 piáu-chhin	表親 biǎoqīn	mother’s and father’s sisters’ families
親情 chhin-chiâⁿ	親戚 qīnqi	relatives

Note that Taiwanese does not have a collective term to represent both grandparents. Instead, each grandparent kinship term can be read in succession or joined by a conjunction.

Additionally, note that the Taiwanese use of the character 祖 in 阿祖 **a-chó^ˊ** indicates ‘great-grandparents’, while the same character in the Mandarin 祖父母 **zǔfùmǔ** refers to ‘grandparents’.

Taiwanese uses two terms to refer to children, 囡 **kiáⁿ** and 囡仔 **gín-á**. Generally, 囡 **kiáⁿ** refers to one’s own blood relation, while 囡仔 **gín-á** refers to any child of a young age. However, this distinction is not strictly upheld. One may also hear 囡仔囡 **gín-á-kiáⁿ** or 囡仔人 **gín-á-lâng** to refer to small children. Mandarin does not make a distinction and uses the term 孩子 **háizi** in both cases.

23.3.8 Friends and colleagues within the same generation

Among friends and colleagues within the same generation, the sibling kinship terms 哥 --**ko** ‘older brother’ and 姊 ---**chí** (--**ché**) ‘older sister’, can be suffixed to a given name to show respect. Additionally, the prefix 阿 **a--** may be added to suggest familiarity.

TAIWANESE	MEANING
嘉明哥 Ka-bêng--ko	‘Brother Ka-beng’
阿明哥 A-bêng--ko	‘Brother A-beng’
美珍姊 Bí-tin--chí	‘Sister Bi-tin’
阿珍哥 A-tin--chí	‘Sister A-tin’

姊仔 **chí--á** is a term generally used for friends and colleagues who are older females but not familial relatives.

24 Time

24.1 Duration

24.1.1 Exact duration

When discussing length of time, use the following measure words to represent duration.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
hour	點鐘 tiám-cheng	小時 xiǎoshí
minute	分(鐘) hun(-cheng)	分(鐘) fēn(zhōng)
second	秒(鐘) bió(-cheng)	秒(鐘) miǎo(zhōng)

Note that the measure word 點 **tiám** ‘hour’ requires 鐘 **cheng** ‘clock’ to be placed after it whenever expressing duration. For the measure words 分 **hun** ‘minute’ and 秒 **bió** ‘second’ the inclusion of 鐘 **cheng** ‘clock’ is optional.

我今仔下早走的時間是一點鐘，十八分，三十五秒。

Góa kin-á-e-chái cháu ê sî-kan sī chit tiám-cheng, chap-peh hun, saⁿ-chap-gō bió.

我今天早上跑步的時間是一個小時，十八分，三十五秒。

Wǒ jīntiān zǎoshang pǎobù de shíjiān shì yī gè xiǎoshí, shíbā fēn, sānshíwǔ miǎo.

My run this morning was 1 hour, 18 minutes, and 35 seconds.

When stating only half an increment, use 半 **pò^a** ‘half’ *before* the measure word.

半 + *measure word*

pò^a + *measure word*

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
half an hour	半點鐘 pò ^a tiám-cheng	半(個)小時 bàn (gè) xiǎoshí
half a minute	半分(鐘) pò ^a hun(-cheng)	半分(鐘) bàn fēn(zhōng)

half a second 半秒(鐘) pò^a bió(-cheng) 半秒(鐘) bàn miǎo(zhōng)

When discussing duration with mixed whole and half units of time, place the 半 **pò^a** ‘half’ *after* the measure word.

whole number + measure word + 半

whole number + measure word + pò^a

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
2.5 hours	兩點半鐘 nāng tiám-pò ^a -cheng	兩個半小時 liǎng gè bàn xiǎoshí
5.5 minutes	五分半(鐘) gō ^h hun pò ^a (-cheng)	五分半(鐘) wǔ fēn bàn(zhōng)
10.5 seconds	十秒半(鐘) cháp bió pò ^a (-cheng)	十秒半(鐘) shí miǎo bàn(zhōng)

24.1.2 Approximate duration

There are several ways to express approximate duration.

24.1.2.1 More than

Placing 以上 **í-siōng** after the measure word and noun indicates that the duration is ‘equal to or greater than’ the stated number.

number + measure word + noun + 以上

number + measure word + noun + í-siōng

‘greater than or equal to *number*’

十 分(鐘) 以上

cháp hun(-cheng) í-siōng

十 分(鐘) 以上

shí fēn(zhōng) yǐshàng

ten minutes or more

半 點鐘 以上

pò^a tiám-cheng í-siōng

半 個 小時 以上

bàn gè xiǎoshí yǐshàng

at least a half hour

On the other hand, if 外 **gōa** ‘more than’ is placed directly after the measure word but before the noun, this indicates a duration that is ‘more than’ the stated number.

number + measure word + 外 + noun

number + measure word + -gōa- + noun

‘more than *number*’

兩點外鐘

nāng tiám-gōa-cheng

兩個多小時

liǎng gè duō xiǎoshí

more than two hours

五分外(鐘)

gō hun gōa(-cheng)

五分多(鐘)

wǔ fēn duō (zhōng)

more than five minutes

24.1.2.2 Less than

Placing 以下 **í-hā** after the measure word and noun indicates that the duration is ‘equal to or less than’ the stated number.

number + measure word + noun + 以下

number + measure word + noun + í-hā

‘less than or equal to *number*’

十秒(鐘) 以下

cháp bió(-cheng) í-hā

十秒 以下

shí miǎo yǐxià

ten seconds or less

四十五分(鐘) 以下

sì-cháp-gō 'hun(-cheng) í-hā

四十五分(鐘) 以下

Sìshíwǔ fēn(zhōng) yǐxià

45 minutes or less

Alternatively, 無到 **bô kàu** ‘not even’ can be placed directly before the number expression to indicate that the stated duration has not yet been reached.

無到 + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*

bô kàu + *number* + *measure word* + *noun*

‘less than *number*’

無到 一點鐘

bô kàu chit tiám-cheng

不到 一個小時

bù dào yī gè xiǎoshí

not even an hour

無到 二十秒(鐘)

bô kàu jī-cháp bió(-cheng)

不到 二十秒

bù dào èrshí miǎo

less than 20 seconds

24.1.2.3 Within and between

Placing (以)內 (**í-lāi**) after the measure word and noun indicates that the duration is ‘within’ the duration given by the stated number.

number + *measure word* + *noun* + (以)內

number + *measure word* + *noun* + (í-)lāi

‘within *number*’

一點鐘 (以)內

chit tiám-cheng (**í-lāi**)

一個小時 (以)內

yī gè xiǎoshí (**yǐ**)nèi

within an hour

一工 (以)內

chit kang (i)-lāi

一天 (以)內

yī tiān (yǐ)nèi

during a day

If providing a duration within a given range, place 至 **chì** ‘between’ the extents of the range.

X number + 至 + Y number + measure word + noun

X number + chì + Y number + measure word + noun

‘between *X number* to *Y number*’

五 至 七 分鐘

gō chì chhit hun-cheng

五 至 七 分鐘

wǔ zhì qī fēnzhōng

between 5-7 minutes

兩 至 三 點鐘

nāng chì saⁿ tiám-cheng

兩 至 三 個 小時

liǎng zhì sān gè xiǎo shí

within 2-3 hours

24.2 Clock time

24.2.1 Telling time

When referring to time on the clock, the word for ‘hour’ 點 **tiám** is used to express ‘ o’clock ’.

However, when talking about time on the clock and not duration 鐘 **cheng** is not used. To emphasize that the time is exactly a specific time, place 正 **chiàⁿ** after the hour.

hour + 點

hour + tiám

‘hour o’ clock’

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
1 o’clock	一點 chit tiám	一點 yī diǎn
2 o’clock	兩點 nāng tiám	兩點 liǎng diǎn
3 o’clock	三點 sa ⁿ tiám	三點 sān diǎn
:	:	:
11 o’clock	十一點 cháp-it tiám	十一點 shíyī diǎn
12 o’clock	十二點 cháp-jī tiám	十二點 shí’èr diǎn
7 o’clock exactly	七點正 chhit tiám chià ⁿ	七點整 qī diǎn zhěng
on the hour	正點 chià ⁿ tiám	整點 zhěng diǎn
half past	半點 pò ^a tiám	半點 bàn diǎn

Note that Taiwanese uses the character 正 **chiàⁿ** to mean ‘exactly, on the dot’ or ‘on the hour’ while Mandarin uses 整 **zhěng**.

When including minutes in telling the time, 分 **hun** can optionally be placed after the number of minutes.

hour + 點 + *minutes* + (分)
hour + tiám + *minutes* + (hun)

TIME

1:18 一點十八 (分) chit tiám cháp-peh (hun)
 一點十八 (分) yī diǎn shíbā (fēn)

2:40 兩點四十 (分) nāng tiám sì-cháp (hun)
 兩點四十 (分) liǎng diǎn sìshí (fēn)

Minutes that are less than **10 minutes** past the hour can optionally include 空 **khòng** ‘0’ before the number of minutes.

TIME

7:05 七點(空)五分 chhit tiám (khòng) gō’hun
 七點(○)五分 qī diǎn (líng) wǔ fēn

10:02 十點(空)二分 cháp tiám (khòng) jī hun
 十點(○)二分 shí diǎn (líng) èr fēn

24.2.2 Clock-time expressions

24.2.2.1 Half-hour increments

When indicating ‘half past the hour’, 半 **pòàⁿ** ‘half’ is added after the specified hour. Note that the hour — **chit** ‘one’ is often left off in this expression.

hour + 半

hour + pòàⁿ

‘half past the hour’

TIME	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
half past one 1:30	(一)點半 (chit-)tiám-pòà ⁿ	一點半 yīdiǎn bàn
half past two 2:30	兩點半 n̄ng-tiám-pòà ⁿ	兩點半 liǎng diǎn bàn
half past four 4:30	四點半 sì-tiám-pòà ⁿ	四點半 sì diǎn bàn

24.2.2.2 Past the hour

To express a number of minutes ‘past the hour’, it is possible to place 過 **kòe** ‘past’ after the hour followed by 分 **hun** ‘minute’. However, generally this expression is not used beyond 30 minutes past the hour.

hour + 過 + *minute*

hour + -kòe- + *minute*

‘*minutes* past the hour’

TIME	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
seven past one 1:07	一點過七分 chit-tiám-kòe-chhit-hun	一點過七分 yī diǎn guò qī fēn
quarter past two 2:15	兩點過十五分 n̄ng-tiám-kòe-cháp-gō-hun	兩點一刻 liǎng diǎn yīkè

Note that, unlike the Mandarin 刻 **kè** ‘quarter’, Taiwanese does not use a special term for fifteen minute increments.

Taiwan Mandarin speakers tend not to use ‘past the hour’ expressions and instead prefer the ‘*hour* 點 **tiám** *minute*’ format.

TIME	TAIWAN MANDARIN
seven past one	1:07 一點(○)七分 yī diǎn (líng) qī fēn
quarter past two	2:15 兩點十五分 liǎng diǎn shíwǔ fēn

24.2.2.3 Before the hour

In Taiwanese, when 差 **chha** ‘difference’ is placed *before* the specified hour, it indicates a number of minutes ‘before the hour’.

差 + *minute* + *hour*
 chha + *minute* + *hour*
 ‘minutes before the hour’

TIME	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
twenty to two	1:40 差二十分兩點 chha-jī-cháp-hun-nāng-tiám	差二十分兩點 chā èrshí fēn liǎng diǎn
ten to six	5:50 差十分六點 chha-cháp-hun-lák-tiám	差十分六點 chà shí fēn liù diǎn
five to eleven	10:55 差五分十一點 chha-gō-hun-cháp-it-tiám	差五分十一點 chà wǔ fēn shíyī diǎn

24.3 Parts of the day

Taiwanese has many terms that refer to different parts of the day as opposed to a strict separation between AM or PM. The table in the following section offers an hourly mapping of when particular terms are commonly used. However, note that even within a specific region there are a wide variety of options and individual preferences for these terms. Additionally, there are some terms tied to the rising and setting of the sun. As a result, the appropriate time for these terms fluctuates throughout the year.

24.3.1 Period of the day

When indicating the time using a 12-hour clock, the term for which ‘period of day’ comes before stating the ‘clock time’. Note that 中晝 **tiong-tàu** or 午時 **gō-sī** ‘noon’ includes the full hour between 12pm-1pm and for some speakers may even begin around 11am.

period of day + clock time

8:30 AM 下早(仔) 八點半 e-chái(-á) peh-tiám-pò^a

早上 八點半 zǎoshàng bā diǎn bàn

12:30 PM 中晝 十二點半 tiong-tàu cháp-jī-tiám-pò^a

中午 十二點半 zhōngwǔ shí'èr diǎn bàn

2:00 PM 下晡 兩點 e-po`nng-tiám

下午 兩點 xiàwǔ liǎng diǎn

9:30 PM 暗時(仔) 九點半 àm-sī(-á) káu-tiám-pò^a

晚上 九點半 wǎnshàng jiǔ diǎn bàn

12:00 AM 半暝(仔) 十二點 pò^a-mê(-á) cháp-jī-tiám

半夜 十二點 bànyè shí'èr diǎn

TIME	TAIWANESE		MANDARIN	
6 (<i>dawn</i>)	早起(時)	chái-khí(-sī)	早上	zǎoshàng
	下早(仔)	e-chái(-á)		
	透早	thàu-chá		
	早時(仔)	chái-sī(-á)		
7	:	:	:	:
8	:	:	:	:
9	:	:	上午	shàngwu
10	:	:	:	:

11	午時	gō̍-sî	:	:
12 (<i>noon</i>)	午時 中晝	gō̍-sî tiong-tàu	中午	zhōngwǔ
1	下晝 下晡	e-tàu e-po̍	下午	xiàwǔ
2	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	:
5	:	:	:	:
6 (<i>dusk</i>)	欲暗仔	beh-àm-á (<i>before sunset</i>)	傍晚	bàngwǎn
7	暗時(仔) 下昏(暗) 暗頭仔	àm-sî(-á) e-hng(-àm) àm-thâu-á	:	:
8	:	:	:	:
9	:	:	晚上	wǎnshàng
10	:	:	:	:
11	:	:	:	:
12 (<i>midnight</i>)	半暝(仔)	pòā-mê(-á)	半夜	bànyè
1	:	:	半夜 凌晨	bànyè língchén
2	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	凌晨	língchén
4	早起(時) 下早(仔) 透早 早時(仔)	chái-khí(-sî) e-chái(-á) thàu-chá chái-sî(-á)	:	:
5	:	:	:	:

24.3.2 Parts of the day relative to the present

When referring to approximate times of the day relative to the present, the specified day (yesterday, today, tomorrow) is followed by the ‘period of the day’. If the specified time is on the same day (this morning, this afternoon, this evening), 今仔日 **kin-á-jit** ‘today’ may be omitted.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
yesterday afternoon	昨昏 下晝 cha-hng e-tàu	昨天下午 zuótiān xiàwǔ
this morning	(今仔日) 早起 (kin-á-jit) chái-khí	(今天) 早上 (jīntiān) zǎoshang
tomorrow afternoon	明仔載下晝 bîn-á-chài e-tàu	明天下午 míngtiān xiàwǔ

Abbreviated forms exist for ‘last night’, ‘tonight’, ‘tomorrow morning’, and ‘tomorrow night’.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
last night	昨暗 cha-àm 昨暝 cha-mê	昨晚 zuó wǎn
tonight	下暗 e-àm 下昏 e-hng 下昏暗 e-hng-àm	今晚 jīn wǎn
tomorrow morning	明仔早起 bîn-á-chái-khí	明天早上 míngtiān zǎoshang
tomorrow evening	明仔暗 bîn-á-àm 明仔下昏 bîn-á e-hng	明天晚上 míngtiān wǎnshàng

24.3.3 Referring to habitual occurrences

When expressing a habitual or regular occurrence, add 時 -sî ‘time’ after the period of day.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
in the mornings	早起時 chá-khí-sî 下早時 e-chái-sî	早上時 zǎoshang shí
in the afternoons	下晡時 e-po-sî	下午時 xiàwǔ shí
in the evenings	暗時 àm-sî	晚上時 wǎnshàng shí

25 Calendar

25.1 Years

The word 年 **nî** ‘year’ itself is a measure word and requires no additional measure word. An alternative term for ‘year’ when referring to the duration is 冬 **tang**.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
one year	一年 chit nî 一冬 chit tang	一年 yī nián
two years	兩年 nāng nî 兩冬 nāng tang	兩年 liǎng nián
10 years	十年 cháp nî 十冬 cháp tang	十年 shí nián
every year	逐年 tàk nî 逐冬 tàk tang 每一年 múi chit nî 每一冬 múi chit tang	每年 měinián
within/during a year	一冬內 chit tang lāi 一冬中 chit tang tiong	一年以內 yī nián yǐnèi 一年中 yī nián zhōng

25.1.1 Relative references to a year

To refer to a year relative to the present or a specific point in time, use the expressions in the table below.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
this year	今年 kin-nî	今年 jīnnián
last year	舊年 kū-nî	去年 qùnián

two years ago	前年 chûn-nî	前年 qiánnián
three years ago	大前年 tōa-chûn--nî	大前年 dà qiánnián
four years ago	四年前 sì nî chêng	四年前 sì nián qián
next year	明年 mê-nî (môa-nî)	明年 míngnián
the following year	隔年 keh-nî	翌年 yìnián
two years from now	後年 āu-nî	後年 hòunián
three years from now	大後年 tōa-āu-nî	大後年 dà hòunián
four years from now	四年以後 sì-nî í-āu	四年以後 sì nián yǐhòu
beginning of the year	年頭 nî-thâu	年頭 niántóu
end of the year	年底 nî-té	年底 niándǐ
	年尾 nî-bóe	年尾 niánwěi
	冬尾 tang-bóe	

25.1.2 Specifying a year

To specify a year, read aloud each numeral of the year in sequence followed by 年 **nî** ‘year’. Numerals for years are read using the literary reading of numbers (see [3.1.2 Literary reading for numbers](#)).

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
1960	一九六空年	一九六〇年
	it kiú liók khòng nî	yī jiǔ liù líng nián
2005	二空空五年	二〇〇五年
	jī khòng khòng ngó nî	èr líng líng wǔ nián

25.2 Months

The word for ‘month’ 月 **gòeh** is preceded by the measure word 個 **kò** when describing a number of months. Without the measure word, the pairing of a number with 月 **gòeh** ‘month’ refers to a specific calendar month. Naturally, because ‘one’ and ‘two’ have different counting and measure word versions, the distinction is even clearer. When referring to the duration of a month rather than the calendar month, an alternative but more traditional form of ‘month’ can also be used 月日 **gòeh-jit**. Note that the

term 月日 **góeh-jit** itself is a measure word and requires no additional measure word.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
one month	一個月 chit kò góeh	一個月 yī gè yuè
	一月日 chit góeh-jit	
January	一月 it-góeh	一月 yī yuè
two months	兩個月 nāg kò góeh	兩個月 liǎng gè yuè
	兩月日 nāg góeh-jit	
February	二月 jī-góeh	二月 èr yuè
three months	三個月 sa ⁿ kò góeh	三個月 sān gè yuè
	三月日 sa ⁿ góeh-jit	
March	三月 sa ⁿ -góeh	三月 sān yuè
every month	逐個月 tàk kò góeh	每個月 měi gè yuè
	逐月日 tàk góeh-jit	
	每(一)個月 múi (chit) kò góeh	
	每(一)月日 múi (chit) góeh-jit	

25.2.1 Relative references to a month

To refer to a month relative to the present, use the following expressions in the table below.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
this month	這個月 chit kò góeh	這個月 zhège yuè
	這月日 chit góeh-jit	
last month	頂個月 téng kò góeh	上個月 shàng gè yuè

頂月日 téng gòeh-jit

next month 後個月 āu kò gòeh 下個月 xià gè yuè

後月日 āu gòeh-jit

25.2.2 Approximate duration

To refer to an approximate period of time or duration related to a month, use the expressions in the table below.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
first third of the month	月初 gòeh-chhe	月初 yuèchū
	月頭 gòeh-thâu	
middle third of the month	月中 gòeh-tiong	月中 yuè zhōng
last third of the month	月短 gòeh-té	月底 yuèdǐ
	月尾 gòeh-bóe	
more than a month	一個外月 chit kò-gōa-gòeh	一個多月 yī gè duō yuè
15th of the month (lunar)	月半 gòeh-pòan	月半 yuè bàn
within/during a month	一個月的中間 chit kò gòeh ê tiong-kan	一個月之間 yī gè yuè zhī jiān
	一個月中 chit kò gòeh-tiong	一個月中 yī gè yuè zhōng

25.2.3 Months of the year

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
January	一月 it-gòeh	一月 yī yuè

	正月 chia ⁿ -góeh	
February	二月 jī-góeh	二月 èr yuè
March	三月 sa ⁿ -góeh	三月 sān yuè
April	四月 sì-góeh	四月 sì yuè
May	五月 gō-góeh	五月 wǔ yuè
June	六月 lák-góeh	六月 liù yuè
July	七月 chhit-góeh	七月 qī yuè
August	八月 peh-góeh	八月 bā yuè
September	九月 káu-góeh	九月 jiǔ yuè
October	十月 cháp-góeh	十月 shí yuè
November	十一月 cháp-it-góeh	十一月 shíyī yuè
December	十二月 cháp-jī-góeh	十二月 shí'èr yuè

The alternative form for ‘January’ 正月 **chiaⁿ-góeh** originally comes from the name for the first month in the lunar calendar. However, it is now used interchangeably with 一月 **it-góeh**. In Mandarin, 正月 **zhēngyuè** is only used when referring to the lunar calendar.

25.3 Weeks

The word 禮拜 **lé-pài** ‘week’ itself is a measure word and requires no additional measure word. Note that this differs from Mandarin in that both words ‘week’ 星期 **xīngqí** and 禮拜 **lǐbài** require the additional measure word 個 **gè**.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
one week	一禮拜 chit lé-pài	一個禮拜 yī gè lǐbài
two weeks	兩禮拜 n̄ng lé-pài	兩個禮拜 liǎng gè lǐbài
10 weeks	十禮拜 cháp lé-pài	十個禮拜 shí gè lǐbài
every week	逐禮拜 tàk lé-pài 每禮拜 múi lé-pài	每個禮拜 měi gè lǐbài
within a week	一禮拜的中間 chit lé-pài ê tiong-kan	一個禮拜之間 yī gè lǐbài zhī jiān

一禮拜中 chit lé-pài-tiong

一個禮拜中 yī gè lǐbài zhōng

Additionally, 禮拜 **lé-pài** can mean ‘Sunday’. The addition of the measure word 个 **ê** before 禮拜 **lé-pài** as well as context generally helps to make clear which meaning is intended.

阮 這 禮拜 欲 去 日本。

Gún chit lé-pài beh khi Jit-pún.

我們 這個 禮拜 要 去 日本。

Wǒmen zhège lǐbài yào qù Rìběn.

This week we are going to Japan.

阮 這 个 禮拜 欲 去 日本。

Gún chit ê lé-pài beh khi Jit-pún.

我們 這個 禮拜天 要 去 日本。

Wǒmen zhège lǐbàitiān yào qù Rìběn.

This Sunday we are going to Japan.

To refer to a week relative to the present, use the expressions in the table below.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
this week	這禮拜 chit lé-pài	這(個)禮拜 zhè(ge) lǐbài
last week	頂禮拜 téng lé-pài	上(個)禮拜 shàng (gè) lǐbài
next week	後禮拜 āu lé-pài	下(個)禮拜 xià (gè) lǐbài
two weeks, fortnight	半個月 pò ^a -kò-góeh	半(個)月 bàn (gè) yuè
	半月日 pò ^a gòeh-jit	

25.4 Days

The word 日 **jít** (also pronounced **lit**) ‘day’ is also a measure word and requires no additional measure word. An alternative term 工 **kang** ‘day’ is often preferred when counting or referring to the duration.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
one day	一工 chit kang	一天 yī tiān
	一日 chit jít	

two days	兩工 nāg kang	兩天 liǎng tiān
	兩日 nāg jít	
10 days	十工 cháp kang	十天 shí tiān
	十日 cháp jít	
everyday	逐工 tàk-kang	每天 měitiān
	每(一)工 múi(chít)-kang	
	逐日 tàk-jít	
	每日 múi-jít	
within/during a day	一工內 chít kang lāi	一天內 yī tiān nèi
	一工中 chít kang-tiong	一天中 yī tiān zhōng

In Mandarin, 天 **tiān** ‘day’ is more commonly used, while 日 **rì** ‘day’ is reserved for more formal uses. Taiwanese tends to reserve 天 **thiⁿ** to signify the weather, seasons, or for use in set expressions.

25.4.1 Relative references to a day

To refer to a day relative to the present, use the expressions in the table below.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
today	今仔日 kin-á-jít	今天 jīntiān
yesterday	昨昏 cha-hng (châng)	昨天 zuótiān
two days ago	頂日(仔) téng-jít(-á)	前天 qiántiān
	昨日 chòh--jít	
three days ago	落昨日 loh-chòh--jít	大前天 dàqiántiān
	大昨日 tōa-chòh--jít	
four days ago	四日前 sì-jít-chêng	四天前 sì tiān qián
tomorrow	明仔載 bîn-á-chài	明天 míngtiān
	明仔日 bîn-á-jít	
two days from now	後日 āu--jít	後天 hòutiān

three days from now	大後日 tōa-āu--jit	大後天 dàhòutiān
four days from now	四日(以)後 sì-jit (í-)āu	四天以後 sì tiān yǐhòu

Note that 後日 **āu-jit** without the neutral tone has the meaning of ‘someday’ or ‘some unspecified time in the future’.

25.4.2 Days of the week

The days of the week are presented in the table below. The days of the week ‘Monday’ through ‘Saturday’ optionally may be prefixed by 禮 **lé-**.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Sunday	禮拜 lé-pài	禮拜天 lǐbài tiān
	禮拜日 lé-pài-jit	禮拜日 lǐbài rì
Monday	(禮)拜一 (lé-)pài-it	禮拜一 lǐbài yī
Tuesday	(禮)拜二 (lé-)pài-jī	禮拜二 lǐbài èr
Wednesday	(禮)拜三 (lé-)pài-sa ⁿ	禮拜三 lǐbài sān
Thursday	(禮)拜四 (lé-)pài-sì	禮拜四 lǐbài sì
Friday	(禮)拜五 (lé-)pài-gō ^ˊ	禮拜五 lǐbài wǔ
Saturday	(禮)拜六 (lé-)pài-lák	禮拜六 lǐbài liù

Note that if referring to a preceding or subsequent day of the week, 禮 **lé-** cannot be omitted from the expression.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
next Monday	後禮拜一 āu lé-pài-it	下禮拜一 xià lǐbài yī
last Monday	頂禮拜一 téng lé-pài-it	上禮拜一 shàng lǐbài yī

25.4.3 Days of the month

Sometimes the first 10 days of the month follow a practice used with the lunar calendar. Each day is preceded by 初 **chhe** ‘beginning’.

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
first of the month	初一 chhe-it	初一 chū yī
second of the month	初二 chhe-jī	初二 chū èr
third of the month	初三 chhe-sa ⁿ	初三 chū sān
:	:	:
tenth of the month	初十 chhe-cháp	初十 chū shí

25.5 Specifying dates

In Taiwanese, dates are specified from the largest increment of time to the smallest (i.e. year, month, day). Note that numerals for years are read using the literary reading of numbers (see [3.1.2 Literary reading for numbers](#)).

June 21, 2013

YEAR	MONTH	DAY
二空一三年	六月	二十一號
jī khòng it sam nî	lák góeh	jī-cháp-it hō
二〇一三年	六月	二十一號
èr líng yī sān nián	liù yuè	èrshíyī hào

November 7, 1950

YEAR	MONTH	DAY
一九五空年	十一月	七號
it kiú ngó khòng nî	cháp-it góeh	chhit hō
一九五〇年	十一月	七號
yī jiũ wũ líng nián	shíyī yuè	qī hào

Note that for days up to the tenth of the month, the lunar calendar system of reading days may be used (see [25.4.3 Days of the month](#)).

25.6 Seasons

	TAIWANESE	MANDARIN
Spring	春天 chhun-thi ⁿ	春天 chūntiān
Summer	夏天 hā-thi ⁿ	夏天 xiàtiān
	熱天 jóah-thi ⁿ	
Autumn	秋天 chhiu-thi ⁿ	秋天 qiūtiān
Winter	冬天 tang-thi ⁿ	冬天 dōngtiān
	寒天 kôa ⁿ -thi ⁿ	

26 Present

In English, the present tense can be used to indicate actions that are in progress or habitual.

IN PROGRESS

She is writing a long letter.

HABITUAL

She writes long letters.

Taiwanese does not inflect or change the form of the verb to reflect tense (past, present, or future). However, time-specific phrases and grammatical elements can be used to help clarify when context is insufficient.

26.1 Present tense from context

Generally, context will indicate when an action has occurred. However, if more clarification is required, a time expression (‘January 24’, ‘today’, ‘this week’) or time adverb (‘now’, ‘currently’) can be provided (see [14.1.2 Time adverbs](#)).

The sentence below can be set in any point in time given the proper context.

伊寫批。

I siá phoe.

她寫信。

Tā xiě xìn.

She wrote / is writing / will write a letter.

26.2 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the present

If the tense has not yet been established, a specific time expression or time adverb can be used to indicate or to underscore the time of the action. Time expressions and adverbs are generally placed after the subject but may be placed before the subject in the topic position for emphasis.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
這馬 chit-má	現在 xiànzài	now
今仔日 kin-á-jit	今天 jīntiān	today
目前 bók-chiân	目前 mùqián	currently, presently
這禮拜 chit lé-pài	這(個)禮拜 zhè (gè) lǐbài	this week
這個月 chit kò góeh	這個月 zhè gè yuè	this month
今年 kín-nî	今年 jīnnián	this year

伊 這馬 佇大間的報社食頭路。

I chit-má tī tōa keng ê pò-siā chiáh thâu-lō.

他 現在 在大的報社工作。

Tā xiànzài zài dà de bàoshè gōngzuò.

He now works for a large newspaper.

劉小姐 今仔日 干焦招待新的人客。

Lâu sió-chiá kin-á-jit kan-na chiau-tāi sin ê lâng-kheh.

劉小姐 今天 只接待新的客人。

Liú xiǎojiě jīntiān zhǐ jiēdài xīn de kèrén.

Ms. Lau is only seeing new clients today.

目前 阮替你定位愛受服務費。

Bók-chiân gún thè lí tēng-ūi ài siu hók-bū hùi.

目前 我們替你定位要收服務費。

Mùqián wǒmen tì nǐ dìngwèi yào shōu fúwù fèi.

Currently, we charge a service fee for helping you make a reservation.

這禮拜 公車無停佇市政府。

Chit lé-pài kong-chhia bô thêng tī chhī-chèng-hú.

這禮拜 公車不停在市政府。

Zhè lǐbài gōngchē bù tíng zài shìzhèngfǔ.

This week the bus does not stop at city hall.

今年 阮的棒球隊逐場比賽攞輸。

Kín-nî gún ê pāng-kiû-tūi tàk tiūⁿ pí-sài lóng su.

今年 我們的棒球隊每場比賽都輸。

Jīnnián wōmen de bàngqiúduì měi chǎng bǐsài dōu shū.

This year our baseball team is losing every game.

26.3 Ongoing actions

26.3.1 Emphasizing that an action is in progress using 咧 **teh**

In English, to describe an action that is ongoing the ‘-ing’ suffix is added to the verb along with a form of ‘to be’ as a helping verb (‘She is talking’).

Taiwanese conveys this ongoing action by placing the dynamic continuous aspect marker 咧 **teh** before an action verb (see [8.2.1 Dynamic continuous aspect](#)). This emphasizes that the action is already in progress.

咧 + verb

teh + verb

‘to be verb-ing’

伊 咧 行 路。

I teh kiāⁿ lō.

他 在 走 路。

Tā zài zǒu lù.

He is walking.

吳 小姐 和 朋友 咧 講 話。

Ngô sió-chiá hām pêng-iú teh kóng ōe.

吳 小姐 跟 朋友 在 講 話。

Wú xiǎojiě gēn péngyǒu zài jiǎng huà.

Ms. Ngou is talking to her friend.

The particle 咧 **teh** can only be placed before action verbs (see [7 Action verbs](#)). Stative verbs, modal verbs, and adjectives used as verbs can only emphasize the present by using time expressions (see [9 Stative verbs](#), [12 Modal verbs](#), [6 Adjectives](#)).

STATIVE VERB

我 這陣 想 欲 眠 一下。

Góa chit-chūn siuⁿ-beh bîn--chit-ê.

我 現在 想要 睡 一下。

Wǒ xiànzài xiǎngyào shuì yīxià.

Right now I am thinking of taking a nap.

ADJECTIVE

湯 這馬 真 燒。

Thng chit-má chin sio.

湯 現在 很 熱。

Tāng xiànzài hěn rè.

The soup is hot right now.

MODAL

伊 這馬 欲 走。

I chit-má beh cháu.

他 現在 要 走。

Tā xiànzài yào zǒu.

He wants to go now.

26.3.2 Emphasizing the immediacy of an action in progress

While the use of the particle 咧 **teh** before an action verb states that an action is already in progress, the immediacy can be further emphasized by placing 佇 **tī-** before 咧 **teh** to form 佇咧 **tī-leh** (note the slight change in pronunciation), conveying ‘in the middle of’ doing something. Alternate forms include 當咧 **tng-teh** and 拄咧 **tú-teh** (see [8.2.1.2 Emphasizing the immediacy of an action](#)).

佇咧 + *verb*

tī-leh + *verb*

‘in the middle of *verb* + -ing’

我袂當和你講話，因為我 這馬 佇咧 讀冊。

Góa bē-tàng hām lí kóng ōe, in-ūi góa chit-má tī-leh thàk chheh.

我不能跟你講話，因為我 現在 正在 讀書。

Wǒ bùnéng gēn nǐ jiǎng huà, yīnwèi wǒ xiànzài zhèngzài dú shū.

I can’t talk to you because I am in the middle of studying.

阮 這馬 當咧 整理 桌仔，所以請小等一下。

Gún chit-má tng-teh chéng-lí toh-á, só-í chhiáⁿ sió-tán--chit-ê.

我們 現在 正在 整理 桌子，所以請稍等一下。

Wǒmen xiànzài zhèngzài zhěnglǐ zhuōzi, suǒyǐ qǐng shāo děng yīxià.

We are setting up your table right now, so please wait a moment.

彼个老歲仔 拄咧 和鳥仔講話。

Hit ê láu-hòe-á tú-teh hām chiáu-á kóng oe.

那個老人家 正在 和鳥講話。

Nàge lǎorénjiā zhèngzài hé niǎo jiǎng huà.

That old man right now is talking to the birds.

In Mandarin, the equivalent emphasis can be expressed by placing 正在 **zhèngzài** before the verb phrase.

26.3.3 Including manner with ongoing actions

The particle 咧 **teh** is separable from the verb, so adverbs of manner can be placed in between (see [14.2.3 Manner adverbs](#)).

咧 + *manner adverb* + *verb*

teh + *manner adverb* + *verb*

恁囡足乖，您攏 咧 恬恬 耍。

Lín kiáⁿ chiok koai, in lóng teh tiām-tiām súg.

你的孩子非常乖，他們都在 靜靜地 玩。

Nǐ de hái'izi fēicháng guāi, tāmen dōu zài jìngjìng de wán.

Your children are so well behaved. They are all playing so quietly.

阮小弟這馬佇塗跤 咧 慢慢 趯。

Gún sió-tī chit-má tī thô-kha teh bān-bān sô.

我的弟弟現在在地上 在 慢慢地 爬行。

Wǒ dìdì xiànzài zài dìshàng zài mànman de páxíng.

My little brother is now slowly crawling on the floor.

26.3.4 Describing an ongoing state using verb suffix 咧 --leh

The static continuous aspect marker 咧 --leh can be used as a suffix to change-of-state action verbs to emphasize an action that is in a persistent state or condition (see [8.2.2 Static continuous aspect](#), [7.2 Change-of-state action verbs](#)). The verb can be describing a posture (e.g. sitting down), manner of existence (e.g. picture hanging on the wall), or repetitive motion (e.g. chewing gum).

verb + 咧

verb + --leh

伊 佇 車 頭 前 倚 咧。

I tī chhia thâu-chêng khiā--leh.

她 在 車 前 面 站 著。

Tā zài chē qiánmiàn zhànzhe.

She is standing in front of the car.

學 生 冊 提 咧。

Hák-seng chheh thèh--leh.

學 生 拿 著 書。

Xuéshēng názhe shū.

The students are holding their books.

水 晶 燈 按 厝 頂 吊 咧。

Chúi-chhiⁿ-teng àn chhù-téng tiàu--leh.

水 晶 燈 在 天 花 板 吊 著。

Shuǐjīngdēng zài tiānhuābǎn diàozhe.

Crystal lights are hanging from the ceiling.

門 攏 關 咧。

M̄ng lóng koaiⁿ--leh.

門 都 關 著 呢。

Mén dōu guānzhe ne.

All the doors are closed.

阮 車 停 咧 佇 外 口。

Gún chhia thêng--leh tī gōa-kháu.

我 們 的 車 停 在 外 面。

Wǒmen de chē tíng zài wàimiàn.

Our car is parked outside.

Note that Taiwanese does not have an end-of-sentence particle equivalent to the Mandarin 呢 **ne** for emphasizing ongoing actions in the present. Additionally, in some contexts, the Mandarin phrasing sounds more natural without an explicit suffix marking an ongoing state.

26.4 Habitual actions in the present

26.4.1 Expressing habitual actions with 有 ū

To emphasize a habitual action in the present, place 有 ū followed by the dynamic aspect marker 咧 **teh** before the verb (see [8.5 Habitual aspect](#)). Note that if a time expression is provided, the addition of 有 咧 ū **teh** before the verb is optional.

有 + 咧 + *verb*

ū + *teh* + *verb*

暗頓食了，我有咧啣茶。

Àm-tng chiáh liáu, góa ū teh līm tê.

晚餐吃完，我經常喝茶。

Wǎncān chī wán, wǒ jīngcháng hē chá.

I drink tea after dinner.

廖小姐拜五暗時佇廟寺的戲台搬戲。

Liāu sió-chiá pài-gō`àm-sī tī biō-sī ê hì-tâi poaⁿ-hì.

廖小姐禮拜五晚上在寺廟的舞台表演。

Liào xiǎojiě lǐbàiwǔ wǎnshàng zài sìmiào de wǔtái biǎoyǎn.

Ms. Liao performs on the temple stage on Friday nights.

阮有咧檢查身份證。

Gún ū teh kiám-cha sin-hūn-chèng.

我們經常檢查身份證。

Wǒmen jīngcháng jiǎnchá shēnfènzhèng.

We do check identification.

Note that in Standard Mandarin habitual action is generally understood through context, with a time expression, or emphasized through an adverb such as 經常 **jīngcháng** ‘regularly’. Taiwan Mandarin can also use 有在 **yǒu zài** before the verb to indicate a habitual action.

TAIWANESE

伊有咧行路。

I ū teh kiāⁿ lō.

He does go for walks.

STANDARD MANDARIN

他 經常 走路。

Tā jīngcháng zǒu lù.

He does go for walks.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

他 有在 走路。

Tā yǒu zài zǒu lù.

He does go for walks.

26.4.2 Using time adverbs to indicate habitual actions

逐 **ták** ‘each, every’ paired with a period of time may be used to create a time adverb that indicates habitual actions. An alternate form is 每 **múi**.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
逐 點鐘 <u>ták tiám-cheng</u>	每個小時 <u>měi gè xiǎoshí</u>	each/every hour
逐日 <u>ták jit</u>	每天 <u>měitiān</u>	each/every day
逐工 <u>ták kang</u>	每天 <u>měitiān</u>	each/every day
逐禮拜 <u>ták lé-pài</u>	每(個)禮拜 <u>měi (gè) lǐbài</u>	each/every week
逐個月 <u>ták kò gòeh</u>	每個月 <u>měi gè yuè</u>	each/every month
逐冬 <u>ták tang</u>	每年 <u>měinián</u>	each/every year

Note that in Taiwanese 點鐘 **tiám-cheng** ‘hour’ does not use a measure word like its Mandarin counterpart.

學生 逐點鐘 換課。

Hák-seng ták tiám-cheng ōaⁿ khò.

學生 每個小時 換課。

Xuéshēng měi gè xiǎoshí huàn kè.

The students change classes each hour.

我 每禮拜 拍排球。

Góá múi lé-pài phah pài-kiû.

我 每禮拜 打排球。

Wǒ měi lǐbài dǎ páiqiú.

Every week I play volleyball.

26.4.3 Using relative frequency adverbs to indicate habitual actions

Relative frequency adverbs can be used to describe habitual actions. Below is a selection of some common adverbs used (see [14.2.2 Relative frequency adverbs](#)).

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
直直 tit-tit	一直 yīzhí	always, continuously
不時 put-sî	經常 jīngcháng	regularly
定定 tiān-tiān	常常 chángcháng	constantly, frequently
有當時仔 ū-tang-sî-á	偶爾 ǒu'ěr	sometimes, occasionally
罕得 hán-tit	難得 nándé	rarely

伊 直直 袂記得 紮 伊 的 身份證。

I tit-tit bē-kì-tit chah i ê sin-hūn-chèng.

她 一直 忘記 帶 她 的 身分證。

Tā yīzhí wàngjì dài tā de shēnfènzhèng.

She always forgets to bring her ID card.

隔壁 的 狗仔 定定 咧 吠。

Keh-piah ê káu-á tiān-tiān teh pui.

隔壁 的 狗 常常 在 吠。

Gébì de gǒu chángcháng zài fèi.

The neighbor's dog is constantly barking.

有當時仔 我 用 行 的 去 上班。

Ū-tang-sî-á góa ēng kiān--ê khi siōng-pan.

有 的 時候 我 用 走 的 去 上班。

Yǒu de shíhòu wǒ yòng zǒu de qù shàngbān.

Sometimes I walk to work.

伊 罕得 共 功課 做 予 了。

I hán-tit kā kong-khò chò hō liáu.

他 難得 把 功課 做完。

Tā nándé bǎ gōngkè zuòwán.

He rarely finishes his homework.

26.5 Indicating past events relevant to the present using 矣 --ah

When an action occurs in the past but continues to have relevance in the present, the anterior aspect marker 矣 --ah is placed at the end of the sentence (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)). This often occurs in situations where English uses the present perfect tense ('I have eaten, so I'm not hungry now').

sentence + 矣

sentence + --ah

阮蹓跼這鄰三年矣。

Gún tòà tàt chit lân saⁿ nî--ah.

我們住在這鄰三年了。

Wǒmen zhù zài zhè lín sān nián le.

We have lived in this neighborhood for 3 years.

你已經共咱煮中晝頓矣。

Lí í-keng kā lán chú tiong-tàu-tng--ah.

你已經幫我們做午餐了。

Nǐ yǐjīng bāng wǒmen zuò wǔcān le.

You have already cooked us lunch.

楊先生已經共阮買電影票矣。

Iûⁿ--sian-siⁿ í-keng kā gún bé tiān-iaⁿ phiò--ah.

楊先生已經幫我們買電影票了。

Yáng xiānshēng yǐjīng bāng wǒmen mǎi diànyǐng piào le.

Mr. Iunn has already bought our theater tickets.

27 Past

Taiwanese does not inflect or change the form of the verb to reflect the past tense. Instead, the past tense is understood from context, specified by time expressions, or indicated through aspect markers.

27.1 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the past

Time expressions ('yesterday', 'last year') and time adverbs ('in the past', 'previously') can provide a temporal context for the verb. Generally, time expressions or adverbs are placed after the subject but may be placed before the subject in the topic position for emphasis.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
昨昏 cha-hng (châng)	昨天 zuótiān	yesterday
頂禮拜 téng lé-pài	上(個)禮拜 shàng (gè) lǐbài	last week
頂個月 téng kò gòeh	上個月 shàng gè yuè	last month
頂月日 téng gòeh-jit	上個月 shàng gè yuè	last month
舊年 kū-nî	去年 qùnián	last year
過去 kòe-khì	過去 guòqù	in the past
以前 í-chêng	以前 yǐqián	previously

我 昨昏 申請 護照。

Góa cha-hng sin-chhéng hō-chiàu.

我 昨天 申請 護照。

Wǒ zuótiān shēnqǐng hùzhào.

I applied for a passport yesterday.

頂 個月 你 應該 收著 退稅。

Téng kò gòeh lí eng-kai siu-tiòh thè-sòe.

上 個月 你 應該 受到 退稅。

Shàng gè yuè nǐ yīnggāi shōudào tuìshuì.

Last month you should have gotten a tax refund.

阮 舊年 去 美國 旅行。

Gún kū-nî khì Bí-kok lú-hêng.

我們 去年 去 美國 旅行。

Wǒmen qùnián qù Měiguó lǚxíng.

We traveled to the United States last year.

以前 動物園 予 阮 用 翕相機。

Í-chêng tōng-bút-hêng hō' gún ēng hip-siōng-ki.

以前 動物園 讓 我們 用 照相機。

Yǐqián dòngwùyuán ràng wǒmen yòng zhàoxiàngjī.

Previously, the zoo let us use cameras.

27.2 Completed actions in the past

To express that an action was completed in the past, the verb is placed in the perfective aspect (see [8.1 Perfective aspect](#)). In Taiwanese, there are two types of perfective aspect markers: 有 ū and phase complements.

27.2.1 Expressing a completed action with 有 ū

To indicate that an action verb is completed, place 有 ū before the verb. Stative verbs, modal verbs, and adjectives used as verbs can only express the past by using time expressions.

有 + verb

ū + verb

伊 有 來。

I ū lái.

他 來了。

Tā láile.

He came.

曾 太太 有 帶 餅 來。

Chan thài-thài ū tòà piáⁿ lái.

曾太太帶了餅乾來。

Zēng tàitài dàile bǐnggān lái.

Mrs. Chan brought cookies.

Note that Mandarin uses the verb suffix 了 **-le** to indicate a completed action and does not have a direct equivalent to the Taiwanese use of 有 **ū** for marking the perfective aspect. However, Taiwan Mandarin has adopted the use of placing 有 **yǒu** before a verb, reflecting the grammar of Taiwanese.

STANDARD MANDARIN

你吃飯了嗎？

Nǐ chī fàn le ma?

Did you eat?

TAIWAN MANDARIN

你有吃飯嗎？

Nǐ yǒu chī fàn ma?

Did you eat?

TAIWANESE

你有食飯無？

Lí ū chiáh p̄ng--bô?

Did you eat?

27.2.2 Expressing a completed action with a phase complement

Another method to indicate that an action is completed in the past is by adding a phase complement (see [11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#)). Phase complements indicating completion (了 **liáu**, 完 **ôan**, 好 **hó**, 煞 **soah**) signal that the action of the verb has ended. Placed immediately after the verb, phase complements must be the final element in a clause or sentence.

verb + phase complement (completion)

阮昨昏共文章寫完。

Gún cha-hng kā bûn-chiong siá ôan.

我們昨天寫了文章。

Wǒmen zuótiān xiěle wénzhāng.

Yesterday we wrote our essays.

恁阿媽恰阿母做好遐爾濟菜。

Lín a-má kah a-bú chò hó hiah-nī chē chhài.

你們的奶奶和媽媽做了那麼多菜。

Nǐmen de nǎinai hé māmā zuòle nàme duō cài.

Your grandma and mother cooked so many dishes.

Note that Mandarin marks the perfective aspect on the verb by adding the suffix 了 **-le**. Additionally, Mandarin does not require the perfective aspect marker 了 **-le** to be the final element of a clause or sentence.

27.2.3 Emphasizing a completed action in the past with 有 ū

有 ū can also be used as an emphasis marker. To emphasize that an action did indeed occur, place 有 ū before the verb (see [10.2.4 有 ū as a marker for emphasis](#)). Additional vocal stress or a pause can help distinguish 有 ū as an emphasis marker from a completed action marker. By optionally adding a phase complement after the verb to mark completion, the emphasis function of 有 ū becomes unambiguous (see [11.1.1 Phase complements indicating completion](#), [27.2.2 Expressing a completed action with a phase complement](#)).

有 + verb + (phase complement)

ū + verb + (phase complement)

咱離開辦公室進前，我有共報告寫了矣。

Lán lâ-khui pān-kong-sek chìn-chêng, góa ū kā pò-kò siá liáu--ah.

我們離開辦公室之前，我有把報告寫完啦。

Wǒmen líkai bàngōngshì zhīqián, wǒ yǒu bǎ bàogào xiěwán la.

Before we left the office, I did finish writing the report.

恁父母有共你的學費納了。

Lín pē-bú ū kā lí ê hāk-hùi láp liáu.

你父母有幫你繳了學費啊。

Nǐ fùmǔ yǒu bāng nǐ jiǎole xuéfèi a.

Your parents did pay for your tuition.

有 ū as an emphasis marker in the past can also be used with the experiential aspect markers 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe** (see [8.3 Experiential aspect](#), [27.6 Talking about past experience using 捌 bat and 過 -kòe](#)).

我有捌食過印尼料理。

Góa ū bat chiáh-kòe Ìn-nî liáu-lí.

我有吃過印尼料理。

Wǒ yǒu chīguò Yìnní liàolǐ.

I have had Indonesian cuisine before.

您 已經 有 來過 亞洲。

In í-keng ū lái-kòe A-chiu.

他們 有 已經 來過 亞洲。

Tāmen yǒu yǐjīng lái-guò Yàzhōu.

They have come to Asia before.

27.2.4 Expressing an action that did not occur

If an action did not occur in the past, use the appropriate negative form of the verb. While most verbs use 無 **bô** for the negative form, a few verbs use the negative 毋 **m̄** (see [13.1.1 Pure negative 毋 m̄ ‘not’](#)). Without context or a time expression, the action that did not occur could refer to the past or present.

WITHOUT TIME EXPRESSIONS

彼 兩 的 查埔 囡仔 無 去 上課。

Hit n̄g ê cha-po' gín-á bô khì siōng-khò.

PAST INTERPRETATION

那 兩 個 男孩子 沒有 上課。

Nà liǎng gè nánháizi méiyǒu shàngkè.

Those two boys didn't go to class.

PRESENT INTERPRETATION

那 兩 個 男孩子 不 上課。

Nà liǎng gè nánháizi bù shàngkè.

Those two boys don't go to class (*they don't attend classes*).

Note that in Mandarin, the difference in negation indicates if an action verb has not occurred in the past (沒有 **méiyǒu**) or does not occur in the present (不 **bù**).

With stative verbs, modal verbs, or adjectives, Mandarin can only use 不 **bù** for negation. In this case, the Mandarin is ambiguous like Taiwanese and requires a time expression for clarification.

我 講 的 話，伊 無 相信。

Góa kóng ê ōe, i bô siong-sìn.

我 說 的 話，她 不 相信。

Wǒ shuō de huà, tā bù xiāngxìn.

She didn't believe what I had said (*past interpretation*).

She doesn't believe what I said (*present interpretation*).

With explicit time expressions, the ambiguity for both action and stative verbs is removed.

WITH TIME EXPRESSIONS

彼兩的查埔囡仔 昨昏 無去上課。

Hit n̄ng ê cha-po' gín-á cha-hng bô khi siōng-khò.

那兩個男孩子 昨天 沒有上課。

Nà liǎng gè nánháizi zuótiān méiyǒu shàngkè.

Those two boys didn't go to class yesterday.

我講的話，伊 彼陣 無相信。

Góa kóng ê òe, i hit-chūn bô siōng-sìn.

我說的話，她 那時 丕相信。

Wǒ shuō de huà, tā nà shí bù xiāngxìn.

That time she didn't believe what I had said.

27.2.5 Expressing actions that have not yet occurred using 猶未 iáu-bōe

For actions that still have not occurred, place the negative 猶未 **iaú-bōe** 'not yet' before the verb.

猶未 + verb

iaú-bōe + verb

明仔載的考試，伊 猶未 讀好。

Bîn-á-chài ê khó-chhì, i iaú-bōe thák hó.

明天的考試，她 還沒 讀好。

Míngtiān de kǎoshì, tā háiméi dú hǎo.

She hasn't studied for tomorrow's test yet.

阮 猶未 拍算阮的暑假。

Gún iaú-bōe phah-sng gún ê sú-ká.

我們 還沒 打算我們的暑假。

Wǒmen háiméi dǎsuàn wǒmen de shǔjià.

We haven't planned our summer break yet.

27.3 Habitual actions in the past

For habitual actions that occurred in the past (‘We used to jog’ or ‘He used to play guitar’), place a time expression before the habitual action markers 有咧 ū teh (see [8.5 Habitual aspect](#), [10.2.5 有 ū in the habitual aspect](#), [26.4 Habitual actions](#)).

time expression (past) + 有 + 咧 + verb

time expression (past) + ū + teh + verb

‘used to verb’

我過去踎這條溪仔有咧泅水。

Góa kòe-khì tàt chit tiâu khe-á ū teh siū chúí.

我過去在這條溪經常有游泳。

Wǒ guòqù zài zhè tiáo xī jīngcháng yǒu yóuyǒng.

I used to swim in this creek.

Note that Standard Mandarin generally uses an adverb or time expression to indicate the habitual action. However, Taiwan Mandarin can also use 有在 yǒu zài before the phrase to indicate the habitual aspect.

TAIWAN MANDARIN

我過去在這條溪有在游泳。

Wǒ guòqù zài zhè tiáo xī yǒu zài yóuyǒng.

I used to swim in this creek.

An alternative method to express the habitual past is to use a time expression along with a relative frequency adverb and the reference adverb 攞 lóng ‘always’.

time expression (past) + relative frequency adverb + 攞 + verb

time expression (past) + relative frequency adverb + lóng + verb

‘time expression (past) always verb’

學生以前通常攞聽老師的話。

Hák-seng í-chêng thong-siông lóng thiaⁿ láu-su ê ōe.

學生以前通常都聽老師的話。

Xuéshēng yǐqián tōngcháng dōu tīng lǎoshī de huà.

In the past the students usually listened to the teacher.

伊以前逐日攞佇樹仔跤食中晝頓。

I í-chêng tàk jít lóng tī chhiū-á-kha chiáh tiong-tàu-tng.

她以前每天都在樹下吃午餐。

Tā yǐqián měitiān dōu zài shùxià chī wǔcān.

She used to eat lunch under the tree every day.

27.4 Expressing a repeated event in the past with 閣(再) koh(-chài)

For an event that happened ‘again’ in the past, place the adverb 閣(再) **koh(-chài)** before the verb. If there is a prepositional phrase, it must come between the adverb 閣(再) **koh(-chài)** and the verb.

閣(再) + (prepositional phrase) + verb

koh(-chài) + (prepositional phrase) + verb

鳥鼠仔 閣 按 籠仔 偷 走出去。

Niáu-chhí-á **koh** àn lóng-á thau cháu--chhut-khì.

老鼠 又 從 籠子 偷 跑出去。

Lǎoshǔ yòu cóng lóngzi tōu pǎochūqù.

The mouse escaped from its cage again.

伊 閣再 袂記得 帶 伊 的 錢袋仔 矣。

I **koh-chài** bē-kì-tit tòā i ê chhī-tē-á--ah.

他 又 忘記 帶 他的 錢包 了。

Tā yòu wàngjì dài tā de qiánbāo le.

He forgot to bring his wallet again.

Note that in Mandarin 又 **yòu** ‘again’ is used for past occurrences while 再 **zài** is reserved for the future. Taiwanese, has no such restrictions and may use 閣(再) **koh(-chài)** for both the past and present.

27.5 Expressing the recent past with 頭拄仔 thâu-tú-á

To describe an event that has occurred in the recent past, place the adverb 頭拄仔 **thâu-tú-á** before the verb to express ‘to have just done’ some action (see [14.1.2 Time adverbs](#)). Some alternate forms include 拄才 **tú-chiah** or 拄(仔) **tú(-á)**.

頭拄仔 + *verb*

thâu-tú-á + *verb*

‘to have just *verb*’

劉小姐 頭拄仔 離開 辦公室 矣。

Lâu sió-chhiá thâu-tú-á lī-khui pán-kong-sek--ah.

劉小姐 剛剛 離開 辦公室 了。

Liú xiǎojiě gānggāng líkai bàngōngshì le.

Ms. Lau just left the office.

我 拄才 袂紀得 帶 鎖匙。

Góa tú-chiah bē-kí-tit tòà só-sī.

我 剛才 忘記 帶 鑰匙。

Wǒ gāngcái wàngì dài yàoshi.

I just forgot to bring my keys.

伊 拄 走去。

I tú cháu--khì.

他 才 走了。

Tā cái zǒu le.

He just left.

我 拄仔 咧 看 報紙。

Góa tú-á teh khòaⁿ pò-chóa.

我 剛剛 在 看 報紙。

Wǒ gānggāng zài kàn bàozhǐ.

I was just reading the newspaper.

27.6 Past experiences

27.6.1 Expressing past experiences using 捌 bat and 過 -kòe

To talk about a past experience, use the experiential aspect markers by placing 捌 **bat** before the verb,

過 **-kòe** after the verb, or use both 捌 **bat** and 過 **-kòe**. Note that the past experience must be a repeatable event (see [8.3 Experiential aspect](#)). Often the adverb 已經 **í-keng** ‘already’ is added for emphasis.

METHOD 1

(已經) + 捌 + *verb*

(í-keng) + bat + *verb*

我 捌 去 印度。

Góa bat khi Ìn-tō.

我 去過 印度。

Wǒ qùguò Yìndù.

I have gone to India before.

蔡 先生 已經 捌 去 予 醫生 看著 頭疼。

Chhài--sian-siⁿ í-keng bat khi hō-i-seng khòaⁿ-tiōh thâu-thiàⁿ.

蔡 先生 已經 給 醫生 看過 頭痛。

Cài xiānshēng yǐjīng gěi yīshēng kànguò tóutòng.

Mr. Chhai has already seen the doctor for his headache.

METHOD 2

(已經) + *verb* + 過

(í-keng) + *verb* + -kòe

我 去過 印度。

Góa khi-kòe Ìn-tō.

我 去過 印度。

Wǒ qùguò Yìndù.

I have gone to India before.

蔡 先生 已經 去過 予 醫生 看著 頭疼。

Chhài--sian-siⁿ í-keng khi-kòe hō-i-seng khòaⁿ-tiōh thâu-thiàⁿ.

蔡 先生 已經 給 醫生 看過 頭痛。

Cài xiānshēng yǐjīng gěi yīshēng kànguò tóutòng.

Mr. Chhai has already seen the doctor for his headache.

METHOD 3

(已經) + 捌 + *verb* + 過

(í-keng) + bat + *verb* + -kòe

我 捌 去過 印度。

Góa bat khì-kòe Ìn-tō.

我 去過 印度。

Wǒ qùguò Yìndù.

I have gone to India before.

蔡先生 已經 捌 去過 予 醫生 看著 頭疼。

Chhài--sian-siⁿ í-keng bat khì-kòe hō'ì-seng khòaⁿ-tiòh thâu-thiàⁿ.

蔡先生 已經 給 醫生 看過 頭痛。

Cài xiānshēng yǐjīng gěi yīshēng kànguò tóutòng.

Mr. Chhai has already seen the doctor for his headache.

Note that in Mandarin only the suffix 過 **-guò** is used to indicate past experience.

27.6.2 Expressing not having had an experience

To indicate that an event has not been experienced before, use 毋 **m̄** to negate 捌 **bat**, if present. If only the suffix 過 **-kòe** marks the experiential aspect, use the proper negation for the main verb. To provide additional emphasis on ‘never’ having had an experience, the adverb 從來 **chiông-lâi** ‘since before’ or 到今 **kàu-taⁿ** ‘until now’ may be used.

METHOD 1

毋 + 捌 + *verb* + (過)

m̄ + bat + *verb* + (-kòe)

伊 毋 捌 食 臭豆腐。

I m̄ bat chiáh chhàu-tāu-hū.

她 沒 吃過 臭豆腐。

Tā méi chīguò chòu dòufu.

She has not eaten stinky tofu before.

伊 到今 毋 捌 駛過 車。

I kàu-taⁿ m̄ bat sái-kòe chhia.

她 從來 沒 開過 車。

Tā cónglái méi kāiguò chē.

She has never driven a car before.

賴先生 從來 毋 捌 看 京戲。

Lōa--sian-siⁿ chiông-lâi m̄ bat khòaⁿ Kiaⁿ-hì.

賴先生從來沒看過京劇。

Lài xiānshēng cónglái méi kànguò Jīngjù.

Mr. Loa has never seen Peking Opera before.

METHOD 2

negation + verb + 過

negation + verb + -kòe

伊無食過臭豆腐。

I bô chiáh-kòe chhàu-tāu-hū.

她沒吃過臭豆腐。

Tā méi chīguò chòu dòufu.

She has not eaten stinky tofu before.

伊到今無駛過車。

I kàu-taⁿ bô sái-kòe chhia.

她從來沒開過車。

Tā cónglái méi kāiguò chē.

She has never driven a car before.

賴先生從來無看過京戲。

Lōa--sian-siⁿ chiông-lâi bô khòaⁿ-kòe Kiaⁿ-hì.

賴先生從來沒看過京劇。

Lài xiānshēng cónglái méi kànguò Jīngjù.

Mr. Loa has never seen Peking Opera before.

28 Future

In English, the future tense is generally marked by placing the modal verb ‘will’ before the main verb.

He will watch television.

While Taiwanese does not inflect or change the form of the verb to reflect tense (past, present, or future), future actions often include a modal verb functioning similarly to the English ‘will’.

伊 會 看 電視。

I ē khòaⁿ tiān-sī.

他 會 看 電視。

Tā huì kàn diànshì.

He will watch television.

Additionally, time-specific phrases can be used to help clarify the tense when insufficient context is provided.

28.1 Time expressions and time adverbs indicating the future

Time expressions (‘tomorrow’, ‘next Thursday’) and time adverbs (‘in the future’, ‘next time’) can provide a temporal context for the verb. Generally, time expressions or adverbs are placed after the subject but may be placed before the subject in the topic position for emphasis.

Following is a table of common time adverbs used to discuss the future.

TAIWANESE	MANDARIN	MEANING
下昏暗 e-hng-àm	今晚 jīnwǎn	tonight
明仔載 bîn-á-chài	明天 míngtiān	tomorrow
後禮拜 āu lé-pài	下(個)禮拜 xià (gè) lǐbài	next week
後個月 āu kò góeh	下個月 xià gè yuè	next month
明年 mê-nî	明天 míngtiān	next year
將來 chiong-lâi	將來 jiānglái	in the future

咧欲 teh-beh	快要 kuàiyào	just about to
後擺 āu-pái	下次 xià cì	next time

下昏暗 阮 欲 看 恐怖片。

E-hng-àm gún beh khòaⁿ khióng-pò-phìⁿ.

今晚 我們 要 看 恐怖片。

Jīnwǎn wǒmen yào kàn kǒngbùpiàn.

Tonight we will watch a horror film.

阮 查 得 明年 會 按 高中 畢業。

Gún cha-kiáⁿ mê-nî ē àn ko-tiong pit-giáp.

我 女兒 明年 會 從 高中 畢業。

Wǒ nǚ'ér míngnián huì cóng gāozhōng bìyè.

Next year my daughter will graduate from high school.

伊 咧 欲 到 矣。

I teh-beh kàu--ah.

他 快要 到了。

Tā kuàiyào dào le.

He's just about to arrive.

28.2 Indicating the future with possibility modal verbs

To express the events that will occur in the future, Taiwanese generally makes use of modal verbs to express the possibility or desire for an action to occur.

28.2.1 Expressing possibility using 會 ē

To indicate a strong possibility of an event occurring, place the modal verb 會 ē ‘will’ before a verb. Generally, the feeling is one of inevitability and not necessarily intention (see [12.1.1 Modal verb 會 ē ‘will’](#)).

會 + verb

ē + verb

‘will verb’

後禮拜五 阮 會 為 總統 投票。

Āu lé-pài-gō gún ē ūi chóng-thóng tâu-phiò.

下禮拜五 我們 會 為 總統 投票。

Xià lǐbàiwǔ wǒmen huì wèi zǒngtǒng tóupiào.

Next Friday we will vote for the president.

咱 去 曼谷 的 飛行機 明仔早仔 會 起飛。

Lán khi Bān-kok ê hoe-lêng-ki bîn-á-chái-á ē khí-poe.

我們 去 曼谷 的 飛機 明早 會 起飛。

Wǒmen qù Màngǔ de fēijī míngzǎo huì qǐfēi.

Our flight to Bangkok will take off tomorrow morning.

28.2.2 Expressing possibility using 欲 beh

To stress the possibility that an event will likely occur in the immediate future, place the modal verb 欲 **beh** (also pronounced **boeh**) ‘going to’ before a verb (see [12.1.2 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to be going to’](#)). Note that because 欲 **beh** also has the meaning ‘to want’, when the subject is an animate being (person or animal), the future action may also be interpreted to include intention. If the subject is inanimate (objects, non-living things), 欲 **beh** only conveys future possibility.

欲 + verb

beh + verb

‘to be going to verb’

謝 先生 下 昏暗 欲 請 阮 食 飯。

Siā--sian-siⁿ e-hng-àm beh chhiáⁿ gún chiáh pñg.

謝 先生 今晚 要 請 我們 吃 飯。

Xiè xiānshēng jīnwǎn yào qǐng wǒmen chī fàn.

Mr. Sia is going to treat us to dinner tonight.

政府 欲 予 人 獎學金。

Chèng-hú beh hō lāng chióng-hák-kim.

政府 要 給 人 獎學金。

Zhèngfǔ yào gěi rén jiǎngxuéjīn.

The government is going to award scholarships.

28.3 Describing events that are just about to happen

To indicate that an event is just about to happen, place the adverb 咧欲 **teh-beh** ‘just about to’ before the verb. Additionally, the end-of-sentence particle 矣 **--ah**, which can be used to indicate a change in situation, is also commonly used with imminent events (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#)). An alternate version is 強欲 **kiōng-beh**.

咧欲 + verb + (矣)

teh-beh + verb + (--ah)

‘just about to verb’

緊 抱 紅 嬰 仔， 伊 咧 欲 哭 矣。

Kín phō âng-eⁿ-á, i teh-beh khàu--ah.

快 抱 抱 嬰 兒， 他 快 要 哭 了。

Kuài bàobào yīng'ér, tā kuàiyào kū le.

Hurry and hold the baby. He's just about to cry.

天 看 起 來 強 欲 落 雨 矣。

Thiⁿ khòaⁿ-khí-lâi kiōng-beh lóh hō--ah.

天 空 看 起 來 快 要 下 雨 了。

Tiānkōng kànqǐlái kuàiyào xià yǔ le.

The sky looks like it's just about to rain.

28.4 Indicating the future with desire modal verbs

Actions in the future can also be described in terms of desire (wanting, wishing, hoping, thinking of doing).

28.4.1 ‘Wanting to’ perform an action

To express desiring to perform an action in the future, place the modal verb 欲 **beh** or 愛 **ài** before a verb (see [12.2.1 Modal verb 欲 beh ‘to want’](#), [12.2.2 Modal verb 愛 ài ‘to want’](#)). Note that 愛 **ài** is generally preferred over 欲 **beh** when there are different subjects or when used before an adjective. In

some contexts the desire to perform an action can include translations of ‘hoping’ or ‘wishing’.

欲 / 愛 + *verb*

beh / ài + *verb*

‘to want to *verb*’

我愛伊會當讀台大。

Góa ài i ē-tàng thák Tâi-tâi.

我要她能讀台大。

Wǒ yào tā néng dú Táidà.

I hope that she can study at National Taiwan University.

阮欲坐船去。

Gún beh chē chûn khì.

我們要坐船去。

Wǒmen yào zuò chuán qù.

We wish to travel by boat.

阮欲/愛跼遐坐咧。

Gún beh/ài tàm hia che--leh.

我們要在哪裡坐著。

Wǒmen yào zài nǎlǐ zuòzhe.

We want to sit over there.

28.4.2 ‘Would like to’ perform an action

To express an early interest in an action or to politely convey a desire, place 想欲 **siuⁿ-beh** ‘would like to’ before a verb (see [12.2.3 Modal verbs](#) 想欲 *siuⁿ-beh* and 想愛 *siuⁿ-ài* ‘would like, thinking of’). An alternate form is 想愛 **siuⁿ-ài**.

想欲 + *verb*

siuⁿ-beh + *verb*

‘would like to *verb*’

伊想欲共恁囝送去補習班。

I siuⁿ-beh kā in kiáⁿ sàng khì pó-sip-pan.

他想要把他兒子送去補習班。

Tā xiǎngyào bǎ tā érzi sòng qù bǔxíbān.

He would like to put his son in cram school.

邱小姐 想愛 開店。

Khu sió-chiá siūⁿ-ài khai-tiàm.

邱小姐 想要 開店。

Qiū xiǎojiě xiǎngyào kāidiàn.

Ms. Khu is thinking of opening a new business.

29 Changes

29.1 Words expressing change

The English word ‘change’ can occur in quite a variety of contexts that sometimes requires a more precise term in Taiwanese. This section broadly divides the terms for ‘change’ with regards to *intransitive* actions, the subject undergoes the action itself (‘The dog smells like flowers’), and *transitive* actions, the subject performs an action on another object (‘That dog smells every fire hydrant’).

29.1.1 Changes that occur with no object

These verbs for ‘change’ can be used to express changes that are *intransitive* (there is no object), the subject itself undergoes the change.

29.1.1.1 Changes in characteristics

The verb 變 **pìⁿ** can be used when describing how one characteristic or aspect of the subject changes. The literary register pronunciation 變 **piàn** is also commonly used but is more often found in compound words such as 改變 **kái-piàn** ‘to transform’ or 變做 **piàn-chó** ‘to become’.

變 **pìⁿ**

你應該等到弓蕉變黃色才食。

Lí eng-kai tán kàu keng-chio **pìⁿ** ng-sek chiah chiah.

你應該等到香蕉變黃色才吃。

Nǐ yīnggāi děng dào xiāngjiāo **biàn** huángsè cái chī.

You should wait for the banana to change yellow before you eat it.

伊驚伊若留跔這個空課伊會變。

I kiaⁿ i nā lâu tàm chit ê khang-khòe i ē piⁿ.

他怕如果他留在這個工作他會變。

Tā pà rúguǒ tā liú zài zhègè gōngzuò tā huì biàn.

He's afraid he will change if he stays at this job.

變 PIÀN

我逐擺看著伊，伊的頭毛閣變矣。

Góa tàk pái khòaⁿ-tiòh i, i ê thâu-mo'koh piàn--ah.

我每次看到她，她的髮型又變了。

Wǒ měi cì kàndào tā, tā de fàxíng yòu biàn le.

Every time I see her, her hairstyle has changed again.

29.1.1.2 To transform

The terms 改變 **kái-piàn** and 轉變 **chóan-piàn** generally refer to a more substantial change that 'transforms' or 'alters' the entirety of the subject into something significantly different.

改變 KÁI-PIÀN

你的文章已經改變真濟。

Lí ê bûn-chiong í-keng kái-piàn chin chē.

你的文章已經改變很多。

Nǐ de wénzhāng yǐjīng gǎibiàn hěnduō.

Your essay has already changed a lot.

轉變 CHÓAN-PIÀN

對長背來講，社會最近轉變傷濟。

Tùi tióng-pòe lâi kóng, siā-hōe chòe-kīn chóan-piàn siuⁿ chē.

對長輩來說，社會最近改變太多。

Dùi zhǎngbèi lái shuō, shèhuì zuìjìn gǎibiàn tài duō.

For the older generations, society has changed too much recently.

29.1.1.3 To become something

The term 成為 **sêng-ūi** is often used to stress the result of a change or what a subject has become.

成為 SÊNG-ŪI

伊細漢時想講我會成為台灣的總統。

Góa sè-hàn sī siūⁿ-kóng góa ē sêng-ûi Tâi-oân ê chóng-thóng.

我小的時候以為我會成為台灣的總統。

Wǒ xiǎo de shíhòu yǐwéi wǒ huì chéngwéi Táiwān de zǒngtǒng.

When I was young, I thought I would become Taiwan's president.

29.1.2 Changing an object

The verbs for ‘change’ in this section can be used to express changes that are *transitive*, the subject performs an action on an object.

29.1.2.1 To correct, edit, or fix

The terms 改 **kái** and 修改 **siu-kái** below generally refer to changes made through small adjustments to correct, edit, or fix an object.

改 KÁI

我下昏暗會共恁的考試攞改好。

Góa e-hng-àm ē kā lín ê khó-chhì lóng kái hó.

我今晚會把你們的考試都改好。

Wǒ jīnwǎn huì bǎ nǐmen de kǎoshì dōu gǎi hǎo.

I will correct all of your tests tonight.

修改 SIU-KÁI

手腕若傷長，我會當替你修改。

Chhiú-ńg nā siuⁿ tng, góa ē-tàng theh lí siu-kái.

如果袖子太長，我能幫你修改。

Rúguǒ xiùzi tài cháng, wǒ néng bāng nǐ xiūgǎi.

If the sleeves are too long, I can help you change them.

29.1.2.2 To exchange, switch

The terms 換 **ōaⁿ** and 改換 **kái-ōaⁿ** generally refer to changes made through a switch or exchange of objects.

換 **ŌAⁿ**

咱來換位去窗仔邊遐。

Lán lái ōaⁿ ūi khì thang-á piⁿ hia.

我們換位子到靠窗戶那邊吧。

Wǒmen huàn wèizi dào kào chuānghù nà biān ba.

Let's change our seats to the ones by the window.

改換 **KÁI-ŌAⁿ**

改換較輕鬆的音樂。

Kái-ōaⁿ khah khin-sang ê im-gák.

改換比較輕鬆的音樂。

Gǎihuàn bǐjiào fāngsōng de yīnyuè.

Change the music to something more relaxing.

29.1.2.3 To improve

The terms 改良 **kái-liông**, 改善 **kái-siān**, and 改進 **kái-chìn** generally refer to changes that 'improve' or make an object better.

改良 **KÁI-LIÔNG**

作穡的改良番麥品種。

Chò-sit--ê kái-liông hoan-béh phín-chéng.

農夫改良玉米品種。

Nóngfū gǎiliáng yùmǐ pǐnzhǒng.

The farmer improved this variety of corn.

改善 **KÁI-SIÂN**

伊的成績若無改善，伊袂當畢業。

I ê sêng-chek nā bô kái-siān, i bē-tàng pit-giáp.

她的成績如果不改善，她不能畢業。

Tā de chéngjī rúguǒ bù gǎishàn, tā bù néng bìyè.

If her grades don't change, she won't be able to graduate.

改進 **KÁI-CHÌN**

你若和計程車司機講話，就會真緊改進你的台語。

Lí nā hām kè-thêng-chhia su-ki kong ōe, tō ē chin kín kái-chìn lí ê Tâi-gí.

如果你和計程車司機講話，就會很快改進你的台語。

Rúguǒ nǐ hé jìchéngchē sījī jiǎng huà, jiù huì hěn kuài gǎijìn nǐ de Táiyǔ.

You will improve your Taiwanese quickly by speaking with taxi drivers.

29.1.3 Unchanging

To indicate that no change occurs, the negative 無 **bô** can be used for events in the past and 袂 **bē** for events in the present or future. 不變 **put-piàn** ‘unchanging’ is a word compound that can be used in all time periods.

無變 **BÔ PIÀN**

雖然伊變做有名，但是伊的個性無變。

Sui-jiân i piàn-chó ū-miâ, tân-sī i ê kò-sèng bô piàn.

雖然她變成有名，但是她的個性沒有變。

Suīrán tā biànchéng yǒumíng, dànshì tā de gèxìng méiyǒu biàn.

Even though she became famous, her personality did not change.

袂變 **BĒ PIÀN**

無論我幾擺佮伊問，伊的回答攏袂變。

Bô-lūn góa kúí pái kah i m̄ng, i ê hôe-tap lóng bē piàn

不管我幾次問她，她的回答都不變。

Bùguǎn wǒ jǐ cì wèn tā, tā de huídá dōu bù biàn.

Regardless of how many times I ask her, her answer doesn't change.

不變 **PUT-PIÀN**

雖然伊失業矣，但是伊堅持的態度不變。

Sui-jiân i sit-giáp--ah, tân-sī i kian-chhî ê thài-tō put-piàn.

雖然他失業了，但是他堅持的態度不變。

Suīrán tā shīyè le, dànshì tā jiānchí de tàidù bù biàn.

Even though he has lost his job, his attitude is unchanging.

Unlike the Mandarin negative 不 **bù**, the Taiwanese 不 **put** only appears within word compounds and cannot be used to freely negate any verb or adjective.

29.2 Resultative complements indicating change

Resultative complements can also be used to indicate change (see [11.2 Resultative complements](#)). In some cases, they are used together with other words signifying change.

29.2.1 Changing into with resultative 做 -chò

The resultative complement 做 -**chò** can be paired with some verbs to reflect a ‘change into’ a different form or ‘to become’.

verb + 做

verb + chò

‘change into verb’

換做 ŌAⁿ-CHÒ

你敢會當共這寡英鎊換做美金？

Lí kám ē-tàng kā chit kóa Ing-pōng ōaⁿ-chò Bí-kim?

你能不能把這些英鎊換成美金嗎？

Nǐ néngbùnéng bǎ zhè xiē Yīngbàng huànchéng Měijīn ma?

Can you change these British pounds into American dollars?

變做 PIÀN-CHÒ

阮阿爸變做我的頭家，我就袂堪得。

Gún a-pah piàn-chò góa ê thâu-ke, góa tō bē-kham-tit.

我爸爸變成我的老闆，我就受不了。

Wǒ bàba biànchéng wǒ de lǎobǎn, wǒ jiù shòubùliǎo.

When my father became my boss, I couldn't stand it.

咱的乖乖後生按怎變做遮爾仔歹？

Lán ê koai-koai hāu-seⁿ án-chóaⁿ piàn-chò chiah-nī-á pháiⁿ?

我們的乖乖兒子怎麼成為這麼壞？

Wǒmen de guāiguāi érzi zěnmē chéngwéi zhème huái?

How did our well-behaved boy become so bad?

In some contexts, the resultative complement 做 -**chò** is used to indicate that one has misinterpreted an action.

你挂才講「買」我聽做「賣」。

Lí tú-chiah kóng ‘bé’ góa thiaⁿ-chò ‘bē’.

你剛才說「買」我聽成「賣」。

Nǐ gāngcái shuō ‘mǎi’ wǒ tīngchéng ‘mài’.

When you just said ‘buy’, I (mistakenly) thought I heard you say ‘sell’.

29.2.2 Successfully achieving with resultative 成 -sêng

The resultative complement 成 -sêng can be attached to verbs to signal that a goal has been successfully achieved. This is often used to emphasize that a change has moved from incompleteness to successful completion.

verb + 成

verb + sêng

‘successfully become verb’

變成 PIÀN-SÊNG

政府 欲 遮的 查埔 囡仔 變成 好 公民。

Chèng-hú beh chia-ê cha-po' gín-á piàn-sêng hó kong-bîn.

政府 要 這些 男孩子 變成 好 公民。

Zhèngfǔ yào zhè xiē nánháizi biànchéng hǎo gōngmín.

The government wants these boys to become good citizens.

完成 ÔAN-SÊNG

我 今仔日 的 功課 已經 完成 矣。

Góa kin-á-jit ê kong-khò í-keng ôan-sêng--ah.

我 今天 的 功課 已經 完成 了。

Wǒ jīntiān de gōngkè yǐjīng wánchéng le.

I've already finished today's homework.

養成 IÓNG-SÊNG

囡仔 愛 按 細漢 開始 才 會當 養成 好 習慣。

Gín-á ài àn sè-hàn khai-sí chiah ē-tàng ióng-sêng hó sip-kòan.

孩子 要 從 小 開始 才 能 養成 好 習慣。

Háizi yào cóng xiǎo kāishǐ cái néng yǎngchéng hǎo xíguàn.

Successfully raising children with good habits must begin when they are young.

29.3 Expressing a new situation with end-of-sentence

particles

29.3.1 Indicating a change of state with adjectives and particle 矣 --ah

When an adjective functions like a verb and signals a new state or situation, the anterior aspect marker 矣 --ah is added to the end of the clause or sentence (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#), [6.5.1 Change-of-state particle 矣 --ah](#)).

changed situation + 矣

changed situation + --ah

掃地了後，塗跤清氣矣。

Sàu-tè liáu-āu, thô-kha chheng-khì--ah.

掃地以後，地板乾淨了。

Sǎodì yǐhòu, dìbǎn gānjìng le.

After sweeping, the floor is now clean.

伊這馬無咧讀俄文矣。

I chit-má bô teh thák Gô-bûn--ah.

他現在丕念俄文了。

Tā xiànzài bù niàn Éwén le.

He is no longer studying Russian.

這條椅子的跤斷去矣。

Chit liâu í-á ê kha tīg--khì--ah.

這把椅子的腳斷掉了。

Zhè bǎ yǐzi de jiǎo duàndiào le.

This chair's leg is broken now.

29.3.2 Emphasizing a new situation with the end-of-sentence particle --啦 lah

The end-of-sentence particle 啦 --lah can follow the anterior aspect marker 矣 --ah to give further

emphasis that the situation has changed (see [8.4 Anterior aspect](#), [22.1 End-of-sentence particles](#)).

changed situation + 矣 + 啦

changed situation + --ah + --lah

攏無物仔通食因為予伊食了矣啦！

Lóng bô mih-á thang chiáh in-ūi hō i chiáh-liáu--ah--lah!

都沒有吃的東西因為被他吃完啦！

Dōu méiyǒu chī de dōngxī yīnwèi bèi tā chīwán la!

There's no food left because he ate it all!

因為你袂記得共牛奶因跼冰箱內，所以歹去啦。

In-ūi lí bē-kì-tit kā gû-leng khng tàm peng-siuⁿ-lāi, só-í pháiⁿ--khì--lah.

因為你忘了把牛奶放在冰箱裡，所以壞掉啦。

Yīnwèi nǐ wàngle bǎ niúǎi fàng zài bīngxiāng lǐ, suǒyǐ huàidiào la.

Because you forgot to put it in the fridge, the milk has gone bad.

Note that in Mandarin 啦 **la** is considered a combination of the Mandarin anterior aspect marker 了 **le** and end-of-sentence particle 啊 **a**.

29.4 Describing a condition that has gotten worse using 去 --khì

The suffix 去 --**khì** can be attached to some adjectives to indicate that a condition has become worse (see [6.5.2 Describing conditions that have worsened 去 --khì](#)). The end-of-sentence particle 矣 --**ah** may optionally be added to emphasize the change in situation.

adjective + 去 + (矣)

adjective + --khì + (--ah)

緊來食，若無，菜會冷去。

Kín lâi chiáh, nā bô, chhài ē lêng--khì.

快來吃，要不然菜會冷了。

Kuài lái chī, yàobùrán cài huì lěng le.

Eat soon or the food will become cold.

我袂記得共衫按洗衫幾提出來，所以臭去矣。

Góa bē-kì-tit kā saⁿ àn sé-saⁿ-ki thèh--chhut-lâi, só-í chhàu--khì--ah.

我忘記把衣服從洗衣機拿出來，所以臭了。

Wǒ wàngjì bǎ yīfú cóng xǐyījī náchūlái, suǒyǐ chòu le.

I forgot to take the clothes out of the washer, so they stink now.

One exception to this construction is 好去 **hó--khì** which conveys that a situation has improved.

歇睏幾工了後，感冒攏好去矣。

Hioh-khùn kúi kang liáu-āu, kám-mō lóng hó--khì--ah.

休息幾天之後，感冒都好了。

Xiūxi jǐ tiān zhīhòu, gǎnmào dōu hǎo le.

After resting a few days, my cold has completely gotten better.

29.5 Emphasizing a change in the immediate future

To indicate a change brought on by an action about to happen, place 咧欲 **teh-beh** (also pronounced **tih-beh**) before the verb. 強欲 **kiōng-beh** is an alternate form.

咧欲 + *verb*

teh-beh + *verb*

‘just about to + *verb*’

毋免佢洪先生敲電話，因為伊咧欲到位矣。

M-bián kah Âng--sian-siⁿ khà tiān-ōe, in-ūi i teh-beh kàu-ūi--ah.

不用給洪先生打電話，因為他快要抵達了。

Bùyòng gěi Hóng xiānshēng dǎ diànhuà, yīnwèi tā kuàiyào dǐdá le.

There is no need to call Mr. Ang because he is just about to arrive.

阮強欲離開停車場。

Gún kiōng-beh lî-khui thêng-chhia-tiūⁿ.

我們快要離開停車場。

Wǒmen kuàiyào líkai tíngchēchǎng.

We are just about to leave the parking lot.

彼欖樹仔強欲倒落去。

Hit châng chhiū-á kiōng-beh tó--lòh-khì.

那棵樹快要倒下去。

Nà kē shù kuàiyào dào xiàqù.

That tree is about to fall down.

29.6 Expressing changes over time

29.6.1 Changes over time ‘more and more’

To express that an adjective, stative verb, or modal verb is becoming ‘more and more’ over time, place 愈來愈 **jú lái jú** ‘more and more’ (also pronounced **lú lái lú**) before the adjective, stative verb, or modal verb (see [6.8.1 Changes over time](#)). An alternate form is 那來那 **ná lái ná**.

愈來愈 + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

jú lái jú + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

‘more and more + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*’

ADJECTIVE

最近 汽油 愈來愈 貴。

Chòe-kīn khi-iū jú lái jú kùi.

最近 汽油 越 來 越 貴。

Zuìjìn qìyóu yuè lái yuè guì.

Recently gasoline is getting more and more expensive.

STATIVE VERB

我 愈來愈 恰意 你 的朋友。

Góa jú lái jú kah-ì lí ê pêng-iú.

我 越 來 越 喜歡 你 的朋友。

Wǒ yuè lái yuè xǐhuān nǐ de péngyǒu.

I like your friend more and more.

MODAL VERB

彼 齣 電影 我 愈來愈 想 欲 看。

Hit chhut tiān-iaⁿ góa jú lái jú siuⁿ-beh khòaⁿ.

那 部 電影 我 越 來 越 想 要 看。

Nà bù diànyǐng wǒ yuè lái yuè xiǎngyào kàn.

More and more I would like to see that movie.

29.6.2 Changes over time 'less and less'

To express that an adjective, stative verb, or modal verb is becoming 'less and less' over time, use 愈來愈 jú lái jú before the negative form of an adjective, stative verb, or modal verb (see [6.8.1 Changes over time](#)). An alternate form is 那來那 ná lái ná.

愈來愈 + *negative + adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

jú lái jú + *negative + adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

'less and less + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*'

這個故事愈來愈無趣味。

Chit ê kò-sū jú lái jú bô chhù-bī.

這個故事越來越沒興趣。

Zhègè gùshì yuè lái yuè méi xìngqù.

This story is getting less and less interesting.

這個工作，我愈來愈無考慮。

Chit ê kang-chok, góa jú lái jú bô khó-lī.

這個工作，我越來越不考慮。

Zhègè gōngzuò, wǒ yuè lái yuè bù kǎolǜ.

I'm considering this job less and less.

伊那來那袂當記得伊細漢的時陣。

I ná lái ná bē-tàng kì-tit i sè-hàn ê sī-chūn.

他越來越不能記得他小的時候。

Tā yuè lái yuè bù néng jìdé tā xiǎo de shíhòu.

He is less and less able to remember his childhood.

29.6.3 Changes caused by another action

To express that the increase of one action influences another action, place 愈 jú or 那 ná before both the action verb and the adjective, stative verb, or modal verb (see [6.8.2 Changes that cause other changes](#)).

愈 + *action verb* + 愈 + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

jú + *action verb* + jú + *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*

‘the more *action verb*, the more *adjective/stative verb/modal verb*’

伊愈走愈瘦。

I jú cháu jú sán.

她越跑越瘦。

Tā yuè pǎo yuè shòu.

The more she runs, the thinner she becomes.

伊駛車愈緊我會愈驚。

I sái chhia jú kín góa ē jú kiaⁿ.

他開車越快我會越怕。

Tā kài chē yuè kuài wǒ huì yuè pà.

The faster he drives, the more scared I get.

伊那大我那愛照顧伊。

I ná tōa góa ná ài chiàu-kò i.

他越大我越得照顧他。

Tā yuè dà wǒ yuè dēi zhàogù tā.

The bigger he gets, the more I have to watch over him.

30 Additions

30.1 Expanding the subject or object

The preposition 佮 **kah** (also pronounced **kap**) ‘with, and’ can be used to join together nouns whether as part of a multiple subject or multiple object (see [15.5 Prepositions of accompaniment and interaction](#)). Alternate forms include 和 **hām** and 參 **chham**.

noun 1 + 佮 + noun 2

noun 1 + kah + noun 2

阮阿母、阿兄 佮 小妹， 您 夜市 已經 去了。

Gún a-bú, a-hiaⁿ kah sió-mōe, in iā-chhī í-keng khì liáu.

我 媽媽、哥哥 和 妹妹， 他們 已經 去了 夜市。

Wǒ māmā, gēgē hé mèimeī, tāmen yǐjīng qùle yèshì.

My mother, older brother, and younger sister already went to the night market.

請 你 共 牛奶 和 雞卵 園 踎 冰箱。

Chhiáⁿ lí kā gû-leng hām ke-nṅg khng tàm peng-siuⁿ.

請 你 把 牛奶 跟 雞蛋 放 在 冰箱。

Qǐng nǐ bǎ niúnnǎi gēn jīdàn fàng zài bīngxiāng.

Please put the milk and eggs in the refrigerator.

醫生 參 護士 佇 急診 等 病人。

I-seng chham hō-sū tī kip-chín tán pēⁿ-lâng.

醫生 和 護士 在 急診 等 病人。

Yīshēng hé hùshì zài jízhěn děng bìngrén.

The doctor and nurse are waiting for the patient in the emergency room.

If there are more than two nouns, then a special backwards slanting comma 頓號 **tng-hō** ‘、’ is used to mark a series and placed between the nouns. The conjunction 佮 **kah** ‘with, and’ is used before the last item in the series.

noun 1 、 *noun 2* 、 *noun 3* + 佢 + *noun 4*

noun 1 、 *noun 2* 、 *noun 3* + kah + *noun 4*

還我的冊、膨紗衫、牛仔褲 佢 耳鉤。

Hêng góa ê chheh, phòng-se-saⁿ, gû-á-khò kah hīⁿ-kau.

還我的書、毛衣、牛仔褲 和 耳環。

Huán wǒ de shū, máoyī, niúzǎikù hé ěrhuán.

Give back my books, sweater, jeans, and earrings.

30.2 Providing additional information about the subject

30.2.1 Adding descriptions in a subsequent sentence

To indicate that a subject possesses an additional quality in subsequent sentences, place 嘛 **mā** ‘also’ before the adjective or stative verb. An alternate form is 也 **iā**.

subject + 嘛 + *adjective / stative verb*

subject + mā + *adjective / stative verb*

邱小姐足專門。伊 嘛 真巧。

Khu sió-chiá chiok choan-bûn. I mā chìn khiáu.

邱小姐非常專業。她 也 很聰明。

Qiū xiǎojiě fēicháng zhuānyè. Tā yě hěn cōngmíng.

Ms. Khu is very professional. She is also smart.

彼隻馬仔真緊。伊 也 真少年。

Hít chiah bé-á chìn kín. I iā chìn siàu-liân.

那隻馬很快。牠 也 很年輕。

Nà zhī mǎ hěn kuài. Tā yě hěn niánqīng.

That horse is fast. It is also very young.

30.2.2 Describing two qualities within a sentence

又閣 **iū-koh** can be used to express a subject possessing two qualities which are both positive or both negative. Place 又閣 **iū-koh** before the first adjective and then repeat 又閣 **iū-koh** before the second adjective. Depending on individual preference, the leading 又閣 **iū-koh** may be omitted.

(又閣) + *adjective* + 又閣 + *adjective*

(iū-koh) + *adjective* + iū-koh + *adjective*

作穡人的生活 (又閣) 歹做 又閣 艱苦。

Choh-sit-lâng ê seng-óah (iū-koh) pháiⁿ-chò iū-koh kan-khó.

農人的生活 又 難做 又 辛苦。

Nóng-rén de shēnghuó yòu nánzuò yòu xīnkǔ.

A farmer's life is difficult as well as tiring.

Note that while in Mandarin the leading 又 **yòu** can be omitted, it is more commonly included.

An alternate form of describing two qualities is to omit the 又 **iū-** component altogether.

(閣) + *adjective* + 閣 + *adjective*

(koh) + *adjective* + koh + *adjective*

你的紅嬰仔 (閣) 乖 閣 古錐。

Lí ê âng-eⁿ-á (koh) koai koh kó-chui.

你的嬰兒 也 乖 也 可愛。

Nǐ de yīng'ér yě guāi yě kě'ài.

Your baby is both well-behaved and cute.

30.2.3 Expressing surprise at having two qualities

To convey surprise that a subject possesses two qualities, place 毋但 **m̄-nā** 'not only' before the first quality and 閣 **koh** 'but also' before the second quality. Adjectives, verbs, verb phrases, and clauses may all be placed in this sentence pattern. Note that 毋但 **m̄-nā** 'not only' can appear before or after the subject/topic. However, 閣 **koh** 'but also' must appear at the beginning of the second clause.

1ST CLAUSE

毋但 + *quality 1*

m̄-nā + *quality 1*

'Not only...*quality 1*

2ND CLAUSE

閣 + *quality 2*

koh + *quality 2*

but also...*quality 2*'

暗頓 毋但 歹食，閣 真貴。

Àm-tòng m̄-nā pháitⁿ-chiáh, koh chin kùi.

晚餐 不但 難吃，而且 很貴。

Wǎncān bùdàn nánchī, érqiě hěn guì.

Dinner not only did not taste good but also was expensive.

Alternate forms include 不但 **put-tān** to express ‘not only’ and 甚至 **sīm-chì**, 也 **iā-sī**, 嘛是 **mā-sī**, and 猶閣 **iáu-koh** to express ‘but also’.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
不但 put-tān	甚至 sīm-chì
	也 iā-sī
	嘛是 mā-sī
	猶閣 iáu-koh
‘Not only...’	but also...’

伊 不但 著傷，甚至 予控告著。

I put-tān tiòh-siong, sīm-chì hō khòng-kò--tiòh.

他 不但 受傷，而且 被控告了。

Tā bùdàn shòushāng, érqiě bèi kònggào le.

Not only did he get injured, but also he was sued.

我的好朋友 毋但 緣投，嘛是 好額。

Góa ê hó pêng-iú m̄-nā iân-tâu, mā-sī hó-giáh.

我的好朋友 不但 帥，也是 富有。

Wǒ de hǎo péngyǒu bùdàn shuài, yěshì fùyǒu.

My good friend is not only good-looking but also wealthy.

30.3 Describing a subject performing multiple actions

30.3.1 Multiple actions of equal standing

To indicate that a subject performs more than one action of more or less equal standing, place 也 **iā** before the additional verb. Alternate forms include 嘛 **mā** or 另外 **lêng-gōa**.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>subject + verb 1</i>	也 + <i>verb 2</i>
	iā + <i>verb 2</i>

賴先生負責訓練新的員工，嘛負責管理秘書。

Lōa--sian-siⁿ hū-chek hùn-liān sin ê ôan-kang, mā hū-chek kóan-lí pì-su.

賴先生負責連訓新的員工，還負責管理秘書。

Lài xiānshēng fùzé liánxùn xīn de yuángōng, hái fùzé guǎnlǐ mìshū.

Mr. Loa's responsibilities are to train new employees and to manage the secretaries.

我清洗浴間，另外共糞埤提出去。

Góa chheng sé-ék-keng, lēng-gōa kā pùn-sò theh--chhut-khì.

我清浴室，另外把垃圾拿出去。

Wǒ qīng yùshì, lìngwài bǎ lèsè náchūqù.

I cleaned the bathroom and took out the garbage.

30.3.2 Multiple actions contrary to expectation

To convey that the subject performs another action contrary to expectation, place 猶閣 **iáu-koh** 'still, yet' before the second verb (also pronounced **iah-koh**, **ah-koh**, **á-koh**, **íá-koh**) (see [34 Simultaneous actions](#)). Additionally, 閣 **-koh** can be omitted.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>verb 1</i>	猶(閣) + <i>verb 2</i>
	iáu(-koh) + <i>verb 2</i>

您查某团拍籃球，猶閣拍排球。

In cha-bó-kiáⁿ phah nâ-kiû, iáu-koh phah pâi-kiû.

他的女兒打籃球，還打排球。

Tā de nǚ'ér dǎ lánqiú, hái dǎ páiqiú.

Her daughter plays basketball and even volleyball, too.

阮著愛先轉去窮行李，猶較早睏。

Gún tiòh-ài seng tít-khì khêng hêng-lí, iáu khah chá khùn.

我們需要先回家整理行李，還有早一點睡覺。

Wǒmen xūyào xiān huí jiā zhěnglǐ xínglǐ, háiyǒu zǎo yīdiǎn shuìjiào.

We have to go home first to pack bags, and we need to sleep early.

30.4 Introducing related information to the previous statement

To introduce more information to a statement, use the following expressions to begin a new clause or sentence.

30.4.1 Moreover, furthermore

The terms below expressing ‘moreover’ or ‘furthermore’ can be used to introduce substantially new information that supports the preceding statement.

1ST CLAUSE/SENTENCE	2ND CLAUSE/SENTENCE
<i>statement</i>	並且 pēng-chhiá ⁿ
	而且 jî-chhiá ⁿ
	又閣 iū-koh
	‘moreover, furthermore’

並且 PĒNG-CHHIÁⁿ

我忝甲行袂去矣。並且我腹肚枵。

Góa thiám kah kiâⁿ-bē-khì--ah. Pēng-chhiáⁿ góa pak-tó'iau.

我累得走不動了。並且我很餓。

Wǒ lèi de zǒubudòng le. Bìngqiě wǒ hěn è.

I am too tired to walk anymore. Moreover, I'm hungry.

而且 JÎ-CHHIÁⁿ

這馬俄國傷寒。而且機票會真貴。

Chit-má Ngô-kok siuⁿ kôaⁿ. Jî-chhiáⁿ ki-phiò ē chin kùi.

現在俄國太冷。而且機票會很貴。

Xiànzài Éguó tài lěng. Érqiě jīpiào huì hěn guì.

Right now Russia is too cold. Moreover, the flight ticket will be expensive.

又閣 IŪ-KOH

伊定定坐佇我的位，又閣伊的糞埽攏擲佇遐。

I tiāⁿ-tiāⁿ chē tī góa ê ūi, iū-koh i ê pùn-sò lóng tàn tī hia.

她常常坐在我的位子，而且她的垃圾都丟在那裡。

Tā chángcháng zuò zài wǒ de wèizi, érqiě tā de lèsè dōu diū zài nàlǐ.

She frequently takes my seat. Furthermore, she leaves all her trash there.

30.4.2 In addition, also, one other thing

The terms below expressing ‘also’, ‘in addition’, or ‘one other thing’ can be used to offer additional or supplemental information to the preceding statement.

1ST CLAUSE/SENTENCE	2ND CLAUSE/SENTENCE
<i>statement</i>	另外 lēng-gōa
	猶有 iáu-ū
	‘also, in addition, one other thing’

另外 LĒNG-GŌA

這個報告的期限是後日。另外你下昏暗愛敲予客戶。

Chit ê pò-kò ê kî-hān sī āu--jit. Leng-gōa lí e-hng-àm ài khà hō'kheh-hō.

這個報告的期限是後天。另外你今晚得打給客戶。

Zhègè bàogào de qíxiàn shì hòutiān. Lìngwài nǐ jīnwǎn děi dǎ gěi kèhù.

The deadline for this report is the day after tomorrow. Also, you need to call the client tonight.

猶有 IÁU-Ū

公園佇咱的飯店附近。猶有咱會當行去博物館。

Kong-hng tī lán ê pñg-tiàm hù-kīn. Iáu-ū lán ē-tàng kiâ khi phok-bùt-kóan.

公園在我們的飯店附近。還有我們能走去博物館。

Gōngyuán zài wǒmen de fàndiàn fùjìn. Háiyǒu wǒmen néng zǒu qù bówùguǎn

The park is close to our hotel. Also, we will be able to go the museum.

30.4.3 Besides, except for

除了 **tû-liáu** can mean either to include (‘besides, in addition to’) or exclude (‘except for, not including’) the item specified in the first clause. Generally context helps to clarify which meaning is desired.

30.4.3.1 Inclusive 除了 tû-liáu

除了 **tû-liáu** ‘besides’ can be used at the beginning of the first clause to indicate that including the argument in the first clause, there is a second argument in the second clause. The arguments can be nouns, adjectives, or verbs. To clarify an inclusive reading, place 閣 **koh** ‘also’ in the second clause. Note that 以外 **i-góa** ‘apart from’ can optionally be added to the end of the first clause but does not imply either an inclusive or exclusive reading.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
除了 + <i>argument 1</i> + (以外)	(閣) + <i>argument 2</i>
tû-liáu + <i>argument 1</i> + (i-góa)	(koh) + <i>argument 2</i>
‘besides + <i>argument 1</i>	(also) + <i>argument 2</i> ’

除了拍網球以外，你閣愛創啥物？

Tû-liáu phah bāng-kiû i-góa, lí koh ài chhòng siáⁿ-mih?

除了打網球以外，你還喜歡做什麼？

Chúle dǎ wǎngqiú yǐwài, nǐ hái xǐhuān zuò shénme ?

Besides playing tennis, what else do you like to do?

除了印尼，我閣捌去泰國佻印度。

Tû-liáu Ìn-nî, góa koh bat khì Thài-kok kah Ìn-tō.

除了印尼，我還去過泰國和印度。

Chúle Yìnní, wǒ hái qùguò Tàiguó hé Yìndù.

In addition to Indonesia, I have also been to Thailand and India.

30.4.3.2 Exclusive 除了 **tû-liáu**

除了 **tû-liáu** ‘except for’ or ‘not including’ can also be used at the beginning of the first clause to indicate that excluding the argument in the first clause, there is another argument that holds in the second clause. The arguments can be nouns, adjectives, or verbs. Note that 以外 **i-góa** ‘apart from’ can optionally be added to the end of the first clause, but does not imply either an inclusive or exclusive reading.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
除了 + <i>argument 1</i> + (以外)	<i>argument 2</i>
tû-liáu + <i>argument 1</i> + (i-góa)	<i>argument 2</i>
‘besides + <i>argument 1</i>	<i>argument 2</i> ’

除了海鮮以外，我無食肉。

Tû-liáu hái-sian i-góa, góa bô chiáh bah.

除了海鮮以外，我不吃肉。

Chúle hǎixiān yǐwài, wǒ bù chī ròu.

Except for seafood, I do not eat meat.

除了拍網球，其他的運動伊攏真愛。

Tû-liáu phah bāng-kiû, kî-thaⁿ ê ũn-tōng i lóng chin ài.

除了打網球，其他的運動他都喜歡。

Chúle dǎ wǎngqiú, qítā de yùndòng tā dōu xǐhuān.

Not including tennis, he loves to play all sports.

31 Contrasts

31.1 Conjunctions indicating contrast

31.1.1 Simple contrasts

Some conjunctions such as 毋過 **m̄-koh** (also pronounced as **m̄-kò** or **m̄-kù**) ‘but’ or ‘however’ can be placed in the beginning of the second clause to change the direction of a statement made in the first clause. The conjunction, a word used to join clauses, appears in the beginning of the second clause. If the subject is included in the second clause, then it follows the conjunction. Alternate forms include 但是 **tān-sī** and 總是 **chóng--sī**. The expression 猶毋過 **iáu-m̄-koh** can be used to convey ‘but still’.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>statement</i>	毋過 m̄-koh
	但是 tān-sī
	總是 chóng--sī
	‘but, however’

毋過 **M-KOH**

我穿罩衫 佢戴帽仔，毋過 我猶閣寒。

Góa chhēng tà-saⁿ kah tì bō-á, m̄-koh góa iáu-koh kôaⁿ.

我穿外套也戴帽子，不過 我還會冷。

Wǒ chuān wàitào yě dài màozi, bùguò wǒ hái huì lěng.

I'm wearing a coat and hat, but I'm still cold.

但是 **TĀN-SĪ**

伊愛來參加酒會，但是 伊工作著愛先做予了。

I ài lâi chham-ka chiú-hōe, tān-sī i kang-chok tiòh-ài seng chò hō'liáu.

她要來參加酒會，但是 她得先做完工作。

Tā yào lái cānjiā jiǔhuì, dànshì tā dēi xiān zuòwán gōngzuò.

She wants to come to the cocktail party, but she has to first finish her work.

總是 CHÓNG--SĪ

您有夠錢通請暗頓，總是 您真凍酸。

In ū káu chiⁿ thang chhiáⁿ àm-tòng, chóng--sī in chin tàng-sng.

他們有錢可請晚餐，可是 他們很吝嗇。

Tāmen yǒu qián kě qǐng wǎncān, kěshì tāmen hěn lìnse.

They have the money to pay for dinner, but they are stingy.

猶毋過 IÁU-M-KOH

食魚會予伊袂爽快，猶毋過 伊也是會食。

Chiáh hī ē hō i bē sóng-khòai, iáu-m-koh i iā-sī ē chiáh.

吃魚會讓他不舒服，不過 他還是會吃。

Chī yú huì ràng tā bú shūfú, bùguò tā háishì huì chī.

Eating fish makes him sick, but still he eats it.

31.1.2 Emphasizing contrasts

To further emphasize the contrast between clauses, stronger contrast conjunctions expressing ‘nevertheless’ or ‘on the contrary’ (such as 卻是 **khiok-sī**) can be placed before or after the subject in the second clause. The subject is often omitted in the second clause if there is no change in subject. Alternate forms include 顛倒 **tian-tò** and 反倒轉 **hóan-tò-tng**.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>statement</i>	卻是 khiok-sī
	顛倒 tian-tò
	反倒轉 hóan-tò-tng
	‘on the contrary, nevertheless’

卻是 KHIOK-SĪ

佇咱兜犯法袂使得，卻是 阮猶原愛你。

Tī lán tau hōan-hoat bē-sái--tit, khiok-sī gún iū-ôan ài lí.

在我們家犯法是不被允許的，但是 我們仍然愛你。

Zài wǒmen jiā fànǎ shì bù bèi yǔnxǔ de, dànshì wǒmen réngrán ài nǐ.

Breaking the law is not acceptable in this family. Nevertheless, we still love you.

顛倒 TIAN-TÒ

伊挂仔贏獎學金，伊 顛倒 無歡喜。

I tú-á iān chióng-hàk-kim, i tian-tò bô hoan-hí.

他剛贏得獎學金，他 反而 不開心。

Tā gāng yíngdé jiǎngxuéjīn, tā fǎn'ér bù kāixīn.

He just won a scholarship, but surprisingly he isn't happy.

反例轉 HÓAN-TÒ-TŪNG

彼个查埔囡仔干焦行一下就跋落去，反到轉伊開始笑。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á kan-na kiâ chit-ê tō póah--lòh-khì, hóan-tò-túg i khai-sí chhiò.

那個男孩子才走一下就跌到，反而他開始笑。

Nàge nánháizi cái zǒu yīxià jiù diēdào, fǎn'ér tā kāishǐ xiào.

That little boy only walked a few steps before he fell. Contrary to what you would expect, he started to laugh.

31.2 Offering a concession in an argument

To offer a concession in an argument, 雖然 **sui-jiân**, which expresses ‘although’ or ‘despite’, can introduce the concession in the first clause. The second clause begins with a contrast conjunction such as 但是 **tān-sī** ‘but’ or a reference adverb such as 嘛 **mā** ‘yet, still’ to reinforce the contrast. Note that in English the second clause does not begin with a contrast conjunction.

31.2.1 Concessions with simple contrasts

For a simple contrast to the concession given by the first clause beginning with 雖然 **sui-jiân** ‘although’, place a contrast conjunction such as 但是 **tān-sī** ‘but’ or 毋過 **m̄-koh** ‘however’ at the beginning of the second clause.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
雖然 + <i>subject</i>	但是
sui-jiân + <i>subject</i>	tān-sī
‘Although <i>subject</i> ...’	

雖然落雨，但是伊欲去外口逗逗。

Sui-jiân lòh hō, tān-sī i beh khì gōa-kháu chhit-thô.

雖然下雨，但是她要去外面玩。

Suī-rán xià yǔ, dànshì tā yào qù wàimiàn wán.

Although it is raining, she wants to go outside to play.

雖然伊會曉讀字，但是伊袂曉寫。

Sui-jiân i ē-hiáu thák jī, tān-sī i bē-hiáu siá.

雖然他會看字，但是他不會寫。

Suīrán tā huì kàn zì, dànshì tā bù huì xiě.

Although he knows how to read characters, he cannot write them.

雖然阮足想欲去，但是阮無夠人通訂行程。

Sui-jiân gún chiok siuⁿ-beh khi, tān-sī gún bô káu lāng thang têng hêng-têng.

雖然我們很想要去，但是我們不夠人可以預訂行程。

Suīrán wǒmen hěn xiǎngyào qù, dànshì wǒmen bù gòu rén kěyǐ yùdìng xíngchéng.

Despite the fact we are excited to go, we don't have enough people to book the trip.

雖然第一車較袂擠，毋過干焦予查某坐。

Sui-jiân tē-it chhia khah bē kheh, m̄-koh kan-na hō'cha-bó'chē.

雖然第一車比較不會擠，不過只讓女生搭乘。

Suīrán dìyī chē bǐjiào bù huì jǐ, bùguò zhǐ ràng nǚshēng dāchéng.

Even though the first train car is less crowded, it is only for women.

31.2.2 Emphasizing contrasts between clauses with a concession

To further emphasize the contrast between clauses with a concession, place a reference adverb expressing 'yet, still' (such as 也 iā or 嘛 mā) in the second clause. If the subject is stated in the second clause, the reference adverb appears after the subject.

1ST CLAUSE

雖然 + *subject*

sui-jiân + *subject*

'Although *subject*...'

2ND CLAUSE

(*subject*) + 嘛

(*subject*) + mā

雖然伊愛動物，伊嘛真愛食肉。

Sui-jiân i ài tōng-bùt, i mā chin ài chiáh bah.

雖然她喜歡動物，她還是很喜歡吃肉。

Suīrán tā xǐhuān dòngwù, tā háishì hěn xǐhuān chī ròu.

Although she likes animals, she still loves to eat meat.

雖然您逐日練習，您猶袂當贏比賽。

Sui-jiân in tàk jít liān-sip, in iáu bē-tàng iāⁿ pí-sài.

雖然 他們 每天 練習， 他們 還 不能 贏 比賽。

Suīrán tāmen měitiān liànxí, tāmen hái bùnéng yíng bǐsài.

Despite the fact they practice everyday, they still can't win a competition.

32 Sequence

32.1 Chronological sequence

32.1.1 Expressing sequence through consecutive verbs

Taiwanese generally follows the principle of presenting verbs in the order of which they would chronologically occur. This principle also allows a sequence of events to be indicated solely through the ordering of verbs within a sentence. No additional words are required.

我寫一張批寄予伊。

Góa siá chit tiuⁿ phoe kià hō'ì.

我寫一封信寄給她。

Wǒ xiě yī fēng xìn jù gěi tā.

I wrote a letter and then sent it to her.

32.1.2 Adverbs in sequences

Besides the use of consecutive verbs, a sequence of events can be indicated through two-clause sentence patterns using time adverbs (see [14.1.2 Time adverbs](#)).

32.1.2.1 Describing an event occurring prior to another event

To indicate that *event 1* occurs prior to *event 2*, the time adverb 進前 **chìn-chêng** ‘previous to’ may be

used. Generally, *event 2*, which occurs later chronologically, is placed in the first clause followed by 進前 **chìn-chêng** ‘prior to’ or ‘before’. Note that this is an exception to the general principle of chronological order of verb placement.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 2</i> + 進前	<i>event 1</i>
<i>event 2</i> + chìn-chêng	<i>event 1</i>
‘before <i>event 2</i>	, <i>event 1</i> occurs’

上飛行機 進前，我想欲買一杯咖啡。

Chiūⁿ hoe-lêng-ki chìn-chêng, góa siuⁿ-beh bé chit poe ka-pi.

上飛機 之前，我想要買一杯咖啡。

Shàng fēijī zhīqián, wǒ xiǎngyào mǎi yī bēi kāfēi.

Before getting on the plane, I want to buy a cup of coffee.

寫這篇文章 進前，我需要較濟研究。

Siá chit phiⁿ bûn-chiong chìn-chêng, góa su-iàu khah chē gián-kiù.

寫這篇文章 之前，我需要多一點研究。

Xiě zhè piān wénzhāng zhīqián, wǒ xūyào duō yīdiǎn yánjiū.

Before writing this essay, I need to do more research.

Note that the adverb 以前 **í-chêng** can be placed before the verb in the first clause to mean ‘previously’ or ‘in the past’.

我 以前 驚狗，但是這馬有三隻矣。

Góa í-chêng kiaⁿ kàu, tām-sī chit-má ũ saⁿ chiah--ah.

我 以前 怕狗，但是現在有三隻了。

Wǒ yǐqián pà gǒu, dànshì xiànzài yǒu sān zhī le.

I was afraid of dogs before, but I have three of them now.

32.1.2.2 Describing an event occurring after another event

To indicate that *event 2* occurs after *event 1*, the time adverb 了(後) **liáu-āu** ‘after’ may be used. Place *event 1* in the first clause followed by 了(後) **liáu(-āu)** ‘after’, then put *event 2* in the second clause. Note that 了(後) **liáu(-āu)** ‘after’ must follow an action or event, not a time period.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i> + 了(後)	<i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i> + liáu(-āu)	<i>event 2</i>

‘after event 1 , event 2 occurs’

伊關門了後，紅嬰仔就開始吼矣。

I koaiⁿ m̄ng liáu-āu, âng-eⁿ-á tō khai-sí háu--ah.

他關門之後，嬰兒就開始哭了。

Tā guān mén zhīhòu, yīng'ér jiù kāishǐ kū le.

After he closed the door, the baby started to cry.

提行李了，去換錢咧。

Thèh hêng-lí liáu, khì ōaⁿ chīⁿ--leh.

拿行李之後，去換錢吧。

Ná xínglǐ zhīhòu, qù huàn qián ba.

After picking up your luggage, go exchange money.

To express that an event occurs after a certain amount of time, use the expression 以後 **í-āu** ‘after’ instead of 了(後) **liáu(-āu)**.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
period of time + 以後	event
period of time + í-āu	event
‘after period of time	, event occurs’

五年以後，我才會當做永久居民。

Gō`nī í-āu, góa chiah ē-tàng chò éng-kiú ku-bîn.

五年以後，我才能當永久居民。

Wǔ nián yǐhòu, wǒ cái néng dāng yǒngjiǔ jūmín.

After 5 years, I can become a permanent resident.

四十五分鐘以後，你的雞卵糕才烘了。

Sì-cháp-gō`hun-cheng í-āu, lí ê ke-n̄ng-ko chiah ē hang-liáu.

四十五分鐘以後，你的蛋糕才會考完。

Sìshíwǔ fēnzhōng yǐhòu, nǐ de dànāo cái huì kǎowán.

Your cake will be finished baking after 45 minutes.

以後 **í-āu** can also appear at the beginning of the second clause to introduce the next part of a sequence. In this context, 以後 **í-āu** means ‘later’.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
event 1	以後 + event 2
event 1	í-āu + event 2
‘event 1 occurs	, later event 2 occurs’

你的後生真好笑，以後伊應該會當做藝人。

Lí ê hāu-seⁿ chin hó-chhiò, í-āu i eng-kai ē-tàng chò gē-jîn.

你的兒子很好笑，以後他應該能當藝人。

Nǐ de érzi hěn hǎoxiào, yǐhòu tā yīnggāi néng dāng yìrén.

Your son is very funny. He should be an entertainer later on.

然後 **jiân-āu** ‘afterwards’ similarly can begin a second clause to introduce the next part of a sequence. Generally, the events occur closely in time.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i>	然後 + <i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i>	jiân-āu + <i>event 2</i>
‘ <i>event 1</i> occurs	, afterwards <i>event 2</i> occurs’

黃先生載您囝去學效，然後伊去上班。

Ng--sian-siⁿ chàì in kiáⁿ khi hák-hāu, jiân-āu i khi siōng-pan.

黃先生載他的孩子去學校，然後他去上班。

Huáng xiānshēng zài tā de hái'zi qù xuéxiào, ránhòu tā qù shàngbān.

Mr. Ng drove his children to school. Afterwards, he went to work.

明仔載阮欲參觀藝術館，然後做伙食中晝頓。

Bîn-á-chài gún beh chham-koan gē-sùt-kóan, jiân-āu chò-hóe chiáh tiong-tàu-tùg.

明天我們要參觀藝術館，然後一起吃午餐。

Míngtiān wǒmen yào cānguān yìshùguǎn, ránhòu yīqǐ chī wǔcān.

Tomorrow we are going to the art museum. Afterwards, we will have lunch together.

後來 **āu-lâi** ‘afterwards’ is only used when referring to past events.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i>	後來 + <i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i>	āu-lâi + <i>event 2</i>
‘ <i>event 1</i> occurred	, afterwards <i>event 2</i> occurred’

阮阿姊搬去溫哥華，後來伊嫁予一个加拿大人。

Gún a-chí poan khi Un-ko-hôa, āu-lâi i kè hō-chit ê Ka-ná-tāi lāng.

我姐姐搬去溫哥華，後來她嫁給一個加拿大人。

Wǒ jiějiě bān qù Wēngēhuá, hòulái tā jià gěi yī gè Jiānádà rén.

My older sister moved to Vancouver. Afterwards, she married a Canadian.

有一擺細漢時，我按樹仔跋落來，後來救護車來矣。

Ū chit pái sè-hàn sî, góa àn chhiū-á póah--lòh-lâi, āu-lâi kiù-hō-chhia lâi--ah.

有一次小的時候，我從樹掉下來，後來救護車來了。

Yǒu yī cì xiǎo de shíhòu, wǒ cóng shù diàoxiàlá, hòulái jiùhùchē lái le.

Once when I was young, I fell from a tree. Afterwards, the ambulance came.

32.1.3 Reference adverbs 就 tō and 才 chiah

Besides time adverbs, two reference adverbs 就 tō (also pronounced **chiū**) and 才 chiah are often used in two-clause sentence patterns to emphasize the sequence (see [14.2.1.5 Promptness](#)).

32.1.3.1 就 tō ‘then’

In a sequence of events, the reference adverb 就 tō ‘then’ is placed just before the second action to underscore the order of events

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i>	就 + <i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i>	tō + <i>event 2</i>
‘ <i>event 1</i> occurs	, then <i>event 2</i> occurs’

共碗洗了了後，阮就去客廳看電視。

Kā óaⁿ sé liáu liáu-āu, gún tō khì kheh-thiaⁿ khòaⁿ tiān-sī.

把碗洗完之後，我們就去客廳看電視。

Bǎ wǎn xǐ wán zhīhòu, wǒmen jiù qù kètīng kàn diànshì.

After washing the dishes, we (directly) went to the living room to watch television.

十碗麵食了了後，我就想欲吐矣。

Cháp óaⁿ mī chiáh liáu liáu-āu, góa tō siūⁿ-beh thò--ah.

吃了十碗麵之後，我就想要吐了。

Chīle shí wǎn miàn zhīhòu, wǒ jiù xiǎngyào tǔ le.

After eating ten bowls of noodles, I just wanted to vomit.

32.1.3.2 才 chiah ‘then’

In a sequence of events, the reference adverb 才 **chiah** ‘then’ can also be placed just before the second action to underscore the order of events.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i>	才 + <i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i>	chiah + <i>event 2</i>
‘ <i>event 1</i> occurs	, then <i>event 2</i> occurs’

阮食暗頓了後，才去散步。

Gún chiáh àm-tng liáu-āu, chiah khi sàm-pō.

我們吃晚餐之後，再去散步。

Wǒmen chī wǎncān zhīhòu, zài qù sànbù.

After we finish eating dinner, we will (then) go take a walk.

先洗浴，才洗喙。

Seng sé-ék, chiah sé-chhùi.

先洗澡，再刷牙。

Xiān xǐzǎo, zài shuāyá.

First take a shower, then brush your teeth.

32.1.3.3 才 **chiah** ‘only then’

In other contexts 才 **chiah** is used in a sequence of events but stresses that the second action will only occur if the first action has already happened.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>event 1</i>	才 + <i>event 2</i>
<i>event 1</i>	chiah + <i>event 2</i>
‘After <i>event 1</i> occurs	, only then does <i>event 2</i> occur’

訓練你的狗了後，伊才會乖。

Hún-liān lí ê káu liáu-āu, i chiah ē koai.

訓練你的狗之後，牠才會乖。

Xùnliàn nǐ de gǒu zhīhòu, tā cái huì guāi.

Only after training your dog will it know how to behave.

After training your dog, only then will it know how to behave.

押金了後，你才會使得手機仔。

Ah kim liáu-āu, lí chiah ē-sài tit chhiú-ki-á.

押金之後，你才可以得到手機。

Yā jīn zhīhòu, nǐ cái kěyǐ dédào shǒujī.

Only after paying a deposit will you be allowed to get a mobile phone.

After paying a deposit, only then will you be allowed to get a mobile phone.

32.1.4 Describing an event occurring as soon as another event occurs

To express an event occurs as soon as another event occurs, place the phrase 一(下) **chit(-ē)** before the verb in *event 1*. Often, the second clause includes the reference adverb 就 **tō** before the verb in *event 2*.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
一(下) + <i>event 1</i>	(就) + <i>event 2</i>
chit(-ē) + <i>event 1</i>	(tō) + <i>event 2</i>
‘As soon as <i>event 1</i> occurs , then <i>event 2</i> occurs’	

你一(下)洗手了後, 就會使食飯。

Lí chit(-ē) sé chhiú liáu-āu, tō ē-sái chiáh p̄ng.

你一洗完手, 就可以吃飯。

Nǐ yī xǐwán shǒu, jiù kěyǐ chī fàn.

As soon as you wash your hands, (then) you may eat.

你一(下)到遮, 餐廳會予咱坐咧。

Lí chit(-ē) kàu chia, chhann-thiaⁿ ē hō lán chē--leh.

你一到这里, 餐廳就會讓我們坐者。

Nǐ yī dào zhèlǐ, cāntīng jiù huì ràng wǒmen zuòzhě.

As soon as you arrive here, (then) the restaurant will allow us to sit down.

32.2 Cause and effect

32.2.1 Using 因為 in-ūi ‘because’ and 所以 só-í ‘therefore’ for cause and effect

The general sentence construction to indicate cause and effect uses 因為 *in-ūi* ‘because’ in the first clause and 所以 *só-í* ‘therefore’ at the beginning of the second clause.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
因為 + <i>cause</i>	所以 + <i>effect</i>
<i>in-ūi</i> + <i>cause</i>	<i>só-í</i> + <i>effect</i>
‘Because <i>cause</i>	, therefore <i>effect</i> ’

因為天氣 遐爾 熱，所以 伊 毋 出去 外口 耍。

In-ūi thiⁿ-khì hiah-nī jòah, *só-í* i m̄ chhut-khì gōa-kháu sng.

因為天氣 那麼 熱，所以 她 不要 出去 外面 玩。

Yīnwèi tiānqì nàme rè, *suǒyǐ* tā bù yào chūqù wàimiàn wán.

Because the weather is so hot, (*so*) she doesn’t want to go outside and play.

因為 吳 小姐 對 蝦仔 過敏，所以 予 伊 食 雞腿飯。

In-ūi Gô^s-sió-chiá tui hē-á kòe-bín, *só-í* hōⁱ i chiáh ke-thúi-png.

因為 吳 小姐 對 蝦子 過敏，所以 讓 她 吃 雞腿飯。

Yīnwèi Wú xiǎojiě duì xiāzi guòmǐn, *suǒyǐ* ràng tā chī jītūifàn.

Because Ms. Gou is allergic to shrimp, (*so*) let her eat the chicken rice.

因為 *in-ūi* ‘because’ may be used independently and appear in either the first clause or second clause. If the subject is the same for both clauses, the subject may be left out of either clause.

ORDER 1	
1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
因為 + <i>cause</i>	<i>effect</i>
<i>in-ūi</i> + <i>cause</i>	<i>effect</i>
‘Because <i>cause</i>	, therefore <i>effect</i> ’

因為 塞車，伊 會 袂 赴 開會。

In-ūi that chhia, i ē bē-hù khui-hōe.

因為 塞車，他 會議 會 遲到。

Yīnwèi sāi chē, tā huìyì huì chídào.

Because there is traffic, he will be late to the meeting.

ORDER 2	
1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>effect</i>	因為 + <i>cause</i>
<i>effect</i>	<i>in-ūi</i> + <i>cause</i>
‘ <i>effect</i>	because <i>cause</i> ’

伊會袂赴開會，因為塞車。

i ē bē-hù khui-hōe, in-ūi that chhia.

他會議會遲到，因為塞車。

Tā huìyì huì chídào, yīnwèi sài chē.

He will be late to the meeting because of traffic.

所以 só-í ‘therefore’ can also be used independently but can only occur in the second clause.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
cause	所以 + effect
cause	só-í + effect
‘cause	, therefore effect’

老師受氣矣，所以咱應該恬恬坐咧。

Lāu-su siu-khì--ah, só-í lán eng-kai tiām-tiām chē--leh.

老師生氣了，所以我們應該安靜坐著。

Lǎoshī shēngqì le, suǒyǐ wǒmen yīnggāi ānjìng zuòzhe.

The teacher is angry; therefore, we should all sit quietly.

我真忝，所以咱來轉去。

Góa chin thiám, só-í lán lâi tng--khì.

我很累，所以我們回家吧。

Wǒ hěn lèi, suǒyǐ wǒmen huíjiā ba.

I’m tired, so let’s go home.

32.2.2 Using 既然 kî-jîân ‘since’ to express cause

既然 **kî-jîân** ‘since’ can be used to express cause. However 既然 **kî-jîân** is less common and can only be used in the first clause. An alternate form is 甲 **kah**.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
既然 + cause	effect
kî-jîân + cause	effect
‘Since cause	, then effect’

既然頭家受氣矣，咱下昏暗愛加班。

Kî-jîân thâu-ke siu-khì--ah, lán e-hng-àm ài ka-pan.

既然老闆生氣了，我們今晚要加班。

Jìrán lǎobǎn shēngqì le, wǒmen jīnwǎn yào jiābān.

Since the boss got angry, we have to work late tonight.

既然 外口有蠓仔，咱就佇內底食飯。

Kì-jiân gōa-kháu ū báng-á, lán tō tī lāi-té chiáh p̄ng.

既然 戶外有蚊子，我們就在裏面吃飯吧。

Jìrán hùwài yǒu wénzi, wǒmen jiù zài lǐmiàn chī fàn ba.

Since there are mosquitos outside, let's eat inside.

伊里毋納錢，阮只好揣恁某討。

I kah m̄ lāp-chhī, gún chí-hó chhōe in bó thó.

既然 他不要繳錢，我們只好找他的妻子索取。

Jìrán tā bù yào jiǎo qián, wǒmen zhǐhǎo zhǎo tā de qīzi suǒqǔ.

Since he won't pay, we have no other choice than to ask his wife.

32.2.3 Using 毋才 m̄-chiah 'therefore' to express effect

The conjunction 毋才 m̄-chiah 'therefore' or 'as a result' can also be used to express effect. Place 毋才 m̄-chiah at the beginning of the second clause.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
cause	毋才 effect
cause	<u>m̄-chiah</u> effect
'cause	, therefore effect'

因為你佢伊講伊貧惰，伊 毋才 做較濟矣。

In-ūi lí kah i kóng i pîn-tōaⁿ, i m̄-chiah chò khah chē--ah.

因為你告訴他他懶惰，所以 他才做比較多了。

Yīnwèi nǐ gàosu tā tā hěn lǎnduò, suǒyǐ tā cái zuò bǐjiào duō le.

You told him he was lazy; as a result, he works even more.

導遊破病矣，遊覽 毋才 取消矣。

Tō-iû phòh-pēⁿ--ah, iû-lám m̄-chiah chhú-siau--ah.

導遊病了，所以 旅遊取消了。

Dǎoyóu bìng le, suǒyǐ lǚyóu qǔxiāo le.

The guide got sick; as a result, the tour was cancelled.

33 Purpose

33.1 Expressing purpose through consecutive verbs

Taiwanese generally follows the principle of presenting verbs in the order in which they would chronologically occur. This principle also allows a sequence of events to be indicated solely through the ordering of verbs within a sentence. No additional words are required. Depending on the meaning of the verbs, a relationship of purpose can be established suggesting the first verb was performed in order to accomplish the second verb.

verb 1 + verb 2

‘verb 1 performed in order to verb 2’

伊 提 皮包仔 出來 納錢。

I thèh phôe-pau-á chhut-lâi láp-chîⁿ.

他 拿 皮包 出來 繳費。

Tā ná píbāo chūlái jiǎo fèi.

He took out his wallet to pay.

彼 工 阮 阿兄 早 起來 坐 第一 班 火車。

Hít kang gún a-hiaⁿ chá khí-lâi chē tē-it pan hóe-chhia.

那天 我 哥哥 早 起 坐 第一 班 火車。

Nèitiān wǒ gēgē zǎo qǐ zuò dìyī bān huǒchē.

That day, my older brother got up early to catch the first train.

33.2 Using 來 lâi ‘come’ and 去 khì ‘go’ to indicate purpose

To indicate that the purpose of the first verb is to perform the second verb, place the verb 來 lâi or 去

khì before the second verb. The choice of direction reflects whether the direction of movement is towards the speaker (來 **lâi**) or away from the speaker (去 **khì**). When there is no actual physical movement in a particular direction towards the speaker, either verb may be used.

verb 1 + 來 / 去 + verb 2

verb 1 + lâi / khì + verb 2

‘verb 1 performed in order to verb 2’

貓仔 跳 來 佇 桌仔頂 來 食 阮 的 菜。

Niau-á thiau lâi tī toh-á-téng lâi chiáh gún ê chhài.

貓 跳 到 桌子 上 來 吃 我們 的 菜。

Māo tiào dào zhuōzi shàng lái chī wǒmen de cài.

The cat jumped onto the table to eat our food.

阮 坐 佇 窗仔邊 來 看 山。

Gún chē tī thang-á-piⁿ lâi khòaⁿ soaⁿ.

我們 坐 在 窗戶 邊 來 看 山。

Wǒmen zuò zài chuānghù biān lái kàn shān.

We sat by the windows to see the mountains.

彼 个 查埔 囡仔 用 哭 去 討 較 擠 餅。

Hit ê cha-po' gín-á ēng khàu khì thó khah chē piáⁿ.

那個 小 男孩 用 哭 去 要 更 多 的 餅乾。

Nàge xiǎo nánhái yòng kū qù yào gèng duō de bǐnggān.

That little boy used crying to get more cookies.

阮 阿母 拍 手 去 驚 走 鬼。

Gún a-bú phah-chhiú khì kiaⁿ-cháu kúi.

我 媽 拍 手 去 嚇 跑 鬼。

Wǒ mā pāishǒu qù xiàpǎo guǐ.

My mother clapped her hands to scare away the ghosts.

33.3 Expressing a goal or purpose of action with 為著 ùi-tiòh

To express that an action is performed for a certain goal or purpose, place 為著 **ùì-tiòh** before the desired goal or purpose.

為著 + *desired result*

ūi-tiòh + *desired result*

為著 贏比賽，棒球隊 逐日 練球。

Ūi-tiòh iān pí-sài, pāng-kiû-tūi tàk jít liān-kiû.

為了 贏比賽，棒球隊 每天 練球。

Wèile yíng bǐsài, bàngqiúduì měitiān liàn qiú.

To win the tournament, the baseball team practiced every day.

阮的商店 為著 提供上方便的服務，逐日 攏有開。

Gún ê siong-tiàm ūi-tiòh thê-kiong siōng hong-piān ê hòk-bū, tàk jít lóng ū khai.

為了 提供最方便的服務給客人，我們的商店 每天都有開。

Wèile tígōng zuì fāngbiàn de fúwù gěi kèrén, wǒmen de shāngdiàn měitiān dōu yǒu kāi.

To offer the most convenience to our customers, our store is open every day.

我食兩個頭路就是 為著 繳學費。

Góa chiáh n̄g ê thau-lō tō sī ūi-tiòh kiáu hāk-hùi.

我有兩個工作就是 為了 繳學費。

Wǒ yǒu liǎng gè gōngzuò jiù shì wèile jiǎo xuéfèi.

I have two jobs in order to pay for tuition.

33.4 Expressing actions taken to avoid an outcome

To indicate an action that was performed to avoid an outcome, place 較免 **khah bián** before the unwanted outcome.

較免 + *unwanted outcome*

khah bián + *unwanted outcome*

家己帶餅 較免 踮遐買物食。

Ka-ti tòà pián **khah bián** tàt hia bé mih-chiah.

自己帶零食 免得 在那裡買吃的東西。

Zìjǐ dài língshí **miǎndé** zài nàlǐ mǎi chī de dōngxī.

Bring a snack so you won't have to buy food there.

伊佇學校共功課做了，所以 較免 紮課本轉去。

I tī hāk-hāu kā kong-khò chò liáu, só-í **khah bián** chah khò-pún tng--khì.

他在學校做了功課，所以免帶課本回去。

Tā zài xuéxiào zuòle gōngkè, suǒyǐ miǎn dài kèběn huíqù.

He did his homework at school, so he didn't have to take his textbooks home.

33.5 Expressing for whom an action is performed

When an action is performed on someone else's behalf, the person who benefits can be introduced by prepositions known as benefactives (see [15.7 Prepositions for benefactives](#)). The prepositions 替 **thè**, 共 **kā**, and 為 **ūi** in this context can often be translated into English as 'for'. However, note that several of these prepositions have other meanings as well.

替 **THÈ**

我替阿母洗衫。

Góa thè a-bú sé saⁿ.

我替媽媽洗衣服。

Wǒ tì māmā xǐ yīfú.

I washed the clothes for my mom.

共 **KĀ**

李小姐共伊的狗仔買衫。

Lǐ sió-chiá kā i ê káu-á bé saⁿ.

李小姐給她的狗買衣服。

Lǐ xiǎojiě gěi tā de gǒu mǎi yīfú.

Ms. Li bought clothes for her dog.

為 **ŪI**

遮的職員為經理拍拚。

Chia ê chit-ôan ūi keng-lí phah-piàⁿ.

這裡的職員為經理努力工作。

Zhèlǐ de zhíyuán wèi jīnglǐ nǚlì gōngzuò.

The employees here work hard for their manager.

34 Simultaneous actions

34.1 Describing two actions occurring at the same time

34.1.1 When each activity receives attention independently

To indicate that two activities occur during the same time period but require a shift in attention, place 一面 **chit-bīn** ‘on one side’ before each verb phrase. An alternate form is to place 那 **ná** before each verb phrase.

一面 + *verb phrase* + 一面 + *verb phrase*
 chit-bīn + *verb phrase* + chit-bīn + *verb phrase*

歇熱時，我拍算 一面 上課 一面 食 頭路。

Hioh-jòah sī, góa phah-sng̤ chit-bīn siōng-khò chit-bīn chiáh thau-lō.

暑假的時候，我計劃 一邊 上課 一邊 工作。

Shǔjià de shíhòu, wǒ jìhuà yībiān shàngkè yībiān gōngzuò.

This summer break I plan on taking classes and working.

阮下昏暗 那 奕牌仔 那 看電視。

Gún e-hng-àm ná ī pài-á ná khòaⁿ tiān-sī.

我們今晚 一邊 玩牌 一邊 看電視。

Wǒmen jīnwǎn yībiān wán pái yībiān kàn diànshì.

Tonight we are going to play cards and watch television.

34.1.2 When two activities are performed at once 像時 siāng-sī

To indicate that two activities are conducted at the same time, place 像時 **siāng-sî** before the verb phrase. The conjunction 也 **iā** ‘also’ can optionally be used to connect the two verb phrases.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS

像時 + *verb phrase 1* + (也) + *verb phrase 2*

siāng-sî + *verb phrase 1* + (iā) + *verb phrase 2*

我真愛 像時 騎 腳踏車 也 聽 音樂。

Góa chin ài siāng-sî khiâ kha-tâh-chhia iā thiaⁿ im-gák.

我很喜歡 同時 騎 腳踏車 也 聽 音樂。

Wǒ hěn xǐhuān tóngshí qí jiǎotàchē yě tīng yīnyuè.

I really enjoy cycling and listening to music at the same time.

莫 像時 食物 講話。

Mái siāng-sî chiáh mih kóng ôe.

不要 同時 吃 東西 說話。

Bùyào tóngshí chī dōngxī shuō huà.

Don't chew and talk at the same time.

像時 **siāng-sî** can also be used when multiple subjects perform a single action simultaneously.

MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

subject(s) + 像時 + *verb phrase*

subject(s) + siāng-sî + *verb phrase*

學生 像時 寫了 考券。

Hák-seng siāng-sî siá-liáu khó-kng.

學生 同時 寫完 考卷。

Xuéshēng tóngshí xiěwán kǎojiàn.

The students simultaneously completed their tests.

李先生 佻 洪先生 攏 像時 予 辭 頭路 矣。

Lí--sian-siⁿ kah Âng--sian-siⁿ lóng siāng-sî hō`sî thâu-lō--ah.

李先生 和 洪先生 都 同時 被 炒魷魚 了。

Lǐ xiānshēng hé Hóng xiānshēng dōu tóngshí bèi chǎoyóuyú le.

Mr. Li and Mr. Ang were fired at the same time.

34.1.3 When multiple subjects perform an activity together at once

To indicate that multiple subjects do a single activity together, place 同齊 **tâng-chê** before the verb phrase. While the multiple subjects are performing an activity together, it is possible for each subject to independently perform different actions.

multiple subjects or plural subject + 同齊 + verb phrase

multiple subjects or plural subject + tâng-chê + verb phrase

咱下昏暗來 同齊 包水餃！

Lán e-hng-àm lái tâng-chê pau chúí-kiáu!

我們今晚 一起 包水餃吧！

Wǒmen jīnwǎn yīqǐ bāo shuǐjiǎo ba!

Let's make dumplings (together) tonight!

謝小姐 佢 慫 小妹 欲 同齊 種 一 樣 樹仔。

Siā sió-chiá kah in sió-mōe beh tâng-chê chéng chit châng chhiū-á.

謝小姐 和 她的 妹妹 要 一起 種 一 棵 樹。

Xiè xiǎojiě hé tā de mèimei yào yīqǐ zhǒng yī kē shù.

Ms. Sia and her younger sister are going to plant a tree together.

34.1.4 Performing actions together

To more generally indicate that an activity is performed with others, use the adverb 做伙 **chò-hóe** ‘together’. Place this manner adverb before the verb or verb phrase. Alternate forms include 做陣 **chò-tīn**, 相佢 **saⁿ-kap**, or 鬥陣 **tàu-tīn**.

做伙 + verb

chò-hóe + verb

‘do verb together’

咱 做伙 來 去 看 電影。

Lán chò-hóe lái khi khòaⁿ tiān-íáⁿ.

我們 一起 去 看 電影 吧。

Wǒmen yīqǐ qù kàn diànyǐng ba.

Let's go to the movies together.

咱 的 頭家 著 愛 做陳 解決 這 個 問題。

Lán ê thâu-ke tiòh-ài chò-tīn kái-koat chit ê bûn-tê.

我們 的 老闆 必須 一起 解決 這 個 問題。

Wǒmen de lǎobǎn bìxū yīqǐ jiějué zhège wèntí.

Our bosses will have to solve this problem together.

阮兜的規定其中一个是愛相儉食飯。

Gún tau ê kui-tēng kî-tiong chit ê sī ài saⁿ-kap chiáh p̄ng.

我們家的規定其中之一是得一起吃飯。

Wǒmen jiā de guīdìng qízhōng zhī yī shì děi yīqǐ chī fàn.

One of our family rules is to always eat together.

恁若鬥陣工作，明仔載以前恁一定做予了。

Lín nā tàu-tūn kang-chok, bîn-á-chài í-chêng lín it-tēng chò hō'liáu.

你們如果一起工作，明天前你們一定會做完。

Nǐmen rúguǒ yīqǐ gōngzuò, míngtiān qián nǐmen yīdìng huì zuòwán.

You will finish by morning if you work together.

34.2 Giving priority to one action over another

To give priority of attention to one action over another, place one verb into the background.

34.2.1 Indicating a constant state with verb suffix 咧 --leh

The verb suffix 咧 --**leh** can be added to verbs to indicate a constant state. This pertains to verbs used to describe a manner of existence (a picture hanging on the wall), a persistent posture (crouching on the ground), or repetitive motions without an implied ending (cutting with scissors) (see [8.2.2 Static continuous aspect](#)). Placing a suffixed verb into the background allows a second more active verb to occur in the foreground. The more active verb in the foreground follows immediately after the 咧 --**leh** suffixed verb in the background

background verb + 咧 + *foreground verb*

background verb + --leh + *foreground verb*

查某囡仔佇眠床頂坐咧笑。

Cha-bó gín-á tī bîn-chhng-téng chē--leh chhiò.

女孩子在床上坐著笑。

Nǚháizi zài chuángshàng zuòzhe xiào.

The little girl is sitting on the bed smiling.

阮後生 佇 溪仔墘 跔咧 揣 水雞。

Gún hāu-seⁿ tī khe-á-kîⁿ khû--leh chhōe chúí-ke.

我 兒子 在 河岸 蹲著 找 青蛙。

Wǒ érzi zài hé'àn dūnzhe zhǎo qīngwā.

My son is crouching by the river looking for frogs.

34.2.2 Indicating a state or action already occurring in the background

To indicate that an action or state is already occurring in the background before another more active verb occurs in the foreground, place 的 時陣 **ê sî-chūn** ‘during that time, when’ after the action or state that sits in the background. Note that either or both 的 **ê** and 陣 **-chūn** may be omitted in this expression.

background verb + (的)時(陣) + *foreground verb*

background verb + (ê) sî(-chūn) + *foreground verb*

阮 睏 的 時陣， 阮 狗仔 偷 走去。

Gún khùn ê sî-chūn, gún káu-á thau cháu--khì.

我們 睡覺 的 時候， 我們 的 狗 偷 跑出去。

Wǒmen shuìjiào de shíhòu, wǒmen de gǒu tōu pǎochūqù.

When we were sleeping, our dog ran away.

阮 阿姊 細漢 時， 較 嬌。

Gún a-chí sè-hàn sî, khah súi.

我 姐姐 小 的 時候， 比較 漂亮。

Wǒ jiějiě xiǎo de shíhòu, bǐjiào piàoliang.

When my older sister was younger, she was much prettier.

34.2.3 Habitual occurrences

The expression 的 時陣 **ê sî-chūn** ‘whenever’ can also be used to describe habitual occurrences. The action that initiates or co-occurs with the second action is followed by 的 時陣 **ê sî-chūn** ‘whenever’. Note that either or both 的 **ê** and 陣 **-chūn** may be omitted in this expression.

verb 1 + (的) 時(陣) + *verb 2*

verb 1 + (ê) sî(-chūn) + *verb 2*

伊 啲 酒 的 時 陣， 講 話 真 大 聲。

I lim chiú ê sî-chūn, kóng ôe chin tōa siaⁿ.

他 喝 酒 時， 說 話 很 大 聲。

Tā hē jiǔ shí, shuō huà hěn dà shēng.

Whenever he drinks, he talks very loudly.

我 運 動 時， 我 流 真 濟 汗。

Góa ūn-tōng sî, góa lâi chin chē kōaⁿ.

我 運 動 時， 我 流 很 多 汗。

Wǒ yùndòng shí, wǒ liú hěn duō hàn.

Whenever I exercise, I sweat a lot.

35 Conditionals

Conditional sentences are made up of two main components: the *condition* and the *result*. The *condition* describes a hypothetical set of circumstances that generally must happen in order for the *result* to occur. In English, the condition is often placed within an ‘if’ clause and set apart by a comma.

If she comes here, then I will leave.

CONDITION	RESULT
‘she comes here’	‘I will leave’

The order may be switched even though the ‘if’ clause must occur first chronologically in order for the result to happen.

I will leave if she comes.

In Taiwanese, the condition set up by the ‘if’ clause generally comes before the result.

伊若來，我就離開。

I nā lâi, góa tō lī-khui.

如果她來，我就離開。

Rúguǒ tā lái, wǒ jiù líkāi.

If she comes here, then I will leave.

CONDITION	RESULT
(伊) 來	我 就 離開
(i) lâi	góa tō lī-khui
‘she comes here’	‘I will leave’

If the subject is the same in both clauses, the subject may appear in both clauses or omitted from one of the clauses.

35.1 Conditionals without special conjunctions

Conditional sentences can be formed without the use of special conjunctions signifying ‘if’ or ‘then’. Simply stating the condition to be fulfilled in the first clause followed by the result or consequence in the second clause can produce a conditional sentence. A comma or pause in spoken speech is made in between clauses. Additionally, the second clause often will have a potential or future marker by using the modal verbs 會 *ē* ‘will’ or 袂 *bē* ‘will not’ with the verb (see [12.1.1 Modal verb 會 *ē* ‘will’](#)).

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>condition</i>	<i>result</i>

無 清 房間， 袂 使 出去。

Bô chheng pâng-keng, bē-sài chhut-khì.

不 清 房間， 不 可以 出去。

Bù qīng fángjiān, bù kěyǐ chūqù.

If you don’t clean your room, you will not be allowed to go out.

35.2 If-then clauses

An if-then clause is a two-part conditional sentence which first states a necessary condition (‘if’ clause) for a result (‘then’ clause) to occur.

若 *nā* ‘if’ can be placed before or after the subject. However, the placement of 若 *nā* ‘if’ can influence the meaning. Whatever follows 若 *nā* becomes part of the condition. 就 *tō* ‘then’ may optionally appear before the verb in the second clause to emphasize the causal relation between the ‘if’ clause and ‘then’ clause.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
<i>subject</i> + 若	(就) + <i>verb</i>
<i>subject</i> + <i>nā</i>	(<i>tō</i>) + <i>verb</i>

AFTER THE SUBJECT (SUBJECT IS EXCLUDED FROM THE CONDITION)

伊 若 去， 我 會 受 氣 矣。

I *nā* khì, góa ē siū-khì--ah.

他 要是 去， 我 會 生 氣 了。

Tā yàoshi qù, wǒ huì shēngqì le.

If he goes, I will become angry (*the act of ‘going’ causes the anger*).

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
若 + <i>subject</i>	(就) + <i>verb</i>
<i>nā</i> + <i>subject</i>	(<i>tō</i>) + <i>verb</i>

BEFORE THE SUBJECT (SUBJECT IS INCLUDED IN THE CONDITION)

若伊去，我會受氣矣。

Nā i khì, góa ē siū-khì--ah.

要是他去，我會生氣了。

Yàoshi tā qù, wǒ huì shēngqì le.

If he goes, I will become angry (*the fact that 'he' goes causes the anger*).

Alternate terms for 'if' include 若準 **nā-chún**, 若是 **nā-sī**, 假使(-若) **ká-sú (-nā)**, and 如果 **jû-kó**. 假使 **ká-sú** must come before the subject.

若是 **NĀ-SĪ**

若是阮阿兄，伊這馬就買票。

Nā-sī gún a-hiaⁿ, i chit-má tō bé phiàu.

要是我哥哥，他現在就買票。

Yàoshi wǒ gēgē, tā xiànzài jiù mǎi piào.

If it were my older brother, then he would buy the tickets now.

若準 **NĀ-CHÚN**

伊若準啍咖啡，就會睏袂去。

I nā-chún lim ka-pi, tō ē khùn-bē--khì.

她如果喝咖啡，就會睡不著。

Tā rúguǒ hē kāfēi, jiù huì shuìbuzháo.

If she drinks coffee, she will not be able to sleep.

如果 **JŪ-KÓ**

伊如果無聽你的話，就敲電話予您阿母。

I jû-kó bô thiaⁿ lí ê ōe, tō khà tiān-ōe hō in a-bú.

他如果不聽你的話，就打電話給他媽媽。

Tā rúguǒ bù tīng nǐ de huà, jiù dǎ diànhuà gěi tā māmā.

If he doesn't listen to you, then call his mother.

假使(若) **KÁ-SÚ (NĀ)**

假使若鞋仔傷細的，你就予小弟。

Ká-sú nā ê-á siuⁿ sè ê, lí tō hō sió-tī.

如果鞋子太小的，你就給弟弟。

Rúguǒ xiézi tài xiǎo de, nǐ jiù gěi dìdì.

If the shoes are too small, then give them to your younger brother.

35.3 Other types of conditional clauses

35.3.1 In the event, just in case

To emphasize that the condition is not expected or not likely to occur, use 萬一 **bān-it** to express ‘in the event’ or ‘just in case’ in the condition. Alternate versions include 一旦 **it-tàn** and 毋拄好 **m-tú-hó**. Generally, 毋拄好 **m-tú-hó** is used before an event that is considered unwanted or unlucky. Note that ‘in the event’ conditional clauses may occur in the second clause.

萬一 BĀN-IT

萬一 若落雨，阮會共婚禮改做後禮拜。

Bān-it nā lòh hō, gún ē kā hun-lé kái-chò āu lé-pài.

萬一 如果下雨，我們會把婚禮改成下禮拜。

Wànyī rǔguǒ xià yǔ, wǒmen huì bǎ hūnlǐ gǎichéng xià lǐbài.

In the event that it rains, we will change the wedding to next week.

毋拄好 M-TÚ-HÓ

伊有紮一寡電池，毋拄好手電的電用了矣。

I ū chah chit-kóa tiān-tī, m-tú-hó chhiú-tiān ê tiān ēng-liáu--ah.

他帶一些電池，萬一手電筒的電用完了。

Tā dài yīxiē diànchí, wànyī shǒudiàntǒng de diàn yòngwán le.

He brought some batteries just in case the flashlight runs out of power.

一旦 IT-TÀN

一旦 我揣著頭路，我會真歡喜。

It-tàn góa chhōe-tiòh thau-lō, góa ē chin hoaⁿ-hí.

一旦 我找到工作，我會很高興。

Yīdàn wǒ zhǎodào gōngzuò, wǒ huì hěn gāoxìng.

If one day I find a job, I will be very happy.

35.3.2 Unless, only if

To emphasize a more restricted condition, 除非 **tû-hui** ‘unless’ can be placed before the subject of the first clause. 除非 **tû-hui** ‘unless’ is often paired with 若無 **nā-bô** ‘otherwise’ in the second clause. This underscores the result that will occur if the condition in the first clause fails to happen.

除非 + <i>subject</i>	(若無) + <i>verb</i>
tû-hui + <i>subject</i>	(nā-bô) + <i>verb</i>
‘Unless <i>condition</i> , otherwise <i>result</i> ’	

除非你的車會當飛，(若無)咱會袂赴矣。

Tû-hui lí ē chhia ē-tàng poe, (nā-bô) lán ē bē-hù--ah.

除非你的車能飛，(要不然)我們會來不及了。

Chúfēi nǐ de chē néng fēi, (yàobùrán) wǒmen huì láibují le.

Unless your car can fly, (*otherwise*) we will be late.

However, when 除非 **tû-hui** is paired with 才 **chiah** in the second clause, the meaning of 除非 **tû-hui** shifts to ‘only if’. With this construction, the second clause describes a result that can only occur if the condition in the first clause is fulfilled.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
除非 + <i>subject</i>	才 + <i>verb</i>
tû-hui + <i>subject</i>	chiah + <i>verb</i>
‘Only if <i>condition</i> , then <i>result</i> ’	

除非你會當泅 1500 公尺，你才會使參加團隊。

Tû-hui lí ē-tàng siû chit chheng go kong-chhih, lí chiah ē-sài chham-ka thōan-tūi.

除非你能游泳 1500 公尺，你才可以參加團隊。

Chúfēi nǐ néng yóuyǒng 1500 gōngchǐ, nǐ cái kěyǐ cānjiā tuánduì.

Only if you can swim 1500 meters will you (*then*) be allowed to join the team.

35.3.3 Even if

To emphasize that a result will occur even if the condition occurs, place 準做 **chún-chò** ‘even if’ before the subject in the first clause. An alternate form is 就算是 **chiū-sng sī**. The result often begins with an adverb expressing ‘still’ such as 嘛 **mā**, 猶 **iáu**, or 猶原 **iû-gôan**.

1ST CLAUSE	2ND CLAUSE
準做 + <i>subject</i>	(嘛) + <i>verb</i>
chún-chò + <i>subject</i>	(mā) + <i>verb</i>

準做 **CHÚN-CHÒ**

準做我好額，我猶原袂買車。

Chún-chò góa hó-giáh, góa iû-gôan bē bé chhia.

即使我富有，我仍然不會買車。

Jíshǐ wǒ fùyǒu, wǒ réngrán bù huì mǎi chē.

Even if I were wealthy, I still would not buy a car.

就算是 CHIŪ-SŪNG SĪ

就算是 伊 請 所有 您 親情， 新娘 的人客 嘛 會 較 濟。

Chiū-sūng sī i chhiáⁿ só-ū in chhin-chiâⁿ, sin-niū ê lāng-kheh mā ē khah chē.

就算是 他 請了 所有 他的 親戚， 新娘 的客人 也 比較 多。

Jiùsuàn shì tā qǐng le suǒyǒu tā de qīnqī, xīnniáng de kèrén yě bǐjiào duō

Even if he invited all his relatives, there would still be more guests from the bride's side.

35.3.4 If not for, if it weren't for

To emphasize that without a condition having occurred, the result would not have happened, place 若無 **nā-bô** 'if not for' before the condition. An alternate version is 若毋是 **nā-m-sī** 'if it weren't for'.

若無 NĀ-BÔ

若無 您 鬥相共， 我 共 這 塊 桌仔 搬袂去。

Nā-bô in tau-saⁿ-kāng, góa kā chit tè toh-á poan-bē--khì.

要不是 他的 幫忙， 我 這 張 桌子 搬不動。

Yàobùshì tā de bāngmáng, wǒ zhè zhāng zhuōzi bānbùdòng.

If not for his help, I would not have been able to move this table.

若毋是 NĀ-M-SĪ

若毋是 狗仔 咧 吠， 阮 共 賊仔 掠袂著。

Nā-m-sī káu-á teh pūi, gún kā chhāt-á liáh-bē-tiòh.

要不是 狗 在 吠叫， 我們 抓不到 小偷。

Yàobùshì gǒu zài fèijiào, wǒmen zhuābùdào xiǎotōu.

If it weren't for the dog's barking, we wouldn't have been able to catch the burglar.

35.3.5 As long as, provided that, if only

To emphasize that only a single condition needs to be met in order for the result to occur, place 只要 **chí-iàu** 'as long as' before the condition. Other translations include 'provided that' and 'if only'.

只要 押 身份證， 你 會使 借 藍球。

Chí-iaù ah sin-hūn-chèng, lí ē-sài chioh nâ-kiû.

只要押身分證，你可以借籃球。

Zhǐyào yā shēnfènzhèng, nǐ kěyǐ jiè lánqiú.

As long as you leave your ID, you may borrow the basketball.

只要無落雨，咱會佇外口舉行婚禮。

Chí-iaù bô lòh hō, lán ē tī gōa-kháu kí-hêng hun-lé.

只要不下雨，我們會在外面舉行婚禮。

Zhǐyào bù xià yǔ, wǒmen huì zài wàimiàn jǔxíng hūnlǐ.

Provided that it doesn't rain, we will have the wedding outside.

35.3.6 Regardless, no matter, whether or not, in any case

To emphasize that regardless if a condition occurs the same result will occur, place 無論 **bô-lūn** before the condition. An alternate version is 毋管 **m-kóan**. Other translations include 'regardless if', 'no matter if', and 'whether or not'.

無論 **BÔ-LŪN**

無論你有請我食飯，無，我袂和你做伙去彼間餐廳。

Bô-lūn lí ū chhiáⁿ góa chiáh p̄ng, bô, góa bē hām lí chò-hóe khi hit keng chhan-thiaⁿ.

不管你有沒有請我吃飯，我還是不會跟你一起去那家餐廳。

Bùguǎn nǐ yǒuméiyǒu qǐng wǒ chī fàn, wǒ háishì bù huì gēn nǐ yīqǐ qù nà jiā cāntīng.

Whether or not you buy me dinner, I will not go with you to that restaurant.

毋管 **M-KÓAN**

毋管李小姐加班，伊錢趁袂夠。

M-kóan Lí sió-chiá ka-pan, i chiⁿ thàn-bē-kàu.

不管李小姐是否加班，她錢仍然賺不夠。

Bùguǎn Lǐ xiǎojiě shìfǒu jiābān, tā qián réngrán zhuànbùgòu.

Regardless if Ms. Li works overtime, she won't earn enough money.

較講 **khah-kóng** and 總是 **chóng--sī** can be added to sentences without providing a specific condition. These expressions are commonly translated to 'in any case', 'no matter what', and 'regardless'.

較講 **KHAH-KÓNG**

較講你嘛愛趁錢。

Khah-kóng lí mā ài thàn chiⁿ.

無論如何你總是要賺錢。

Wúlùn rúhé nǐ zǒngshì yào zhuànqián.

In any case, you still have to earn money.

總是 CHÓNG--SĪ

咱 總是 應該 揣著 下昏暗 會當 蹣 的 所在。

Lán chóng--sī eng-kai chhōe-tiōh e-hng-àm ē-tàng tòā ê só-chāi.

無論 如何 我們 應該 找到 今晚 能 住 的 地方。

Wúlùn rúhé wǒmen yīnggāi zhǎodào jīnwǎn néng zhù de dìfāng.

No matter what, we should find a place to stay tonight.

35.4 Implying possible consequences ‘otherwise, or else, if not’

To emphasize that possible consequences will occur if action is not taken, place the adverb 若無 **nā-bô** ‘otherwise’ before the implied consequence. An alternate version is 無 **bô** set aside by a comma. These expressions are also commonly translated as ‘or else’ or ‘if not’.

若無 NĀ-BÔ

若無，你 按怎 欲 去？

Nā-bô, lí án-chóaⁿ beh khi?

不然，你 怎麼 要 去？

Bùrán, nǐ zěnmē yào qù?

If not, how will you get there?

無 BÔ

共 文件 緊 傳過來 咧，無，客戶 會 受氣 矣。

Kā bûn-kiāⁿ kìn thōan--kòe-lâi--leh, bô, kheh-hō ē siū-khì--ah.

把 文件 快 傳過來 吧，不然，客戶 會 生氣 了。

Bǎ wénjiàn kuài chuánguòlái ba, bùrán, kèhù huì shēngqì le.

Send me the document right away; otherwise, the client will be angry.

References

- Blust, Robert. (1999). Subgrouping, circularity and extinction: some issues in Austronesian comparative linguistics. In E. Zeitoun & P.J.K Li (Eds.) *Selected papers from the Eighth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, 31–94. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
- Chang, Miao-Hsia. (2009). Metaphorization and Metonymization: Diachronic Development of Verbs of Volition in Southern Min. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics*, 7(1), 53-84. Taipei: Crane Publishing Co.
- Chao, Yuen-ren. (1968). *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Chappell, Hilary. (1982). Towards a typology of aspect in Sinitic languages. *Zhōngguó Jìngnèi Yǔyán jì Yǔyánxué: Hànyǔ Fāngyán* 中國境內語言暨語言學:漢語方言 [Chinese Languages and Linguistics: Chinese dialects], 1(1), 67–106. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
- . (1989). The grammatical category of aspect in Southern Min: preverbal coding of aspect in Min-Xiamen. *La Trobe working papers in linguistics*, (2), 113-126.
- . (2001). The experiential perfect as an evidential marker in Sinitic Languages. *A typology of evidential markers in Sinitic languages*. In H. Chappell (ed.), *Sinitic Grammar: Synchronic and diachronic perspectives*, 56-84. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Ping. (2004). *Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheng, Lisa L.S., Huang, C.T. James, Li, Y.H. Audrey, & Tang, C.C. Jane. (1999). Hoo, hoo, hoo: syntax of the causative, dative, and passive constructions in Taiwanese. In Pang-Hsin Ting (Ed.), *Contemporary Studies on the Min Dialects* [Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph 14], 146-203. Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley.
- Cheng, Lisa L.S. & Sybesma, Rint. (2005). Classifiers in four varieties of Chinese. In Giglielmo Cinque and Richard S. Kayne (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*, 259-291. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cheng, Robert L. (鄭良偉). (1968). Tone Sandhi in Taiwanese. *Linguistics*, 41, 19-42.
- . (1985). A Comparison of Taiwanese, Taiwan Mandarin, and Peking Mandarin. *Language* 61(2), 352-377. Washington, DC: The Linguistic Society of America.
- . (1990). *Yǎnbiàn zhōng de Táiwān shèhuì yǔwén: Duō yǔ shèhuì jí shuāngyǔ jiàoyù* (演變中的台灣社會語文：多語社會及雙語教育) [Essays on sociolinguistic problems of Taiwan]. Taipei:

Zìlì wǎnbào shè wénhuà chūbǎn bù (自立晚報社文化出版部).

- Chiung, Wi-vun Taiffalo. (2000). Peh-oe-ji, Childish writing? *Paper presented at the 6th Annual North American Taiwan Studies Conference*. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- Ethnologue. (2009). Chinese, Min Nan. Retrieved from: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/nan>
- Huang, C.-T. James. (1999). Chinese Passives in Comparative Perspective. *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 29, 423-509. Hsinchu: National Tsing Hua University.
- Klöter, Henning. (2004). Language Policy in the KMT and DPP Eras. *China Perspectives* 56 . Retrieved from: <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/442>
- . (2005). *Written Taiwanese*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Kurpaska, Maria. (2010). Chinese Language(s): a Look through the Prism of The Great Dictionary of Modern Chinese Dialects. In Volker Gast (Ed.), *Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs* (215). Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Lâu, Sêng-hiân (劉承賢). (2010a). *Syntax of Kám Questions in Taiwanese*. Masters thesis. Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University.
- . (2010b). Excising Tags: Distinguishing Between Interrogative SFPs And Tag Questions In Taiwanese. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics* 8(1), 1-28. Taipei: National Cheng Chi University.
- Li, Charles N. & Thompson, Sandra A. (1981). *Mandarin Chinese—A Functional Reference Grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Li, Chin-An, Yeh, Chieh-Ting & Lee, Marian. (2005). *Harvard Taiwanese 101*. Tainan: King-an Publishing.
- Li, Hui-chi. (2008). Obligatory Object Shift in Taiwan Southern Min. In Shin-mei Kao and Shelley Ching-yu Hsieh (Eds.), *NCKU FLLD Monograph Series Vol.1. : Languages across Cultures*, 151-170. Tainan: National Cheng Kung University.
- . (2012). Passives and Causatives in a Specific Taiwanese Construction. *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies, New Series* 42(1), 169-189. Hsinchu: National Tsing Hua University.
- Li, Hui-chi & Hsieh, Ching-yu. (2009). The reference of the third person pronoun i in the ka... hoo construction. *Journal of Taiwanese Vernacular* 1(1), 62-79. Tainan: National Cheng Kung University.
- Li, Paul Jen-kuei. (2000). *Formosan languages: The state of the art*. In David Blundell(Ed.), 45-67.
- Lien, Chin-fa. (1994). The Order of ‘Verb-Complement’ Constructions in Taiwan Southern Min. *The Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies, New Series* 24(3), 345-369. Hsinchu: National Tsing Hua University.
- . (2003). In search of covert grammatical categories in Taiwanese Southern Min: a cognitive

- approach to verb semantics. *Language and Linguistics*(4), 379-402. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
- . (2011). Interface of Modality and the *tit4* 得 Constructions in Southern Min: A Case Study of Their Developments from Earlier Southern Min in the Ming and Qing to Modern Taiwanese Southern Min. *Language and Linguistics* 12(4), 723-752. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
- Lin, Alvin. (1999). Writing Taiwanese: The Development of Modern Written Taiwanese. *Sino-Platonic Papers* (89). Philadelphia: Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Pennsylvania.
- Lin, Huei-Ling. (2002). The Interface between Syntax and Morphology: Taiwanese Verbal Complexes. *Proceedings of the 16th Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation*, 308-319. Jeju: The Korean Society for Language and Information.
- . (2003). Postverbal Secondary Predicates In Taiwanese. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics* 1(2), 65-94. Taipei: National Cheng Chi University.
- . (2004). Lexical vs. Syntactic Negation in Taiwanese. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics* (30), 107-128. Taipei: National Taipei Normal University.
- . (2012). Preverbal Objects in Taiwan Southern Min: Topic or Focus? *Studies in Chinese Linguistics* 33(3), 165-182. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Lin, Yenchun. (2011). Superlatives in Taiwanese. In Zhuo Jing-Schmidt (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 23rd North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-23) Volume 2*, 164-174. Eugene: University of Oregon.
- Maryknoll Language Service Center. (2001). *Taiwanese-English Dictionary*. Taichung, Taiwan. Retrieved from: <http://www.taiwanesedictionary.org/>
- . (2013). *English-Taiwanese Dictionary*. Taichung, Taiwan. Retrieved from: <http://www.taiwanesedictionary.org/>
- Norman, Jerry. (1979). Chronological strata in the Min dialects. *Fāngyán* 方言. 4, 268-273.
- . (1991). The Mǐn dialects in historical perspective. In William S.Y. Wang (Ed.). *Languages and dialects of China. Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series* 3, 325-360. Berkeley: University of California.
- Ota, Katsuhiko J. (2005). *An Investigation of Written Taiwanese*. Masters thesis. University of Hawaii at Manoa. Retrieved from ScholarSpace: <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/>
- Ross, Claudia & Ma, Jing-heng Sheng. (2006). *Modern Mandarin Chinese grammar: a practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Shī Yǒngshēng (施永生). (1990). *Taiwanese Book 2* (2nd ed.). Taichung: Maryknoll Language Service Center.
- . (1997). *Taiwanese Book 1* (2nd ed.). Taichung: Maryknoll Language Service Center.

- Symonds, Martin & Seiboth, David. (1998). *Taiwanese Survival Course*. Taipei: Taipei Language Institute Press.
- Teng, Shou-Hsin. (1995). Objects and verb-complexes in Taiwanese. In Tsao Fengfu and Tsai Meihuei (Eds.). *Papers from the 1994 Conference on Language Teaching and Linguistics in Taiwan*, 1-22. Taipei: Crane Publishing Co.
- Yang, Hui-lang. (2012). *The Interaction of Negatives with Modality, Aspect, and Interrogatives*. Doctoral dissertation. Arizona State University. Retrieved from Arizona State University Digital Repository: http://repository.asu.edu/attachments/93660/content/tmp/package-x7LZKb/Yang_asu_0010E_11800.pdf
- Yip, Po-Ching & Rimmington, Don. (2004). *Chinese: a Comprehensive Grammar*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Yu, Szu-I Sylvia. (2011). Post-Verbal Markers in Taiwanese Southern Min and Fuzhounese. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics* 37(2), 241-258. Taipei: National Taipei Normal University.
- Zhōnghuá Mínguó Jiàoyùbù 中華民國教育部 [ROC Ministry of Education]. (2011). Retrieved from: http://twblg.dict.edu.tw/holodict_new/index.html

Index

a- 阿 [23.2.7](#)

-á 仔 noun suffix [4.1](#)

tone change rules [2.6.4.1](#)

--á 仔 [23.2.6](#)

ability

expressing ability with modal verbs [12.3](#)

action verbs *see* [verbs](#)

additions [30](#)

adjectives [6](#)

absolute adjectives [6.2](#)

desirable adjectives [6.4](#), [10.2.7](#), [13.2.8](#)

reduplication [6.7](#), [14.2.3.1](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.10](#)

undesirable adjectives [6.4](#), [13.3.4](#)

addressing others *see* [names](#)

adverbs [14](#)

attitude adverbs [14.1.1](#)

confidence adverbs [14.1.3](#)

manner adverbs [14.2.3](#), [26.3.3](#)

reference adverbs [14.2.1](#)

relative frequency adverbs [14.2.2](#), [26.4.3](#)

time adverbs [14.1.2](#), [26.2](#), [26.4.2](#), [27.1](#), [28.1](#), [32.1.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.6](#)

word order [14.1.4](#), [14.2.4](#), [14.3](#)

after [14.1.2](#), [32.1.2.2](#)

ah 啊 [22.2](#)

--**ah** 矣 [6.5.1](#), [8.4.1](#), [12.1.2](#), [22.1.1](#), [26.5](#), [29.3.1](#)

ài 愛

to need [12.5.1](#), [13.5.1](#)

to want [12.2.2](#), [28.4.1](#)

to like [12.2.4](#)

all [14.2.1.1.1](#)

although [31.2](#)

aih-ioh 哎唷 [22.2](#)

àn 按

from (time) [15.4](#)

from (place) [15.1](#)

án-chóaⁿ 按怎 *how* [20.5.7](#)

án-chóaⁿ-iūⁿ 按怎樣 *how* [20.5.7](#)

and [15.5](#), [30.1](#), [30.2.2](#)

anterior aspect *see* [aspect](#)

any

anyone [5.5.1](#)

anything [5.5.1](#)

anywhere [5.5.1](#)

apologies [21.4.4](#), [23.1.3](#)

appearance verbs *see* [verbs](#)

approximations [3.4](#)

arithmetic *see* [numbers](#)

as long as [35.3.5](#)

as soon as [32.1.4](#)

aspect [8](#)

anterior aspect [8.4](#)

continuous aspect

dynamic continuous aspect [8.2.1](#), [9.3](#), [10.3.3](#), [26.3.1](#)

static continuous aspect [7.2.1](#), [8.2.2](#), [10.3.3](#), [26.3.4](#)

experiential aspect [8.3](#)

habitual aspect [8.5](#), [10.2.5](#), [13.2.4](#)

perfective aspect [8.1](#)

with phase complements [8.1.2](#)

tentative aspect [8.6](#), [21.3](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.4](#)

aspiration [2.1.1](#), [2.1.4](#)

at [15.3](#), [15.4](#), [16.1](#)

āu-lâi 後來 *afterwards (past)* [32.1.2.2](#)

auxiliary verbs see [modal verbs](#)

bān-it 萬一 *in the event, just in case* [35.3.1](#)

bat 捌 [1.2.2.3](#), [8.3.1](#), [8.3.3](#), [13.1.5](#), [27.6.1](#)

bē 袂 [13.3](#)

as question particle [13.3.2](#), [22.1.1](#)

negating ability [13.3.1.2](#)

negating permission [13.3.1.3](#)

negating possibility [13.3.1.1](#)

negating potential complements (unrealized) [13.3.3](#)

negating undesirable adjectives [6.4.2](#), [13.3.4](#)

because [32.2.1](#)

before the hour [24.2.2.3](#)

beforehand [14.1.2](#)

beh 欲

to be going to [12.1.2](#), [28.2.2](#)

to want [12.2.1](#), [28.4.1](#)

beh-ài 欲愛 *to want (noun)* [12.2.4](#)

benefactives [15.7](#), [18.3](#)

besides [30.4.3.1](#)

between [6.3.2](#), [24.1.2.3](#)

bián 免 [12.5.1](#)

as question particle [13.5.2](#), [22.1.1](#)

negating obligation [13.5.1](#)

bô 無 [13.2](#)

as a general-purpose question tag [13.2.7.1](#)

as a universal question particle [12.2.7.3](#), [20.3.2](#), [22.1.1](#)

as an emphasis marker [13.2.5](#)

if not, or else [35.4](#)

negating desirable adjectives [6.4.2](#), [13.2.8](#)

negating existence [13.2.1](#)

negating experiential aspect [13.2.3](#)

negating habitual aspect [13.2.4](#)

negating perfective aspect [8.1.1](#), [13.2.2](#), [13.2.7.2](#), [22.1.1](#)

negating phase complements [13.2.6](#)

negating possession [13.2.1](#)

negating potential complements (actualized) [13.2.6](#)

bô kàu 無到 *not even* [3.4.4](#)

bô-lūn 無論 *regardless, no matter, whether or not* [35.3.6](#)

bōe 未 *see* [iáu-bōe](#) 猶未

negating anterior aspect [8.4](#), [13.4.1](#)

as question particle [13.4.2](#), [22.1.1](#)

both [14.2.1.1.1](#), [30.2.2](#)

but [31.1.1](#), [31.2.1](#)

but also [30.2.3](#)

calendar time [25](#)

can [12.3.1](#), [12.3.2](#), [13.3.1.2](#)

cardinal directions [16.2.3](#)

cause and effect [32.2](#)

causative verbs see [verbs](#)

cháh 開 *by means of (a vehicle), via* [15.6](#)

change [29](#)

change-of-state action verbs [7.2](#)

change-of-state particle [6.5.1](#)

changes over time [6.8.1](#), [29.6](#)

intransitive changes [29.1.1](#)

transitive changes [29.1.2](#)

characters [1.4.1](#)

che 這 *this* [5.4.3](#)

chē 坐 *by means of (a vehicle), via* [15.6](#)

posture verbs [16.3.3.4](#)

prepositions doubling as verbs [15.9](#)

chêng 從 *from, since (time specified)* [15.4](#)

chêng-lâi 從來 *from the beginning* [8.3.1](#)

chha 差 *before the hour* [24.2.2.3](#)

chha-put-to 差不多 *almost, nearly* [3.4.2](#)

chham 參 *with, and* [15.5](#), [30.1](#)

chhì 試 *to try* [8.6.4](#)

chhiáⁿ 請 *please* [21.4.1](#)

chhiáⁿ-kàu 請教 *may I ask (for your advice)* [21.4.1](#)

chhiáⁿ-m̄ng 請問 *may I ask* [21.4.1](#)

chì 至

to (time specified) [15.4](#)

to (range) [24.1.2.3](#)

chí-iàu 只要 *as long as, provided that, if only* [35.3.5](#)

chia 遮 *here* [2.6.4.3](#)

chia-ê 遮的 *these* [4.6.3](#)

chia--ê 遮的 *these (ones)* [5.4.2](#)

chiah 才

only, only have exclusivity [14.2.1.4](#)

just, only then promptness [14.2.1.5](#), [32.1.3.2](#)

chiah-nī-á 遮爾仔 *so, as much as* [6.3.7](#)

chiâⁿ 成 *almost, nearly* [3.4.2](#)

chìn-chêng 進前 *previous to* [32.1.2.1](#)

chîⁿ 錢 *money* [3.5](#)

chioh 借 *to borrow/to lend* [18.2.4](#)

chiong 將 [17.4.3](#)

chit 這 *this* [4.6.1](#)

chit 這 *these* [4.6.2](#)

chit-bīn...chit-bīn... 一面...一面... [34.1.1](#)

chit-ē 一下 *a little bit*

tentative aspect [8.6.2](#), [21.3.2](#)

as soon as [32.1.4](#)

chiū-sng sī 就算是 *even if* [35.3.3](#)

-chò 做 *to change into* [29.2.1](#)

chò-hóe 做伙 *together* [34.1.3](#)

chó-iū 左右 *more or less* [3.4.2](#)

chò-tūn 做陣 *together* [34.1.3](#)

chóaⁿ-iūⁿ 怎樣 *how* [20.5.7](#)

chóng--sī 總是

but, however [31.1.1](#)

regardless, no matter what, in any case [35.3.6](#)

cho 租 *to rent* [18.2.4](#)

chún-chò 準做 *even if* [35.3.3](#)

clock time see [time](#)

colloquial reading [1.2.2.2](#)

commands [21](#)

causative verbs in commands [21.8](#)

group proposals [21.6](#)

manner adverbs in commands [14.2.3.3](#)

modal verbs in commands [21.5](#)

negative commands [21.7](#)

with *kā* 共 construction [17.4.5](#), [21.9](#)

comparisons [6.3](#)

comparative degree [6.3.9](#)

superlative degree [6.3.10](#)

complements see [verb complements](#)

conditionals [35](#)

conjunctions [31.1.1](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.10](#)

continuous aspect see [aspect](#)

contractions [2.3.1](#)

contrasts [31](#)

dates [25.5](#)

dative verbs see [verbs](#)

days [25.4](#)

decimals see [numbers](#)

default objects see [objects](#)

definite nouns *see* [nouns](#)

definite objects *see* [objects](#)

demonstratives [4.6](#)

demonstrative adjectives [4.6.1](#), [4.6.2](#), [4.6.3](#)

demonstrative pronouns [4.6.3](#), [5.4](#)

despite [31.2](#)

destination verbs *see* [verbs](#)

direct objects *see* [objects](#)

directional complements *see* [complements](#)

directional expressions [16.4](#)

discounts *see* [numbers](#)

displacement verbs *see* [verbs](#)

duration

approximate duration [24.1.2](#), [25.2.2](#)

duration complements [11.8](#)

duration for action verbs [7.1.1](#)

exact duration [24.1.1](#)

including duration and objects [7.1.5](#)

的

as modifying particle [6.6](#)

as possessive marker [4.8.1](#)

--的 [23.2.5](#)

會

desirable adjectives [6.4.2](#), [13.3.4](#)

will [12.1.1](#), [13.3.1.1](#), [28.2.1](#)

can [12.3.1](#), [13.3.1.2](#)

-會

potential complements (unrealized) [11.4.2](#), [13.3.3](#)

ē-ēng-tit 會用得 *may* [12.4.1](#), [13.3.1.3](#), [21.5](#)

ē-hiáu 會曉 *can* [12.3.1](#), [13.3.1.2](#)

ē-sái(-tit) 會使(得) *may* [12.4.1](#), [13.3.1.3](#), [21.5](#)

ē-tàng 會當

can [12.3.2](#), [13.3.1.2](#)

may [12.4.1](#), [13.3.1.3](#), [21.5](#)

eh 欸 [22.2](#)

eh 喂 [22.2](#)

emphasis [10.2.4](#), [13.2.5](#), [27.2.3](#)

end-of-sentence particles see [particles](#)

eng-kai 應該 *should* [12.5.2](#)

ēng 用 *with (an instrument or appliance)* [15.6](#)

estimates [numbers](#)

except for [30.4.3.2](#)

exclamatory particles [22.2](#)

existence [10.1.4](#), [10.2.2](#), [10.3.1](#), [13.2.1](#)

experiential aspect see [aspect](#)

extent complements see [verb complements](#)

even if [35.3.3](#)

even more [6.1.1](#), [6.3.9](#)

even though see [although](#)

every

everyone [5.5.1](#)

everything [5.5.1](#)

everywhere [5.5.1](#)

family names see [names](#)

finals [2.2](#)

focusing construction see [sī 是](#)

fractions *see* [numbers](#)

frequency

absolute frequency complements [11.8](#)

absolute frequency for action verbs [7.1.2](#)

including objects and frequency [7.1.6](#)

furthermore [30.4.1](#)

future time [28](#)

change in the immediate future [29.4](#)

imminent actions [12.1.3](#), [28.3](#)

time expressions and adverbs for the future [28.1](#)

given names *see* [names](#)

goodbyes *see* [salutations](#)

gratitude [23.1.2](#)

greetings [23.1.1](#)

-gōa 外 *more than* [3.4.3](#), [24.1.2.1](#)

gōa-chē 偌濟 *how much, how many* [20.5.8](#)

gōa-kú 偌久 *how long (time)* [20.5.9](#)

gōa-tîg 偌長 *how long (length)* [20.5.9](#)

gōa-tōa 偌大 *how big* [20.5.9](#)

habitual actions

in the past [8.5.1](#), [10.2.5](#), [27.3](#)

in the present [8.5.2](#), [26.4](#)

manner complement indicating habitual actions [11.6.1](#)

specifying time of habitual occurrences [24.3.3](#), [34.2.3](#)

habitual aspect *see* [aspect](#)

haih 唉 [22.2](#)

half [3.3.1](#)

multiples [3.3.6](#)

time (duration) [24.1.1](#)

time (clock) [24.2.2.1](#)

hām 和 *with, and* [15.5](#), [30.1](#)

ha^h 哈 [22.2](#)

he 彼 *that* [5.4.3](#)

he^h 嘿 [22.2](#)

hia 遐 *there* [2.6.4.3](#)

hia-ê 遐的 *those* [4.6.3](#)

hia--ê 遐的 *those (ones)* [5.4.2](#)

hiah-nī-á 遐爾仔 *so, as much as* [6.3.7](#)

hioh 諾 [22.2](#)

hit 彼 *that* [4.6.1](#)

hit 彼 *those* [4.6.2](#)

hngh 哼 [22.2](#)

hó 好

easy to + action verb [6.4.1](#)

as phase complement [8.1.2](#), [11.1.1](#), [27.2.2](#)

-hó 好

as resultative complement [11.2](#)

greetings [23.1.1](#)

hóan-tò-túg 反倒轉 *nevertheless, on the contrary* [31.2](#)

--ho^h 乎 [20.2.3](#), [22.1.1](#), [22.2](#)

hour [24.1](#), [24.2](#)

how [20.5.7](#)

how big [20.5.9](#)

how long [20.5.9](#)

how much/many [20.5.8](#)

however [31.1.1](#), [31.2.1](#)

hō`予

as a causative verb [19.4](#), [21.8](#)

extent complements [11.7.2](#)

indicating indirect objects [15.8.1](#), [18.1](#)

indicating passive voice [15.8.3](#), [19.1](#)

hoh 譁 [22.2](#)**hun-chi** 分之 [3.3.1](#), [3.3.3](#)

í-āu 以後 *after (time), later* [32.1.2.2](#)

í-chêng 以前 *previously, in the past* [32.1.2.1](#)

i-góa 以外 *apart from* [30.4.3](#)

í-hā 以下 *less than* [3.4.4](#), [24.1.2.2](#)

í-lāi 以內 *within* [24.1.2.3](#)

í-siōng 以上 *more than* [3.4.3](#), [24.1.2.1](#)

iā 也

also [14.2.1](#), [30.2.1](#)

and [30.3.1](#)

iā-sī 也是 *but also...* [30.2.3](#)

iāh-sī 抑是 *or* [20.4.1](#)

iáu-bōe 猶未 *not yet*

negating anterior aspect [8.4](#), [13.4.1](#), [27.2.5](#)

negating possibility modal verb **beh** 欲 [12.1.2](#)

iáu-koh 猶閣

but also... [30.2.3](#)

still more [6.3.9](#), [14.2.1.3](#)

still yet [30.3.2](#)

iáu-m̄-koh 猶毋過 *but still* [31.1.1](#)

iáu-ū 猶有 *in addition, also* [30.4.2](#)

if not [35.4](#)

if not for [35.3.4](#)

if only [35.3.5](#)

if-then clauses [35.2](#)

imperatives *see* [comands](#)

in [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

in any case [35.3.6](#)

in the event [35.3.1](#)

in-ūi 因為 *because* [32.2.1](#)

indefinite objects *see* [objects](#)

indefinite pronouns *see* [pronouns](#)

indirect objects *see* [objects](#)

initials [2.1](#)

intensifiers [6.1](#), [9.2](#)

interjections *see* [exclamatory particles](#)

intransitive verbs [29.1.1](#)

introductions [23.2](#)

it-tàn 一旦 *in the event, just in case* [35.3.1](#)

it-tēng 一定 *definitely* [12.5.2](#), [14.1.3](#)

iū-koh 又閣

both...and... [30.2.2](#)

moreover, furthermore [30.4.1](#)

jī-chhiá 而且 *moreover, furthermore* [30.4.1](#)

jiân-āu 然後 *afterwards* [32.1.2.2](#)

jú lâi jú 愈來愈

more and more [6.8.1](#), [29.6.1](#)

less and less [29.6.2](#)

jú-khah 愈較 *even more* [6.3.9](#)

jû-kó 如果 *if* [35.2](#)

just in case [35.3.1](#)

--ka 家 [23.2.8](#)

kā 共

benefactive [15.7](#), [18.3](#), [33.5](#)

facing, towards [15.2](#)

in the passive voice [19.3](#)

kā 共 construction [4.9](#), [15.8.2](#), [17.4](#), [21.9](#)

to [15.5](#)

ká-sú-nā 假使若 *if* [35.2](#)

ka-tī 家己 *oneself* [5.2](#)

kah 甲

extent [11.7.1](#)

to [15.1](#)

kah 佢 *with, from (source)* [15.5](#), [30.1](#)

kak 角 *dime* [3.5](#)

kám 敢 [1.2.2.3](#), [11.5](#), [20.1](#)

kan-na 干焦 *only, only have* [14.2.1.4](#)

kāng-khóan 全款 *same, equally* [6.3.8](#)

kàu 到 *to, arrive*

in directional expressions [16.4](#)

indicating endpoint to duration [7.1.3](#), [15.1](#)

prepositions doubling as verbs [15.9](#)

khah 盍 *why, how could it be* [20.5.6](#)

khah 較 *comparatively, more* [6.3](#), [21.1](#)

khah-bián 較免 [33.4](#)

khah-kóng 較講 *regardless, no matter what, in any case* [35.3.6](#)

khàu 扣 *to deduct* [3.3.4](#)

khì 去

in the passive voice [15.8.3](#)

in commands [21.1](#)

indicating purpose [33.2](#)

-**khì** 去 *away from (speaker perspective)* [7.1.3](#), [11.3.1](#), [15.1](#), [16.4](#), [16.4.2](#)

--**khì** 去 indicating a worsening condition [6.5.2](#), [29.3](#)

khiok-sī 卻是 *nevertheless, on the contrary* [31.2](#)

khòaⁿ-māi 看覓 *to check out* [8.6.3](#)

kho 籊 *dollar* [3.5](#)

kì-jiân 既然 *since* [32.2.2](#)

kinship terms [23.3](#)

kiōng-beh 強欲 *just about to* [12.1.3](#), [14.1.2](#), [28.3](#)

kóa 寡 *some* [4.4](#), [20.5.5](#)

-**kòe** 過 *experiential aspect* [8.3.2](#), [8.3.3](#), [13.2.3](#), [27.6.1](#)

koh 閣

again [14.2.1.2](#), [27.4](#)

both...and... [30.2.2](#)

but also... [30.2.3](#)

koh-khah 閣較 *even more* [6.3.9](#)

kú 久

question word [20.5.9](#)

with duration *long (time)* [7.1.1](#)

kúi 幾 *several* [3.4.3](#), [4.5](#)

kúi 幾 *how many* [4.5](#), [20.5.8](#)

kùi 貴 *honorable* [23.2.1](#)

kúi tiám 幾點 *what time (clock)* [20.5.4](#)

--**lah** 啦 [22.1.1](#), [29.3.2](#)

lâi 來 indicating purpose [33.2](#)

-**lâi** 來 *towards (speaker perspective)* [7.1.3](#), [11.3.1](#), [15.1](#), [16.4](#), [16.4.2](#)

last [14.1.2](#)

--**leh** 咧 [7.2.1](#), [8.2.2](#), [10.3.3](#), [21.1](#), [21.3.1](#), [22.1.1](#), [26.3.4](#), [34.2.1](#)

lêng-gōa 另外

and [30.3.1](#)

in addition, also [30.4.2](#)

less and less [29.6.2](#)

lī 離 *set apart from* [15.3](#)

liaison [2.3.2](#), [4.1](#)

liáu 了

as manner complement [11.6.2](#)

as phase complement [8.1.2](#), [11.1.1](#), [27.2.2](#)

--**liáu** 了 *as resultative complement* [11.2](#)

liáu-āu 了後 *after (events)* [32.1.2.2](#)

literary reading [1.2.2.2](#)

numbers [3.1.2](#)

loanwords [1.2.2.2](#)

location expressions [16](#)

location participles [16.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.8](#)

--**loh** 囉 [22.1.1](#)

lóng 攏 *both, all* [5.5.1](#), [5.5.2](#), [14.2.1.1.1](#), [14.2.1.1.3](#)

m̄ 毋 [13.1](#)

as question particle [20.3.1](#), [22.1.1](#)

as question tag [20.2.4](#)

not [13.1.1](#), [20.2.4](#)

not want [13.1.2](#), [20.3.1](#)

m̄-bián 毋免 *see* [bián](#) 免

m̄-chiah 毋才 *therefore, as a result* [32.2.3](#)

m̄-hó 毋好 *do not* [6.4.3](#), [12.6.3](#), [13.1.4](#), [21.7](#)

m̄-kóan 毋管 *regardless, no matter, whether or not* [35.3.6](#)

m̄-koh 毋過 *but, however* [31.1.1](#), [31.2.1](#)

m̄-nā 毋但 *not only...* [30.2.3](#)

m̄-thang 毋通 *do not* [12.4.2](#), [12.6.2](#), [13.1.4](#), [21.7](#)

m̄-tú-hó 毋拄好 *in the event, just in case* [35.3.1](#)

mā 嘛

also [5.5.1](#), [5.5.2](#), [14.2.1.1.2](#), [14.2.1.1.3](#), [30.2.1](#)

and [30.3.1](#)

mā-hôan lí 麻煩你 *may I trouble you* [21.4.2](#)

mā-sī 嘛是 *but also...* [30.2.3](#)

--**mah** 嘛 [22.1.1](#)

mài 莫 *do not* [12.6.1](#), [13.1.4](#), [21.7](#)

manner complements see [verb complements](#)

may [12.4.1](#), [12.4.2](#), [13.3.1.3](#), [21.5](#)

may I ask [21.4.1](#)

may I ask (for your advice) [21.4.1](#)

may I trouble you [21.4.2](#)

measure words [4.3](#)

group measure words [4.4](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.10](#)

minute [24.1](#), [24.2](#)

modal verbs see [verbs](#)

money [3.5](#)

months [25.2](#)

more and more [6.8.1](#), [29.6.1](#)

more or less [3.4.2](#)

more than [3.4.3](#), [24.1.2.1](#)

moreover [30.4.1](#)

múi 每 *each, every* [26.4.2](#)

multiples see [numbers](#)

must [12.5](#)

ná 哪 *why* [20.5.6](#)

nā 若 *if* [35.2](#)

nā-bô 若無

if not for [35.3.4](#)

if not [35.4](#)

nā-bōe 哪未 *why haven't* [20.5.6](#)

nā-chún 若準 *if* [35.2](#)

ná-ē 哪會 *why would* [20.5.6](#)

ná lâi ná 那來那

more and more [29.6.1](#)

less and less [29.6.2](#)

ná-m̄ 哪毋 *why wouldn't* [20.5.6](#)

nā-m̄-sī 若毋是 *if it weren't for* [35.3.4](#)

ná...ná... 那...那... [34.1.1](#)

nā-sī 若是 *if* [35.2](#)

ná-tiòh 哪著 *why should* [20.5.6](#)

names [23.2](#)

given names [23.2.2](#)

surnames [23.2.1](#)

titles [23.2.3](#)

tone change rules [2.6.4.2](#)

nasals [1.2.2.1](#), [2.2.1](#)

nearly [3.4.2](#)

need [12.5.1](#), [13.5.1](#)

negation [1.2.2.3](#), [13](#)

negative question particles [20.3.1](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.10](#)

with duration complements [11.8.3](#)

with frequency complements [11.8.3](#)

--**neh** 呢 [22.1.1](#)

never [13.1.1](#), [13.2.3](#)

nevertheless [31.2](#)

next [14.1.2](#), [28.1](#)

niā-niā 爾爾 *nothing more* [14.2.1.4](#)

--**nih** 呢 [20.2.3](#), [22.1.1](#)

no matter [35.3.6](#)

no one [5.5.2](#)

nobody [5.5.2](#)

none [5.5.2](#)

not any [5.5.2](#)

nothing [5.5.2](#)

nouns [4](#)

decimals [3.3.5](#)

definite [4.9](#), [11.3.3.2](#)

discounts [3.3.4](#)

indefinite [4.9](#), [11.2.2](#),

modifying without 的 ê [6.6.3](#)

noun phrases and modifying particle 的 ê [6.6](#)

omitting the noun [4.7](#), [6.6.4](#)

plural with group measure words [4.4](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.1](#)

nowhere [5.5.2](#)

numbers [3](#)

arithmetic [3.3.7](#)

counting numbers [3.1](#)

estimates [3.4.2](#)

fractions [3.3.1](#)

literary reading for numbers [3.1.2](#)

multiples [3.3.6](#)

numbers with measure word forms [4.3.1](#)

ordinal numbers [3.2](#)

percentages [3.3.3](#)

range [3.4.1](#)

rates [3.3.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.9](#)

o'clock [24.2.1](#)

ôan 完 as phase complement [8.1.2](#), [11.1.1](#), [27.2.2](#)

-ôan 完 as resultative complement [11.2](#)

objects

default objects [7.1.4](#)

definite objects [11.2.2.2](#), [11.3.3](#)

direct objects [1.2.2.3](#), [17](#)

indefinite objects [11.3.3](#)

indirect objects [18](#)

kā 共 construction [11.3.3.1](#)

objects and duration [7.1.5](#)

objects and frequency [7.1.6](#)

pre-posed objects [17.1](#)

topicalized objects [11.3.3.1](#), [17.2](#)

with directional complements [11.3.3](#)

with duration complements [11.8.2](#)

with extent complements [11.7.3](#)

with frequency complements [11.8.2](#)

with manner complements [11.6.3](#)

with phase complements [11.1.4](#)

with potential complements [11.4.4](#)

with resultative complements [11.2.2](#)

oeh 喂 [22.2](#), [23.1.1](#)

on [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

or disjunctive questions [20.4](#)

or else [35.4](#)

otherwise [35.4](#)

--**oh** 喔 [22.1.1](#), [22.2](#)

pài-thok 拜托 *please* [21.4.3](#)

palatalization [2.1.3](#), [2.1.4](#)

particles [22](#)

double particles [22.1.2](#)

end-of-sentence particles [22.1](#)

exclamatory particles [22.1.2](#)

negative question particles [20.3.1](#)

passive voice [19](#)

past the hour [24.2.2.2](#)

past time [27](#)

completed actions [27.2](#)

past experiences [27.6](#)

recent past [27.5](#)

repeated events in the past [27.4](#)

stative verbs [9.4](#)

- time expressions and adverbs for the past [27.1](#)
- pēng-chhiáⁿ** 並且 *moreover, furthermore* [30.4.1](#)
- pêⁿ** 平 *equally* [6.3.8](#)
- percentages *see* [numbers](#)
- perfective aspect *see* [aspect](#)
- permission [12.4](#)
- phah chiat 拍折 *to discount* [3.3.4](#)
- pháiⁿ** 歹 *difficult to* [6.4.1](#)
- pháiⁿ-sè** 歹勢 *apologies* [21.4.4](#), [23.1.3](#)
- phase complements *see* [verb complements](#)
- please* [21.4.1](#)
- pí** 比 *compared with* [6.3](#)
- pí-kàu** 比較 *to compare* [6.3.2](#)
- placement verbs *see* [verbs](#)
- pòāⁿ** 半 *half* [3.3.1](#)
- multiples [3.3.6](#)
- time (duration) [24.1.1](#)
- time (clock) [24.2.2.1](#)
- pōe** 倍 *-fold* [3.3.6](#)
- possessive [4.8](#)
- implied possessive [4.8.2](#), [4.8.3](#)
- possession with demonstrative adjectives [5.3.3](#)
- possession with plural personal pronouns [5.3.2](#)
- possessive pronouns [5.3](#)
- possibility
- expressing possibility with modal verbs [12.1](#)
- posture verbs *see* [verbs](#)
- potential complements [10.2.6.2](#), [11.4](#)

potential complements (actualized) [11.4.1](#), [13.2.6](#)

potential complements (unrealized) [11.4.2](#)

versus modal verbs [11.4.2](#)

pre-posed objects *see* [objects](#)

prepositions [15](#)

doubling as verbs [15.9](#)

in directional expressions [16.4](#)

in location expressions [16.1](#)

of accompaniment and interaction [15.5](#)

of location [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

of manner [15.6](#), [16.4](#)

of movement [15.1](#)

of orientation [15.2](#)

of time [15.4](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.10](#)

present time [26](#)

time expressions and adverbs for the present [26.2](#)

prices [3.5](#)

prohibition [12.6](#), [13.1.4](#), [21.7](#)

pronouns [5](#)

demonstrative pronouns [4.6.3](#), [5.4](#)

indefinite pronouns [5.5](#)

personal pronouns [5.1](#), [11.2.2.2](#), [11.4.4](#)

plural pronoun suffix [5.1.3](#)

possessive pronouns [5.3](#)

reflexive pronouns [5.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.2](#)

pronunciation [2](#)

- regional variation [2.4](#)
- provided that* [35.3.5](#)
- purpose [33](#)
- put-tān** 不但 *not only...* [20.2.3](#)
- questions [20](#)
 - affirmative-negative questions [13.1.3.1](#), [20.4.3](#)
 - disjunctive questions [20.4](#)
 - particle questions [13.2.7.2](#), [13.2.7.3](#), [20.3](#)
 - question words [20.5](#)
 - tag questions [13.1.3.2](#), [20.2](#)
 - tone change rules [2.6.3.7](#)
- range *see* [numbers](#)
- rates *see* [numbers](#)
- regardless* [35.3.6](#)
- relatives *see* [kinship terms](#)
- repetition
 - repetitive movements [8.2.2.3](#)
 - tentative aspect [8.6.1](#), [21.3.1](#)
- requests *see* [commands](#)
- resultative complements *see* [verb complements](#)
- Romanization [1.4.2](#)
- salutations [23.1.4](#)
- saⁿ-kap** 相恰 *together* [34.1.3](#)
- seasons [25.6](#)
- second (time)* [24.1](#)
- second (ordinal)* [3.2](#)
- sēng** 成 *to successfully become* [29.2.2](#)
- sèⁿ** 姓 [23.2.4](#)

sequence [32](#)

should [12.5.2](#)

sī 是

existence [10.1.4](#)

focusing construction [10.1.2](#), [19](#)

linking verb [10.1.1](#)

passive voice [10.1.3](#)

sī-án-chóa^a 是按怎 *why* [20.5.6](#)

sī--bô 是無 *is that right?* [20.2.1](#)

sī tiòh--bô 是著無 *is that right?* [20.2.1](#)

sián 仙 *cent* [3.5](#)

siāng-sî 像時 *at the same time* [34.1.2](#)

siá^a 啥 *what* [20.5.1](#)

siá^a-lâng 啥人 *who, whom* [20.5.2](#)

siá^a-lâng ê 啥人的 *whose* [20.5.10](#)

siá^a-mih 啥物 *what* [20.5.1](#)

siá^a-mih lâng 啥物人 *who, whom* [20.5.2](#)

siá^a-mih lâng ê 啥物人的 *whose* [20.5.10](#)

siá^a-mih sî-hāu 啥物時後 *when* [20.5.4](#)

siá^a-mih sî-kan 啥物時間 *when* [20.5.4](#)

siá^a-mih sî-chūn 啥物時陣 *when* [20.5.4](#)

siá^a-mih só-chāi 啥物所在 *where* [20.5.3](#)

sīm-chì 甚至 *but also...* [30.2.3](#)

sīm-mih 甚物 *what* [20.5.1](#)

sīm-mih lâng 甚物人 *who, whom* [20.5.2](#)

sīm-mih lâng ê 甚物人的 *whose* [20.5.10](#)

sīm-mih sî-hāu 甚物時後 *when* [20.5.4](#)

sīm-mih sî-kan 甚物時間 *when* [20.5.4](#)

sīm-mih sî-chūn 甚物時陣 *when* [20.5.4](#)

sīm-mih só-chāi 甚物所在 *where* [20.5.3](#)

simultaneous actions [34](#)

since [32.2.2](#)

sió 小 *small* [21.3.2](#), [23.2.1](#)

sio-kāng 相全 *same, identical* [6.3.8](#)

siōng 上 *most* [6.3.10](#)

siūⁿ-ài 想愛 *would like, thinking of* [12.2.3](#), [28.4.2](#)

siūⁿ-beh 想欲 *would like, thinking of* [12.2.3](#), [28.4.2](#)

soah 煞

as adverb [14.1.1](#)

as phase complement [8.1.2](#), [11.1.1](#), [27.2.2](#)

someone [5.5.3](#)

something [5.5.3](#)

sometimes [14.2.2](#)

somewhere [5.5.3](#)

sorry see [apologies](#)

só-i 所以 *therefore* [32.2.1](#)

special verbs see [verbs](#)

stative verbs see [verbs](#)

still [14.2.1](#)

still more [6.3.9](#), [14.2.1.3](#)

still yet [30.3.2](#)

stops [1.2.2.1](#), [2.2.2](#)

su-iàu 需要 *to need* [12.5.1](#)

sui-jiân 雖然 *although* [31.2](#)

sūn 順 *following along* [15.1](#)

surnames see [names](#)

tàk 逐 *each, every* [26.4.2](#)

tàm 踎 *at, on in* [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

tān-sī 但是 *but, however* [31.1.1](#), [31.2.1](#)

tāng-chê 同齊 *together* [34.1.3](#)

tang-sî 當時 *when* [20.5.4](#)

tàu-tīn 鬥陣 *together* [34.1.3](#)

tē- 第 [3.2](#)

teh 咧 [8.2.1.1](#), [8.5.1](#), [10.2.4](#), [10.2.5](#), [26.3.2](#)

teh-beh 咧欲 *just about to* [12.1.3](#), [14.1.2](#), [28.3](#)

telling time [24.2.1](#)

tentative aspect see [aspect](#)

terms of address [23](#)

thang(-hó) 通(好) *may* [12.4.2](#)

thank you see [gratitude](#)

that [4.6.1](#), [5.4.3](#)

thâu-tú-á 頭拄仔 *to have just* [27.5](#)

thè 替 *to stand in for* [15.7](#), [18.3](#), [33.5](#)

there [2.6.4.3](#)

there is see [existence](#)

therefore [32.2.1](#), [32.2.3](#)

those [4.6.2](#), [4.6.3](#)

those (ones) [5.4.2](#)

tī 佇 [10.3](#)

existence [10.3.1](#)

on, at (time) [15.4](#)

on, at, in (place) [10.2.2](#), [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

prepositions doubling as verbs [15.9](#)

tī-leh 佇咧 [8.2.1.2](#), [26.3.2](#), [10.3.3](#)

tī-sî 底時 *when* [20.5.4](#)

tiám 點 *point* [3.3.5](#)

tian-tò 顛倒 *nevertheless, on the contrary* [31.2](#)

tih 掙 *to want to have* [12.2.2](#)

time [24](#)

time adverbs [14.1.2](#), [26.2](#), [26.4.2](#), [27.1](#), [28.1](#), [32.1.2](#)

time expressions [26.2](#), [27.1](#), [28.1](#)

-tiòh 著

manner complement indicating habitual actions [11.6.1](#)

phase complement indicating achievement [11.1.2](#)

tiòh-ài 著愛 *to need* [12.5.1](#), [13.5.1](#)

tiòh--bô 著無 *is that right?* [20.2.1](#)

-tit 得 potential complements (unrealized) [11.4.3](#)

titles [23.2.3](#)

tng 當 *facing, in front of* [15.2](#)

tng-teh 當咧 [8.2.1.2](#), [26.3.2](#)

to

destination [15.1](#), [16.4](#)

indicating indirect objects [15.8.1](#), [18](#)

interaction [15.5](#)

orientation [15.2](#)

time [15.4](#), [24.2.2.3](#)

tó 佢 *which* [20.5.5](#)

tō 就 *just, then* [14.2.1.5](#), [32.1.3.1](#)

tó-ūi 佢位 *where* [20.5.3](#)

tòa 躡 *at, on, in* [15.3](#), [16.1](#)

toeh 佢 *where* [20.5.3](#)

together [34.1.3](#)

toh 佗 *where* [20.5.3](#)

tones [2.5](#)

comparison to Mandarin [1.2.2](#)

neutral tone [2.6.2](#)

tone changes [1.2.2.1](#), [2.5.3](#)

tone change rules [2.6](#)

tone diacritics [2.5.2](#)

topicalized objects *see* [objects](#)

transitive verbs [29.1.2](#)

tû-hui 除非 *unless, only if* [35.3.2](#)

tû-liáu 除了

besides, in addition to [30.4.3.1](#)

except for, not including [30.4.3.2](#)

tú-teh 拄咧 [8.2.1.2](#), [26.3.2](#)

tùi 對

coming from, going towards (movement) [15.1](#)

facing, towards, to (orientation) [15.2](#)

from (time) [15.4](#)

with, and (interaction) [15.5](#)

ū 有

desirable adjectives [6.4.2](#), [10.2.7](#)

emphasis [10.2.4](#), [27.2.3](#)

existence [10.1.4](#), [10.2.2](#)

expressing *some-* [5.5.3](#)

habitual aspect [8.5.1](#), [10.2.5](#), [26.4.1](#)

perfective aspect [1.2.2.3](#), [8.1.1](#), [10.2.3](#), [27.2](#)

phase complement indicating achievement [11.1.2](#)

phase complement indicating potential [11.1.3](#)

possession [10.2.1](#)

potential complements (actualized) [10.2.6.2](#), [11.4.1](#)

ùi 對 *see* [tùi](#) 對 [preposition of movement](#)

ūi 為

benefactive [15.7](#), [18.3](#), [33.5](#)

ūi-siáⁿ-mih 為啥物 *why* [20.5.6](#)

ūi-sīm-mih 為甚物 *why* [20.5.6](#)

ūi-tiòh 為著 indicating purpose [33.3](#)

unless, only if [35.3.2](#)

verbs

action verbs [7](#)

open-ended action verbs [7.1](#)

change-of-state action verbs [7.2](#)

appearance verbs [16.3.3.3](#)

causative verbs [19.4](#), [21.8](#)

dative verbs [18.2](#)

destination verbs [16.4.1](#)

displacement verbs [16.3.3.1](#)

modal verbs [12](#)

of ability [12.3](#)

of desire [12.2](#), [28.4](#)

of obligation [12.5](#)

of permission [12.4](#)

of possibility [12.1](#), [28.2.1](#)

of prohibition [12.6](#)

versus potential complements [11.4.2](#)

placement verbs [16.3.3.2](#)

posture verbs [16.3.3.4](#)

special verbs [10](#)

stative verbs [9](#)

doubling as change-of-state verbs [7.2.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.3](#)

verb complements [11](#)

directional complements [11.3](#)

indicating speaker perspective [7.1.3](#), [11.3.1](#)

double-directional complements [11.3.2](#)

duration complements [11.8](#)

extent complements [1.2.2.3](#), [11.7](#)

frequency complements [11.8](#)

manner complements [1.2.2.3](#), [11.6](#)

versus manner adverbs [11.6.2](#)

phase complements [10.2.6.1](#), [11.1](#)

indicating perfective aspect [8.1.2](#), [10.2.4](#), [13.2.6](#), [27.2.2](#)

indicating achievement [11.1.2](#), [13.2.6](#)

indicating potential [11.1.3](#), [13.2.6](#)

potential complements [1.2.2.3](#), [10.2.6.2](#), [11.4](#)

resultative complements [11.2](#), [29.2](#)

tone change rules [2.6.3.5](#)

verb copying [7.1.5](#), [7.1.6](#), [17.3](#)

voicing [2.1.2](#), [2.1.4](#)

welcome [23.1.1](#)

weeks [25.3](#)

what [20.5.1](#)

whatever [5.5.1](#)

when [20.5.4](#)

whenever [5.5.1](#)

where [20.5.3](#)

wherever [5.5.1](#)

whether or not [35.3.6](#)

which [20.5.5](#)

whichever [5.5.1](#)

who/whom [20.5.2](#)

whoever/whomever [5.5.1](#)

whose [20.5.10](#)

why [20.5.6](#)

with

accompaniment [15.5](#), [30.1](#) by means of [15.6](#)

within [16.2.1](#), [24.1.2.3](#)

years [25.1](#)

Chapter 1 footnotes

1. Klöter, Henning. (2004). Language Policy in the KMT and DPP Eras. *China Perspectives* 56 . Retrieved from: <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/442>
2. Ota, Katsuhiko J. (2005). *An Investigation of Written Taiwanese*. Masters thesis. University of Hawaii at Manoa. Retrieved from ScholarSpace: <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/>
3. Norman, Jerry. (1991). The Mǐn dialects in historical perspective. In William S.Y. Wang (Ed.). *Languages and dialects of China*, 325-360. Berkeley: Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series 3.
4. Ethnologue. (2009). Chinese, Min Nan. Retrieved from: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/nan>
5. Klöter, Henning. (2005). *Written Taiwanese*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
6. *Zhōnghuá Mínguó Jiàoyùbù* (中華民國教育部) [ROC Ministry of Education]. (2011). Retrieved from: http://twblg.dict.edu.tw/holodict_new/index.html
7. Chen, Ping. (2004). *Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics*, 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
8. Norman, Jerry. (1979). Chronological strata in the Min dialects. *Fāngyán* 方言 (4), 268-273.
9. Ota, Katsuhiko J. (2005). *An Investigation of Written Taiwanese*. Masters thesis, 13. University of Hawaii at Manoa. Retrieved from ScholarSpace: <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/>
10. Lin, Alvin. (1999). Writing Taiwanese: The Development of Modern Written Taiwanese. *Sino-Platonic Papers* (89). Philadelphia: Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Pennsylvania.
11. Blust, Robert. (1999). Subgrouping, circularity and extinction: some issues in Austronesian comparative linguistics. In E. Zeitoun & P.J.K Li (Eds.) *Selected papers from the Eighth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, 31–94. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
12. *Zhōnghuá Mínguó Jiàoyùbù* (中華民國教育部) [ROC Ministry of Education]. (2011). Wàilái cí 外來詞 [loanwords]. Retrieved from: http://twblg.dict.edu.tw/holodict_new/index/fulu_wailaici.jsp
13. Li, Paul Jen-kuei. (2000). *Formosan languages: The state of the art*. In David Blundell (Ed.), 45-67.
14. Blust, Robert. (1999). Subgrouping, circularity and extinction: some issues in Austronesian comparative linguistics. In E. Zeitoun & P.J.K Li (Eds.) *Selected papers from the Eighth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, 31–94. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
15. Chen, Ping. (2004). *Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics*, 31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
16. Ethnologue. (2009). Chinese, Min Nan. Retrieved from: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/nan>
17. Cheng, Robert L. (鄭良偉). (1990). *Yǎnbiàn zhōng de Táiwān shèhuì yǔwén: Duō yǔ shèhuì jí shuāngyǔ jiàoyù* (演變中的台灣社會語文: 多語社會及雙語教育) [Essays on sociolinguistic problems of Taiwan], 222-24. Taipei: Zìlì wǎnbào shè wénhuà chūbǎn bù (自立晚報社文化出版部).
18. Klöter, Henning (2005). *Written Taiwanese*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.