

## A comparative study on YE in Chinese Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin

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*ABSTRACT. In this paper, we make a comparative study on YE in Taiwan Mandarin and Chinese Mandarin from the perspective of structural positions, semantics and pragmatics. It is found that: (1) The ratio of sentence-initial YE used in Taiwan Mandarin is much higher than that in Chinese Mandarin. (2) The evaluative YE is used more frequently in Taiwan Chinese than in Chinese Mandarin. (3) The evaluative YE in Taiwan Mandarin is mainly used to emphasize the subjective evaluation; while its counterpart in Chinese Mandarin is mainly used to express euphemism, bringing out the implied contextual presupposition or given information to achieve the purpose of criticism or persuasion.*

**Keywords:** Taiwan Mandarin; Chinese Mandarin; YE

**1. Introduction.** YE is the one of the frequently-used adverbs in Chinese. The fundamental semantics of YE is to express "similarity" (Lu & Ma 1999<sup>[1]</sup>, Hou 1998<sup>[2]</sup>). In addition to this, YE has some other rich semantic meanings and functions. For instance, Lu and Ma<sup>[1]</sup> propose that YE can be used to express euphemism. Cui<sup>[3]</sup> assumes that YE only means "coexistence". The meaning of "sameness" or "similarity" in YE sentences comes not from YE, but from some other elements. Hao<sup>[4]</sup> points out that YE not only means "similarity", but also emphasizes "difference". Contra Lu & Ma (1999)<sup>[1]</sup>, Qu<sup>[5]</sup> proposes that the textual function of YE is to express a subjective opinion which is against a certain hypothesis.

With respect to euphemism, Lu & Ma<sup>[1]</sup> point out that the YE with euphemism is indispensable to the YE with similarity. Due to the basic function of YE is to express "similarity", so when a speaker uses YE in a sentence with the meaning such as blame, resentment, it contains the following meaning: the issues I blamed are not specifically

owned by a specific person but common to others, thus YE weakens the tone of blaming, such as "ni ye tai bu keqi le". Bi (1994)<sup>[6]</sup> basically agrees with this analysis of Ma. She assumes that this kind of YE means juxtaposition, and this juxtaposition is to express a kind of similarity. Because the juxtaposition is operated in a performative domain, it brings the sentence with euphemism. This kind of YE is an euphemistic word; and it is used to convey the difference between the speaker's judgment of the result and the presupposition involved.

With the respect of the emphatic YE on "difference", Hao <sup>[4]</sup> points out evaluative YE, the one mixed with the subjectivity of the narrator, can be used to express euphemism, or criticism. It can also be used to express the difference between the expectation of the narrator and the one of the narrated. When the stress is on YE, the narrator strengthens the subjective evaluation. For example, "ta ye' <sup>1</sup> mei xiangxiang koudai li haiyou duoshao qian, jiu zoujinle wuxingji fandan" 'He went into five-starred hotel directly without considering how much money there is in his pocket'. The narrator puts a stress on YE, which helps to reflect the subjective evaluation. Qu(2006) <sup>[5]</sup>disagrees with Lu & Ma(1999)<sup>[1]</sup>'s analysis of taking the euphemistic YE as the one derived from the meaning of "similarity". He considers the function of YE is to express subjective opinions opposite to the presupposition.

Based on previous studies, this article mainly discusses the following three questions: what is the basic meaning and function of YE in Chinese Mandarin (CM) and Taiwan Mandarin(TM)? What is the difference between them? What's the difference between evaluative YE (often used for euphemism) in CM and TM? We investigate the Chinese mainland TV talk show program "Chengzhang bu fannao" 'Grow up with no worries' (Chinese Mandarin corpus) and "NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese"<sup>2</sup> (Taiwan Mandarin corpus). The two contain 528 items in CM corpus and 579 items in TM<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. The structural distribution of YE in MC and TM.

- (1) The host: ta kan yige yulejiemu, limian xixihaha, en...juede shi meiyou  
she watch one entertainment.programme inside frolic um feel is not  
yiyi de shiqing, zuowei yige laoshi jiang, shi zheyang de ma?  
meaning of thing be one teacher say is like.this DE SFP

The host: 'She watched an entertainment program, in which there were laughs and shouts. Um ... You, as a teacher, felt the program meaningless. Is it right?'

The mother: ye bu shi.  
YE not right

The mother: 'Not really so.'

( 'Chengzhang bu fannao' )

<sup>1</sup> ' means stressed. The abbreviations in glosses are as follows: SFP: sentence-final particle, ASP: aspect markers.

<sup>2</sup> The NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese is available at <http://140.119.172.200/>

<sup>3</sup> We searched 597 items in total, including 18 repeated items.

- (2) F: na ni qunian qu, ni shi zhende jue de buhao o?  
that you last.year go you is really feel not.good SFP

F: 'Did you really feel bad when you went there last year?'

M: ye bucuo la, qishi jiu tingting...  
YE not.bad SFP actually only listen.listen

'It is not so bad. Actually I just listened...'

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

- (3) a. qu meiguo, jianada, zenme ye dei wuwan ba? Wo shang naer zhao name duo  
go America Canada how YE must 50000 SFP I go where find so many  
qian qu ya?  
money go SFP

'If you go to America or Canada, it must cost 50000 yuan at least. Where can I find so much money?'

b. wo ye bu shi zhuan ye zhua xiaotou de.  
I YE not is professional catch thief SFP

'I am not a professional to catch thieves.'

(A talk show program 'Chengzhang bu fannao')

- (4) a. ganjueshang man guai de, ranhou ye man youxin xuexi.  
feel quite well-behaved SFP then YE quite serious learn

'I think he is well-behaved, and also studies seriously.'

b. ni buneng yong dage de fangshi dui ta, ni ye buneng yong xiaodi de  
you can.not use older.brother of way to he you YE can.not use little.brother of  
fangshi dui ta, zuihou ni ye bu zhidao yao zenme dui ta  
way to he final you YE not know will how to he

'You can not treat him as an older brother, neither treat him as a little brother. Actually, you don't know how to get along with him.'

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

- (5) a. tai shao le ye.  
too less SFP YE

'Too little.'

b. tai diuren le ye.  
too shame SFP YE

‘Too ashamed.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

In the structural distribution, YE is normally found in the middle of a sentence, as in (3) and (4). Ye can also be distributed at the beginning of a sentence in MC and TM, as (1) and (2). It is worth noting that the ratio of sentence-initial YE in TM, accounting for 10.53%, is higher than the one in MC. Meanwhile, YE can be used at the end of a sentence in MC, as in (5); however, no such cases are found in TM. This is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. THE STRUCTURAL DISTRIBUTION OF YE IN MC AND TM

	at the beginning of a sentence	in middle of a sentence	at the end of a sentence
TM 579	61 (10.53%)	518 (89.46%)	0 (0)
MC 528	12 (2.27%)	512 (96.96%)	4 (0.75%)

### 3. The Semantics and Pragmatics of YE in MC and TM.

3.1. **Classification.** According to the classification of Lü <sup>[7]</sup>, YE can be classified into four semantic types. The first one is used to denote the sameness or similarity of two things or actions. YE may appear in the former clause and the latter clause (6b, c, e), or occur only in the latter clause, such as (6a, d, f). The second type is used to express the sameness of the consequences in spite of the nullification of premise, as shown in (7). The third type means “even”. It is used to stress the mood, in which LIAN is omitted. This type of YE is often used in negative sentences, as in (8). The fourth type is used for euphemism. If YE is removed, the tone turns straightforward, such as (9).

(6) a. ni qu Beijing canguan fangwen, wome ye qu Beijing canguan fangwen.  
you go Beijing go.around visit we YE go Beijing go.around visit

‘You will go to Beijing for a visit, so will we.’

b. women ye huachuan, ye youyong.  
we YE row YE swim

‘We rowed and swam.’

c. tian ye liang le, feng ye ting le.  
sky YE bright SFP wind YE stop SFP

‘The sky becomes clear, and the wind stops.’

d. women zhongjian you nanfang ren, ye you beifang ren.  
we between have south people YE have north people

‘There are southerners and northerners among us.’

e. mantou wo ye chi, mifan wo ye chi.  
steamed.buns I YE eat rice I YE eat

‘Steamed.buns I like to eat, and rice I like to also.’

f. ta qiantian lai le, zuotian ye lai le.  
he the.day.before.yesterday come SFP yesterday YE come SFP

‘He came here the day before yesterday; so did he yesterday.’

(7) a. suiran yijing xiaqi dayu lai le, zuqiusai ye yao anshi juxing.  
although already rain big.rain come SFP football.game YE will on.time hold

‘In spite of the heavy rain, the football game will be held on time.’

b. shei ye bu shuohua, yanjing dou dingzhe heiban.  
who YE not talk eye all stare ASP blackboard

‘Everyone stared at the blackboard without saying a word.’

c. xi ye xi bu ganjing le.  
wash YE wash not clean SFP

‘It cannot get clean from washing.’

d. yige ren zai congming ye shi youxian de.  
one people more smart YE is limited SFP

‘No matter how clever s/he is, her/his witness is limited.’

e. ta yongyuan ye bu zhidao shenme shi lei.  
he always YE not know what is tired

‘He never knows what tiredness mean to him.’

(8) a. ta tou ye bu tai, zhuanxin xuexi.  
he head YE not lift.up concentrate study

‘He is so absorbed in study that he does not raise his head.’

b. yike liangshi ye bu langfei.  
one grain YE not waste

‘A grain of rice cannot be wasted.’

c. shuye yi dong ye bu dong.  
leaf one wave YE not wave

‘The leaves don’t wave at all.’

(9) ni ye tai bu keqi le.  
you YE too not polite SFP

‘You are too impolite.’

Similarly, Bi (1994)<sup>[6]</sup> divides YE into three types: the first one is used as a symmetric parallel, as in (6). The second means partial inclusion, which is divided into two sub-types. The first subtype denotes the co-occurrence with polarity items, such as the examples in (7a, c, d, e); the second subtype denotes the co-occurrence with some words meaning “all over”, such as (7b). The third expresses mild evaluation, such as (9). Based on Bi<sup>[6]</sup>, we integrate Lü’s<sup>[7]</sup> second type (in spite of the nullification of the premise, the consequence is the same) and third type (meaning “even”), into the second type (partial inclusion) of Bi<sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, we adopt the co-existence analysis of YE in Cui<sup>[3]</sup> and regard the YE with different subjects and different predicates as "coexistence". In this line, we divide YE into four types: (A) to denote that two things are same or similar, such as (6a, e, f). (B) to denote the co-existence, such as (6b, c). (C) to denote the same of the consequences in spite of the nullification of the premises, as in (7), (8). (D) to denote mild evaluation, often used to express euphemism, as in (9).

**3.2. The semantic types of YE in MC and TM.** In line with the modified four types of classification, we study YE in the spoken corpus in MC and TM and list their ratios. After the comparative study, we find YE is mainly used to express “the sameness or similarity of two things” in MC and TM, such as (10, 11). The second frequently used meaning is the “coexistence”. The difference between MC and TM lies in the evaluative usage of YE. Evaluative YE in TM, being 20.89%, has a higher ratio than the one in MC, covering only 9.28%. This is shown in Table 2.

(10) a. nuhaizi zenme jiu bu nenggou pinming gongzuo? Na Wuzentian ye shi nude,  
girl how just not can hard work that Wuzentian YE is female  
hai dang huangdi ne.  
even be emperor SFP

‘Why can a girl not work hard? Wu Zentian, for example, is a female and she even became an emperor.’

b. The host: ta jiu qu de defang bu dui, ta yao cong Libiya huilai de, laoban  
he just go of place not right ta if from Libya come.back DE boss

kending yong ta, dui ba?  
must hire him right SFP

‘He went to a wrong place. If he had come back from Libya, the boss must have hired him.’

The guest: dui, Suomali ye bucuo.  
yes Somalia YE not.bad

‘Yes, it is not a bad idea to go to Somalia.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

- (11) a. ni buneng yong dage de fangshi dui ta, ni ye buneng yong xiaodi  
you can.not use older.brother of way to him you YE can.not use little.brother  
de fangshi dui ta, zuihou ni ye bu zhidao yao zenme dui ta.  
of way to he finally you YE not know will how to he

‘You can not treat him as an older, neither treat him as a little brother. Actually, you don’t know how to get along with him.’

- b. M: ye bucuo la, qishi jiu tingtingting, ...jianjian shimian...  
YE not.bad SFP actually only listen.listen see.see outside

‘Pretty good, actually I just listened... see the world...’

F: jianjian shimian o, hao.  
see the.world SFP good

‘Go around to see the world? Good.’

M: a youde bao de ren jiu juede hai OK la.  
um some apply of people then feel still OK SFP

‘For those who could apply, they did not take it bad.’

F: na wo ye na wo ye qu jianjian shimian hao le.  
that I YE that I YE go see.see the.world ok SFP

‘Then I want to see the world, too.’

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

There is no difference between the YE expressing “the same or similarity” in MC and TM.  
In the following, we will discuss the other 3 semantic types of YE in MC and TM.

TABLE 2. THE SEMANTIC TYPES OF YE IN MC AND TM

	Same or Similar	Coexistence	Evaluation	Consequence
TM 579	256 (44.21%)	134 (23.14%)	121 (20.89%)	68 (11.74%)
MC 528	318 (60.22%)	88 (16.66%)	49 (9.28%)	73 (13.82%)

3.3. **Coexistence.** Comparing the “coexistence” meaning of YE in MC and TM, it is found that the ratio of coexistent YE, being 23.14%, is higher than the one in TM. In addition, we also find that YE can not only be used to connect similar or associated meanings (such as 12), but also be used to connect items with opposite meanings, such as (13) and (14).

(12) a. zhege nanhaizi 23 sui, dujin ye hao, shenzao ye hao, ta dou shi  
 this boy 23 year gold-plating YE fine further.education YE fine he all is  
 chuguo qu kaikuoyanjie qu le, zhege guocheng bu shi zhege baida.  
 go.abroad go see.the.world go SFP this process not is this in.vain

‘This boy is 23 years old. Whether for gold-plating or further education, he went abroad to see the world. This process is not in vain.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

b. liangge nanren zai naban da diandong da dao liang dianzhong, ranhou, ye  
 two man at there play computer.games play to 2 o’clock then YE  
 buguan renjia yunfu zheyang.  
 ignore other pregnant.woman like.this

‘The two men played video games to 2 o’clock and did not consider the pregnant woman nearby.’

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

The following is YE in MC.

(13) a. The mother: ma ba zhege wanyi song gei jibin, rang ta congjin yihou  
 mom BA this thing give to the.guest let he from.now.on  
 jiu haohaodi xuexi.  
 just attentively study

‘I would like to give this thing to the guests, so he study hard attentively from now on.’



The host: hao, song gei women, song gei zhinütuan de ren, ye bu xuyao,  
good send give we send give children.group of people YE not need  
song le jiu ba ta zhai xialai jiu hao le.  
give SFP just BA it pluck down just fine

‘Okay, give it to the children group. Oh, it is not necessary to send, just pluck it.’

a’. hao, song gei women, song gei zhinütuan de ren, dao ye bu xuyao song le.  
good send give we send give children.group of people but YE not need send SFP

‘Okay, give it to the children group. But it is not necessary to send.’

b. dadaoli shi zhende zui you daoli de yige daoli, dui bu dui, danshi dadaoli  
big.truth is real most have truth of a truth right not right but big.truth  
qishi ye shi zui meiyoyong de.  
in.fact YE is most useless SFP

‘Big truth is the most meaningful one, but in fact it is also the most useless.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

(14) a. suishendie you 40G ye, wo lunwen ye bu dao 40G.  
USB have 40G SFP I paper YE not reach 40G

‘The USB has 40G storage; however, my paper has not reached 40G.’

a’. suishendie you 40G ye, wo lunwen dao ye bu dao 40G.  
USB have 40G SFP I paper but YE not reach 40G

‘The USB has 40G storage, but my paper has not reached 40G.’

b. jiu women...gongsi de nage...jiaolian jiangshi a... qishi ta ye bu shi.  
Just we company of that coach lecturer um in.fact he YE not is

‘The lecturer of our company... In fact, he is not a lecturer...’

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

In (13a), the host said “Give it to the children group”, then he said immediately “It is not necessary to give”. In this sentence, we can add DAO ‘conversely’ in front of YE (such as 13a), therefore, YE in this sentence has transition meaning. In (13b), the speaker first had a positive evaluation on “DA DAOLI” (the great truth); however, he used QISHI ‘as a matter of fact’ in the next clause to carry over a negative evaluation on “DA DAOLI”. (14) is an

example of YE in TM, in which two people are discussing whether to buy a USB memory disk. YE in the latter clause in (14a) is not used to express “similarity” (as DAO can be added in front of YE, such as 14a’), but to form a contrast to “40G” in the latter clause. In (14b), the first clause said “He is an instructor in the company”, but the subsequent clause denied such as a statement with *qishi ta ye bushi* “actually he is not”, so there is no similarity between “jiaolian jiangshi” and “ta ye bu shi”. To sum up, we classify “coexistent” YE into two types: the one with transition meaning and the other without transition meaning. The statistics shows that coexistent YE with transition meaning is less frequently used than the one without transition meaning both in MC and TM. Comparatively speaking, the YE with transition meaning in TM has a higher ratio than the one in MC, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. THE MEANING OF COEXISTANT YE IN MC AND TM

	transition meaning	without transition meaning
TM 134	51 (38.05%)	83 (61.94%)
MC 88	29 (32.95%)	59 (67.04%)

3.4. **Consequence.** The consequence type of YE is used both in MC and TM, as respectively shown in (15) and (16).

(15) a. qu Meiguo, Jianada, zenme ye dei 5wan ba? Wo shang naer zhao namen duo  
go America Canada how YE need 50000 SFP I go where find so much  
qian qu a?  
money go SFP

‘If you go to America or Canada, it must cost 50000 yuan at least. Where can I find so much money?’

b. jiusuan ni shi ta mama, ye buneng xianzhi ta kan dianshiju de bili.  
although you is she mother YE can.not limit she watch TV of ratio

‘Although you are her mother, you can’t not limit the frequency of her watching TV.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

(16) a. meiyou shui ye jingshen hen hao.

not sleep YE energy very good

‘Though I did not sleep last night, I am full of energy today.’

a'. suiran meiyou shui ye jingshen hen hao.  
although not sleep YE energy very good

b. xinde Tianmu ye bu hui you jieyun a.  
new Tianmu YE not will have MRT SFP

‘Even there is a new Tianmu, there will be no MRT station there.’

b'. jiusuanshi xinde Tianmu ye bu hui you jieyun a.  
although new Tianmu YE not will have MRT SFP

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

(15) is an example of consequence YE in MC. ZENME in (15a) is a word meaning ‘whatever’. In (15b), “her mother” should be the most qualified person to put some restrictions on her. (16) is an example of consequence YE in TM. In (16a), in the situation of “no sleep last night”, normally we will infer that the speaker must be listless at day, but the result is that the speaker said “I am full of energy”. In (16b), “new TIANMU” is an emerging business district, in which there are many department stores, trendy restaurants, KTV and other buildings. It is also a gathering place for the young people and it should be equipped with the MRT station. The YE in (16b) carries over the consequence which is opposite to the presupposition.

TABLE 4. YE WITH CONSEQUENCE MEANING IN MC AND TM

TM	MC
68	73
(11.74%)	(13.82%)

From the above discussion, it is tempting to assume that YE of this type is often found in sentences with transition meaning. When the presupposition and the consequence are not consistent, there is a transition period.

3.5. **Evaluation.** Hao<sup>[4]</sup> points out that YE with the narrator’s subjectivity has the function to emphasize “difference”. Some are used for euphemism, or for criticism; some are used to express the opinion or expectation difference between narrators and listeners. He also argues this function is also used to emphasize the different levels of “difference”, which is related to the degree of respecting the politeness principle, and the option whether the stress is aligned on YE or not.

(17) a. Ta mei xiangxiang koudai li hai you duoshao qian, jiu zoujin le wuxingji  
he not think.about pocket inside still have how.much money just enter Past five-star  
fandian.  
hotel

b. Ta ye mei xiangxiang koudai li hai you duoshao qian, jiu zoujin le wuxingji  
fandian.

c. Ta ye' mei xiangxiang koudai li hai you duoshao qian, jiu zoujin le wuxingji  
fandian.

‘He didn't think about how much money there is in their pockets and walked into the  
five-star hotel straightly’

(18) a. ni ye tai bu keqi le.  
you YE too not polite SFP

b. ni ye' tai bu keqi le.  
you YE too not polite SFP

‘You are too impolite.’

(19) ta ye' tai bu shi ge dongxi le.  
He YE too not is CL thing SFP  
‘He cannot be called a human.being’

Take (17) as an example. (17a) belongs to a declarative sentence with no narrator's subjectivity. In (17b), when it YE is introduced into the sentence, it means the speaker considered that “he should first think about how much money there is in his pocket”. If this sentence using a stress on XIANGXIANG ‘think’, the narrator will try to obey the politeness principle (partially) in Approbation Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. This is like what Lu&Ma<sup>[1]</sup> proposes that “euphemism is from similarity YE”. Therefore the implied meaning in (17b) is that “a lot of people don't think about the amount of the money in their pockets before walking into a five-star hotel straightly”. However, the stress on YE (such as 17c) helps to reflect the subjective evaluation that “He did not do the right thing”. “Perhaps trouble will come”. We agree with the view of Hao<sup>[4]</sup>. Take (18) as an example. When the stress is not on YE, (18a) is more polite than “ni tai bu keqi le”; but when the stress is on YE, (18b) shows more strong criticism. Another example is (19), in which YE is used to criticize, but not express euphemism.

In view of the above discussion, we classify evaluative YE into two types: the one for euphemism and the other for emphasis. In investigating evaluative YE in MC and TM, it is found that evaluative YE in MC is frequently used as for euphemism (61.22%), evaluative YE in TM is widely used to for emphasis (80.99%). This is shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5. EVALUATIVE YE IN MC AND TM

	For euphemism	For emphasis
TM 121	23 (19%)	98 (80.99%)
MC 49	30 (61.22%)	19 (38.77%)

### I. Euphemistic YE.

Bi<sup>[6]</sup> considers evaluative YE is an tic word. It helps the sentence turn mild, thereby reducing the value of the assertion, and conveying the disagreement between the result and the expectation. We will cite the example from her article in the following.

- (20) ...zixinngche... Tamen yu qiche zhengtu, zaocheng xianxianghuansheng,  
bicycle they with car cut.incause signs.of.danger.appearing.everywhere  
que ye wei niangcheng chehuo.  
but YE not make traffic.accident

‘...Bicycles.... They cut in between crowd and traffic, and bring potential danger here and there, but no traffic accident occurred.’

(Bi 1994)

In (20), Bi<sup>[6]</sup> considers it dangerous for the bicycles to get the road room with cars, which may lead to accidents. However, the reality (no accident happened) did not meet this expectation. However, euphemistic YE is used to highlight a contradiction between assertions and expectations. However, whether the accident happened or not, the situation is still dangerous. This is taken as the commonalities between the two. Similar with Bi, we agree that YE is used to convey a contradiction between assertions and expectation, but we disagree with her in the proposal that YE in (20) expresses sort of similarity.

Through the investigation, we find that euphemistic YE in TM (often unstressed), is not used to express similarity.

- (21) F: ruguo tamen qishi genben jiu meiyou yao qu...na jiu buyong tingke la.  
if they in.fact completely just not want go that just no.need suspend.classes SFP

‘If they have no intention to go there, it is not necessary to suspend the class.’

M: ye bu yiding.  
YE not.sure

‘Not necessarily.’

F: zhende hen mafan.

really very troublesome

‘It is really troublesome.’

M: shuobuding...tamen bu xiang shangke.  
maybe they do not take.class

‘Perhaps, they don’t want to take class.’

F: ye shi.  
YE right

‘Right.’

(22) F: ruguo tamen qushi genben jiu meiyou yao qu...na jiu buyong tingke la.

M: buyiding.

F: zhende hen mafan.

M: shuobuding...tamen buxiang shangke.

F: ?shi.

(23) a. The son: woba bu rang wo qu wan.  
my.father not allow I go play

‘My father did not allow me to play outside.’

The father: na ni jiushi xuexi de jieduan ma.  
that you is study of stage SFP

‘That is because you are in the studying stage.’

The son: shi, na ni ye buneng chengtian da wo a.  
yes that you YE can.not everyday hit I SFP

‘Yes, in spite of this, you can not beat me everyday.’

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

a’. wo chuyu xuexi de jieduan ni ye buneng chengtian da wo a.  
I in learn of stage you YE can.not everyday beat I SFP

a’’. jiushi/jiusuan wo chuyu xuexi de jieduan ni ye buneng chengtian da wo a.  
although I in learn of stage you YE can.not everyday beat I SFP

‘Although I am in the studying stage, you cannot hit me every day.’

Take (21) as an example, two students are discussing whether the class will be suspended or not. The male speaker evaluated the opinion of the female. He said “not necessarily”.

The reason is that the teacher might not want to teach a class. Finally the female speaker changes her ideas and agrees with the view of the male (we can add DAO in front of YE SHI). In this case, we find if YE is deleted, the evaluation of the male speaker will be more stiff. In the last sentence, if we delete YE, the sentence will be less acceptable, as in (22). We consider the YE here is not only used to express an euphemistic tone, but also to highlight the evaluation on the contradiction between assertions and expectation (DAO can be added in front of YE). Next we study an example in MC, as (23). The program discusses whether the parents should educate children in the way of beating or not. "Na" in (23a) can be replaced by “wo chuyu xuexi de jieduan” (‘I am in the learning stage’), as in (23a’). We can add *jishi, suiran, jiusuan* (‘even though’) in the beginning of the sentence, as in (23a’’).

When euphemistic YE is used in a sentence, its presuppositional meaning is triggered by YE, and YE brings out the reality which is contrary to common sense<sup>4</sup>, as the following examples show.

- (24) Caikangyong: keshi ni follow ta jiushi meiyizhan dou yao ting ye.  
but you follow it that.is every.stop all will stop SFP

‘But, if you follow it, it means you have to stop on every bus stop.’

Shenyulin: na ye meicha.  
that YE all.right

‘That is all right.’

(A talk show ‘Kangxilaile’)

- (25) a. suiran/jinguan meiyizhan dou yao ting ye meicha  
although every.stop all will stop YE all. right

‘Although we need to stop at every bus stop, it is still all right.’

- b. ...meicha, meiyizhan dou yao ting ye meicha.  
all.right every.stop all will stop YE all.right

‘...That is ok Stopping at every bus stop is also all right.’

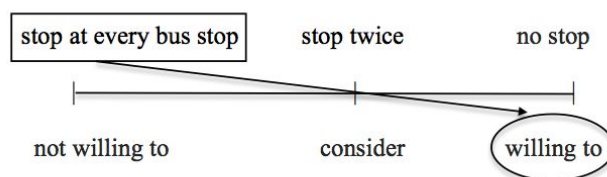


FIGURE 1. THE FUNCTION OF EMPHASIS YE IN (24)

<sup>4</sup> Here we are illuminated with Qu (2006).

In the above examples, some artists who have no sense of direction are talking about how to find a road. One of the artists provides a good method to find roads, which is to follow a bus route. The host disagrees, but Shen Yulin believes that “Stop at each bus stop is all right”. Shen’s words have contextual presupposition, that is, “The situation of stopping at every bus does exist”. We make such an inferences on the basis of this, and it is tempting to conclude that “Stop at every stop is very troublesome, and most people are not willing to do that”, but he still accepted it. In (24), YE brings out the evaluation which is contrary to common sense. As shown in Figure 1. This kind of YE is used as a trigger word, which does not trigger similarity, as in (25b), but concession, as in (25a).

(26) is an example of YE which can be used both in MC and TM. There is no difference between MC and TM.

(26) A: mingtian keyi bang wo banjia ma?  
tomorrow can help I move.house SFP

‘Can you help me to make a move tomorrow?’

B: a. keyi.  
can

‘Okay.’

a’. keyi, wanquan mei wenti.  
can completely no problem

‘Okay, no problem at all.’

b. ye keyi.  
YE can

‘Sort of ok.’

b’. \*ye keyi, wanquan mei wenti  
YE can completely no problem

\*Sort of ok. no problem at all’

b’’. ye keyi, zhiyao wo ba mingtian de yuehui tuidiao.  
YE can only I BA tomorrow of date cancel

‘Sort of ok. Only if I cancel the date tomorrow ’

c. suiran/jinguan wo mingtian yijing you yue le, ye keyi bang ni banjia



although I tomorrow already have date SFP YE can help you move.house

‘Although I have a date tomorrow, I still can help you make a house move.’

d. bang ni dasao keyi, bang ni banjia ye keyi  
help you clean can help you move.house YE can

‘I can help you to clean the house, and I can also help you to make a move.’

In (26), A asks whether B can help him to move house tomorrow (no other antecedent question before this). If B answers with (26a), it means “No problem at all”; if B answers with (26b) (YE included), it is not as clear as (26a). (26b) implies that he has some other plan(s). In this situation, A usually asks: “Will you not be free tomorrow?” Therefore, the function of YE is not only used to soften tone, as an euphemism, but also to bring out a presuppositional meaning. In this line, (26b’) is not appropriate, and (26b’’) is more reasonable. Thus YE in (26b) is not meant to denote sameness or similarity of two things, but to imply a contextual presupposition which is “I have other plan(s) tomorrow”, such as (26c). This usage comes from the transition meaning of the third type (in spite of the nullification of the premise, the consequence is the same). In the sentence, YE belongs to a trigger word to trigger concession meaning (such as 26c), but not the meaning of sameness or similarity (such as 26d).

In discussing euphemistic YE, Lu & Ma<sup>[1]</sup> exemplify it with the sentence “ni ye tai bu keqi le” ‘you are too impolite’. This sentence “ni tai bu keqi le” (without YE) is used as for criticism or blame. However, when YE is added, it will weaken the degree of blame. We think that this type of YE triggers a concession (although/though...) which implies a contextual presupposition.

(27) a. ni ye tai bu keqi le.  
you YE too not polite SFP

‘You are too impolite.’

b. jinguan tade taidu buhao, ni ye tai bu keqi le.  
although his attitude not.good you YE too not polite SFP

‘Although his attitude was good, you are still too impolite.’

Take (27) as an example, which affirms “the attitude of someone is not good”. On this premise, it can be inferred that “as the attitude of someone is not good to me, your impoliteness is not reasonable”. In this line, YE helps to weaken the tone of criticism.

To sum up, the euphemistic YE is a trigger word, which triggers a contextual presupposition and brings out a result contrary to common sense. This kind of YE is developed from a concessive clause “suiran/jinguan... , ye...” ‘although/though... , it is

too...'.<sup>5</sup> Some scholar points out this kind of YE can also denote rebuttal tone. We will discuss such a possibility in the following.

#### A. Can YE denote rebuttal tone?

Shi (2005)<sup>[8]</sup> points out euphemistic YE can denote a rebuttal tone, and the function of YE is to highlight a proposition which is expected or related to a certain behavior, as in (28).

(28) ta ye bu shi ni laopo le, ni ganma hai namen ting ta de?  
she YE not is you wife Past you why still so listen she DE

‘She is no longer your wife, why do you still follow her suggestions?’

He assumes that YE gets a conclusion via highlighting a negative proposition. This includes an inference process, and the premise is: "if P, then Q ". Take (28) as an example. The major premise in (28) is "If she is still your wife, you can listen to her completely". Using YE to deny the premise, we get the negative consequence, as in (28). Many similar examples can be found in the talk show “Chengzhang bu fannao”, as in (29).

(29) a. women jia xianzai ye meiyou nage nengli zai Beijing gei ni mai fangzi,  
we family now YE not that ability in Beijing give you buy house  
duifang jiazhang ping shenme ba nuer jiagei ni?  
the.other.side parents on what BA daughter marry you

‘We have no ability to support you to buy a house in Beijing. Why are the parents willing to marry their daughter to my son?’

b. wo ye bu pa zai zher shuohua dezui ren, xianzai daxue libian duoshao  
I ye not afraid in here talk offend people now university inside  
hunshir de laoshi,wo zhende juede ni zhende hai buru  
how.much idle of teacher I really feel you really even could.as.well  
chuguo qu.  
go.abroad go

‘I am not afraid of my offending others here. I think there are many university teachers who are not responsible for their work. I do think you may study abroad.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

However, disagreeing with the opinion of Shi<sup>[8]</sup>, we assume the rebuttal tone is not introduced by YE but by the latter clause. This is shown in the following examples.

(30) a. chaoweige xianzai ye nianji bu qing leya, yiran hen dianren a

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<sup>5</sup> Liao (2008) classifies YE inot three types and the second type is evaluative euphemism YE, which is used to express the speaker’s emotions and soften the positive (negative) tone.

Chaoweige now YE age not young SFP still very charming SFP

‘Although Chaoweige is not young, he is still very charming.’

b. chaowei ge xianzai ye nianji bu qing le ya.

(31) wo ye bushi zhuanye zhua xiaotou de  
I YE not professional catch thief DE

‘I am not a professional to catch thieves.’

(A talk program ‘Chengzhang bu fannao’)

There might be a rebuttal tone in (30b), and the subtext is probably: “Chaoweige does not be such a flirt” or “He shouldn’t hesitate, but get married as soon as possible”. But we find there is no rebuttal tone in (30a). It is only used to elicit what everyone knows, as a premise to highlight his point of view.

Euphemistic YE can be used to bring out the known information and highlight the speaker’s own point of view. This usage is not seen in “NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese”, and is rarely used in daily conversation in Taiwan. In (30b), the hearer will answer: “really? He looks like only 25 years old”. If someone says (31), the hearer will answer “I always thought you were a cop!”. Accordingly, YE in (30) and (31) is different from Euphemistic YE.

To sum up, euphemistic YE, with no stress, has 2 types in CM: (A) There arises a presuppositional meaning in the sentence with euphemistic YE, which brings out the meaning contrary to common sense; (B) YE introduces given information and highlight the speaker’s point of view. In Taiwan, the first type is common seen, while the second type is rarely found.

## II. Emphasis YE

When YE is used for emphasis, it is usually pronounced with a stress. YE of this type is used to elicit the speaker’s opinion, which is usually with sense of criticism.

(32) M: fanzheng women zhu waimian, yihou ni gugu dou keyi zhu na, lai nage  
anyway we live outside in.the.future you aunt all can live there come that  
a...shui women nabian a...  
SFP sleep we there SFP

‘Since we live outside. In the future your aunt can live there too... She can sleep in our house sometimes.’

F: dui a, keyi a.  
right SFP can SFP

‘Yes, no problem.’

M: dui a, ruguo ta zhende you chengyi dehua...jiu jiao ta na ge...san wu  
right SFP if she she really have sincerity if ... just ask she take CL three five  
bai wan chulai...ding yixia a...fangdai a.  
hundred ten.thousand out support a.little um mortgage SFP

‘Yes, if she really wants to help us, you can ask her to take three to five  
million NT dollars to support us pay the house loan’

F: ...

M: ni shuo...nage...gugu wo kandao fangzi le, danshi wo dou hai meiyou mai,  
you say that aunt I see house SFP but I all still not buy  
shenghuo guo de hen jieju, buran hai you zhuanghuang a,  
life get DE very poor otherwise still have decoration um  
chu yidian xiaoqian, ni yihou keyi zhu.  
out a.little small.money you in.the.future can live

‘You can tell her like that.Aunt, I have already seen the house, but we have not  
buy it yet. Because we are living in poor condition. Can you support us some  
money to decorate the house? You can live with us in the future.’

F: san wu bai wan zhuanghuang ye tai duo leba.  
three five hundred ten.thousand decoration YE too much SFP

‘Three to five million NT dollars for decoration is too large a number.’

(33) jinguan/suiran wo xiang shuofu gugu chuqian, san wu bai wan.  
although I want persuade aunt pay three five hundred ten.thousand

zhuanghuang ye tai duo leba.  
decoration YE too much SFP

‘Although I want to persuade my aunt to pay for our decoration, but three to five  
million NT dollars is really too large a number.’  
(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

(32) is such an example in MC, in which the man persuades the woman to ask for some  
help from her aunt to pay the house mortgage. The woman rejects the suggestion with  
saying *ye tai duo le* ‘too much’. She thinks *san wu bai wan* ‘3 million to 5 million’ is too  
much, despite the fact that she wants her aunt to support some financial help too. This is  
shown in (33).

Judging from this example, we tentatively propose that emphatic YE is derived from  
consequence YE.

(34) a. mianqian wo ye' bu qu.  
 free I YE not go

‘Even it is free, I won't want to go.’

b. lian qian ye' mai bu dao.  
 even money YE buy not reach

‘Even money cannot buy it.’

(‘NCCU Corpus of Spoken Chinese’)

(34) is another example of emphasis YE in TM, in which several students are discussing whether to attend remedial classes and one of them says (34a). Normally, most students are willing to take free courses and this is not the case in (34a). The anti-expectation is elicited with emphasis YE, which works with the polarity meaning to derive the unexpected meaning. (34b) behaves same like (34a).

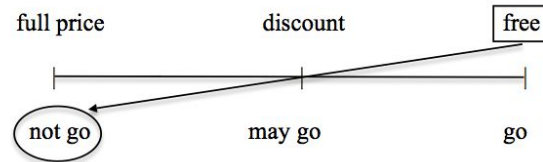


FIGURE 2. THE FUNCTION OF EMPHASIS YE IN (34A)

A related question is how to distinguish euphemism YE and emphasis YE. Hao<sup>[4]</sup> points out that euphemism YE is pronounced unstressed and emphasis YE is stressed. In our opinion, the pronunciation difference is related to the information to be focused. When YE is pronounced unstressed, YE triggers concessive meaning and elicits the hidden context presupposition. However, when YE is pronounced with a stress, its main function is to focus the information after YE, even though it takes presupposition meaning too. The strings after emphasis YE usually collocate with *tai X le* ‘too X’ to bring out the polarity meaning. (Interestingly, when emphasis YE is used with *hen X* ‘too X’, no such function is found, as in 35d). Presupposition is also involved in emphasis YE in (35b), and the first clause in (35c) is one possibility. Inferring from this presupposition, we tend to get the conclusion that this product is good and its price should be a bit high accordingly. However, the actual price is too high to accept.

(35) a. zhe tai gui le.  
 this too expensive SFP

‘This is too expensive.’

b. zhe ye tai gui le.  
 this YE too expensive SFP

‘This is really too expensive.’

c. zhe dongxi hao shi hao, ye tai gui le.  
this thing good is good YE too expensive SFP

‘Although it is really good, is too expensive.’

d. zhege dongxi ye hen gui.  
this thing YE very expensive

‘This one is also very expensive.’

(36) is a similar case in TM. Common sense tells us that an artist should work hard to respect his/her audience. In spite of this, the dance teacher is a bit surprised to see Bao Kaka’s wearing her pants at such a low waist, as in (36a’).

(36) a. Baokaka: wode yijing hen di ye (pointing to the length of her pants)  
my already very low SFP  
na jiushi zhe yangzi.  
that is this looking

‘My pants is already very low.(Pointing to the length of her pants). The length is something like this.’

The dance teacher: ni zhe yangzi ye wei jiemu tai xisheng leba.  
you this looking YE for program too sacrifice SFP  
‘Your dressing like that is really a big sacrifice.’  
(A talk show program ‘Kangxi laile’)

a’: ni zhe yangzi wei jiemu tai xisheng leba.  
you this looking for program too sacrifice SFP

‘Your dressing like that is a big sacrifice.’

Judging from this example, we point out evaluative YE can be divided into 2 types: (A) Euphemism YE is pronounced unstressed. Its function is to elicit the hidden context presupposition, as in (37b). (B) Emphasis YE is pronounced with a stress. It carries over an unknown information. Its function is to highlight the subjective opinion, as in (37c).

(37) a. ni ye tai budongshi le.  
you YE too not.sensible SFP

‘You are really too insensible.’

b. jinguan ta hen meidaoli, ni ye tai budongshi le.  
though he very without.reason you YE too not.sensible SFP

‘Though he is not reasonable, you are really too insensible.’

- c. wulunruhe, ni ye’ tai budongshi le.  
in.any.case you YE too not.sensible SFP

‘In any case, you are really too insensible.’

Evaluative YE in MC is mainly used as an euphemism YE. It is used to highlight the known (or implied) information. Oppositely, Evaluative YE in TM is normally used as an emphasis YE. It is used to express subjective opinion.

4. **Conclusion.** Through the investigation of YE in MC and TM, we find that sentence-initial YE in TM has high ratio than the one in MC. Both in MC and TM, YE is mainly used to express “the same or similarity”. However, evaluative YE in TM has much higher ratio than one in MC. Meanwhile Evaluative YE in MC and TM can be divided into two types: euphemistic YE and for empathetic YE. Evaluative YE in MC, pronounced unstressed, is mainly used for euphemism. Its function is to highlight the implied contextual presupposition or known information to reach the purpose of criticism or remonstrance. Oppositely, evaluative YE, pronounced stressed, is normally used to express emphasis. Its function is to highlight the subjective opinion.

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