

Lexical vs. Syntactic Negation in Taiwanese*

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In Taiwanese the negator *m* seems to have more than one denotation, volitional and simple. The question is whether there are two different *m*'s or just one *m*. This paper proposes that while on the surface there seem to be two *m*'s, underlyingly only the simple *m* exists. The simple *m* attaches to some exceptional verbs in the lexicon and is inserted as a whole under a V node in syntax. *M* can also be inserted alone under a NEG node that is subcategorized for an MP headed by *beh* 'want' or other abstract modals. The phonetic form of *m* attaching to *beh* or abstract modals is still *m* but with an additional volitional meaning. The analysis distinguishing lexical from syntactic negation further explains co-occurrence restrictions, accounts for why the simple *m* cannot occur alone while the volitional *m* can, and also captures other exceptional behaviors of these *m*-exceptional verbs.

Key words: Taiwanese, negation, A-not-A question, disjunctive question, tag question

1. Introduction

In all languages, negation is an important research topic, and different languages adopt different devices for negation, i.e. negative verbs, negative particles, or negative derivational morphemes (Payne 1985). Because of the diversity of its negative markers, negation in Taiwanese is particularly complicated and thus worth researching. Among the various negative markers in Taiwanese, the most commonly discussed is *m* 'not', while most of the other negative markers are argued to be derived from *m* in one way or another. Thus to understand negation in Taiwanese, one must start with the basic negator *m*.

As shown in (1) and (2),¹ *m* seems to have more than one denotation. *M* in (1) does not simply mean 'not'. It has an extra volitional reading, which is lacking in *m* in (2) The problem that follows is whether the *m*'s in (1) and (2) are the same *m*, or instances of two different *m*'s.

- (1) i m lai.
he not-want come
'He does not want to come.'
- (2) i m cai-iann cit can taici.
he not know this CL² matter

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¹ Romanization used in this paper is according to the TLPA (Taiwan Language Phonetic Alphabet).

² CL stands for classifier.

‘He does not know about this matter.’

In previous analyses, some researchers argue that there are two *m*'s (Li 1971, Lin 1974), while others propose that there is only one (Saillard 1992, Teng 1992, Tang 1994). Both interpretations have merits. This paper, however, argues that while on the surface it appears that there are two *m*'s, in actuality, only one *m* exists. That is, on the surface the *m*'s in (1) and (2) are taken to be two different *m*'s. *M* in (2), termed as *m2*, simply denotes ‘not’ and attaches to some exceptional verbs in the lexicon as a negative derivational morpheme, whereas *m* in (1), termed as *m1*, is an underlying *m2*-modal, with the modal being abstract, and on the surface is a negative verb. Therefore, superficially *m* has a dual status, a negative derivational morpheme and a negative verb, while in fact only *m2* exists as a basic negator.

2. Literature review

Li (1971) argues that there are two *m*'s; that is, *m* in (1) denotes ‘not want’,³ while that in (2) simply means ‘not’.⁴ Other than the semantic difference, *m1* and *m2* also differ in their syntactic subcategorization. Only *m1* can be followed by adjectives and PPs, as shown in (3), and only *m2* can take verbs with the semantic feature [-transition], such as *si* ‘be’, *cai-iann* ‘know’, etc., as shown in (4).

- (3) a. i m laushi.
 he not-want honest
 ‘He does not want to be honest.’
 b. *i m laushi.
 he not honest
 ‘He is not honest.’
- (4) a. *i m si haksing.
 he not-want be student
 ‘He does not want to be a student.’
 b. i m si haksing.
 he not be student
 ‘He is not a student.’

Lin’s (1974) analysis on A-not-A questions further supports Li’s view. Lin argues that only *m1* can occur alone at the sentence-final position in the reduced

³ It is named *m1*.

⁴ It is named *m2*.

forms of A-not-A questions, as shown in (5) and (6). The fact that *m* in (5b) can occur alone without attaching to a following verb indicates that *m* in (5b) is a free morpheme, while the ungrammaticality of (6b) shows that unlike the *m* in (5b), *m* in (6b) is bound and thus cannot stand alone. This then supports Li's proposal that there are two different *m*'s, one free and the other bound.

- (5) a. i beh lai ahsi m lai?
 he want come or not-want come
 'Does he want to come or not?'
 b. i beh lai ahsi m?
 he want come or not-want
 'Does he want to come or not?'
- (6) a. i si tai-uan lang ahsi m si tai-uan lang?
 he be Taiwan people or not be Taiwan people
 'Is he Taiwanese or not?'
 b. *i si tai-uan lang ahsi m?
 he be Taiwan people or not
 'Is he Taiwanese or not?'

Cheng (1997) also considers *m* to have two readings, volitional negation and simple negation, and each has different co-occurrence restrictions. Volitional *m* can occur alone, while simple *m* cannot as shown in the answers to the questions in (7) and (8), where *m* in (7a) denotes volitional negation and can stand alone while that in (8a) denotes simple negation and thus cannot occur by itself.

- (7) li kam beh khi?
 you KAM want go
 'Do you want to go?'
 a. m.
 not-want
 'Don't want to.'
 b. m khi.
 not-want go
 'Don't want to go.'
- (8) li kam kann khi?
 you KAM dare go
 'Do you dare to go?'

- a. **m*.
‘not’
‘Not.’
- b. *m* kann.
not dare
‘Do not dare.’

On the other hand, there are scholars who argue that there is only one *m*. Taking a lexical-semantic approach, Teng (1992) proposes that *m* is a primitive negative morpheme, and when followed by different elements, it has different denotations. That is, when followed by action verbs, *m* denotes ‘intention not to’, while when followed by stative verbs, it means ‘contrary’. For Teng, there is only one *m*, and the volitional meaning of *m* in cases like (1) does not come from *m* itself. It is not doubtful that *m* in (1) has extra volitional meaning. The problem with a lexical-semantic analysis like Teng’s is that it is not clear where the volitional meaning comes from, if it is not part of the internal meaning of *m*, and how the volitional meaning should be represented. What’s more, Teng’s claim that the volitional *m* occurs with action verbs only is obviously incorrect. As shown in (9) and (3a), the *m*’s before PP and AP also have the volitional meaning and thus it cannot be that the volitional *m* can only occur with action verbs.⁵

- (9) i *m* *ti chan* e.
he not-want on farm PRT⁶
‘He does not want to be on the farm.’

Tang (1994) also argues that there is only one *m*. He examines Li’s feature matrix for *m* and proposes that the two *m*’s have the same semantic properties such as [+neg], [-completive], [-existence], except for the features [volition] and [V], and what’s more, they are in complementary distribution. All these show that the two *m*’s in Li’s analysis should be taken to be just one morpheme or allomorphs of the same morpheme. To be specific, Tang proposes that the *m*’s in (1) and (2) are the same *m*, except that *m* in (1) has *beh* ‘want’ in its underlying form and *beh* is obligatorily deleted on the surface. This explains the volitional meaning in (1), which is lacking in (2). In other words, the volitional meaning in (1) does not come from *m*, but from *beh* in the underlying structure. Then how do we know when *beh*

⁵ (9) is taken from Li (1971). Tang (1994), however, considers *ti chan* in (9) as a verbal phrase rather than a PP. Even so, *ti chan* with its verbal meaning ‘be on the farm’ is still not an action verb and unlike what Teng claims, it can co-occur with the volitional *m*.

⁶ PRT stands for particle.

is there and when it is not? Tang argues that it is determined by all sorts of factors including semantic features of the verb, the aspectual mode, agency and definiteness of the NP subject, etc. When the combination is right, *beh* is there in the sentence. Even pragmatic factors come into play to determine whether *beh* is available in the underlying structure.

Tang argues that the underlying element which is later obligatorily deleted is *beh*. That is, when *m* has the volitional meaning, *beh* is there in the underlying structure and the volitional meaning has to be ‘want to’. However, is this true? Let’s consider sentence (10).

- (10)a. li nasi m cau kah kin leh li to jiok be tioh gua.
 you if not run KAH fast PRT you then chase cannot up I
 ‘If you do not run faster, you cannot catch up with me.’
- b. *li nasi beh cau kah kin leh li to jiok e tioh gua.
 you if want run KAH fast PRT you then chase can up I
 *‘If you want to run faster, you can catch up with me.’
- c. li nasi cau kah kin leh li to jiok e tioh gua.
 you if run KAH fast PRT you then chase can up I
 ‘If you run faster, you can catch up with me.’

With *cau* ‘run’ being an actional verb, under Tang’s analysis *m* in (10a) should be construed as having the intentional meaning of *beh*. If so, its positive counterpart containing an overt *beh* should be (10b). (10b), however, is ungrammatical, which is unexpected and unaccounted for in Tang’s analysis. Since *beh* is obligatorily deleted only when it occurs with *m*, nothing prevents the occurrence of *beh* in (10b). Therefore, Tang’s analysis seems to be too limited in proposing the underlying volitional element to be *beh*, specifically.

Tang also states that *m* can only co-occur with actional verbs such as *lai* ‘come’ as in (1), but not with stative verbs such as *lausit* ‘honest’ as in (3).⁷ Tang does mention that *m lausit* is possible in a conditional such as (11).⁸ In addition, even though Tang argues that *m* cannot co-occur with process verbs such as *phua* ‘broken’, *hai* ‘damaged’, *si* ‘dead’, Tang shows that *m* followed by a process verb can be possible as shown in (12).⁹

⁷ Tang considers (3a) as an ungrammatical sentence when it occurs alone. Only when (3a) is part of a conditional as in (11) is it considered grammatical according to Tang.

⁸ (11) is taken from Tang (1994:123, footnote 7).

⁹ In (12) *m* occurs in a question form meaning “whether he wants to die or not”. (12) is also taken from Tang (1994:148, (41)).

- (11) *i na m (khing) lausit, to pik (hoo) i lausit.*
 he if not (willing) honest, then force (HOO) he honest
 ‘If he is not (willing to be) honest, force him to be honest.’
- (12) (i) *beh si m si si i e taici kah gua bo kuanhe.*
 (he) want die not-want die be he ASSOC¹⁰ matter with I not-have relation
 ‘Whether he wants to die or not is his own business. It has nothing to do with me.’

Tang gives a detailed description on what may or may not allow the occurrence of *m*, and singles out every exception. Descriptive adequacy is well achieved in Tang’s analysis. However, no further explanation is offered regarding facts such as why the sequence of *m* plus a stative verb can occur in conditionals such as (11) while in other cases, *m* cannot be followed by a stative verb. Also, Tang mentions that *m* normally does not occur with stative verbs but verbs such as *si* ‘be’, *cai-iann* ‘know’, *ho* ‘should’, *khing* ‘willing’, *kamguan* ‘willing’, etc. are exceptions. Even though these exceptional verbs do not fall under the same category, they do behave similarly. For instance, when in disjunctive questions made of positive verbs and negative verbs connected by *ahsi* ‘or’, what comes after the negative marker *m* cannot be omitted if the verb is one of the exceptional verbs mentioned above as shown in (13). In other cases, what comes after the volitional *m* can be omitted, as in (14). In addition, the non-volitional *m* cannot stand alone as an answer to a question as in (15b) while the volitional one can as in (16b).

- (13) a. *i si haksing ahsi m si haksing?*
 he be student or not be student
 ‘Is he a student or not?’
- b. **i si haksing ahsi m?*
 he be student or not
 ‘Is he a student or not?’
- (14) a. *i beh khi taipak ahsi m khi taipak?*
 he want go Taipei or not-want go Taipei
 ‘Does he want to go to Taipei or not?’
- b. *i beh khi taipak ahsi m?*
 he want go Taipei or not-want
 ‘Does he want to go to Taipei or not?’

¹⁰ ASSOC stands for associative. One of the functions of *e* is being an associative marker, which associates or connects two elements.

(15) li si m si haksing?

you be not be student

‘Are you a student?’

a. m si.

not be

‘I am not.’

b. *m.

not

‘Not.’

(16) li beh khi bo?

you want go PRT

‘Do you want to go?’

a. m khi.

not-want go

‘Do not want to go.’

b. m.

not-want

‘Do not want to.’

These behaviors are well explained under Tang’s analysis. Tang considers *m* a proclitic and it must attach to the following verb. Since the *m*’s in (13b) and (15b) are not followed by any verb, there is nothing for *m* to attach to and thus these two sentences are ungrammatical. On the other hand, the *m*’s in both (14) and (16) are volitional. That means they contain *beh* in the underlying structure and therefore the *m*’s in (14) and (16) do not stand alone; they attach to *beh*.

A-not-A questions are also mentioned in Tang. Only exceptional verbs such as *si* ‘be’, *cai-iann* ‘know’, *ho* ‘should’, *khing* ‘willing’, *kamguan* ‘willing’, etc. can form A-not-A questions as shown in (17) and (18). The exceptional verb *cai-iann* occurs in the form of A-not-A to form a question in (17), while other verbs such as *khi* ‘go’ can not occur in A-not-A form in (18). Tang, however, does not further talk about why only these exceptional verbs can occur in A-not-A questions and what could be the correlation between the status of *m* and the formation of A-not-A questions.

(17) li cai-iann m cai-iann i e mia?

you know not know he ASSOC name

‘Do you know his name?’

- (18) *li khi m khi taipak?
 you go not-want go Taipei
 ‘Do you want to go to Taipei?’

In addition, another type of question is not addressed by Tang. That is tag questions in the form of *A-m* as in (19-22).¹¹ What’s special about this type of question is that only those exceptional verbs can be used. As shown in (23), other verbs such as *lai* ‘come’ cannot form a tag question.

- (19) li beh khi khuann i, si m?
 you want go see he, be not
 ‘You want to see him, don’t you?’
- (20) lan mai koh siocenn, ho m?
 we not-want again argue, all-right not
 ‘Let’s not argue any more, all right?’
- (21) li si tiam cia tuahuan e, tioh m?
 you be at here grow-up PRT, right not
 ‘You grew up here, right?’
- (22) li ai lai, cai m?
 you must come, know not
 ‘You must come. Do you understand?’
- (23) *i beh lai, lai m?
 he want come, come not
 ‘He wants to come, doesn’t he?’

Therefore, the co-occurrence restrictions between verbs and questions involving the use of *m* as in *A-not-A* questions and tag questions still need further explanation.

¹¹ This type of question is different from so-called negative particle questions discussed in Cheng et al. (1996) in several aspects. For instance, in a negative particle question such as (i), a negative marker occurs at the end of the sentence but not necessarily right after a verb, while in the tag questions discussed here, *m* occurs right after a verb. Also, in a negative particle question such as (ii), when the negative marker happens to occur right after a verb, the verb does not have to be one of the exceptional verbs, while *m* in tag questions must occur right after one of the exceptional verbs.

- (i) i u tsiak beng bo?
 he have eat rice not-have
 ‘Did he eat?’ (Cheng et al. 1996:41 (3))
- (ii) li kio gua tngkhi ciah m?
 you ask I go-back eat PRT
 ‘You asked me to go back to eat, right?’

They are also different from sentence final particles as in (iii), where *m* does not have the negative or question meaning.

- (iii) in to ti hia siocenn m.
 they then at there argue PRT
 ‘They then were arguing over there.’

3. The analysis

As discussed in the section above, among all the previous analyses, Tang's (1994) is most comprehensive and descriptively adequate. However, his analysis still fails to explain several aspects of *m*. For instance, why can *m* co-occur with a stative verb in conditionals and why can the exceptional verbs but not the other verbs occur in the A-not-A form? This paper would like to further distinguish two *m*'s and claim that the non-volitional *m* attaches to the exceptional verbs in the lexicon while the volitional *m* results from the attachment of the non-volitional *m* to a modal in the syntax. That is, *m* becomes volitional only after its attachment to a modal in the syntax. Underneath there is only one simple negator *m*, while on the surface, *m* could be the simple *m* or *m*+modal.

3.1 Abstract modal in *m*

As discussed in Section 2, Tang (1994) argues that the volitional *m* contains *beh* in its underlying structure. However, as shown in (10), if we take the positive counterpart of *m* in (10a) to be *beh*, the resultant sentence (10b) is ungrammatical. As shown in (10c), the positive counterpart of *m* in (10a) is not overtly shown. Therefore, Tang's analysis is too restricted in proposing the underlying volitional element to be *beh*, specifically. Without a doubt, the volitional *m* contains the meaning of *beh* in some cases. However, it could not be that in all instances of the volitional *m*, *beh* is involved. This paper proposes that the volitional *m* contains a modal, which could be *beh* or something else abstract.¹² When *m* combines with *beh*, the merged phonetic form is *m*, just as when *m* combines with *u* 'have', the phonetic form is *bo* 'not have', or when *m* is followed by *e* 'can', the phonetic form is *beh* 'cannot', as shown in (24b).¹³

- (24) a. *m* + *beh* → *m*
 m + abstract modal → *m*

¹²One reviewer suggests that the semantics of the abstract modal should be made explicit. However, as discussed above, an explicit account such as Tang's which specifies the abstract modal to be *beh* is too restricted to explain conditionals such as (10). In addition, as will be discussed below, the abstract modal in habitual sentences may have the feature [+HAB], which has been proposed by Ernst (1995). Therefore, the semantics of the abstract modal is kept implicit here to encompass the various possibilities.

¹³That *bo*, *beh*, and *mai* all contain *m* in their underlying form is assumed by most linguists working on Taiwanese including Teng (1992) and Tang (1994).

b. m + u → bo
 m + e → beh
 m + ai → mai

The idea of an abstract modal is not so novel after all. Huang (1988) assumes such an abstract modal in his analysis for *bu*, a negative marker in Mandarin.¹⁴ *Bu* in Mandarin cannot co-occur with an aspect marker such as *le* as shown in (25). In addition, *bu* cannot be directly followed by the first verb of a descriptive/resultative construction as shown in (26) and (27). Huang suggests that the sequences [*bu* V *le*] and [*bu* descriptive/resultative construction] are ruled out for semantic reasons. That is, *bu* is first attached to V and then *le* attaches to the negated verb. Such a sequence [[*bu*-V]-*le*] is semantically absurd since the event that has not happened cannot be said to be completed. [*Bu* descriptive/resultative construction] is ruled out for similar semantic reasons.

- (25) *Zhangsan bu mai le shu.
 Zhangsan not buy ASP¹⁵ book
 ‘Zhangsan did not buy books.’
- (26) *Zhangsan bu zou de kuai. Descriptive
 Zhangsan not walk DE fast
 ‘Zhangsan does not walk fast.’
- (27) *Zhangsan bu zou de lei. Resultative
 Zhangsan not walk DE tired.
 ‘Zhangsan did not walk to the extent that he got tired.’

However, there are cases where the sequence [*bu* V descriptive/resultative construction] seems to be allowed as in (28).

- (28) ruguo ni bu zuo de kuai, ni jiu zhui-bu-shang wo. (cf. (26))
 if you not walk DE fast you then chase-not-up I
 ‘If you don’t walk fast, then you won’t catch up with me.’

To account for this type of data, Huang suggests that *bu* in (28) is supported by an abstract modal element in INFL rather than attaching to the verb directly and the

¹⁴ One reviewer points out that since this is not a paper on the comparison of Taiwanese and Mandarin negation, it seems more appropriate to move the discussion about Mandarin to the footnotes. However, in the literature, the idea of an abstract modal mainly comes from the discussion about Mandarin data. It is thus necessary to introduce the discussion about Mandarin in the main text before proceeding to the discussion about Taiwanese data.

¹⁵ ASP stands for aspect marker.

sequence $[[bu-M] [zuo\ de\dots]]$ is not semantically anomalous. Citing examples like (5), Huang also suggests that an abstract modal element in INFL might account for why *m* in Taiwanese as in (5b) can occur alone without being followed by a verb or auxiliary.

Providing support to account for the co-occurrence restrictions of *bu*, Ernst (1995) proposes that *bu*, as a clitic, must attach to the following word and it requires unbounded aspectual situations. Both $[V\ le]$ and $[V\ resultative\ clause]$ denote bounded situations and thus *bu* cannot co-occur with these sequences. As for the descriptive construction, Ernst argues that the manner adverbial is generated preverbally between *bu* and V and then moved to the postverbal position. The trace left by the adverbial blocks the cliticization of *bu* to V. The sequence of *bu* followed by a descriptive clause is thus ungrammatical. As shown in (29), bound by the duration phrase *ba ge xiaoshi* ‘eight hours’, *shui ba ge xiaoshi* ‘sleep for eight hours’ cannot co-occur with *bu* as in (29b). However, (30) seems to be a counterexample to this restriction. In (30) *bu* seems to co-occur with the bounded event denoted by *shui ba ge xiaoshi* ‘sleep for eight hours’. Ernst then proposes that the habitual in (30) is semantically stative as discussed in Smith (1991) and thus unbounded. The abstract feature $[+HAB]$ is proposed to be there in Asp to denote the habitual meaning as shown in (31). (Ernst 1995:698 (73))

- (29) a. ta shui ba ge xiaoshi.
 he sleep eight CL hour
 ‘He slept for eight hours.’
 b. *ta bu shui ba ge xiaoshi.
 he not sleep eight CL hour
 ‘He did not sleep for eight hours.’
- (30) ta yiban bu shui ba ge xiaoshi.
 he in-general not sleep eight CL hour
 ‘Generally he did not sleep for eight hours.’
- (31) NP bu $[_{Asp} [+HAB]]$ VP

M not only demonstrates the same co-occurrence restrictions as mentioned above for Mandarin *bu*, but *m* is even more restricted in its usage. As discussed in Tang (1994), *m* can only co-occur with actional verbs such as *lai* ‘come’ as in (1), but not with stative verbs such as *lausit* ‘honest’ as in (3), whose Mandarin counterpart *bu laoshi* ‘not honest’ is perfectly well-formed. Tang does mention that *m lausit* is possible in a conditional such as (11); however, no explanation is offered regarding this fact. Under the current proposal, (11) is well accounted for, if Huang’s (1988)

analysis for the negator *bu* in Mandarin is adopted; that is, in a conditional, the negator is followed by an abstract modal. As such, *m* in (11) is actually *m*+modal underlyingly; (11) is grammatical as *m* is immediately followed by a modal rather than directly attaching to a stative verb.

Huang's analysis for *bu* in Mandarin can apply to Taiwanese *m* nicely; however, it should be noted that *m* does differ from *bu* in that the former is much more restricted in its distribution. *M* has to be followed by an actional verb, copular verb, cognitive verb, or modal, while *bu* can be followed by a modal or any kind of verb, actional or stative.

3.2 Lexical vs. syntactic negation

Tang (1994) mentions that *m* normally is followed by actional verbs but not stative verbs. However, verbs such as *si* 'be', *cai-iann* 'know', *ho* 'should', *khing* 'willing', *kamguan* 'willing', etc. are exceptions.¹⁶ These exceptional verbs are highly limited. In addition, Tang mentions that these exceptional verbs have three things in common. First, when they occur in disjunctive questions, their occurrence after *m* cannot be omitted as shown in (13). Second, *m* before these exceptional verbs cannot stand alone as an answer as shown in (15). Third, they can occur in the A-not-A question form as shown in (17). The first two aspects have already been explained by Tang as discussed in Section 2, while more needs to be said about A-not-A questions involving *m*.

This paper would like to propose that *m*-exceptional verbs are formed in the lexicon. That is, *m-si*, *m-ho*, *m-cai-iann*, *m-khing*, *m-kamguan*, etc. are formed in the lexicon and inserted as a whole under an appropriate V node c-commanded by an NEG node. Since all these words contain *m*, it seems redundant to have all of them recorded in the lexicon. However, it should be noted that those exceptional words are highly limited and are not productive at all. Therefore, it is not redundant to list all the exceptional words in the lexicon. On the other hand, *m* alone can also be inserted under an NEG node in syntax. *M* in an NEG node is subcategorized for an MP headed by either *beh* or an abstract modal. The volitional *m* results from the attachment of a simple *m* to a modal in syntax.

Such a proposal distinguishing lexical from syntactic negation can account for when *m* can or cannot stand alone in disjunctive questions and answers to questions as discussed in Tang in the following way. *M* as a bound morpheme must attach to a following element. In the disjunctive question in (13b), *m* stands alone and thus

¹⁶ There is no agreement on whether modals, such as *ho* 'should', *khing* 'willing', *kamguan* 'willing', are verbs or not. However, this will not affect what this paper would like to propose; therefore, this paper will adopt Lin and Tang's (1995) view that modals are verbs.

results in an ungrammatical sentence. On the other hand, *m* in (14b) contains an abstract modal, which means *m* does attach to a following element, and thus (14b) is a well-formed sentence. Along the same lines of argument, *m* in (15b), as a bound morpheme, does not attach to a following element and thus results in an ungrammatical sentence, while *m* in (16b) attaches to a following abstract modal. The lexical vs. syntactic analysis proposed here can further account for the formation of A-not-A questions, which is left unexplained in Tang. The following subsections will then focus on the discussion of A-not-A questions.

3.2.1 A-not-A questions in Mandarin

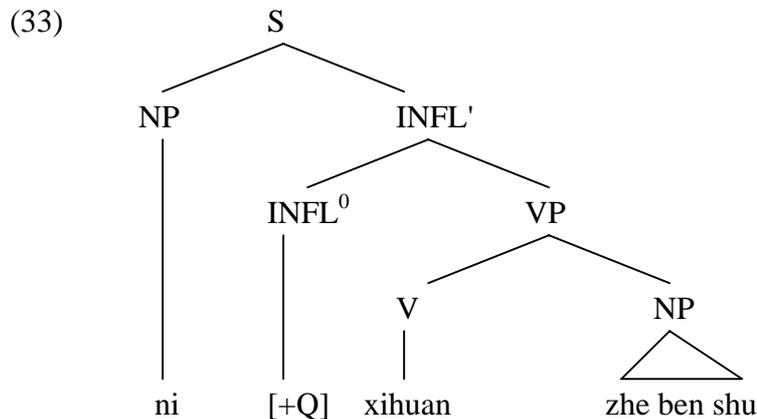
There have been many proposals on how A-not-A questions in Mandarin are formed. The traditional proposal by scholars such as Wang (1967) is to say that A-not-A questions are formed through conjoining of positive elements and negative elements and then deletion of part of the identical elements. For instance, in the Mandarin example (32a), *xihuan zhe ben shu* ‘like this book’ and *bu xihuan zhe ben shu* ‘do not like this book’ are conjoined. (32b) is derived after backward deletion applies to the first instance of *zhe ben shu* ‘this book’, and (32c) is derived if forward deletion applies to the second instance of *zhe ben shu*. (32d) is derived after the first instance of *huan* is further deleted after the formation of (32b).

- (32) a. ni xihuan zhe ben shu bu xihuan zhe ben shu?
 you like this CL book not like this CL book
 ‘Do you like this book or not?’
- b. ni xihuan bu xihuan zhe ben shu?
 you like not like this CL book
 ‘Do you like this book or not?’
- c. ni xihuan zhe ben shu bu xihuan?
 you like this CL book not like
 ‘Do you like this book or not?’
- d. ni xi bu xihuan zhe ben shu?
 you like not like this CL book
 ‘Do you like this book or not?’

Huang (1991), however, points out at least five problems with such an analysis,¹⁷ and

¹⁷ Since those problems are not related to the discussion here, please see Huang (1991) for the discussion of the problems.

he instead takes a modular approach to A-not-A questions. Huang further separates A-not-A questions into the [A not AB] type as in (32a), (32b), (32d), and the [AB not A] type as in (32c) and proposes that these two types of A-not-A questions are derived in different ways. The [A not AB] type of question has a D-structure as that in (33). (Huang 1991:316 (44))



The phonetic realization of the [+Q] feature in INFL is through a reduplication rule, which copies part or whole of the sequence immediately following INFL and inserts the negator *bu* ‘not’ between the copy and the original. If the whole sequence is copied, the derived A-not-A question is something like (32a). If only the verb *xihuan* ‘like’ is copied, the result is (32b), and (32d) is formed when only the first syllable is copied. As for the [AB not A] type as that in (32c), it is derived from a D-structure with a coordinate VP form like [[AB] [not AB]],¹⁸ and the second occurrence of B undergoes a process of anaphoric ellipsis.

Kuo (1992) basically agrees with Huang in assuming that the [A not AB] type of question is derived through a phonetic reduplication rule. Kuo, however, differs from Huang in that he argues that the [+Q] feature is located under NEG rather than INFL.

As discussed in Tang (2000), He (1996) proposes that *A-bu* ‘A-not’ is stored as an item in the lexicon and inserted under an appropriate node in syntax. Tang, however, contends that such an analysis is not economical since all the *A-bu* items will have to be recorded in the lexicon despite the fact that they all contain the morpheme *bu*. Regardless of the problems his analysis might have when accounting for A-not-A questions in Mandarin, this paper proposes that such a lexical analysis accounts for A-not-A questions in Taiwanese nicely.

¹⁸ Huang argues that (32a) can also be derived from such a coordinative VP.

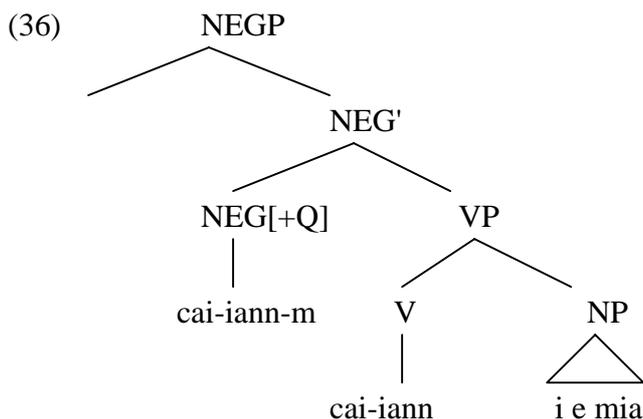
3.2.2 A-not-A questions in Taiwanese

As discussed above, verbs such as *si* ‘be’, *cai-iann* ‘know’, *ho* ‘should’, *khing* ‘willing’, *kamguan* ‘willing’, etc. are exceptional in the sense they are the only non-actional verbs that can be immediately preceded by *m*. Since these verbs are not a natural class and they need to be memorized, it is not surprising that their *m*-A forms, such as *m-si*, *m-ho*, *m-cai-iann*, are all recorded in the lexicon. In addition, A-not-A questions in Taiwanese are restricted to these exceptional verbs as in (17) and (18). As shown in (19-22), these exceptional verbs are also those that can occur in the tag question form. As such, it is also argued that their A-*m* forms, such as *si-m*, *ho-m*, *cai-iann-m*, *khing-m*, *kamguan-m*, are stored in the lexicon. The next question is then where A-*m* and *m*-A are inserted in syntax, respectively. As the rightmost element is often the head of the derived word, *m* in A-*m* is the head. Since other than the negative feature, *m* is often interrogative and occurs in a negative particle question as shown in (34) and (35) (Cheng et al. 1996), A-*m* thus also has the interrogative feature. Therefore, A-*m* is inserted under an appropriate node bearing the interrogative feature as shown in (36),¹⁹ which has the [+Q] feature under the NEG node as Kuo (1992) argues.²⁰

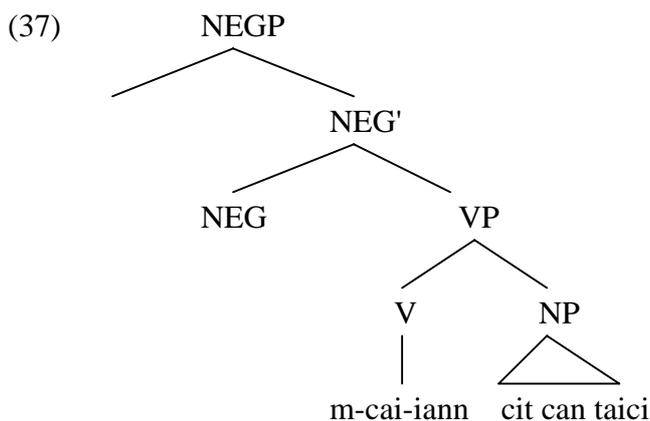
- (34) li kio gua tngkhi chu ciah m?
 you ask I go-back home eat PRT
 ‘You asked me to go back home to eat, right?’
- (35) chu hoo lang sio khi a m?
 house HOO people burn go ASP PRT
 ‘The house was burn down, right?’

¹⁹ (36) is the D-structure of an A-not-A question such as (17).

²⁰ One reviewer points out that since not all A-not-A questions involve the sequence A-*m* as in the [AB not A] type this analysis will not be able to account for all the types of A-not-A questions in a consistent way. However, it should be noted that A-not-A questions are not a homogeneous group. It is necessary to divide them into different groups and find an appropriate analysis for each group. That is why Huang (1991) takes a modular approach toward A-not-A questions as discussed in subsection 3.2.1. The lexical A-*m* account proposed here does not apply to the [AB not A] type, since this type is derived from a different D-structure, one with a base-generated coordinate VP form as proposed by Huang.



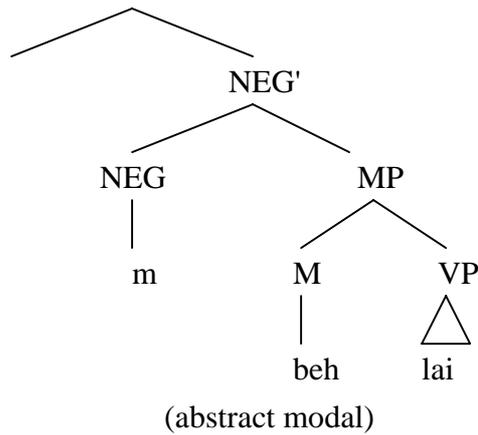
As for *m-A*, it is headed by A and thus has the same category as A. Note that *m-A* is not just inserted under any node that is suitable for A. It has to be a node subcategorized for by an NEG node so that the [+NEG] feature of *m-A* can be checked by the NEG node as illustrated in (37), assuming Chomsky's (1993) feature checking theory.²¹ (37) is then the D-structure of a negative sentence involving one of the exceptional verbs such as (2).



As for the formation of regular negative sentences, *m*, inserted alone under an NEG node, is subcategorized for an MP headed by either *beh* or an abstract modal as shown in (38), which is the D-structure of a regular negative sentence such as (1).



²¹ As for where the feature checking takes place, there are in general two options. As Pollock (1989) proposes to be the case for checking off the V-features of Agr in English and French, feature checking takes place either before spell-out or at LF. For French, the checking takes place before spell-out because as Chomsky (1993) puts it, the V-features of Agr in French are strong and thus have to be checked off before spell-out; otherwise, the derivation will crash. Therefore, V moves overtly to Agr to check off the features. On the contrary, the V-features of Agr are weak in English and they are invisible, which will not cause the derivation to crash. The checking of the features is postponed until LF because it is cheaper to move at LF than to move overtly, following the principle "Procrastinate". In the case in question, however, there is no evidence indicating whether the movement of *m-V* from V to NEG for checking the [+NEG] feature takes place before spell-out or is postponed until LF. Either way, the derived sentence is the same. Therefore, further study on this aspect is still needed.

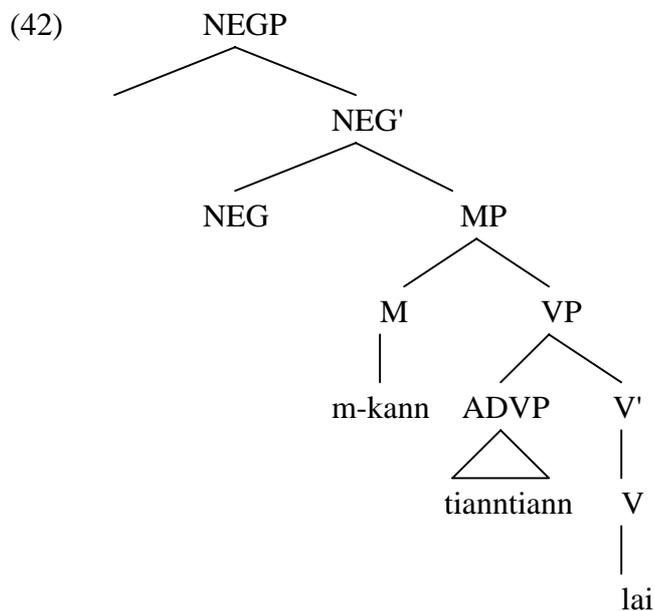
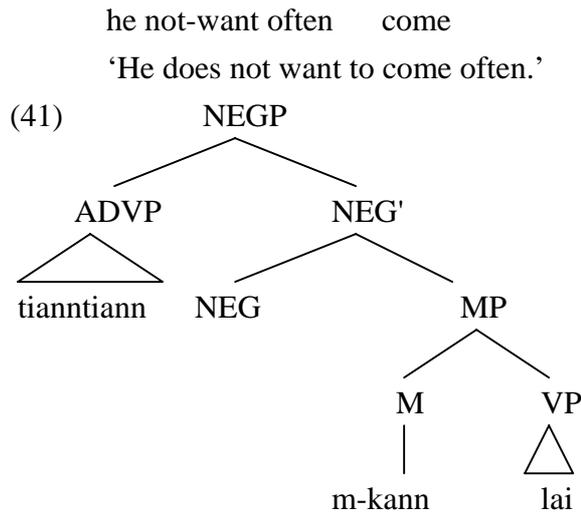


The phonetic form of *m* attached to *beh* or an abstract modal is still *m*. Without any change of the phonetic form, *m* now has the meaning of *beh* or other modals. That explains why *m* in sentences like (1) has a volitional meaning.

3.2.3 Scope of negation

Now that this paper has proposed two types of negation, lexical negation and syntactic negation, the question that follows is whether these two types of negation demonstrate different scopes of negation. The answer is no. As the two structures in (37) and (38) demonstrate, they are exactly the same in the sense that NEG has scope over the following MP or VP. They differ only at the lexical insertion. That is, whether *m* is inserted under the NEG node alone or *m* plus an exceptional verb is inserted under a V node. In both cases, the NEG node has scope over what follows. Therefore, as shown in (39) and (40) these two types of negation both have scope over the adverb only when the adverb follows the negator as in (b), but not when the adverb precedes the negator as in (a). (41) is proposed to be the structure of (39a), while the structure of (39b) is as shown in (42).

- (39) a. i tianntiann m kann lai.
 he often not dare come
 ‘He often does not dare to come.’
 b. i m kann tianntiann lai.
 he not dare often come
 ‘He does not dare to come very often.’
- (40)a. i tianntiann m lai.
 he often not-want come
 ‘He often does not want to come.’
 b. i m tianntiann lai.



Another piece of evidence for the proposal that lexical negation has the same scope of negation as syntactic negation comes from so-called negative polarity items. Both types of negation can co-occur with negative polarity items such as *jimho* 'any' as shown in (43) and (44). In addition, lexical negation differs from inherently negative verbs such as *huantui* 'oppose', which cannot co-occur with the negative polarity item as shown in (45).

(43)i m cai-iann jimho taici.
 he not know any matter
 'He does not know anything.'

(44)i m ciah jimho mihkiann.

he not-want eat any thing

‘He does not want to eat anything.’

(45) *i huantui jimho taici.

he oppose any matter

*‘He opposes any matter.’

Co-occurrence with negative polarity items thus further proves that lexical negation is close to syntactic negation rather than inherently negative words.

4. Conclusion

In the literature there has long been discussion on whether there is only one *m* or two different *m*'s, volitional *m* and simple *m*, in Taiwanese. Regarding this question, this paper has proposed an analysis which distinguishes lexical from syntactic negation. Under the current proposal, while on the surface there seem to be two different *m*'s, underlyingly there is only one *m*, the simple negator.

This proposal differs from Teng's (1992) analysis which also proposes only one *m* in that this proposal is very specific about where the volitional meaning comes from. It is from the abstract modal *m* attaches to. However, this proposal is not as limited as Tang's (1994), which states that the modal has to be *beh*, specifically. The idea of an abstract modal as argued for in this paper further accounts for the occurrence of *m* plus stative verbs in conditionals, which is left unexplained in Tang (1994). In addition, the current lexical vs. syntactic analysis offers an explanation as to why only exceptional verbs can occur in A-not-A questions and tag questions, which are also unaccounted for in previous analyses.

The present analysis, which distinguishes lexical from syntactic negation, not only covers phenomena discussed in previous analyses but also offers an explanation for aspects unaccounted for. Therefore, the current proposal is much more comprehensive and explanatorily adequate.

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臺灣話中的構詞否定相對於句法否定

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臺灣話的否定詞 *m* 有意願否定及簡單否定兩種語意，本文所要探討的問題便是：臺灣話究竟有一個或兩個不同的否定詞 *m*。本文以為雖然表面上似乎有兩個不同的 *m*，但在深層結構僅有一簡單 *m* 存在。此一簡單 *m* 於詞庫中附著於例外動詞上，整個 [*m*-例外動詞] 並於句法層面加在動詞節之下。*m* 亦可單獨加在 NEG 節之下，而此 NEG 節必須次類劃分以 *beh*「要」或其他抽象情態詞為主要語的 MP。*m* 附著於 *beh* 或其他抽象情態詞之後的語音形式還是 *m*，但已增加額外的意願語意。本分析方法區分構詞否定與句法否定，因而可進一步解釋 *m* 的共現限制，以及解釋為何簡單 *m* 不可單獨出現而意願 *m* 卻可以，並且掌握了 [*m*-例外動詞] 的一些例外行為。

關鍵詞：臺灣話、否定、正反問句、選擇問句、附加問句