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▶ Excising Tags: Distinguishing between Interrogative SFPs and Tag Questions in Taiwanese

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doi:10.6519/TJL.2010.8(1).1

Taiwan Journal of Linguistics, 8(1), 2010

臺灣語言學期刊, 8(1), 2010

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頁數/Page: 1-27

出版日期/Publication Date: 2010/06

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**EXCISING TAGS: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN
INTERROGATIVE SFPs AND TAG QUESTIONS IN TAIWANESE***

Seng-Hian Lau

ABSTRACT

This paper serves as an investigation into the differences between interrogative sentence-final particles (SFPs) and tag questions (tags) in Taiwanese. What we are concerned with is the discrepancies found among the lists of interrogative SFPs in the literature. To distinguish tags from the interrogative particles (PRTs), a testing procedure is devised based on the proposal for testing negative particles (NEG-PRTs) in Hsieh (2001). We conclude that *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, *m*, *honn*, *m̄*, *ma*, *nih* are interrogative SFPs and *hiò*, *m-me(me)*, *sī-bô*, *sī-m̄* (*s̄m*) and *sioh* are tag questions. Among the interrogative SFPs, *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, and *m* are negative-particles which occur under IP, *honn*, *m̄*, *ma*, and *nih* are particles which perch higher, under CP. We believe that distinguishing SFPs from tags is the foundation of a solid investigation into SFPs.

Key words: Taiwanese, SFP, tag

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended as an investigation of the difference between interrogative sentence-final particles (SFPs) and tag questions (tags) in Taiwanese. What we are concerned with is the discrepancy found among the lists of interrogative SFPs in the literature. To distinguish tags from interrogative particles (PRTs), a testing procedure was devised based on the proposal for testing negative particles (NEG-PRTs) in Hsieh (2001).

* Many thanks to the two anonymous reviewers for their comments. I am also grateful to Su-ú Tân, Jui-ying Chen, and Li-Chi Elvis Yang who provided useful suggestions.

2. TAIWANESE SFPS IN THE LITERATURE

Few studies have been done on SFPS in Taiwanese. Researchers not only have no consensus on what would be included in a list of SFPS, but also disagree with each other on the definition and usage of each of them. We also noticed that some discrepancies in the representation of pronunciation (especially with tone) are found among researchers. These differences are not caused by dialectal variations, but are rather due to the failure to appreciate the neutralized tone phenomenon of the SFPS. And we have to admit that it is sometimes a tough task to identify the exact original tone of a specific SFP.

To simplify the present discussion, we will ignore some tonal differences and consolidate some of the items that appear differently in the literature.¹ Consolidation, however, should not be taken to mean that we deny that tonal differences contribute to semantic nuances. In fact, we think that it is possible for a tonal difference to mark one PRT from another one. As we know, most of the research on Cantonese SFPS takes particles that are merely distinct by tone as different lexical items (among others, Sybesma and Li 2007; Law, Y. 2004; Law, A. 2002, Fung 2000).² Since we will not go into the details of each SFP, consolidation is employed only as a convenience to cope with the high degree of divergence in the literature.

3. SFPS AND THE QUESTION TAGS

3.1 SFPS

Just as the literal sense of the term indicates, sentence-final particles are those that occur at the end of a sentence or an utterance. They are all functional words. As B. Li (2006: 1) observes, most of them do not have a denotative or referential meaning, but are mainly used to convey emotive and/or epistemic nuances within a particular discourse context.

Consequently, these particles are semantically regarded as elusive (Li and Thompson 1981: 238). Scholars have mainly taken two different

¹ Readers may retrieve the original papers / theses / dissertations from the source noted in (11) and in the references.

² We believe that this is one of the reasons why examples of Cantonese SFPS greatly outnumber Taiwanese ones in the literature.

approaches to the study of SFPs. Some of them have studied the use of each SFP in different contexts to list an array of meanings for each of them (e.g., Chao 1968), and others have attempted to extract general, context-free semantic functions (among others, Li and Thompson 1981, Hu 1981, Chu 1998, B. Li 2006).

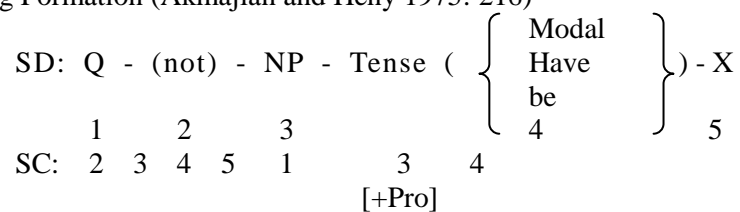
Apart from the semantics, we find that the syntax of SFPs in Sinitic languages has attracted relatively little attention. And it is not surprising that instances of the syntactic study of SFPs in Taiwanese are even scarcer (see Cheng 1997, Lien 1988, Chen 1989, 1993). However, the lack of attention does not mean that the syntax of SFPs is trivial. In fact, their specific syntactic positions and their interactions with other syntactic elements in a split-CP and split-IP theoretical background may help us elucidate the phenomena in the syntactic periphery.

3.2 Tags

Li and Thompson (1981: 546) define tag questions in Mandarin as the addition of a short A-not-A question form of certain verbs as a tag to a statement. They also claim that tag questions are functionally different from other types of Mandarin questions in that they serve to seek confirmation of the statement that occurs before the tag.

Likewise, C. Li (1998) also claims that English tag questions are those, usually in the form of yes-no questions, attached to the end of an indicative clause. In their introduction to transformational syntax, Akmajian and Heny (1975) discuss English tag questions in detail. The rule of tag formation in English is given below:³

(1) Tag Formation (Akmajian and Heny 1975: 216)



³ Among others, Quirk et al. (1985) also propose five rules for forming the most common type of tag questions and the restraints on them. Due to space and time constraints, we are unable to perform an overall survey of the literature on tags.

The derivation is from SD (structural description) to SC (structural change). “Q” indicates “Question,” which would obligatorily trigger the application of the Question rule to produce the inverted word order. The feature [+Pro] to the copied subject—i.e., term 3 in the SC—designates that the copied subject must appear in its corresponding pronoun form.

According to Akmajian and Heny (1975: 263), tags may occur in an imperative sentence, too:

- (2) a. Tense - will - you - leave the room
b. leave the room - Tense - will - you
Leave the room, will you.

Although the surface form is identical, Akmajian and Heny (1975) suggest that the tag formation rule plays no role in (2). Since a question can, in fact, be used as an imperative sentence, they claim that the imperative sentence is derived from a question with a rule of VP Fronting. It is the fronting rule that moves the VP to the initial position and leaves “will you” behind.

Lastly, tag formation transformation differs in that it belongs to the last-cyclic rules. Akmajian and Heny (1975: 369-70) assume that rules apply cyclically—that is to say, rules apply in linear order in each cycle. Their claim implies that any of the transformations may apply in any cycle. But the tag, among others, must not be allowed to apply to embedded sentences, but may apply only on the highest cycle.

Controversies are found in regard to the details of analyzing tags. For instance, there is no consensus about the grammaticality of uninverted tag questions (unnegated tag questions when the main clause is also unnegated and vice versa).⁴ And we can find no common syntactic analysis of tag questions.

3.3 Between SFPs and Tags

SFPs are supposed to be part of the sentence, but we found that some of the items in the literature are plausible as tags. It is reasonable to exclude tags from the investigation of SFPs, since tags are merely attached to a sentence, but are not actually part of it (in the sense of

⁴ Readers may refer to Hintikka (1982) and the references in it.

being c-commanded by an identical C head).⁵ However, it is not always easy to tell a tag from an SFP. On the one hand, researchers disagree on definitions and categorizations of tags (tag questions; question tags; interrogative tags).⁶ On the other hand, it is not always easy to recognize a pause between the main clause and the attached tag. It seems that we cannot depend on our intuition to distinguish tags from SFPs.

In Hsieh (2001), a series of tests are devised to detect tags from NEG-PRTs. Hsieh points out that in Mandarin, when *dàodǐ* is present in the sentence, a question word has to be c-commanded by *dàodǐ*. The NEG-PRT, as a question word, does not occur as high as C^0 since the NEG-PRT is lower than *dàodǐ* and c-commanded by it (The following example is from Hsieh 2001: 100 [18].):

- (3) 你 到底 給了 他 錢 沒有?
 Ni daodi gei-le ta qian meiyou?
 you indeed give-ASP he money not.have
 “Did you indeed give him the money?”

Hsieh (2001) holds that in the sentence above, the NEG-PRT *meiyou* must be lower than C^0 . To bolster her claim, Hsieh also refutes the possibility that *dàodǐ* occurs in a position higher than the C^0 , and the NEG-PRT does occupy the C^0 position. She argues that if that is so, then the NP preceding *dàodǐ* would be forced to take a position as high as [Spec, CP]⁷. This is not a welcome consequence because such a position is usually considered to contain topic phrases or focused elements (Hsieh 2001: 101).⁸

⁵ Since we find the subject and verb agreeing between a main clause and its tag, it is possible to conjecture that tags are connected to the main clause in some way. The most extreme speculation would be that tags are actually a part of the whole sentence. Nonetheless, it is evident that the derivation and syntactic positions between tags and SFPs are very different.

⁶ Readers may refer to McGregor (1995), K.K.Y. Cheng (1995), Pilch (1986), and the references in them.

⁷ The specifier of CP (componentizer projection).

⁸ Since Sinitic languages are topic-prominent languages (among others, Tsao 1979), we do not deny that the NPs and even adverb(ial)s may be topicalized and moved to a relatively high position.

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In a similar fashion, Hsieh (2001) employs the Taiwanese cognate of *dàodǐ*, *tàu-té*⁹ to sift the tags out of the real NEG-PRTs. By this test, *m̄*, *sī--bô* and *sī-m̄* are all ruled out from the list of NEG-PRTs (the sentences below are from Hsieh 2001: 163 [37]; 2001: 165 [43].):

(4) a. *你 到底 食飯--矣, 毋 ? (Southern Min)
Lí tàu-té tsiáh-pá--a, mm¹⁰?
you eat-full ASP not
“Have you indeed eaten, haven't you?”

b. *你 到底 是 學生, 是無 ? (Southern Min)
Lí tàu-té sī hák-sing, sī--bô?
you indeed be student be-not.have
“Are you indeed a student?”

c. *伊 到底 是 學生, 是毋 ? (Southern Min)
I tàu-té sī hák-sing, sī--bô?
he indeed be student be-not
“Is he indeed a student?”

In addition to the test of co-occurrence with *tàu-té*, Hsieh (2001) also brings up a second contrast between tags and real NEG-PRTs. She points out that tags, like *m̄*, *sī-m̄* and *sī--bô*, cannot occur in an embedded clause

⁹ In Taiwanese, there is usually more than one pronunciation for each Sinograph. The same two sinographs of *tàu-té* are also pronounced in the oral pronunciation system as *kàu-té*, which is used quite differently (refer to 1931-2, edited by Ogawa Naoyoshi. *Tai-Ni Dai Jiten* ‘A Comprehensive Taiwanese–Japanese Dictionary’ The Office of the Governor-General of Taiwan). The employment of the literary pronunciation system for a word commonly indicates that it is historically new. On the other hand, this word is not found in the dictionaries of other Southern Min dialects, e.g. Amoy (Xiamen), Quangzhou and Zhangzhou (see 2006, edited by Zhou, Chang-Ji et al. *Minnan Fangyan Da Cidian*. Fujian People’s Publishing House and 2007 *Minnanhua Zhangqiang Cidian*. Zhonghua Book Company) Last but not least, this word is pronounced in various ways in Taiwan—e.g., *tàu-té*, *tàu-tí* or *tāu-té*. All the facts suggest that *tàu-té* is not in the inherent Southern Min vocabulary. The variant pronunciations suggest that it is new in Taiwanese and thus, conjecturally, a loanword from Mandarin.

¹⁰ *Mm* is used in Hsieh (2001) to denote *m̄* with a mid-level prolonged tone. Another *m̄*, pronounced in a neutralized tone, is recognized as a real particle. We follow Hsieh’s notation of these two items.

as the real NEG-PRTs do (2001: 163-4).¹¹ Lastly, Hsieh (2001: 164-5) indicates that, unlike a yes/no question that is used for genuine requests for information, a tag question is used for the confirmation of the truth of the proposition denoted by the clause preceding the tag question. Therefore, we can tell a tag from its tendency to expect an answer consistent with the sentence preceding it.¹²

However, in light of Rizzi's (1997, 1999) and Cinque's (1999) works on the left periphery, a split-CP¹³ and split-IP¹⁴ structure may accommodate *dàodǐ* / *tàu-té* and SFPs in a different way. Not only are there more positions under CP, but the IP left periphery also provides another possible space for a different analysis.

In the relevant research concerning *dàodǐ*, *what the hell*¹⁵/*dàodǐ* is analyzed variously as an “aggressively non-D(iscourse)-linked” *wh*-phrase (Pesetsky 1987), an emphasizer for the interrogative force of *wh*-phrases (Kuo 1997), an adverb occurring in a preverbal or pre-IP adjunct position (Huang and Ochi 2004), and a complement of the perspective phrase in the left periphery hosting a perspective operator (Chou 2005). Based on these studies, it seems proper to position *dàodǐ*/*tàu-té* in the left periphery of IP, which is elaborated by Cinque (1999).

If we are on the right track, then we may not eliminate the possibility that some SFPs sit under C^0 , though we agree to Hsieh's view that some NEG-PRTs are lower than C^0 . Due to the multiplied positions in the left periphery, the validity of identifying a tag from its failing to co-occur with *dàodǐ*/*tàu-té* is limited.

For this reason, Hsieh's (2001) other proposal of testing the compatibility of the seeming PRT within an embedded clause seems more attractive. However, it would be too hasty to judge an item that

¹¹ The examples Hsieh (2001) gives are all parenthetical expressions. McCawley (1994) discusses the issue of the specific features of embedded clauses in parenthetical expressions.

¹² Hsieh (2001) does not apply the two tests in detail on *sī--bô* and *sī--m̄*, and we will not go through them step by step.

¹³ Refer to Rizzi (1997, 1999).

¹⁴ Refer to Cinque (1999).

¹⁵ Translated as ‘indeed’ in Hsieh (2001).

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fails to occur in an embedded clause to be a tag¹⁶. See the following examples in Mandarin:

- (5) a. *你 覺得 [快 起來 吧!] (Mandarin)
 Ni juede [kuai qilai ba!]
 you think [quickly get-up PRT]
 (Intended reading) “You think: ‘Get up quickly!’”
- b. *你 覺得 [他 走 了 呀!] (Mandarin)
 Ni juede [ta zou le ya!]
 you think [he go Asp PRT]
 (Intended reading) “You think: ‘(out of your expectation that) He has left!’”
- c. 你 覺得 [他 會 來 嗎, 張三?] ¹⁷ (Mandarin)
 Ni juede [ta hui lai ma, Zhongsan?]
 you think [he will come PRT Zhongsan?]
 “Do you think that Zhongsan will come?”
- d. *你 覺得 [他 怎麼 可能 會 來?] (Mandarin)
 Ni juede [ta zeme keneng hui lai ?]
 you think [he how-come come?]
 (Intended reading) “Do you think: ‘How come he will come?’”

There is no doubt that *ba*, *ya*, and *ma* in the embedded clauses in (5) are SFPs, but in a parenthetical expression, only the interrogative connotation (e.g., 5c) can have a matrix scope. Neither the imperative (5a) nor the exclamative (5b) can. Moreover, a rhetorical question like the embedded one in (5d) would also be blocked to obtain a matrix scope. In other words, the test would work only among pure interrogative particles. And it would wrongly exclude certain complex ones that are

¹⁶ Some researchers recognize tag statements and others tag forms, in addition to tag questions. We do not adopt this view here. Readers may find these forms in McGregor (1995) among others.

¹⁷ The right dislocation in the subordinate clause is intended as a delimitator to pinpoint the SFP *ma* in the embedded clause.

interrogative, but that also contain other semantic connotations—e.g., rhetorical mood. For this reason we shall not take it as a valid test.

Negative question particles have been studied by many researchers, such as Cheng, Huang, and Tang (1996), Hsieh (2001), and R. R. Huang (2008). Although we think that the test proposed in Hsieh (2001) has room for improvement, we reckon, following Hsieh (2001) and R. R. Huang (2008), that these NEG-PRTs are formed by deleting the second VP of a VP-not-VP structure. And this argument is supported by the co-occurrence test with *tàu-té* devised by Hsieh, for they are supposed to be under IP.

3.4 A Proposal to Revise the Test

In order to sift tags out from SFPs, we suggest, in the first place, checking whether a candidate for an SFP expresses interrogative meaning independently. The ones with a positive answer are candidates for interrogative particles.

To tell tags from NEG-PRTs, first we check whether they are under IP or not. The NEG-PRTs compatible only with a positive sentence but not with a negative sentence, in other words, respecting the A-not-A order, are the ones that are possible candidates for particles under IP. We then test them in a sentence in which *tàu-té* is present. The ones that cause the sentence with *tàu-té* to be ungrammatical are tags, and not real SFPs.

Hitherto, only the candidates of interrogative particles that are not under IP are left and need to be examined. These items are presumed to base-generate in a position higher than *tàu-té*, and therefore they are not c-commanded by it. Owing to their not being derived from VP-not-VP and carrying a strong [+Q] feature, we propose to test their compatibility with *kám*. Based on our arguments that *kám* is an interrogative in the CP domain carrying a strong [+Q] feature¹⁸, a co-occurrence of another item with the same strong [+Q] feature would result in their competing for feature checking under IntP¹⁹ at LF which would cause the derivation to crash.²⁰

¹⁸ Please refer to the argumentation in my thesis (forthcoming). In short, *kám* is located in a position higher than the boundary of the IP left periphery (Cinque 1999).

¹⁹ Interrogative Projection in Rizzi (1999).

²⁰ We adopt the multiple-specifier-hypothesis in Chomsky (1995) for TopP. Since this hypothesis is motivated by the observation of multiple subjects in topic-prominent

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Nonetheless we should not neglect the interference from the agreeing condition between tags and their stems in operation of one test. When tags are composed of auxiliaries or verbs, they do, in some way, conform to the pattern employed by their stems. See the major types of tags in English, especially the examples (from McGregor 1995:94, Table I):

(6)

| Mood of stem | Polarity | Example |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Indicative | Reverse, + – | You're going aren't you |
| | Reverse, – + | You aren't going are you |
| | Same, ++ | You're going are you |
| | Same, – – | You aren't going aren't you |
| Interrogative | Same, ++ | Are you going are you |
| Imperative | Reverse, + – | Come here won't you |
| | Reverse, – + | Don't come here will you |
| | Same, ++ | Come here will you |
| | Same, – – | Don't come here won't you |
| Exclamative | Reverse, + – | What a bank balance, isn't it |

As the examples above indicate, it seems that the verbs/auxiliaries adopted by the tags are the ones used (or that should be used) in their stems. Exceptions are found only in the imperative mood, but this is not surprising, for this gap is caused by the adoption of the infinitive to express the imperative in English.

The same requirement is observed in Taiwanese, too.

- (7) a. 你 會 去 台北 開會, 會--無 ? (Taiwanese)
 Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khai-huē, ē--bô?
 you will go Taipei attend-meeting will not
 "You will go to Taipei to attend the meeting, won't you?"

languages (e.g., Japanese, Korean, Mandarin), we will not assume a cross-phrase phenomenon of multiple specifier positions. And, as a result, we do not claim multiple feature checking other than [+topic]. Readers interested in this issue may refer to Ura (1996) and Doron and Heycock (1999), and to the references in them.

- b. *你 會 去 台北 開會， 欲--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khui-huē, beh--bô?
 you will go Taipei attend-meeting want not
 (Intended reading) “You will go to Taipei to attend the meeting.
 Do you want to go?”
- c. 你 是 阿明 的 學生， 是(著)--無²¹？(Taiwanese)
 Lí sī A-bîng ê hák-sing, sī (tiòh)--bô?
 you be A-bing DE student be (right) not?
 “You are a student of A-bing, aren’t you (am I right)?”
- d. *你 是 阿明 的 學生， 會--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí sī A-bîng ê hák-sing, ē--bô?
 you be A-bing DE student will not?
 (Intended reading) “You are a student of A-bing. Will you
 become his student?”
- e. 你 欲 做伙 食飯， 欲--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-pîng, beh--bô?
 you want together have-meal want not
 “You want to have meal together, don’t you?”
- f. *你 欲 做伙 食飯， 會--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-pîng, ē--bô?
 you want together have-meal will not
 (Intended reading) “You want to have meal together. Can you
 come?”

Tags with stems employing auxiliaries like *ē*, *beh*, and copula *sī* basically follow the verbal adoption. However, the copula *sī* and the adjective *tiòh*, used to confirm the stem, may be used rather extensively. For example:

²¹ Here we exemplify *sī--bô* among the tags. However, this does not mean that we have a preconception of that *sī--bô* should be taken merely as a tag. Since this item is found in the list of SFPs in the literature, we will test it just like the other candidates later.

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- (8) a. 你 會 去 台北 開會， 是--無？(Taiwanese)
Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khui-huē, sī--bô?
you will go Taipei attend-meeting be not
“You will go to Taipei to attend the meeting. Isn’t it the case?”
- b. 你 會 去 台北 開會， 著--無？(Taiwanese)
Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khui-huē, tiòh--bô?
you will go Taipei attend-meeting right not
“You will go to Taipei to attend the meeting. Am I right?”
- c. 你 欲 做伙 食飯， 是--無？(Taiwanese)
Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-p̄ng, sī--bô?
you want together have-meal be not
“You want to have a meal together. Isn’t it the case?”
- d. 你 欲 做伙 食飯， 著--無？(Taiwanese)
Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-p̄ng, tiòh--bô?
you want together have-meal right not
“You want to have a meal together. Am I right?”

Although the sentences in (8) exemplify the rather extensive usage of these two items, there are some circumstances in which *sī* and *tiòh* do not work in making a tag.

- (9) a. *你 會 去 台北 開會--袂？ 是--無？
Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khui-huē--bē? Sī--bô?
you will go Taipei attend-meeting not-will be not
(Taiwanese)
(Intended reading) “Will you go to Taipei to attend the meeting?
Isn’t it the case?”

- b. 你 會 去 台北 開會--袂? 會--無?
 Lí ē khì Tâi-pak khui-huē--bē? Ê--bô?
 you will go Taipei attend-meeting not-will will not
 (Taiwanese)
 “Will you go to Taipei to attend the meeting? Will you?”
- c. *你 欲 做伙 食飯--無? 是--無? (Taiwanese)
 Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-p̄ng--bô? Sī--bô?
 you want together have-meal not be not
 (Intended reading) “Do you want to have meal together? Isn’t it
 the case?”
- d. 你 欲 做伙 食飯--無? 欲--無? (Taiwanese)
 Lí beh tsò-hué tsiáh-p̄ng--bô? Beh--bô?
 you want together have-meal not want not
 “Do you want to have a meal together? Do you (want)?”
- e. *你 愛 來 抑無 愛來? 著--無? (Taiwanese)
 Lí ài lâi iah bô ài lâi? Tiòh--bô?
 you like come or not like come right not
 (Intended reading) “You like to come or not like to come? Am
 I right?”
- f. 你 愛 來 抑無 愛來? 愛--無? (Taiwanese)
 Lí ài lâi iah bô ài lâi? Ài--bô?
 you like come or not like come like not
 “You like to come or not like to come? Do you like to come?”

Sentences in (9) show that when the mood of the stem is interrogative, the tags necessarily conform to the verb/auxiliary selection of its stem. This is conceivable, for semantically *sī* and *tiòh* express assent to a proposition. When either of the two are in a tag respectively, they serve to question the proposition in the stem. If the stem is a question itself, *sī* and *tiòh* would find no proposition about which an inquiry is to be made. As a result, the basic agreement pattern between the stem and the tag would be followed when an interrogative stem is present.

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Taking account of the agreement phenomenon mentioned above, we are now able to dispel the confusion encountered, more or less, when we consult our informants with sentences in which *kám* and a seeming PRT, especially *sī--bô*, co-occur. The divergence in judgments among our informants cannot be generalized simply betwixt *kám* and different candidates for PRTs. We think that strict agreement on verbal usage between a stem in the interrogative mood and a tag plays a part in the test. As a result, we will test only the candidate PRTs, which are constituted with a verbal element, with *kám* in a condition of verbal agreement (see the examples below):

- (10) a. ?你 敢 欲 去 (,) 是無? (Taiwanese)²²
Lí kám beh khì(?) sī--bô?
you KAM will go be not
(Intended reading) “Will you go? Isn’t it the case?”
- b. 你 敢 欲 去, 欲--無? (Taiwanese)
Lí kám beh khì, beh--bô?
you KAM will go will not
“Will you go? Will you?”
- c. 你 敢 是 欲 去? 是--無? (Taiwanese)
Lí kám sī beh khì? sī--bô?
you KAM be will go be not
“Will you surely go? Is it sure?”

²² In fact, our informants have very divergent judgments on the *kám*-questions with *sī--bô*. This complexity is aggravated even more when different tenses, aspects, and modals are included. Each sentence may be given opinions from *not acceptable*, to *marginal*, to *acceptable*, respectively. We believe that this discrepancy in judgment derives from syntax, especially the position of *kám*, with even in the literature researchers unable to agree on its question type. (Huang (1991) analyzes this kind of question as a variant of A-not-A questions with features of constituent questions syntactically; Cheng (1997), Crosland (1998), and Hsieh (2001) claim that it belongs to the Yes-no question type). Because of this ambiguity in question type, *kám*-questions show an equivocal behavior in relation to verbal agreement with the tags, in particular the tags constituted with *sī*.

d. 你 有 去 參加， 有--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí ū khì tsham-ka, ū--bô?
 you Asp go join-in Asp not
 “You joined in, did you?”

e. 你 是 有 去 參加， 是--無？(Taiwanese)
 Lí sī ū khì tsham-ka, sī--bô?
 you be Asp go join-in be not
 “You did join in, did you?”

In (10c) and (10e), *sī* is used as a focus marker,²³ and its appearance also licenses the employment of *sī* in the tag attached. That is to say, the condition of agreement between the stem and the tag could also be respected by the linking of the focus marker *sī*. However, it ought not to be deemed as an exception, for the focus marker shares the [+V] feature with verbs, auxiliaries, and aspect markers (see É Kiss 1998, 1999, among others).

Before we pursue the procedure drawn up to sift out the tags from the seeming interrogative particles, we will first present a checklist of candidates. The goal, in all cases, is to distinguish tag questions from interrogative SFPs, and we shall define the term “interrogative particles” by adopting the definition of Sybesma and Li (2007: 1748 fn.14), “the fact that a particle is compatible with an interrogative sentence, does not make it an interrogative particle [.....] Only those particles, which can be argued to turn a declarative into an interrogative will be called ‘interrogative particles.’” We propose that only the particles in the aforementioned definition carry a strong [+Q] feature and unambiguously transform a declarative into a question. Otherwise, a sentence may become an interrogative induced by some other syntactic element. Sometimes the interrogative mood may even be attached covertly to a word string that is identical to a declarative counterpart by the different functional setting under C^0 (ForceP and IntP in Rizzi 1997, 1999).

Below, we check each of the Taiwanese SFPs found in the literature by attaching them to declaratives, *i beh lâi*, “he wants to come” and *i ē*

²³ The focus mentioned here is not general. With syntactic operation involved, we propose that these sentences are cleft sentences with identificational foci (see Lee 2005, É. Kiss 1998).

lâi, “he will come” (some items require a specific tense, e.g., *buē*), in order to make a judgment. Particles that invariably turn the sentence(s) into interrogatives will be counted as interrogative particles.²⁴

(11)

| Item | Sentences with item attached | Interrogative | Source |
|--------|--|---------------|--|
| a | I beh lâi--a. I ē lâi--a. | — | Chen 1989; Tin 1934; Lien 1988; Li 1950; MOE ²⁵ |
| buē/bē | I beh lâi--bē? I ē lâi--buē? | ✓ | MOE, Cheng 1997, Hsieh 2001 |
| bô | I beh lâi--bô? I ē lâi--bô? | ✓ | Cheng 1997; Li 1950; Hsieh 2001 |
| ê | I beh lâi--ê. I ē lâi--ê. | — | MOE; Li 1950 |
| ha(nn) | I beh lâi--ha(nn). I ē lâi--ha(nn). | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989; Chen 1993; Li 1950 |
| he | I beh lâi--he. I ē lâi--he. | — | Chen 1989, 1993 |
| hiòo | I beh lâi--hiòo? I ē lâi--hiòo? | ✓ | Chen 1989, 1993 |
| honn | I beh lâi--honn? I ē lâi--honn? | ✓ | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989, 1993; Tin 1934 |
| koh | I beh lâi--koh. I ē lâi--koh. | — | Cheng 1997; Chen 1989; Li 1950; Tin 1934 |
| kong | I beh lâi--kong. I ē lâi--kong. | — | Cheng 1997; Chen 1989; Lien 1988 |

²⁴ We have consolidated some of the items that are classified by different tone by different researchers. See Section 2.

²⁵ *Jiaoyu Bu Taiwan Minnanyu Changyong Ci Cidian* (A Taiwan Southern Min Dictionary of Common Words, Ministry of Education, R.O.C.). Online dictionary. (Retrieved November 1, 2009)

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| | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|--|
| lah | I beh lâi--lah. I ē lâi--lah. | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989; Li 1950; Tin 1934; Lien 1988 |
| le | I beh lâi--le. I ē lâi--le. | — | MOE; Chen 1989, 1993; Cheng 1997; Li 1950; Tin 1934; Lien 1988 |
| li | I beh lâi--li. I ē lâi--li. | — | MOE |
| liò | I beh lâi--liò. I ē lâi--liò. | — | Chen 1989, 1993 |
| loo | I beh lâi--loo. I ē lâi--loo. | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989, 1993; Li 1950; Tin 1934; Lien 1988 |
| m | I beh lâi--m? I ē lâi--m? | ∩ | Cheng 1997; Hsieh 2001 |

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| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| m̄ ²⁶ | I beh lâi m̄? I ē lâi m̄? | ˇ | Cheng 1997; Hsieh 2001 |
| mah | I beh lâi--mah. I ē lâi--mah. | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989 |
| ma | I beh lâi ma? I ē lâi--ma? | ˇ | Li 1950; Tin 1934 |
| m-me (me) | I beh lâi m-me? I ē lâi m-me? | ˇ | Li 1950 |
| neh | I beh lâi--neh. I ē lâi--neh. | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989, 1993 |
| nih | I beh lâi--nih? I ē lâi--nih? | ˇ | MOE; Chen 1989, 1993; Li 1950; Tin 1934 |
| nòo | I beh lâi--nòo. I ē lâi--nòo. | — | Cheng 1997; Chen 1989; Li 1950 |

²⁶ One may notice that there are probably two *m̄* in Taiwanese. One of them is an interrogative particle, and the other is not. The latter is used in a fashion similar to *ya* in Mandarin. See the example below of the claimed non-interrogative one. A dialogue is offered for a clearer context.

- i. Question: 伊 (阿明) 都 猶未 到--咧, 你是按怎 咧 煮 緊緊? (Taiwanese)
I (A-bîng) to iáu-buē kàu--leh, lí sī-án-tsuánn teh tsú kín-kín?
he (A-bîng) even not-yet arrive PRT you why Asp cook quickly
“He (A-bîng) hasn’t arrived yet. Why do you cook in a hurry?” (English)
他 (阿明) 又 還沒 來, 你 為 什麼 趕 著 煮 飯 呀? (Mandarin)
Tā (A-bîng) yòu hái méi lái, nǐ wèishéme gǎn-zhe zhǔfàn ya?
Answer: 阿明 欲 來 毋₂(。/?)煞 毋 免 煮 較 腥臊--咧! ? (Taiwanese)
A-bîng beh lâi m̄₂. Suah m̄-bián tsú khah tshenn-tshau--leh! ?
A-bîng will come PRT. How-can-we-not unnecessarily cook more abundantly
“Since A-bîng is coming, how can we do without preparing a wonderful dinner!” (English)
阿明 要 來 呀。難 道 不 用 煮 得 豐 盛 點 嗎? ! (Mandarin)
A-bîng yào lái ya. Nándào búyòng zhǔ-de fēngshèng diǎn ma?!

We believe the plausible declarative usage is actually a rhetorical one. Saying “A-bing is coming, don’t you know?” expresses something like “You do know it, but why do you speak or act in manner as [if] you are not informed?”

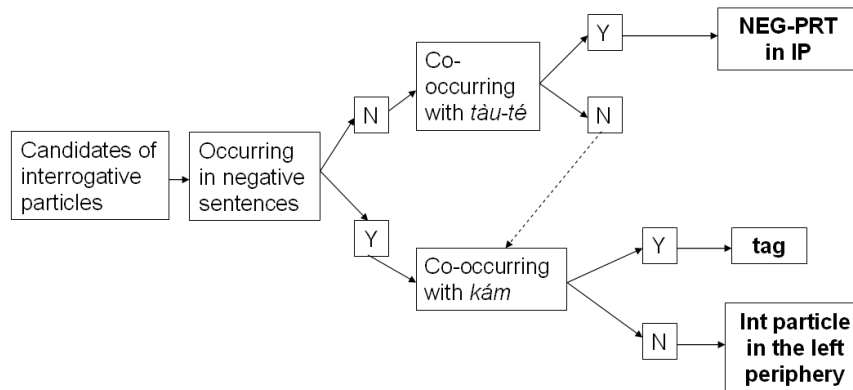
| | | | |
|------------------|--|---|---|
| oo | I beh lâi--oo. I ē lâi--oo. | — | MOE; Cheng 1997; Chen 1989, 1993; Li 1950; Tin 1934; Lien 1988 |
| sī--bô | I beh lâi sī--bô? I ē lâi sī--bô? | ∨ | Cheng 1997 |
| sioh | I beh lâi--sioh? I ē lâi--sioh? | ∨ | Cheng 1997 |
| sī-m̄/sim̄ | I beh lâi--sī-m̄? I ē lâi--sī-m̄? | ∨ | Cheng 1997; Hsieh 2001 |
| suah | I beh lâi suah. I ē lâi suah. | — | Cheng 1997; Li 1950 |
| niā-niā | I beh lâi niā-niā. I ē lâi niā-niā. | — | Li 1950 |
| tsit-ē | I beh lâi--tsit-ē. I ē lâi--tsit-ē. | — | Li 1950 |
| u | I beh lâi--u. I ē lâi--u. | — | Cheng 1997 |
| ue ²⁷ | *I beh lâi--ue. *I ē lâi--ue. | — | Chen 1989 |
| tō-sī | I beh lâi tō-sī. I ē lâi tō-sī. | — | Li 1950 |
| tsiah-sī | I beh lâi tsiah-sī. I ē lâi tsiah-sī. | — | Li 1950; Lien 1988 |
| bī-sī | I beh lâi bī-sī. I ē lâi bī-sī. | — | Li 1950 |
| koh-le | I beh lâi koh-le. I ē lâi koh-le. | — | Lien 1988 |

According to the result of the test, we now have a list of candidates as interrogative particles: *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, *hiòo*, *honn*, *m*, *m̄*, *ma*, *m-me(me)*, *nih*, *sī--bô*, *sī--m̄ (sim̄)*, and *sioh*.

Before further examination is pursued, a summarized procedure is illustrated below for convenience.

²⁷ This particle can be attached only to DPs (determiner projections). Therefore, its attachment to a declarative would cause ungrammaticality.

(12)



When testing, we do not rely on intuition with reference to the negative markers to pick out the NEG-PRTs. There are scant etymological studies on these items, and at the same time, some of the PRTs may have more than one possible origin. For instance, *sioh*, which some claim is derived from *sī--bô* (Cheng 1997), may also be an amalgamation of *sī* and *oo* (*ooh*), another common PRT. To avoid potential mistakes, we merely test every candidate with a negative sentence to find if it respects the A-not-A order, as a checkpoint for possible NEG-PRTs, before going to the next step. Moreover, if a PRT respects the A-not-A order, but cannot co-occur with *tau-tè*, it will be tested with *kām* as a double-check (indicated by the dashed line).

3.5 Testing

First, all the candidates are embedded into a negative sentence (the agreement requirement between the negation and the verb/Asp is considered).

(13)

| Particle | Testing with a neg-sentence |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>buē</i> | *I <i>buē</i> lâi-- <i>buē</i> ? |
| <i>bē</i> | *I <i>bē</i> lâi-- <i>bē</i> ? |
| <i>bô</i> | *I <i>bô</i> beh lâi-- <i>bô</i> ? |
| <i>hiòo</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi-- <i>hiòo</i> ? |
| <i>honn</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi-- <i>honn</i> ? |
| <i>m</i> | *I <i>m̄</i> lâi-- <i>m</i> ? |
| <i>m̄</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi <i>m̄</i> ? |
| <i>ma</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi <i>ma</i> ? |
| <i>m-me (me)</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi <i>m-me</i> ? |
| <i>nih</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi-- <i>nih</i> ? |
| <i>sī--bô</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi <i>sī--bô</i> ? |
| <i>sī-m̄ (s̄m̄)</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi <i>sī-m̄</i> ? |
| <i>sioh</i> | I <i>bē</i> lâi-- <i>sioh</i> ? |

Based on the result of the test above, only four particles, *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, and *m*, cannot occur in a negative sentence. Therefore, we think that they are possible NEG-PRTs. To confirm this speculation, the co-occurrence test of these four items and *tàu-té* in a single sentence is carried out below. ([14] is quoted from Hsieh [2001].)

(14)

| Particle | Testing with <i>tàu-té</i> |
|------------|--|
| <i>buē</i> | Lí <i>tàu-té</i> tsiáh-pá á <i>buē</i> ? (152 [12b]) |
| <i>bē</i> | Lí <i>tàu-té</i> ē-hiáu phah kiû-- <i>bē</i> ? (152 [12a]) |
| <i>bô</i> | Lí <i>tàu-té</i> beh khi-- <i>bô</i> ? (156 [19]) |
| <i>m</i> | Lí <i>tau-te</i> beh khi <i>m</i> ? (159 [28a]) |

All the sentences above are judged to be grammatical. The four particles can co-occur with *tàu-té* in a sentence. In this sense, we agree with Hsieh (2001) that they are NEG-PRTs that cannot occur as high as C^o.²⁸

²⁸ Hsieh (2001: 162) claims that both *bô* and *m* are under Q. And Q is marked with the [+WH] feature. But unlike *bô*, *m* is raised from its preverbal position to Q. As for *bē* and *buē*, Hsieh (2001: 155) proposes that they project a QP. This QP has a coordinate structure and undergoes VP ellipsis. The Q head is also marked with the [+WH] feature, and this structure has operator movement.

With respect to the rest of the candidates, see the table below for the results of the test. The testing is carried out according to the requirement of the agreement condition between an interrogative stem and its tag.²⁹

(15)

| Particle | Testing with <i>kám</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>hiòo</i> | I kám sī Ko-hiông lâng--hiòo? |
| <i>honn</i> | *I kám beh lâi--honn? |
| <i>m̄</i> | *I kám ài tsiáh mī m̄? |
| <i>ma</i> | *I kám beh lâi ma? |
| <i>m-me(me)</i> | I kám ài tsiáh mī m-me? |
| <i>nih</i> | *I kám beh lâi--nih? |
| <i>sī--bô</i> | I kám sī Ko-hiông lâng sī--bô? |
| <i>sī-m̄ (sìm)</i> | I kám sī Ko-hiông lâng sī-m̄? |
| <i>sioh</i> | I kám sī Ko-hiông lâng sioh? |

As this table shows, about half of the remainder has problems in co-occurring with *kám*. According to what we argued in subsection 3.4, the non-co-occurrence and consequent ungrammaticality signifies derivational failure from more than one item being in competition for [+Q] feature checking.

To sum up, we propose that *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, *m*, *honn*, *m̄*, *ma*, and *nih* are interrogative SFPs and that *hiòo*, *m-me(me)*, *sī--bô*, *sī-m̄ (sìm)* and *sioh*³⁰ are tag questions. Among the interrogative SFPs, *buē*, *bē*, *bô*, and *m* are negative-particles that occur under IP, and *honn*, *m̄*, *ma*, and *nih* are particles that are positioned higher, under CP³¹.

²⁹ We have mentioned that *kám* is ambivalent regarding the verbal selection of a tag attached. This does not deny, however, the strictness of a test which is done according to the verbal agreement requirement between the stem and the tag. In other words, to follow the agreement would assure no interference.

³⁰ Our informants acknowledge that *hiòo*, *sī--bô*, *sī-m̄ (sìm)*, and *sioh* behave more like SFPs than do other common tags. We presume that these tags are undergoing a process of grammaticalization. However, according to the observations in the syntax, they have not been grammaticalized totally. It is more appropriate to list them among tags rather than as real SFPs.

³¹ Based on Moro (2000), Sybesma (2008) suggests that IP-raising as a unit is not possible. If he is right, then it amounts to proposing that for some SFPs to be base-generated in the CP domain would be problematic. Therefore, the term “CP” here

4. CONCLUSION

By devising a testing procedure, we have examined the specific syntactic behavior of the claimed interrogative particles in the literature. Some of these seemingly interrogative particles are not essentially interrogative. For example, we argue against Chen (1989, 1993) and Li (1950) that *ha(nn)* is not an interrogative particle, and against Chen (1989, 1993) that *neh* is not supposed to be deemed interrogative.

Moreover, some of the apparent interrogative particles are not even particles themselves. In this aspect, we disagree with Chen (1989, 1993), Li (1950), and Cheng (1997) about their respective recognition of *hiòo*, *m-me(me)*, *sī--bô*, *sī-m̄ (sìm)* and *sioh*.

As for *m̄*, which is denied as being a particle in Hsieh (2001), we think that it is undoubtedly an interrogative particle, judging by its interaction with *kám*. Although it is argued that it cannot be a particle for it does not co-occur with *tàu-té*, such reasoning is not adequate in the light of the studies on the left periphery.

We hope that this study will cast some new light on SFPs and interrogative sentences. For example, see the sentence below (from Huang 1991: 326 [85]):

- (16) (*)Lí kám bat tsit-ê lâng (á) m̄-bat? (Taiwanese)
 you Q know this person or not-know
 “Do you know this person or don’t know [him]?”

This sentence is deemed grammatical by Huang, but it is not acceptable according to our informants. We believe that this discrepancy can be explained away by identifying the final part of (16) as a tag. When an obvious pause is inserted between *lâng* and (á) *m̄-bat*, the acceptability of this sentence is greatly improved among our informants.

Last but not least, identifying particles is the first step in studying SFPs. Many researchers give their list simply by intuition; but as a result, not only can no consensus be obtained, but also some non-particle items are mixed with real sentence-final particles³². We suggest first

should not be taken as a strict one (e.g., Rizzi 1999). The term is better perceived as the positions higher than where *tàu-té* is.

³² It is claimed that there are at least 40-odd to perhaps more than 90 SFPs in Cantonese (Sybesma and Li 2007, Leung 1992). Although we are in no doubt that Cantonese is a

establishing an objective mechanism as the foundation for a solid investigation into SFPs.

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language with abundant particles, we believe that reliable tests are necessary for verification of each item in the lists.

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排除附加問句—
判別台語句末疑問助詞與附加問句

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本論文旨在區隔台語中的句末疑問助詞與附加問句，研究動機來自於文獻中不同學者各自提出了相互不一致的台語句末疑問助詞清單。參考謝妙玲(2001) 檢測否定句末助詞的方案，我們設計了一檢測程序，用以區別文獻中所列示之成份係屬句末疑問助詞或附加問句。結論為：*buē*、*bē*、*bô*、*m*、*honn*、*m̄*、*ma*、*nih* 為句末疑問助詞，但 *hiò*、*m-me(me)*、*sī--bô*、*sī-m̄ (sìn)* 及 *sioh* 則為附加問句成份。前列之句末疑問助詞中，*buē*、*bē*、*bô* 及 *m* 為屈折語投射下的否定句末助詞，而 *honn*、*m̄*、*ma* 及 *nih* 則相對位置較高，位處標句詞短語之下。我們主張可靠的句末助詞研究，應建立在確立句末助詞清單，並排除附加問句的基礎之上。

關鍵字：台語，句末助詞，附加問句