Grammaticalization of Zikhai in Cantonese

BA (Hon) Linguistics and Language Technology
CTL 4235 Final Year Project

20 May, 2010
**Abstract**

Grammaticalization is used to describe how a lexical item takes up new grammatical functions or how a grammatical item develops new grammatical functions. Phonological, semantic, grammatical and functional changes are closely related to grammaticalization.

In this paper, the Cantonese expression *zikhai* 即係 is studied based on spontaneous speech data. The grammaticalized result of *zikhai* in spontaneous conversations is identified and described. The functions of the word *zikhai* have undergone grammaticalization and its meaning is bleached and it gained some other functions in conversation.

In this paper, I argue that *zikhai*, besides being a copula and a textual connective, has taken up several more functions in actual talk-in-interaction including being a resumption marker, a repair marker and a pause-filler. These functions help accomplish various interactional works in conversation, such as showing understanding of preceding talk and linking the following talk back to a previous turn, etc.
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1. **Introduction**

Grammaticalization is currently a hot topic among linguists (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca, 1994; Shen, 1994; Pullum, 1997; Campbell, 2001; Fang, 2002; Hopper & Traugott, 2003; Xing, 2003). The term ‘grammaticalization’, as Hopper & Traugott (1993) define, has two meanings. It can refer to the *research framework* of the language phenomena which concerns “how lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or how grammatical items develop new grammatical functions” (p.1). On the other hand, it can also refer to the “steps whereby particular items become more grammatical through time” (p.2).

Shen (1994:17) and Wen (1998:47) describe grammaticalization as the process or phenomenon through which the meaning of a content word 語詞 becomes empty, or through which the content word takes on some grammatical functions. It is called 語詞虚化 in the traditional Chinese linguistics. Shen (1994:17) further elaborates that the process of 虚化 has different extents. Both the processes of 1) a content word becoming a function word 處詞; and 2) a function word taking on more functions can be called 虚化.

Hopper & Traugott (2003), Bybee & Hopper (2001), Heine (1993) and many other scholars suggest that phonological, semantic, grammatical and functional changes are very often related to grammaticalization (Heine, 1993:106). In particular, Heine (1993) pointed

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1 Shen (1994) later points out that 虚化 and grammaticalization are not exactly the same in the sense that 虚化 focuses on semantic bleaching/weakening while *grammaticalization* focuses on the formation of discourse function. He further explains that the difference between the two terms is that grammaticalization covers a broader scope than 虚化 (p.17). 虚化 is in fact one of the instances of grammaticalization. (cf. Shen (1994) and Wen (1998))
out that these changes are “predicted” by the grammaticalization theory (p.106). Semantic change is a significant characteristic observed in grammaticalization. Hopper & Traugott (2003) point out early researches of grammaticalization focus mainly on semantic loss (Meillet, 1912; Gabelentz, 1901; and more recently Kuryłowicz, 1965; Heine & Reh, 1984). Nonetheless, Hopper & Traugott (2003) suggest that some new semantic/pragmatic functions may be gained during the grammaticalization process, and it is rather a “redistribution or shift, but not a loss, of meaning”. (p.94)

Among other possible factors, frequency of word plays a very important role in the grammaticalization mechanism (Haiman, 1994; Bybee 2003). Bybee (2003) writes,

“Frequency is not just a result of grammaticization, it is also a primary contributor to the process, an active force in instigating the changes that occur in grammaticization.” (p.602)

Given that frequency is the key factor that contributes to grammaticalization, phonological reduction in grammaticalized words is not surprising (Bybee & Hopper, 2001). This hypothesis is supported by recent studies (Wong, 2006; Hsiar, 2007) which suggest that high-frequency words are more likely to experience changes in phonology (examples will be given in Section 4.1). Haspelmath (1999) gave an explanation regarding this particular phenomenon as below,

“… items that fulfill a frequent discourse function will then increase in frequency because they are very often useful. ...Increased frequency also means increased predictability, and the more predictable an item is, the
less phonologically salient it needs to be. Speakers can now afford a
slurred pronunciation (by the maxim of economy) because the danger of
misunderstanding (the maxim of clarity) is not particularly high.” (p.1058)

Thus, phonological alternation of a word is very likely, though not necessarily, related to
grammaticalization.

Given that semantic weakening and phonological change can be indicators of a
frequently-used word undergoing grammaticalization, I report in this paper an investigation
of the expression zikhai 即係, which is frequently used in Hong Kong Cantonese (Cantonese
hereafter). This study is data-based and the objective is to identify and describe the
grammaticalized result of zikhai in spontaneous conversations. We will see that the
functions of the word zikhai have undergone further grammaticalization. Zikhai has its
meaning bleached and gains some other functions in conversation. Phonological alternation
in the pronunciation of zikhai is also found among Cantonese speakers, which gives an
excellent example in support of hypothesis of frequency playing a significant role in
grammaticalization.

This report is organized as follows. Detailed analysis will start from Section 2, which
examines the basic meanings of zikhai as 1) a copula; and 2) a connective doing elaboration.
The nature of the data collected for this research will be described in Section 3. Then we will
have a brief look at the phonological reduction of syllables in zikhai in Section 4.1. Phonological analysis draws on Cheung’s (1986) and Wong’s (2006) earlier works. In Section

2 The term ‘grammaticalization’ in this paper refers to the outcome of the grammaticalization process. The
objective of this study is to identify and describe the grammaticalized result of zikhai. The mechanism of the
grammaticalization process will not be covered.
4.2, a detailed analysis of conversational uses of zikhai will be given. We will see that zikhai, besides being a copula and a textual connective, has taken up several more functions in actual talk-in-interaction including being a resumption marker, a repair marker and a pause-filler. These functions help accomplish various interactional works in conversation, such as showing understanding of preceding talk and linking the following talk back to a previous turn, etc. In Section 5, we will explore how different functions, pronunciation variations and position of zikhai in conversation inter-relate with one another. Section 6 concludes the report.

2. The meanings of zikhai

The standard pronunciation of zikhai 即係 is [tsek^5 xe133] or written as zik1hai6 in Jyutping^3 (Language Society of Hong Kong, 1993). For the sake of convenience, ‘zikhai’ is used to refer to our target item except where pronunciation variations of zikhai are discussed.

In order to understand the meanings of zikhai, a number of dictionaries of Cantonese are consulted. Explanations and examples of zikhai are quoted as below.

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^3 Jyutping is a romanization scheme devised by a group of linguists in Hong Kong. (Language Society of Hong Kong, 1993)
To facilitate my explanation in the next section, which is about zikhai in conversation, I will further classify the senses of zikhai according to their semantic differences with the aid of the examples given by these dictionaries. According to Table 2.1, zikhai can be explained by three groups of definitions: 1) “換句話說就是”; 2) “即” or “即是”; and 3) “就是”. Further analysis on these explanations will be provided later in this section.

From the definitions and examples given in the dictionaries, we can see that zikhai has two functions: as a copula and textual connective. For example, let us review the examples from Wu (1997:128),
Zikhai in these sentences are used as copula and link up two expressions. This construction is similar to the ‘\((expression_1)\) is \((expression_2)\)’ construction in English, in which ‘\(expression_1 = expression_2\)’.

In (1), zikhai connects two words “執笠” and ”歇業”. Both of which refer to the state of a business being shut down. The latter part of the sentence is usually an explanation of the prior. This structure is used very often to explain expressions to foreigners or someone who are unfamiliar with Cantonese (see footnote in Wu, 1997:128).

Similar to (1), zikhai in (2) links up two components of a sentence. However, one of the components is a phrase (“姑媽嘅仔”) instead of a word (cf. ”執笠” and ”歇業” in (1)). Although the surface forms of the two components are different, the two expressions connected by zikhai are semantically identical (e.g. “大表哥” = “姑媽嘅仔”). In other words, zikhai can link up two expressions which are semantically similar but not necessarily at the same syntactic level. The two items which are linked up by zikhai can be both lexical (example (1)), or one is lexical while the other is phrasal (example (2)). Zikhai can also link up two phrasal items. Wu (1997) suggests that zikhai can mean ”換句話說就是”. In other words, zikhai can be used to paraphrase the prior expression with another phrasal expression.

(3) 運動對血糖嘅影響主要係視乎個人因素, ZIKHAI 會因人而異.
Here, zikhai links up two parts of the sentence. The phrase which comes after zikhai ("會因人而異") is the paraphrase of the previous phrase, namely "視乎個人因素". The two phrases "視乎個人因素" and "會因人而異" have different surface forms but they share similar meanings. In other words, they are paraphrases. The first part of the sentence "視乎個人因素" is paraphrased into "會因人而異".

From the examples so far, the two expressions (words or phrases) connected by zikhai are semantically the same. Another group of possible definitions of zikhai that Wu (1997:128) and Zhang & Ni (1999:73) suggest is zik 即 or ziks 即是⁴. In Dictionary of Function Words in Modern Chinese (現代漢語虛詞詞典), Hou (1998:299-300) explains zik (marked as Mandarin pronunciation ji in the following examples⁵) as,

即：連詞，表示並列關係，前後所指相同；就是，連接詞，短句或分句

1. 較熟的要算白莽, JI 殷夫了，他曾和我通過信，校過稿 (魯迅)
2. 我們在這方面使用的方法，是民主的 JI 說服的方法，而不是強迫的方法 (毛澤東)
3. 偉大作家曹雪芹，終於在窮愁困頓中於公元一七六三年或一七六四年，JI 乾隆二十七年或二十八年的除夕去世 (《紅樓夢》前言)
4. 社會的變化，主要地是由於社會內部矛盾的發展，JI 生產力和生產關係的矛盾，階級之間的矛盾，新舊之間的矛盾，由於這些矛盾的發展，推動了社會的前進，推動了新舊社會的代謝 (毛澤東)
5. 《唐三藏取經詩話》 JI 《大唐三藏取經詩話》，又名 《大唐三藏法師取經記》，全書分三卷，共十七節 (《魯迅全集》注釋)

| Table 2.2 | Explanations and examples of zik (ji) in Hou (1998:299-300). |

⁴ ziks is the written form of zikhai in formal Chinese.
⁵ ji is the Mandarin pronunciation of zik. In this paper, the two forms of zik and ji are used interchangeably.
If we substitute *ji* with *zikhai* in any of the examples given by Hou and utter these sentences in Cantonese, all sentences are still interpreted in the same way and the meanings of these sentences are preserved. Let us look at a particular instance from Hou,

(4) 社會的變化，主要地是由於社會內部矛盾的發展，*ji* 生產力和生產關係的矛盾，階級之間的矛盾，新舊之間的矛盾，由於這些矛盾的發展，推動了社會的前進，推動了新舊社會的代謝

Rather than copula, *ji* in (4) serves as a textual connective which coordinates a prior expression with one or more expressions that follow. As we see in (4), what comes after *ji* is a large chunk which is made up by a few phrases. *Ji* here connects the prior expression "社會內部矛盾" with the three parallel expressions, namely "生產力和生產關係的矛盾", "階級之間的矛盾" and "新舊之間的矛盾". The writer elaborates what "社會內部矛盾" entails by naming three sub-categories, suggesting the prior expression has three components in that particular context. In other words, unlike examples (1) to (3), the meanings of the two parts that *ji* connected are actually context-dependent. In that particular context, "社會內部矛盾" refers to "生產力和生產關係的矛盾", "階級之間的矛盾" and "新舊之間的矛盾". In other context, "社會內部矛盾" may mean other kinds of conflicts.

As we can see in (4), *ji* can be a textual connective to do elaboration. According to Wu (1997:128) and Zhang & Ni (1999:73), *zikhai* can mean *ji*. Also, if we replace *ji* by *zikhai* in (4) and utter the sentence in Cantonese, the sentence is still grammatical and the meaning of (4) remains unchanged. It is also true for the rest of the examples in Table 2.2. Therefore, the textual connective use of *zikhai* and *ji* are the same.
Moreover, if we examine again the sentence in (4), the writer is in fact doing an elaboration. Elaboration means to give further information, often on an expression just mentioned. In other words, similar to ji, zikhai can be used to introduce an expression which specifies the prior one within a sentence. Consider the constructed example in Cantonese below,

(5) 佢用咗佢一個月既人工, **zikhai** 三千蚊, 去買嗰部電腦.

Here, the speaker provides an extra or a more specific information to the addressee about what has just been mentioned. The amount of a month’s salary “一個月既人工” may differ in different situations. Additional effort is made in explaining the amount of money the speaker was talking about is precisely ”三千蚊”. This contrasts with (2), where ”大表哥” and ”姑媽嘅仔” are semantically identical regardless where and when such a sentence is uttered. Look at another constructed example,

(6) 我仲記得兩年前, **zikhai** 2007 年個暑假我去咗上海旅行.

兩年前 is a deictic expression whose exact reference to a point in time depends on when such a sentence is uttered. Ferro et al. (2001) notice that temporal expressions in natural language can be ambiguous due to their properties of “fuzzy boundaries” and “context-dependence” (p.3-4). The reference of “兩年前” can be confusing to the addressee, especially when this utterance is said in the first few or the last few months of a year. Clarification work is needed and it can be achieved by doing elaboration using an expression
starting with *zikhai*.

From examples (4) to (6), we can see that although the meanings of the expressions connected by *zikhai* are context-dependent, they denote the same referents in those particular contexts. ”一個月既人工” is ”三千蚊” in that particular context in (5), so as the case of ”兩年前” and ”2007 年” in (6), and the two big chunks in (4).

From all the examples above, we have seen that *zikhai* can be a copula and a textual connective. The expressions that are linked by *zikhai* are either identical intrinsically in their semantics (e.g. examples (1), (2) and (3)); or identical in terms of the local context (e.g. examples (5) and (6)).

The third definition of *zikhai* given by the dictionaries is 就係 (zausi 就是 or zauhai 就係 in Cantonese; *jiushi* in Mandarin, *jiushi* hereafter). Biq (2001) carried out a corpus-based study in the usage of Mandarin *jiushi* and *jiushishuo* 就是說 in both press reportage (PR hereafter) and conversational speech (CS hereafter). She considers PR as “the most ‘conservative’ (written) text type, and the senses of *jiushi* and *jiushishuo* identified in PR are taken as ‘canonical’” (p.55). She then compares the senses of *jiushi* and *jiushishuo* found in PR with the actual usage in CS. The senses/usages of *jiushi* and *jiushishuo* found in PR in her work are summarized in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Examples†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. **Copula** with an emphasis on the preciseness of the equation   | a. 上海近年要辦的十二件實事， 第一件 **JIUSHI** 有關上海地城市交通設施的。  
                                                                       | ‘The first of the twelve important things to be accomplished this year in Shanghai is (precisely) about the city transportation facilities.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                          |
| 2. **Uptoner** ("is as much as"); or **Downtoner** ("is as little as – is just/only") | a. 他們承包的工程耽誤一天損失 **JIUSHI** 三千圍。                           
                                                                       | ‘For the construction project they contracted, the business loss for any delay is (as much as) 3,000 dollars per day.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                          |
|                                                                      | b. 他說教育改革歸根結底一句話, **JIUSHI** 要始終按教育教學規律辦事。       
                                                                       | ‘He says that the bottom line for educational reform is just/simply to follow the principles of teaching and education.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                          |
| 3. In the construction of **bushi A, jiushi B**                      | a. 每當孩子貪玩時, **BUSHI** 訓斥, **JIUSHI** 打上幾巴掌。                 
                                                                       | ‘Whenever the kids were being mischievous, they either got scolded or got slapped.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                      |
|                                                                      | b. 如今遇上這裡有貨, 他說 **JIUSHI** 等到晚上關門 **YE** 要等。          
                                                                       | ‘Now that this place has the goods (she wants), she says she’ll wait (in line) even if it means she has to wait till the evening closing hour.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                          |
| 4. **Textual connective** (**jiushishuo only**)                     | a. 並不是每一本書都有知識，都有益處，也 **JIUSHISHUO** 並不是每一本書都是你的朋友。 
                                                                       | ‘Not every book contains knowledge and is good for you. That is to say, not all books are friends or sweethearts of yours.’ |
|                                                                      |                                                                          |
| Table 2.3  Meanings of **jiushi** and **jiushishuo** in PR identified by Biq (2001) |
| † Examples are transliterated into Chinese characters. Translations are quoted from Biq’s work. |

From Biq’s findings shown above, the first two usages of **jiushi** are actually copula, but with different colors added to it. The first usage is a copula with an emphasis on the preciseness, while the second one is a copula with a sense of up/down-toning. Therefore, **jiushi** in PR have three main functions in Mandarin: as a copula, as a component of a complex...
construction, and as a textual connective. Just now, we substitute zikhai for ji and those sentences remain fine. What if we do the same and substitute the instances of jiushi in PR with zikhai in examples in Table 2.3 above? It turns out that sentences (1a) to (3b) are ungrammatical or unnatural when uttered in Cantonese.

(7) [Copula]
   a. 上海近年要辦的十二件實事, 第一件 JIUSHI 有關上海城市交通設施的.
   b. *上海近年要做嘅十二件(實)事, 第一件 ZIKHAI 有關上海嘅城市交通設施.

(8) [Up-toner]
   a. 他們承包的工程耽誤一天損失 JIUSHI 三千圓.
   b. ? 他們承包嘅工程, 遲(咗)一日, 損失 ZIKHAI 三千蚊.

(9) [Construction: bushi ... jiushi...]
   a. 每當孩子貪玩時, BUSHI 訓斥, JIUSHI 打上幾巴掌.
   b. *每次(嘅)細路仔貪玩嘅時, 吼(係)鬧, ZIKHAI 打(佢)幾巴.

(10) [Construction: jiushi ... ye...]
   a. 如今遇上這裡有貨, 他說 JIUSHI 等到晚上關門 YE 要等.
   b. *宜家咁啱呢度有貨, 佢話 ZIKHAI 等到黑夜閂門 都 要 等.

The copula use (in (7)) of Mandarin jiushi and Cantonese zikhai has subtle differences. In addition, other usages of jiushi in PR (e.g. up/downtoner (in (8)) and the bushi-jiushi construction (in (9))) are not applicable in Cantonese. In fact, some of the instances of jiushi can actually be substituted by zauhai 就係 in Cantonese (e.g. examples (7) and (8) in the

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6 Jiushi and zikhai could have the same meaning in some situation in Cantonese, e.g. 執笠就係歇業. However, due to the focus of the study, comparative analysis of jiushi and zikhai will not be provided in this report.
above text, example (2b) in Table 2.3) but not zikhai, while others will have different constructions in Cantonese (e.g. examples (9) and (10)).

However, jiushishuo (example (4a) in Table 2.3) seems to be a special case that the sentence survives even if we change jiushishuo to zikhai. Biq described jiushishuo as an expression consists of the expression jishi and the verb shuo (to say). In fact, Cantonese has a corresponding expression to jiushishuo: zikhaiwaa 即係話. The presence of zikhaiwaa in Cantonese is also observed from the examples given by Rao, Ouyang & Zhou (1991:104) and Zhang & Ni (1999: 73).

(12) ZIKHAI 話佢係你表弟? (Zhang & Ni, 1999: 73)

Consider the example of jiushishuo from Biq’s data,

(13) 並不是每一本書都有知識, 都有益處, 也 JIUSHISHUO 並不是 每一本書都是你的朋友.

If we substitute jiushishuo with zikhaiwaa in the sentence above, the meaning of the sentences is unaffected when uttered in Cantonese. However, what is more interesting is that even if we substitute jiushishuo with zikhai (but not zikhaiwaa), sentence (13) remains grammatically correct and semantically unchanged. This particular fact can lead to the conclusion that zikhai, on top of copula and textual connective, can do the work of jiushishuo/zikhaiwaa.

To sum up, although zikhai and jushi are not completely the same in meaning (e.g.
subtle differences in the copula use), zikhai can be used as a copula and textual connective\(^7\) (and these two usages will be referred to as ‘basic usages’ in the rest of this paper).

Despite the basic usages of zikhai found in the dictionaries, it does not mean that we have already got the whole picture. Biq (2001) discovers that jiushi (and its variations jiushishuo and jiushuo) serves more functions in conversation other than the canonical meanings in PR. The CS functions of jiushi, jiushishuo and jiushuo found by Biq are shown below in Table 2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Examples(^9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CS 1. Copula + “precisely”                 | a. B: (1.2) 所以它, 成功啊, **JIUSHI** 這個原因.  
A: Um.                                              |
|                                            | B: (1.2) So its, success, **is (precisely)** because of this reason.  
A: Um.                                              |
| CS 2. Copula + “just/only”                 | a. B: 晚上呢, 我給他們, 包餃子, 給他們作幾個  
菜, (0.8) 不是甚麼大菜, **JIUSHI** 作點小冷菜.  
B: In the evening, I'll make, dumplings for them,  
and make a few dishes for them. (0.8) Nothing  
special, **just** a few cold dishes. |
| CS 3. “either A or B”; or “even”         | a. A: 你有草坪你不維持不行, 你要維持, **BUSHI** 自己, (0.7) **JIUSHI** 要請人來搞.  
B: 就 **JIUSHI** 交朋友嘛 -**YE** 也得看看你這個小子他媽的有錢兒沒錢兒.  
B: Even when making friends they (the Americans)  
would (first) consider if you've got money or not. |

\(^7\) As we defined earlier in this section that textual connective is used to link up two expressions, and Biq (2001)’s jiushishuo is also under this usage, I will use the term ‘textual connective’ to refer to cases like the ones in examples (3), (4), (5), (6), (13) and also Biq’s cases of jiushishuo.
4. “That is”, “In other words”, “Namely”

a. B: 那個女孩子家呢, 是北京的, 貧民區。JIUSHI, eh=生活環境很差。
   A: 那個女孩子家呢, 是北京的, 貧民區。JIUSHI, eh=生活環境很差。
   B: That girl’s place, was in Beijing’s, poor area.
   (1.4) Which means that, eh= the living environment was pretty bad.

b. B: 民以食為天。
   A: Uhm.
   B: JIUSHISHUO 先得吃飽飯, 別的再做。
   B: “People take food as the utmost important”.
   A: Uhm.
   B: It means that you have to have enough to eat, before you do anything else.

5. Floor holder

a. B: 但是, 中國呢, 反過來呢 JIUSHI, 很重視這個文人畫。
   A: Uhm.
   B: But, China, on the contrary JIUSHI, regards literati paintings as important.

b. A: Uhm.
   B: (2.2) 那麼 JIUSHUO 這個是中國, 藝術中間一個
   般非常重要的傳統。
   A: Uhm.
   B: (2.2) So jiuishhuo this/it, is, a very important
   tradition in Chinese art.
   A: Uhm.

Table 2.4  Meanings of jiuishi, jiuishishuo and jiuishuo in CS identified by Biq (2001)
‡ Examples are transliterated into Chinese characters. Translations are quoted from Biq’s work.

In this section, we see that zikhai is in many situations not the same as jiuishi although jiuishi is one of the definitions provided by dictionaries. In other words, the dictionary definitions are not sufficient to illustrate all the uses of zikhai. Moreover, we can see from Biq (2001)’s study that usages of jiuishi (and jiuishishuo) are not exactly the same in PR and CS even if, according to Biq, PR is considered as the canonical meaning of jiuishi (p.55). Biq pointed out the addition of CS functions of jiuishi and jiuishishuo are the cases of
grammaticalization (p.71). It may also be the case for *zikhai* in Cantonese. These two particular reasons lead to the motivation of studying the actual functions of *zikhai* with a data-based approach. We will see in later sections that *zikhai* has taken up some conversational functions other than the basic usages we have discussed here. This fact serves as solid supporting evidence that *zikhai* is under the process of grammaticalization.

3. *Database*

The analysis in the second half of this report is based on conversational data. They are provided by the supervisor of this project. They consist of recordings of spontaneous conversations between Cantonese native speakers. Three pairs of two people chatted causally on topics of their own choice while being recorded. The total length of the three conversations is about 78 minutes. The recording of the conversations are transcribed (see *Appendix* for the transcription conventions).

Other details of the data are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of recording (mm:ss)</th>
<th>Speakers (Gender)</th>
<th>Total characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C01</td>
<td>A (Female)</td>
<td>5186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (Male)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C03</td>
<td>E (Male)</td>
<td>5693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F (Female)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C04</td>
<td>G (Male)</td>
<td>10593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H (Female)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 (Male:3 Female:3)</td>
<td>21472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.1* Details of data used in this study

The choice of using natural spontaneous conversations as a source for investigation is motivated by two reasons. In the previous section, we have seen that, although *jiushi* is one of the definitions provided by dictionaries for *zikhai*, there may be incongruity between the
usage of zikhai and jiushi when they are actually used. Moreover, we can see from Biq (2001)’s study that in what sense a word is used and how frequently it is used in actual application can only be found in data-based examination. As a result, spontaneous conversations are examined for this project.

4. Zikhai in conversation

4.1. Pronunciation variations of zikhai in conversation

Although the full pronunciation of zikhai is [tsɪk̚⁵ xe̞i³³], it is surprising that the full pronunciation is non-existent in our data. Rather than the full pronunciation, five variations are identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notations</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Jyutping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZE.HAI</td>
<td>[tsɛ⁵ xe̞i³³]</td>
<td>ze1 hai6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.AI</td>
<td>[tsɛ⁵ bi³³]</td>
<td>ze1 ai6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.EI</td>
<td>[tsɛ⁵³]</td>
<td>ze1 ei6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E</td>
<td>[tsɛ⁵⁵+³³]</td>
<td>ze1 e6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE</td>
<td>[tsɛ⁵⁵]</td>
<td>ze1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Pronunciation variations of zikhai identified in the data

† Notations used in this paper. The full-stop symbol “.” indicates syllable boundary.

8 Due to the limited scope of this project, all of the pronunciations of the variations are transcribed based on my perception as a native speaker of Cantonese. However, phonological account will be given based on examples provided in Cheung’s study with words having similar syllable structure to zikhai, and I assume words with such syllable structure undergo similar phonological alternation.

9 ZE.E is transcribed as [tsɛ⁵⁵+³³] in IPA because the vowels of the two syllables in ZE.E are practically the same that it is pronounced as if it is a one-syllable word with a tone contour of 55+33. However, such a tone is not found in standard Cantonese pronunciation. The 55+33 tone serves as a trace that ZE.E is a blend of two syllables and is still perceived as a two-syllable word. On the other hand, the tone of ZE has become a high level tone, and ZE is perceived as an actual one-syllable word.
Studies on cross-syllable assimilation in Cantonese have been carried out as early as the 1960s (Hashimoto, 1972; Yuan et al., 1960; Lass, 1984; Cheung, 1986). In more recent studies, this phenomenon is referred to as “syllable fusion”\(^{10}\) (Wong 2004; 2006; Wong, Chan & Beckham, 2005). Below are some examples of syllable fusion in Cantonese given by Wong (2006:1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 識唔(識) ‘know NEG (know)’</td>
<td>sek(^5) m(^{21}) (sek(^5)) (\rightarrow) se(^7) m(^{21}) (sek(^5)) (\rightarrow) se(^5) m(^{21}) (sek(^5))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 其實 ‘in fact’</td>
<td>k(^{21}) e(^{21}) se(^2) (\rightarrow) k(^{21}) e(^{21}) et(^2) (\rightarrow) k(^{21}) et(^{21}+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 知道 ‘know’</td>
<td>tsi:(^{55}) tou(^{33}) (\rightarrow) tsi:(^{55}) ou(^{33}) (\rightarrow) tsi:u(^{55+33})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 朝頭(早) ‘morning’</td>
<td>tsi:u(^{55}) t(^2) e(^{21}) (tsou(^{55})) (\rightarrow) tsi:u(^{55}) au(^{21}) (tsou(^{55})) (\rightarrow) tsi:u(^{55+21}) (tsou(^{35}))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Examples of syllable fusion in Cantonese in Wong (2006:1)

Cheung (1986:239) used zikhai as one of the examples when describing the phenomenon of coda deletion in Cantonese. From his analysis, one of the components, zik [tsIk\(^\text{ts}\)]\(^5\), exhibits a deletion of demoraed coda, while the second component, hai [x\(\text{ei}\(^{33}\)]\(^5\), remains unchanged.

\[
\text{[tsIk}^{\text{ts}\text{]}^{5}\text{ xei}^{33}] \rightarrow \text{[tse}^{5}\text{ xei}^{33}]^{11}
\]

I mark this variation as ZE.HAI in our case.

---

\(^{10}\) Adoption of the term “syllable fusion” in this paper is motivated by Wong (2006:15-19)’s argument of using “syllable fusion” against “contraction” and “co-articulation” in other literatures (e.g. Cheung (1986)).

\(^{11}\) dze[k]1 h\(\text{ej}\)6 in Cheung’s original work as we are using different sets of IPA symbols.
In addition to \textit{ZE.HAI} proposed by Cheung, four other variations are found in our data. These variations have undergone higher degree of alternation. Both the coda of \textit{zik} and the onset of \textit{hai} are deleted in \textit{ZE.AI}. In \textit{ZE.EI}, other than the deletions that \textit{ZE.AI} underwent, the vowel of the second syllable is centralized from [ɐi] to [ei]. The vowel of \textit{ZE.E} is further reduced to [e], which is assimilated by the vowel in the first syllable [tsε] progressively, after coda and onset deletion. Despite the alternations that \textit{ZE.AI}, \textit{ZE.EI} and \textit{ZE.E} have gone through, the tone contour of these variations are still preserved. The last candidate found is \textit{ZE}. On top of coda deletion, onset deletion and vowel reduction, the original 33 tone of the second syllable \textit{hai} is assimilated into 55 tone, and fused with the first syllable. As a result, \textit{zikhai} is produced as if it is a one-syllable word, as \textit{ZE}\textsuperscript{12}. As our focus will be on the functions of \textit{zikhai} in conversation, readers can refer to Cheung’s (1986) work for detailed analysis.

Inspired by Cheung’s (1986) observation of the fact that bisyllable contraction may occur in different extent, Wong (2004) studied over spectrographs of a few tokens in her data and found that there are in fact many intermediate degrees of syllable fusion between the two extremes, i.e. the plain form and the fused form, of a token. She later introduced a scale of five degrees (2006:162-163) to classify different extents of syllable fusion. \textit{ZE.EI}, \textit{ZE.E} and \textit{ZE} in our data experience the highest degree\textsuperscript{13} (degree zero) of fusion, while \textit{ZE.AI} experiences the second highest degree (degree one) of fusion on her scale.

Other than the five variations listed in Table 4.1, the expression \textit{zikhaiwaa} [tsek\textsuperscript{5} ɐi\textsuperscript{33} wa:]\textsuperscript{33} (or \textit{zik1hai6waa6} in \textit{Jyutping}) is also found in our data as stated earlier in the previous

\textsuperscript{12} Cheung (1986:242) used another example 一係 (\textit{jat1hai6} in \textit{Jyutping}) to illustrate cases of extreme bisyllable contraction, which may ended up with merged syllable.

\textsuperscript{13} Please refer to Wong (2006)’s work for detailed definition and classification of each degree in the scale.
section. Similar to *zikhai*, the full pronunciation *zikhaiwaa* is not found in our data. Instead, a variation *ZE.E.WA* is found. All the variations are exhausted in the list below. The notation of *zikhai* will be used hereafter as collective term referring to all variations of *zikhai*, unless variations are significant in the topic-in-discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variations</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Jyutping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZE.HAI</td>
<td>[tse(^{55}) xe(^{33})]</td>
<td>ze1 hai6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.AI</td>
<td>[tse(^{55}) ei(^{33})]</td>
<td>ze1 ai6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.EI</td>
<td>[tsei(^{53})]</td>
<td>ze1 ei6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E</td>
<td>[tse(^{55+33})]</td>
<td>ze1 e6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE</td>
<td>[tse(^{55})]</td>
<td>ze1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E.WA</td>
<td>[tse(^{53}) wa(^{33})]</td>
<td>ze1 e6 waa6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3** All pronunciation variations of *zikhai* found in our data

Before we go on to discuss the conversational functions of *zikhai*, let us have a look at the occurrence of each variation in the data, as shown below in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variations</th>
<th>No. of instances in data</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZE.HAI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.AI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.EI</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E.WA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4** Occurrence of each variation of *zikhai* among all the variations
From Table 4.4, we can see that almost half the instances of zikhai in our data are ZE.E (49.2%), followed by ZE (38.1%). These two variations made up the majority (87.3%) among all the variations of zikhai. On the other hand, the rest of the variations are infrequent. Further investigation of each of these variations in relation to their functions will be provided in Section 5.

4.2. Functions of zikhai in conversation

We have seen in Section 2 that zikhai has two basic functions: as a copula and as a textual connective. In this section, the actual functions of zikhai in our data will be identified. We will start with the basic usages mentioned in Section 2.

4.2.1 Copula

Copula use of zikhai (cf. examples (1) and (2)) is still found, though not many, in our data. Consider the extracts below,

(14) [C04]

9 H: 我喺住佢嗰陣時(,) ZE.E 有個職位啦: [喺聯合國
10 G: 喔
11 H: 其實原本已經兩三年嚟
12 G: 說: 03 年嘅, >03 年到而家
13 H: . h ZE.E 我覺得佢喺陣時已經叫: 咁風光, 擺返身彩歌樣走喇
In extract (14), G and H are talking about one of the officials in the United Nations Organization (the UN). H is not very sure about for how long that particular official has been in that position. It is indicated by the temporal phrase "兩三年" (line 11) which refers to a range of time. G then comes in and says that the official has been in that position since “03年”. G continues his turn by saying the sentence "03年到而家 ZE 啥嘅三年囉". In this context, the two expressions "03年到而家" and "啱啱三年" points to the exact same period of time, saying that "03年到而家" is precisely three years time. Zikhai in line 12 serves as a copula connecting these two expressions which means the same in this context.

In extract (15), E is talking about a workshop he had been to. He refers to his group-mates in the workshop as "白馬" (line 332), which is a term used by E’s uncle to describe certain kind of people. However, this term is perhaps not very familiar to F. After the possible completion point of E’s utterance in line 332 followed by a brief pause, F initiated a repair\(^\text{14}\) and tries to locate the trouble-source by offering her interpretation of the

\(^{14}\) The definitions of the terms ‘repairs’, ‘trouble-source’, ‘self-/other-initiation; and ‘self-/other-repair’ will be given in Section 4.2.4, where repairs will be discussed.
term “白馬” with another word “王子” and a question particle “aa4”, as “白馬王子” is a possible word in Cantonese meaning a prince on a white horse. F wants to check whether her understanding matches what E meant. After F issued the repair-initiation, E tries to self-repair and explains the term “白馬” by using the expression “咩嘢都唔識”. This expression describes what he means by “白馬” said earlier. Zikhai in line 335 is a copula which links up two expressions, “白馬” and “咩嘢都唔識”, which describe the same referent in this context.

4.2.2 Textual connective

Textual connective use of zikhai is also found in our data. These zikhai can be grouped in two types, each with different interactional significance and occurs in different positions in speakers’ turns. First, zikhai can be used within a speaker turn to link up two expressions or turn-constructional units15 (TCU hereafter), of which the second one is an elaboration or explanation of the prior expression just said (cf. examples (5) and (6) in Section 2). Consider extract (16) below,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(16) [C04]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>356 H: [係啊 =你明唔明啊? ZE.E::{()} 對我個人嚟講係一個好大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ 357 啥 impact 喔, ZE將我個 value 吧, 去沖擊啊, 你明唔明啊?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358 G: [唔嗯=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 A term used in Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974), which refers to the linguistics units (which can be sentential, clausal, phrasal or lexical) that are used by speakers to construct a turn in conversation (p.702). In addition, “whatever the units employed for the construction, ...they still have points of possible unit completion” or “points which are projectable before their occurrence” (p.720). For detailed discussion on the properties of TCU, please refer to Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974)’s work.
H has been criticizing some government officials. He is expressing his disappointment and astonishment on some issues those government officials had dealt with. In lines 356 and 357, H is saying that the way of how the government handle the issue has a big impact on him ("我個人嘅>係一<個好大嘅impact囉"). He then explains that the impact is on his (moral) value ("將我個value呢,去沖擊啊."). This explanation is prefaced with zikhai, which connects "將我個value呢,去沖擊啊" with "對我個人嘅>係一<個好大嘅impact囉".

Some instances of zikhai are found between two successive turns of different speakers. Zikhai can be the first word of the next speaker’s turn. In other words, zikhai may appear in the turn-initiation position of the next speaker’s turn.

(17) [C03]

250 E: 雨裏啦::: 啥= 小月尾呢, h 就考埋試
251 F: 係吖
252 E: 假設亦都考 過埋個咩喇. ZE.T 咪 module exam 就考晒架(喇)
253 F: [係啲啦]
254 E: 噗嘅一刻如果佢個樣嘅offer 唔我= 唋我可以搵嘅$嘅(+) 我可以搵
255 計. 如果走呢(+)可以繼續搵留 -> 繼續<, 不過我話唔會繼續留 Centre S-
256 老細都唔 w- 覺得我應該再留呢度啲喇
257 ()
→ 258 F: ZE.T 想你出去(+)行- ZE.T 想咁到你喇
In the two extracts above, *zikhai* (in the arrowed lines and shaded) are in the turn-initial position. In extract (17), E is saying whether he should accept the new job offer after December. From line 254 to 256, E has been saying what he will do if he had an offer and that he will probably not going to work in the center anymore (“不過我諗唔會繼續留 centre”). After that, he offers his estimation that his boss does not want him to stay in the center either (“老細都唔覺得我應該再留喺度架喇”). After the possible completion point of E’s turn (line 256) and a brief pause (line 257), F self-selects to be the next speaker at line 258 and says “*ZE.E佢想你出去(.)行-”*. Although this utterance is not brought to its completion due to a repair-initiation (as indicated by the cut-off), we can still see that it is related to the preceding talk of E because the pronoun “佢” in F’s turn refers to E’s boss (“老細”) in the prior turn (E’s turn at line 256). What is more, based on the syntactic evidence of the TCU-so-far, what F probably wanted to say is “*ZE.E佢想你出去行吓*. F is trying to show her understanding based on what E has said so far. E’s utterance of “老細都唔- 覺得我應該再留嘅度架喇” is interpreted by F as “佢想你出去行吓”. F’s intention to show understanding is further supported by her following self-repair “*ZE.E佢唔到你喇*” (line
Both utterances in F’s turn in line 258 indicate what he has inferred from E’s previous utterance of “老細都唔觉得我應該再留喺度架喇”. The first zikhai in line 258 is used as a textual connective.  

Extract (18) is another illustration. From line 321, E is expressing his view on the fact that company trainees generally do not know much about business firms as they are talking about “big four” at line 318. After E has said “唔會識太多嘢囉”, F self-selects at the transition-relevance place (TRP hereafter) to take up the next turn. Her utterance “ZE啱啱出嚟” is her understanding of E’s utterance immediately before. F gives her explanation to why trainees do not know much – it is precisely because “they are new” (“啱啱出嚟”). F’s interpretation is confirmed by E’s “係嘞:” followed by his version of explanation – it is because most of them are fresh-graduates (“大部份都係啱啱:都大學畢業”) (line 324).

The speaker (speaker F) in extracts (17) and (18) uses zikhai to elaborate previous speakers’ ideas. It should be noted that zikhai connects the two units of talk which are said by different parties in a conversation. In other words, zikhai ties the upcoming unit to the preceding talk of another speaker.

Some may argue that the second zikhai in 258 can be a textual connective or a repair marker (which will be introduced in the Section 4.2.4). It depends on how we interpret the repaired sentence. It can be a fresh start of the whole turn that replacing everything, or it can be a case that zikhai is a repair marker that introduces a replacement substituting 佢想你出去(.)行., with the first zikhai is still there being a textual connective. It is hard to tell which one is the intended usage because the speaker’s intention is often not known. Cases of this kind will be counted as undetermined. (Details will be explained in Section 5)

Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) refers transition-relevance place (TRP) as “the first possible completion” point of a TCU. Turn transition becomes relevance near such a place (p.703-704).
4.2.3 Resumption marker

Other than copula and textual connective, it is observed that zikhai takes up other functions in conversations. One of these functions is resumption marker. Various studies are found in investigating how speakers resume their talks (Schiffrin, 1987; Chiu, 2000; Mazeland & Huiskes, 2001). Mazeland & Huiskes (2001:6) concluded Jefferson’s view of how speakers return to prior talks as below,

“If a next speaker moves on by returning to material further back than prior turn, he can either present his turn as a continuation of this earlier talk or do the return as a resumption (cf. Jefferson 1972: 319 ff.). ... Depending on how a speaker packages a next turn, the preceding talk is either dealt with as something that can be integrated unproblematically into the ongoing activity (continuation) or as something which is moved away from when the abandoned line is picked up again (resumption).” (pp. 4-5)

Mazeland & Huiskes (2001:6) further elaborate the term “resumption” as the action that speaker deal with “something which is moved away from when the abandoned line is picked up again.” Mazeland & Huiskes also compare “resuming” with Sacks (1992)’s “skip-connecting” (Mazeland & Huiskes, 2001:20). Sacks (1992:349) explains skip-connecting is the action where "... a speaker produces an utterance that is indeed related to some prior utterance, but it's not related to the directly prior utterance, but some utterance prior to the directly prior utterance". On the other hand, Mazeland & Huiskes (2001) pointed out “resumption” is different from skip-connecting that resumption can “tie over long distance” where skip-connecting cannot (p.25). Below is a model of resumption suggested by
In other words, speaker in conversation may have side-tracked in the middle of his/her talk.
Using the resumption marker, the speaker tells the listener that he/she is trying to continue
his/her topic he/she has been talking about. One distinctive character which differentiates
resumption marker from cross-turn textual connective is that what comes after the marker is
not an elaboration. Consider the extract that we have seen before as below,

\[(19) \quad [C04]\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
9 & H: \text{ 我諗住佢嘅陣時(.)} ZE.E \text{ 有個職位啦: [喺聯合國} \\
10 & G: \text{ [唔唔} \\
11 & H: \text{ 其實原來已經兩三年嚟} \\
12 & G: \text{ [嘆嘆] 03 年嚟, >03 年到而家 ZE <嘆嘆三年嚟} \\
\rightarrow & 13 & H: .h ZE.E \text{ 我覺得佢喺陣時已經叫叫住風光, 擔當身段嘅樣樣好啊}
\end{array}
\]

We have seen this extract in Section 4.2.1 (extract (14)). G and H are talking about the
officials in the UN. In line 9, H says ”我諗住佢嘅陣時(.)} ZE.E \text{ 有個職位啦}” followed by a
supplement of specifying the organization that the position is in (the UN). Interestingly, H’s
TCU ”其實原來已經兩三年嚟” seems to be a digression from his current talk. H is editing
some background information of his previous utterance of ”我諗住佢嘅陣時(.)} ZE.E \text{ 有個職}
位啦: [喺聯合國]. The background information is the period of time that official has been
working in the UN, namely ”兩三年”. Then in line 12, G gives more information and confirms
the time (see our discussion in Section 4.2.1, extract (14)). These two pieces of talks (line 11 and 12) lead the conversation out of track. In order to resume his talk, H uses *zikhai* to link his following talk (in line 13) back to his prior turn (line 9). Speaker H simply continues his talk about the official’s job and nothing is being elaborated or explained. *Zikhai* here connects H’s utterance at line 13 back to his earlier talk at line 9. Let us now consider (20)

(20) [C03]

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>433</td>
<td>E:</td>
<td>[不過(.) 點啊? 阿濤錄咗未啊?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434</td>
<td>F:</td>
<td>錄咗啊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>435</td>
<td>E:</td>
<td>僅點啊?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>436</td>
<td>F:</td>
<td>有啊, 但同 Percy 倾到唔願走啊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>437</td>
<td>E:</td>
<td>咦?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ 438 | F: | 係啊, *ZE.EI* 原來佢哋兩個係訛 04 年識嘅, 但係= |
| 439 | E: | =又係 ge2? |
| 440 | F: | 係訛嘅, 係:一齊讀 PhD:誒然之後阿: Percy 係讀四年, 阿濤係讀(...) [三年= |
| 441 | E: | = |
| 442 | F: | =果大家都係()舎 year one 啊嘛, 唔訛 take 吃嘅 course, 然之後大家= |
| 443 | E: | 唔 |
| 444 | F: | =一齊上過 =咁係係, 原來好唔熟嘅, 一年有見到一次嘅(.) 唔, 我係 |
| 445 | F: | 可能係無意中(...) 就: 火陣時一年之前, [入 hall 舻, 唔我話讀 linguistics, = |
| 446 | E: | 唔 |
| 447 | F: | =阿濤又話讀得有人讀 linguistics =佢講個名出嚟 =話係我師兄嘛 |

Up to line 436, F has been saying that two of her friends enjoyed their conversation so much (during the recording session) that they did not want to go. After hearing this piece of information, E shows his surprise as indicated by the exclamation “喲?” (line 437). Then, using “係啊” (line 438), F confirms what she said and continues to explain why her friends enjoy each other’s company so much (“原來佢哋兩個係訛 04 年識嘅” and so forth). F’s TCU of “原來佢哋兩個係訛 04 年識嘅” in line 438 (and the story that is going to unveil) is
exactly the reason why “佢同 Percy 倘到唔願走”. Distracted by the intervening turn of E’s exclamation at line 437 and having to respond to it, F uses zikhai to lead her forth-coming talk back into track so that she could resume her telling. Here, zikhai links the rest of F’s turn back to her own prior turn, which is (at least) one turn away from the current turn.

4.2.4 Repair marker

Another conversational usage of zikhai is to mark repairs18. Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks (1977, hereafter SJS) used the term “repair” to refer to the problems the speakers deal with in conversations (p.363). These problems include those in “speaking, hearing and understanding” (p.363). Repair can be initiated by the speaker of the current turn (“self-initiation”) or by other participants in the conversation (“other-initiation”). After self-/other-initiation of the problem (or “trouble-source”) (p.363), the speaker of the trouble-source turn, or other speakers, can do the repair proper, (“self-repair” and “other-repair” respectively) (p.363)19. According to SJS (1977), trouble-source can be indicated by “self-initiation” or “other-initiation” (p.363). Both initiations involve different techniques20 and occupied different “placements relative to the trouble-source”21 (p.363). After initiation, the trouble-source can be resolved by speaker of the trouble-source turn

18 It should be noted that pause-fillers (as well as pauses) are usually counted as indications for word search when the next word is due, and therefore considered as a repair marker (Liddicoat, 2007:178). However, pause-fillers which do not initiate any repairs nor introduce any repair items are considered as pause-fillers in this project. Those instances of zikhai which initiate self-/other-repairs or before repair items are categorized as repair markers.

19 For detailed discussion, please refer to SJS (1977)’s paper.

20 According to SJS, typical techniques in self-initiations are “non-lexical speech perturbations”, such as cut-offs and sound stretches (p.367), while those in other-initiations are question words or partial repeats of the trouble-source turn plus question words (p.367-368).

21 According to SJS, self-initiation repairs can be done 1) within the trouble-source turn; 2) at the TRP of the trouble-source turn and 3) in the third-turn to the trouble-source turn (p.366), while other-initiations occur mainly in the turn after the trouble-source turn (p.367).
(“self-repair”) or other speakers (“other-repair”).

It is found in our data that *zikhai* can be used as repair markers to indicate self-/other-initiations (and these *zikhai* are usually found near the trouble-source (Zhang, 1998)). *It can also introduce repair items in repair proper* (and these *zikhai* are usually comes before the repair items).

Let us start with the instances of *zikhai* which are used as self-initiator. The two extracts below illustrate self-initiations within the trouble-source turns, and the trouble-sources are resolved (or repaired) within the turn (These cases are “same-turn self-repairs” according to SJS (1977)).

(21)  [C01]

49 A: 關乜嘢事, 我哋今日大風到呢: hei2我哋[房呢 hei]開咗
50 B: [連棟都吹起 he he he
51 [he he he
52 A: [唔係啊, 開咗個窗呢, 跟住呢, 個窗簾都吹咗出街啊
53 ()
54 B: 真係跌咗落街呀?
55 A: 跌咗嘅, 本來個窗簾係我個門: [>]ZE.EI個窗入面<
56 B: [哦; 窗簾
57 A: 窗簾啊, [跟住 ch-]
58 B: [我聽到個窗跌咗落街
59 A: [唔係啊, 係吹咗出[去攞
In extract (21), A appears to misspoke “窗” (window) as “門” (door), both words being semantically taxonomical sisters under the category of furniture. It turns out that A means to say the curtain was hanging on the window, not on the door. After realizing he has said the wrong word he initiates the repair by a combination of initiation techniques, i.e. cut-off and zikhai, on site of the trouble-source word “門”. He then recycles the classifier “個” followed by the intended word “窗”.

In extract (22), speaker E, after uttering “但係而家喺” (line 84), cuts off and attempts to repair for the first time and replace “喺” by a more specific expression “我喺”. However, after the first repair, E makes another repair attempt by cutting off again during producing “我喺 f-”, followed by zikhai and a brief pause (line 86). This combination of initiation techniques leads E to restructure his utterance as “喺學校度有啲 t- 有頭有()地位喺啲放晒假” (line 86). In both (21) and (22) above, the speakers of the trouble-source interrupt themselves and do the self-repair immediately after trouble-source (on-site self-repairs).

Extracts (21) and (22) illustrates self-initiations in same-turn self-repairs. On the other
hand, repairs can be initiated by other speakers (“other-initiation”) in the next turn after the trouble-source turn. Consider extracts (23) and (24).

(23) [C01]
173 B: 我都要返 hall 啊，啱晒 perfection
174 A: 到底我要返 lab 執嘢先過，跟住坐個係免費的返 hall 擺低啲啲，我今
175 日 last day 聊
176 B: 你有返過去咩?
177 A: [嘅]，我返去擺張 appointment letter [又 又 我]
178 B: [嘅]而家返去咩啊?執電腦，執
179 個 mon 走呀?
180 A: [嘅]啊，要留返個 lab 度啊，[有得拎走]
181 B: [嘅]你，喺你揹咩走?
182 A: 我仲有 cushion 同埋仲有少少留喺度
183 B: [揹埋未走喺]
184 A: 係啊，揹埋*t-
185 B: [趁而家有乜雨咗嗎]
186 A: (吓?) =[係]，梗係坐個係免費的返去啊，有免費的的咗嗎
187 B: [喺，喺-]
→ 188 B: [ZE.E]等佢哋有 freshman(呀)?
189 A: 唔 aa2? =唔使 gaa3

(24) [C03]
614 F: 好強，佢做(女警都得啊)
615 E: [唔係(.] 如果呢:: 你唔係成日-ZE 練開呢，其實應該要跑啲
616 個圈圈
617 (..)
→ 618 F: [ZE.E] 運動場嘅圈圈呢，四百
→ 619 E: [ZE.E] 紅色嘅運動場嘅圈圈呢，四百
620 F: [ZE.E] 等啦::

In extract (23), A is planning to move her things in the laboratory out and bring them back to her students’ hall because it is her last day of working in the lab. B suggests her to do that as soon as possible in case it starts to rain (“揹埋未走喺” and “趁而家冇乜雨” in lines 183 and
After B’s suggestion of packing up her things right away, A probably thinks B was telling her to bring the things back to the hall on foot. Therefore, A shows some doubts by saying “吓?” (line 186) and gives her alternative, which is going back to the hall by “free-cab”22 (“梗係坐免費的的返去喇”(line 186)), as a means to object to B’s suggestion. After A’s turn in line 186, B issues an other-initiation by asking “ZE.EI等佢哋有freshman(呀)?” (literally “do you mean you need to wait until there are freshmen (who also want to ride a cab)?”). By asking the question, B actually wants to check if his understanding is in line with A’s. After this initiation, A clarifies by saying ”唔使gaa3” (literally “you don’t (have to wait for those freshmen)”23.

In extract (24), F issues an (other-)initiation (line 618) on the trouble-source “圈圈” by saying “邊啲圈圈啊?” in line 616. After that, she issues another other-initiation by offering her understanding of the term, in a ‘you mean X’ format, by saying “ZE.E 紅色嘅啲” (“(You mean) the red ones.”).

We have seen so far that zikhai can issue repair-initiations. Moreover, it can also be used to introduce items in repair proper. Consider extract (25).

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22 “Free cab” actually refers to the university’s shuttle bus between the campus and the resident hall.

23 cf. the connective use of zikhai which show understandings (in Section 4.2, extract (17) and (18)). In repair marker use of zikhai (in other-initiations), the expression prefaced by zikhai is a question. On the other hand, in connective use of zikhai, the expression prefaced by zikhai is not a question.
(25)  [C01]

250  A: 係啊，有糧出啊，唔得嘅，跟住我哋叫個茶去食。
251  B: 係啊，快啲陪我出去換，換嘅，早啲換，早啲走啊，可以食個 tea
252  啲啊，食壽司 tea 啰可以。
253  A: 食咩壽司 tea 啰？
254  → B: 唔知啊，ZE.E 想問- 可- 可能有 tea set 呢，我突然間好想食壽司。
255  (.)
256  A: 有興趣。
257  B: 一兩件都好開心。
258  A: 你去百佳買啊。

In extract (25), B utters an expression “壽司 tea” (line 252) which appears to be an unfamiliar term to A. A therefore issues an other-initiation and locates the term in which she finds trouble in the following turn (line 253). B in the next turn tries to resolve the trouble-source by explaining the term. He first shows some uncertainty about using the term, saying “唔知啊” which shows that he steps back a bit. Then, he tries to explain what he is saying is that they (A and B) can find a place which serves sushi for tea-lunch. Here in line 254, B is doing self-repair after other-initiation. He uses zikhai to signal that what comes after is a repair proper.24

4.2.5  Pause-filler/ Floor-holder

In some cases, zikhai do not seem to have any meanings and do not contribute much in an utterance. These zikhai are pause-fillers or floor-holders, which are similar to jiushi and jiushishuo in Mandarin examined by Biq (2001). The function of these zikhai is to fill up

24 cf. the connective and also resumption use of zikhai. Although zikhai in connective, resumption and repair use can be in similar positions to connect two units of talks (of the same speaker), what follows zikhai is an elaboration for connective use, a simple continuation for resumption use, and a repair of other-initiation for repair use. (Please refer to examples in different usages and compare the differences among these three.)
pauses in conversations, either in the middle of the TCU-in-progress or between successive TCUs. Zikhai here does not have much concrete meanings. The talk is still understandable and syntactically complete without them. In other words, the original semantic meaning of zikhai becomes more bleached or empty. The fact that the syntactic structure of the utterance continues after zikhai is the major criteria to distinguish pause-fillers from repair markers. The interactional role of pause-filler is to hold the floor for the current speaker, and tells the other parties in the conversation that the speaker still has something more to say. Consider (26), which was shown as (14) and (19).

(26) [C04]

H: 我諗住佢嗰陣時(.). Zikhai 有個職位啦: [喺聯合國
G: [嗯嗯
H: 其實原來已經兩三年嚟
G: 誰:: 03 年嚟, >03 年到而家 ZE<哈哈哈三年嚟
H: .h Zikhai 我覺得佢嘅時已經叫叫幾風光, 嚟返身彩樣走架個

Zikhai in line 9 does not have any meaning to itself. The whole utterance is still understandable and the syntax of the whole utterance is complete without zikhai. H is having trouble in finding the next word after he has said “我諗住佢嘅時”. The utterance so far is incomplete as evidenced by its syntactic structure. H at this point is searching a little bit for the next word, as indicated by the brief pause and zikhai, and then his talk resumes.

Quoted from Clark & Wasow (1998), “Jefferson (1989) found, speakers won’t tolerate a pause mid-utterance that is more than about one second long. When speakers anticipate too long a pause, they need to deal with it. They can use a filler, editing expression, or preliminary commitment to the next constituent.” (p.238)

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25 Successive TCUs can be those in multi-TCU turns or cross speaker turns.
Similar to extract (26), zikhai in line 615 of (27) is a pause-filler. In the middle of E’s turn indicated by the arrow, E cuts off after the syllable “日”. It shows that he may have some hesitation (e.g. on uttering the next due word, the formulation of the utterance, or any others). He uses zikhai to fill up the pause and he continues to unfold the rest of the current TCU. Again, the meaning of zikhai here is empty and it does nothing except being there.

In extracts (26) and (27), zikhai is used as a pause-filler in the middle of the current TCU. It can also be found between successive TCUs in the same turn, as shown in the two extracts below.

(28) [C04]

203 G: 啊, 係喺, 唔第三, 亦都 ZE 詛過去幾年, h 係 04 年
204 G → 大家一路擔心< 沙士會復發啦, ZE 最後發覺就有事. 但係
205 引伸出就禽流感啦, ZE 唔系有咩感指到話, 原來好多年之前 h 已=
206 H: [唔好]
207 G: =經有禽流感嘅嘅 h, [大陸原來係係住家唔係 h, 唔, 唔係(.] 而家=
In (28), G comes to a possible completion point of his current TCU after ”>大家一路擔心<沙士會復發啦” in line 204. However, level intonation signals that he has not finished his turn. He continues and says “最後發覺就冇-冇事啦", which is simply a continuity from his previous talk and nothing is being elaborated. Zikhai in line 204 between ”>大家一路擔心<沙士會復發啦” and “最後發覺就冇-冇事啦” does not have any meaning and therefore it serves as pause-filler and it is found between successive TCUs of the same speaker’s turn.

The case in extract (29) is similar. Zikhai in both lines 315 and 319 are pause-fillers. The utterances followed by zikhai in both cases are not elaboration. The speaker is just claiming the floor as ‘I have got more to say’. Pause-fillers (or floor-holders) are particularly useful when the current speaker has come to a possible completion point and wants to hold on to his current turn. Otherwise, a next speaker may come in by self-selection. For instance, at line 319 in extract (29), H’s TCU has come to a possible completion syntactically and intonationaly. However, after several beats of laughter, H says ”ZE.È:" and claims his floor. It shows that H intends to continue. However, although the floor is gained, H probably has not

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26 cf. zikhai in extracts (16) - (18) which are doing elaboration work of previous (either own or others’) talk.
constructed the utterance yet, as indicated by the brief pause followed by a click and another pause-filler “誒”. After all these efforts, he finally manages to talk and goes on with his comment “好怪囉我覺得呢啲現象”.

In sum, as we see in this section, the copula use and textual connective use of zikhai are still found in conversations. Other than these two basic functions, zikhai gains some new functions in conversation. It can be used as a resumption marker which ties a speaker’s turn back to his/her own earlier turn after intervening turns. Zikhai can also be a repair marker that indicates self-/other-initiations and introduces the repair item. In addition, zikhai can be used as a pause-filler.

5. Distribution of Zikhai

In the previous section, we have seen that zikhai has a few pronunciation variations (Section 4.1) and various conversational functions (Section 4.2). Then, questions may be asked, such as whether zikhai occurs (or does not occur) in some particular slot in a turn, or whether there are any pronunciation variations reversed for particular functions (or in other direction: whether any conversational functions favor certain pronunciation variations). The answers to these questions could be partly answered from the statistical facts of the data. We will see if there are inter-relationships between: 1) pronunciation variations and functions; 2) pronunciation variations and positions in turn/TCU; and 3) functions and positions in turn/TCU of zikhai. Before answering any of these questions, I will show the criteria I used to categorize the instances of zikhai in the data.
Counting of functions

Basically, the functions of zikhai are distinguished according to the analysis and categorizations suggested in Section 4.2. All instances of zikhai fall into one (and only one) of the six categories, namely: 1) copula; 2) textual connective; 3) resumption marker; 4) repair marker; 5) pause-filler; and 6) undetermined.

The category of undetermined is reserved for those instances which lack sufficient evidences to claim whether it should fall into any of the first five categories. For example,

(30) [C03]

152 F: umhum
153 E: ZE E 佢哋想睇燒炭死者吖嘛，所以可能有 case 問話會過案頂嘅 我
154 所以而家 .hh 嗯呢點解冇我咁 s- ( ) 中心同唔啲鑑好鬼 friend
155 F: Umhum [ umhum
156 → E: [ heh ZE 反而同啲嘅 - ZE-
157 F: [s- CP 有咁 friend aa4?
158 E: 誠:: 對人嚟同:: 暢問仲同係維護個關係嘅

The second zikhai in line 156 could be a pause-filler or a repair. The syntax of “ZE 反而同啲嘅 -” is unfinished. What follows could be a continuation of the current utterance (and therefore a pause-filler for zikhai), or a repair item/fresh start (and therefore a repair marker in this case). The fact that speaker E abandons the rest of the TCU simply leaves the role of the second zikhai undetermined. The second zikhai is therefore sorted into the category of undetermined. On the contrary, the function of the first zikhai in line 156 is identifiable. In line 154, E is saying that they are getting along with those forensic pathologists quite well. Implied by the utterance unfolded so far until the cut-off in line 156, E is very likely to say they do not get along too well with some other people. This is indicated by the connective “反而” which introduces counter-arguments. Also, what comes after “同啲” is very likely to
be a noun phrase, which introduces some other group of people in contrast to forensic pathologists. Therefore, although the current TCU has never come to completion, we can still see that the first *zikhai* is going to introduce an elaboration that describes the situation from the opposite point of view: who they are *not* getting along with. *Zikhai* in this case is sorted as a textual connective.

In most of the cases of successive *zikhai*, if the last member is not a pause-filler, the first (or first few) member(s) would be categorized as undetermined since it is difficult to tell they are pause-fillers or recyclings of functional *zikhai*. However, if all the successive *zikhai* (including the last one) are completely empty in meaning as evidenced by the surrounding utterance, they are all counted as pause-fillers. Consider the following,

(31)  [C04]  

Both instances of *zikhai* in extract (31) are empty in meaning. In line 291, G simply continues his talk and nothing is elaborated after the two *zikhai*. The utterance is still understandable without the two *zikhai* and therefore they are pause-fillers. This can be further supported by the presence of the slight stretching in “ZE.E” and the brief pause between the “ZE.E” and “ZE”. Both of these indications show that G may be experiencing some trouble in continuing his talk and he is trying to hold the floor. Thus, they are both counted as pause-fillers.

On the other hand, some instances of *zikhai* appear to have more than one function.
Zikhai in line 602 is syntactically a copula that connects “泓都·堅尼地城” and “殮房嘅邊”， as the original sentence would be “泓都·堅尼地城ZE.E殮房嘅邊”. However, it can also be considered as a repair marker as it introduces a self-initiation. This is because the next item after “ZE.E”, which is a location indicated by the question word “邊度”, is due but the item is not readily available yet. To make the case more complicated, during the word search, F stretches the syllable of “ZE.E” to avoid the potential silence. Eventually, this instance of zikhai is categorized as copula. The reason for excluding the possibility of pause-filler (and also repair marker) is that the sentence would be ungrammatical without zikhai. It is just the stretching of sound (or precisely the word search) happened to occur in zikhai. It can also explain why it is not considered as repair marker. Although the sequence of “zikhai plus question word” can be a repair-initiation, simply the fact that the zikhai is obligated in this sentence rules out the option of counting it as a repair marker. As the result, copula is the best fitted function in this situation and it is counted so. Similar cases are handled in the same way that the most appropriate function (based on the sequential context where zikhai
occurs) is adopted.

In some cases, the roles of zikhai are uncertain. Consider extract (17), which is presented as (33) below,

(33)  [C03]

250  E: 兩睇啦::: 嗨= 十二月尾呢 h 就: 考埋試
251  F: 假
252  E: 假設亦都考 近理數咩嘅, ZE.E 喂 module exam 就考唔架(聽)
253  F: [假啦
254  E: 嗨嘅一刻如果你有個嘅様嘅 offer 傳我= 嗨我可以有得揀嘅( )我可以揀
255  計= 如果走呢( )可以繼續揀嘅 > 繼續<, 不過我嘅唔會繼續留 centre s-
256  老細都啲 w= 覺得我應該再留條度架
257  ( )

258  F: ZE.E 佢想你出去( )行-. ZE.E 佢都想你啊

We have seen that the first zikhai in the arrowed turn is a textual connective. The problem goes to the one in the second TCU. After the cut-off of the syllable ”行” is a new TCU is initiated, and it resembles the first (both syntactically and semantically, which shows the inferred understanding of F). If we see the second TCU as a fresh start after the abandonment of the first TCU, the second zikhai would be a textual connective, as first zikhai is actually ”deleted” together with rest the first TCU. Or, it can be the case that the second zikhai is a repair marker that introduces a partial replacement substituting only part of the first TCU, namely 佢想你出去( )行-, with the first zikhai is still there being a textual connective and not deleted. Both cases have equal possibilities and it is hard to tell which one is really the case because the speaker’s intention is often not known. Thus, the second zikhai (and cases of this kind) is counted as undetermined.
**Counting of positions in turn/TCU**

For the term ‘positions’, I refer to the positions of *zikhai* relative to a turn or a TCU. All instances of *zikhai* are classified into one (and only one) of the five categories, namely: 1) turn-initial; 2) TCU-initial; 3) mid-TCU; 4) TCU-final; and 5) undetermined²⁷.

Clarification is needed for the distinction between the term turn-initial and TCU-initial. By turn-initial, I mean the initial position of the first TCU of each turn (cf. *zikhai* in the arrowed line of extracts (17), (18) and (19)). On the other hand, TCU-initial refers to the initial position of the second and any subsequent TCUs in a (multi-TCU) turn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X:</th>
<th>#_____</th>
<th>$______</th>
<th># = Turn-initial position;</th>
<th># = Turn-initial position;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y:</td>
<td>#______</td>
<td>$______</td>
<td>$<strong><strong>[</strong></strong>]</td>
<td>$ = TCU-initial position;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X:</td>
<td>[___],</td>
<td>[. .]</td>
<td>. = TCU boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.0** Distinction between positions of turn- and TCU-initial

If a speaker abandons the on-going TCU and starts a new one which is prefaced with *zikhai*, this *zikhai* will be counted as in the TCU-initial position.

The category of undetermined, similar to what we have done in sorting out the functions of *zikhai*, is reserved for those instances which lack sufficient evidences to claim whether it should go into any of the first four categories. We can refer to extract (33) which we have seen just now as consisting of an undetermined position of *zikhai*. As we cannot decide whether “佢養唔到你喇” is a fresh start or a partial replacement, we cannot decide whether the second *zikhai* is in turn- or TCU-initial position. Therefore, it is sorted as

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²⁷ In principle, *zikhai* can be a TCU itself, e.g. as an abandoned TCU. However, there are no such instance in our data and therefore the position as “itself as a TCU” is not included.
A special method is used to classify successive pause-filler use of *zikhai* in turn-/TCU-initial positions. The first member of successive *zikhai* is counted as turn-/TCU-initial while other member(s) is/are counted as mid-TCU. The reason is that *zikhai*, even if it is a pause-filler, is a linguistic item which actually occupies the place of where it is. Therefore, as shown in extract (34) below, the first member of the successive *zikhai* (line 294) occupies the TCU-initial position. Speaker G’s floor is claimed and her current TCU becomes effective. Therefore, the second member of the successive *zikhai* is counted as in the position of mid-TCU.

![Extract from the text](image)

Instances of repair marker use of *zikhai* are treated with extra care. In the cases where *zikhai* marks the repair of (lexical or phrasal) recycling, replacement or restructuring, *zikhai* is counted as in the mid-TCU position as long as upcoming utterance is not a fresh start. By fresh start (or restart), I mean the cases that a speaker abandoned his/her on-going TCU and start a new one. The new TCU has a new syntactic structure and is semantically not very related to the abandoned TCU. On the other hand, speaker may restructre the whole TCU-in-progress or restructure only a part of it. If the restructuring only replaces part of the trouble-source TCU or the restructured utterance is conveying similar meaning to the trouble-source TCU, *zikhai* in these cases are counted as in the mid-TCU positions.
In extract (35) above, zikhai in the arrowed line is a repair marker in mid-TCU position. The trouble-source verb “搞” is replaced by “要” and the replacement is carried out within a TCU. The position of zikhai in line 222 is therefore considered as mid-TCU.

In the above extract, the utterance prefaced with the shaded zikhai in line 247 is a restart. It is supported by the discontinuity of syntax between “佢唔係好 consistently 呢去:” and “唔呢十年呢, 其實佢已經有一定嘅經濟實力啊各樣嘅” and the fact that the semantics are not consistent between the abandoned TCU and the new TCU. Therefore zikhai in line 247 is counted as in the TCU-initial position.
5.1. Relationship between pronunciation variations and functions of zikhai

As we are clear about how functions and positions of zikhai are categorized, let us first have a look at the distribution of functions against different variations of zikhai in Table 5.1 (graphical representation in Figure 5.1) below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variations</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copula</td>
<td>Textual connective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.HAI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.AI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.EI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E.WA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Distribution of usages vs. variations of zikhai

† All percentages are based on the total of 244 instances
From the figures in Table 5.1, we can see that *zikhai* (as a group) is mostly used as pause-fillers (41.8%). The second common function is textual connective (25.4 %) and the third is repair marker (23.0%). Individually, from Figure 5.1 we see that ZE.E is most frequently used as pause-fillers (56 [check, it’s 55 in the table] instances in 244 *zikhai* in total, 23.0%). Other relatively frequent usages are pause-filler use of ZE (40 instances, 16.4%), repair marker use of ZE.E (31 instances, 12.7%), textual connective use of ZE (24 instances, 9.8%) and repair marker use of ZE (21 instances, 8.6%). The others are not frequently used. Some categories, such as resumption use of ZE.EI and repair marker use of ZE.AI, are not found in our data.

Although we pointed out in Section 2 that the copula is one of the basic functions of *zikhai*, cases of *zikhai* being used as a copula is rare – only 4 instances out of 244 in total.
(1.6%). On the contrary, zikhai is mainly used as a pause-filler, which is completely empty in meaning. These two pieces of observations are solid evidences for zikhai’s grammaticalization.

Also, from the figures above, one of our questions in the beginning of this section is answered. We do not observe any correspondence between pronunciations and functions. Thus, it is believed that no variations are particularly reserved for certain functions. The reverse is also true, that no functions are carried out with any particular variations. It can be exemplified by a simple instance as extract (37) below. The two zikhai are both used as pause-fillers in the same TCU, but they are pronounced differently, one with ZE.E while another with ZE.HAI. (See also the contrast in extracts (14)-(15) and (17)-(18))

(37)  [C04]

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142 H:</td>
<td>招啦, &lt; .h[一招就 ZE.E (. 特顯佢自己嘅嘢嘢(.)) 作经验丰富, 但係呢=</td>
<td>143 G:</td>
<td>喂喂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>144 H:</td>
<td>=方面我覺得 ZE.E 唔係話 ZE.HAI 許正確=你要講经验丰富=佢係大陸</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Relationship between pronunciation variations and positions in turn/TCU of zikhai

The numbers of instances of different variations of zikhai in different positions are shown in Table 5.2 (Graphical representation in Figure 5.2) below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZE.HAI</td>
<td>Turn-initial</td>
<td>TCU-initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZE.E.WA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Distribution of positions vs. variations of zikhai

All percentages are based on the total of 244 instances.

Figure 5.2 Distribution of positions vs. variations of zikhai
In Table 5.2, we can see that zikhai (as a group) is mostly found in mid-TCU (48.4%), followed by TCU-initial position (41.0%). If we consider each variation individually, we see that most frequent instance is \(ZE.E\) in mid-TCU position (61 instances in total 244 zikhai in total, 25.0%). Other frequent instances are \(ZE.E\) in TCU-initial position (46 instances, 18.9%), \(ZE\) in mid-TCU position (45 instances, 18.4%) and \(ZE\) in TCU-initial position (39 instances, 16.0%). Other instances are not frequent. Some categories, such as \(ZE.HAI\) and \(ZE.AI\) in turn-initial position are not found in our data.

Furthermore, no correspondence between pronunciations with positions of zikhai is observed. Extract (38) and (39) below illustrate this fact. Zikhai in these two extracts are found in the mid-TCU position but they are pronounced differently, one with \(ZE.E\) while another with \(ZE.HAI\).

(38) [C03]

606  F: =我嘅跟住佢跑呢 =我驚俾人拐咗 hh h he he [嚟度又有車又有刺客仭=  
607  E:          [吓
608  F: =嚟到的士啊喺時, 好黑喺喺路(...) 於是死死地跟住佢跑
609  E:          啾咕
610  F: 嘟先跑到出去泓都度
611  E: 啾咕
612  (.)
613  F: 就係嚟嘅

→ 614  E: 泓都-堅尼地城, ZE.E::: 過度啊?=廢房廈度(...) 未到
615  F: um::: [入- 入一條街啲:]  
616  E:          [焚化爐廈邊 ] 焚化爐廈邊
617  F: 係啊(...) 係由一路直路- 一路(.) 跑跑跑
Summarizing the findings from Section 5.1 and 5.2, we come to the conclusion that neither the functions nor the positions of zikhai would be the factor that leads to its variations in phonology. This claim can be exemplified by the following extract, where zikhai with different pronunciations are doing the same thing (filling pauses) in the same position (mid-TCU).

Alternatively, we can say that the factor of phonological variations of zikhai is not a constraint affecting the functions as well as the positions of zikhai. For example, ZE.E is a copula in extract (15) but a pause-filler in extract (28).

Based on the conclusion that pronunciation variations do not contribute to zikhai’s functions, we can assume that all the variations can be treated as a whole – zikhai.

5.3. Relationship between functions and positions of zikhai

If there are no regular patterns between phonological variations of zikhai and their functions and positions, what is the distribution of zikhai’s functions in different positions? Take a look at Table 5.3 below, which shows different functions of zikhai against their positions.
Table 5.3  Distribution of usages vs. positions of zikhai

† All percentages are based on the total of 244 instances

Based on the figures in the above table, we will have a brief summary of each function in different positions.
5.3.1 Copula in different positions

All instances of the copula use of zikhai are found in mid-TCU (4 instances in total, 1.6%). It is not surprising due to the syntactic constraint\(^{28}\) of Cantonese that copula is used in the middle of a sentence (cf. examples (1), (2) and extracts (14), (15)).

5.3.2 Textual connective in different positions

Instances of connective use of zikhai are widely spread in distribution that they are found in all of the four positions of turn-initial (13 instances, 5.3%), TCU-initial (37 instances, 15.2%), mid-TCU (9 instances, 3.7%) and TCU-finial (3 instances, 1.2%).

Those in turn-initial positions are mostly used by speakers to show understandings or give their inferred conclusions of the prior other-speaker’s turn (see extracts (17) and (18)).

For the connective uses in TCU-initial position, the cases are either showing understanding of the prior other-speaker’s turn after devices of acknowledgement or agreement (see extract (20) in Section 4.2.2 or extract (41) below), or self-elaboration of previous TCU in current speaker’s own turn (see extract (16)).

\(^{28}\) Although in Cantonese the order of items in a sentence may sometimes be altered (Cheung, 1997, Fung 2007), and it may lead to a TCU-/turn-initial copula, these cases are not found in our data.
Connectives in Mid-TCU are solely doing elaboration of the immediate prior expression in one TCU. Examples can be found in extract (16) in Section 4.2.2 or in (42) below.

A few cases of zikhai are found in the TCU-final position and used as textual connectives (3 instances, 1.2%). These cases are ‘right dislocations’ where a turn-/TCU-initial zikhai is moved to the end of that turn/TCU. Example is given in (43) below.
5.3.3 **Resumption marker in different positions**

Resumption markers are usually used at the beginning of a speaker’s talk which is to be tied to his/her own prior talk located at least one turn before. It is therefore not surprising to find resumption use of zikhai at turn-initial position (2 instances, 0.8%). However, it is observed that some cases of resumption use of zikhai are found in TCU-initial position (6 instances, 2.5%). It is because the turn of resumption talk usually starts with devices that show acknowledgement (e.g. “喀”) or agreement (e.g. “係嘞”) of the immediate prior turn of another speaker, or other short turn-constructional items, as shown in (44) and (45) below.

(44) [C04]

298 G: =所以然後估一定有好多( ) 喊但少不免 >亦都今日我睇報紙都留
299 意到唔<, 喊譬如最明顯就係沙士家屬( ) 喊一定會引發可能另一輪啦,
300 —啲 ZE.AI “唔頭”:: “或者指責啊
301 H: [係啦 =揀到依啲嘅 sentiment] 啃
\[302 G: [係啦，ZE.E.WAA，啭
303 你當年做到啲樣，係未有認真好好地了結咗( ) 你而家無事又
304 好似又再推高一層，( ) 喊係真係，係好令人火滾咯

(45) [C03]

145 E: =最緊要( ) 要活得有意義啦真 h
146 F: [發光啊要
147 F: =係啦::
\[
148 E: hhhh 喻:: ( ) ZE.E( ) 就係講，覺得( ) 喔次去，去見( ) 健:: 好快手搞
149 抓條啊，不過我咁 centre 單獨都想再睡一次，不過就真係想睡一晚自殺嘅
150 個樣嘅

Resumption marker use of zikhai is not found in positions other than TCU-/turn-initial.
5.3.4 Repair marker in different positions

Repair markers are found mostly in TCU-initial positions (31 instances, 12.7%). These cases are usually restarts after abandoned TCUs in the middle of a speaker’s turn (cf. extract (36)). Repair uses of zikhai are also found in the positions of mid-TCU (25 instances, 10.2%), which are cases of self-repairs (recycling, replacement and restructuring) within TCUs. No cases of repair marker are found in the TCU-final position. It is because, if zikhai is used as repair initiators, they are usually placed near the trouble-sources (especially in same-turn self-repairs); otherwise if zikhai is used to introduce repair items, zikhai usually comes before the repair items. Repair uses of zikhai are also not found in turn-initial positions in our data.

5.3.5 Pause-filler in different positions

Cases of pause-filler use of zikhai are only found in mid-TCU (80 instances, 32.8%) and TCU-initial (22 instances, 9.0%) positions. The reason is that it is possible for a speaker to have trouble (in formulating her upcoming talk, in searching the next due item, etc.) anywhere of his/her turn-in-progress and therefore he/she could have paused anywhere of his/her turn-in-progress. However, pause-filler use of zikhai is neither found in TCU-final nor found as a TCU itself. It is explained in the beginning of this section that zikhai in these two positions are mostly abandoned TCUs and therefore very likely to be counted as undetermined in function.

5.3.6 Undetermined cases in different positions

There are in total 10 cases of zikhai (4.1%) whose function is undetermined. As explained earlier in this section, cases of undetermined function of zikhai are those found in successive zikhai or in abandoned TCUs. (See extract (30)).
6. Conclusion

In this report, we have given an analysis of the pronunciation variations and conversational functions of the Cantonese expression *zikhai*. We have seen that the Cantonese expression *zikhai* has six different pronunciation variations in actual conversation, which are ZE.HAI, ZE.AI, ZE.EI, ZE.E, ZE and ZE.E.WA. The standard pronunciation [ts k ʰ x i˧˩] is no longer found and, among those six variations, ZE.E is most frequently used by speakers in actual conversation. The second most frequently used variation is ZE. These two variations take up over 80% of all the variations of *zikhai* found in our data.

We tried to establish the meaning of *zikhai* by consulting a number of Cantonese dictionaries. From these dictionaries, we have seen that *zikhai* has two basic functions, copula and textual connective. However, Cantonese is a spoken language and the actual usages of *zikhai* are not fully revealed unless we look into how Cantonese speakers actually use it. It is therefore the reason we rely on spontaneous conversation as data to carry out the analysis.

After all the instances of *zikhai* in the data are examined, different conversational functions of *zikhai* are distilled out. *Zikhai* has actually taken up three more functions in actual conversation in addition to its basic functions given in the dictionaries. We have seen that *zikhai*, originally being a copula and a textual connective, can also be used as a resumption marker, a repair marker or a pause-filler in conversation. The meaning of *zikhai* is somewhat bleached when it is used as resumption marker and repair marker. The meaning of *zikhai* is further bleached when it is used as a pause-filler. It is found that the copula use of *zikhai* is not frequent. The majority of *zikhai* are pause-fillers, whose meaning is completely empty. The fact that *zikhai* has become semantically bleached and taken up new
interactional functions are a result of it being grammaticalized. The statistics also indicate that there is no one-to-one correspondence between phonological variations and different functions/distribution of zikhai.
References

Hamburg: Buske.


**Dictionaries Consulted**


### Appendix

Transcription conventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of speech overlap</td>
<td>[</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending of speech overlap</td>
<td>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short pause (&lt; 0.2 second)</td>
<td>(.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer pause (&gt; 0.2 second)</td>
<td>(..)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latching/continuous speech</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing intonation (with natural pause)</td>
<td>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final intonation</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonation of question†</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclaiming/excited intonation</td>
<td>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks delivered in a relatively slow pace</td>
<td>&lt;....&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks delivered in a relatively fast pace</td>
<td>&gt;....&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks delivered in louder voices</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks delivered in a relatively quiet voices</td>
<td>******</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks delivered in a relatively more quiet voices</td>
<td>******</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations or laughter</td>
<td>h h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-breathing sound</td>
<td>.h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut-off of sound</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching of sound</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal gesture</td>
<td>((clear throat))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear speech</td>
<td>(</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† The ‘?’ symbol is usually taken as raising intonation of an utterance. However, unlike English, Cantonese is a tonal language in which questions are mainly marked by lexical question markers. The ‘?’ symbol in the project is used to indicate that the utterance is a question and it is not necessarily in raising intonation.

Other remark:

Words with no corresponding written Chinese characters are represented in *Jyutping* (Linguistics Society of Hong Kong, 1993)