

Simple introduction of Taiwanese Romanization System (TL)

The phonology of Taiwanese Min Nan is very complicated, and I just have a bit of knowledge of linguistics, content of the article is not completed, and it has some mistakes possibly.

Taiwanese Min Nan is a dialect of Min Nan, which is a variety of Chinese. There are lots of Romanization systems for the dialect, but Taiwanese Romanization System (台灣閩南語羅馬字拼音方案, *Tâi-uân Bân-lâm-gí Lô-má-jī* Phing-im Hong-àn, abbr. **TL**) is the recent one published by government. Besides, TL is very similar to *Pêh-ōē-jī*, another famous Romanization for that language. The accent of Kaohsiung, a city in Southern Taiwan, is thought to be the most approaching accent to the general one of Taiwanese Min Nan, so the phones shown in the article are mainly of that accent.

There 2 kinds of the phoneme combination of a syllable in TL:

1. Formal form: [C (onset)] + V¹(with diacritical to show tone probably) + [C (coda)]
2. Numeral form: [C (onset)] + V (without diacritical) + [C (coda)] + tone number
eg: *thak* ([t^hāk¹], to read) can be written as *thak8*. The vertical short line above “a” is a diacritical mark for tone 8.

Consonant (Syllabic Consonant Excluded)

TL	IPA	
	onset	coda
b	b	N/A ²
p	p ³	p ⁷ 4

1 Syllabic consonant, monophthong, diphthong, or triphthong.

2 N/A: in the table, it means “not used for”.

ph	p ^h	N/A
m	m	m
d	d	N/A
t	t	t ⁷
th	t ^h	N/A
n	n	n
l	l	N/A
ts	t͡s: when the vowel is (or starts by) i. ⁵ t͡s̺: or else	N/A
tsh	t͡sh: when the vowel is (or starts by) i. t͡sh̺: or else	N/A
j	d͡z: when the vowel is (or starts by) i. d͡z̺: or else	N/A
g	g	N/A
k	k	k ⁷
kh	k ^h	N/A
ng	ŋ	ŋ
h ⁶	h	ʔ ⁷

Vowel & Syllabic consonant

monophthong

TL		IPA
Formal form	Trad. form	
a		a
ann	a ⁿ	ã
e		e
enn	e ⁿ	ẽ
i		i

3 [p], [t], [k] here are unaspirated.

4 ͡: no audible release.

5 For example: *tsiam1* [t͡ɕiam¹]

6 Comparison: *ho2* [hə¹] and *oh8* [ə⁷]

inn	i ⁿ	ĩ
o		ə: southern Taiwan accents (similar to the general one) o, ɤ : some variants of accents.
onn	o ⁿ	õ
oo	o ⁷	ɔ
u		u
unn	u ⁿ	ũ

ps. -nn or ⁿ means nasalized.

The following monophthong are not used in general accent of Taiwanese Min Nan.

TL	IPA
ir	ɨ
er	ə
ee	ɛ

Syllabic consonant

TL	IPA
m	m̩
ng	ŋ̩

Diphthong and Triphthong

non-syllabic mark are not shown. The di/triphthong is combined with monophthong, hence the IPA are not shown here. -nn can be written as “n”.

TL		
au	io	ui
ainn	iaunn	ue
ai	iau	uann
iunn	iann	uainn

7 In Unicode, the number of the little dot by o is U+0358 (combining dot above right).

iu	ia	uai
ua		

P.S.:

- Because of relaxed pronunciation, in Taiwan nowadays, *ia* in “*iat*” and “*ian*” are pronounced [e] (or [ɛ]) usually. In other cases, *ia* is pronounced [ja].
- nn (ⁿ) should be appended to the end of the pure vowel(s). eg: *miann⁵*, *iunn⁵*

The following diphthong are not (or seldom) used in general accent of Taiwanese Min Nan. Non-syllabic mark may be shown.

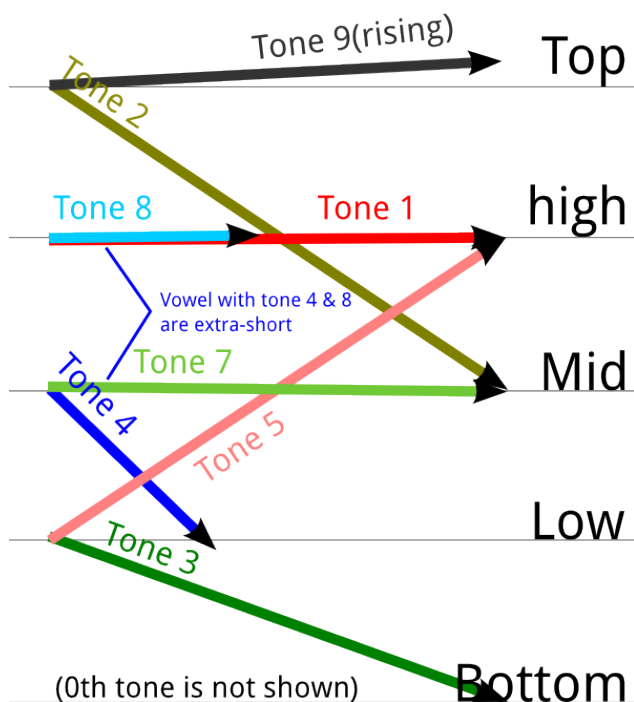
TL	IPA
ere	ɶ
uee	ueɛ
ionn	iõ ⁸
uinn	uĩ

Tone mark

Min Nan is a tonal language. In Kaohsiung accent of Taiwanese Min Nan, there are 9 tones which are the 0th zone and the 1st-9th tone except the 7th tone, which is used in some accents.

The figure of tone contours of Kaohsiung accent is shown below:

8 It's used in the word, *uan1-ionn1* (鴛鴦, mandarin duck). Because I read the word as *uan1-iunn1*, which is also the written form of the word in general accent, I don't know the correct phone of “o” here. [iõ] is just a guess of phone.



Vowels with tone 4 & 8 are extra-short (IPA: [◌̚]), which means the duration of the sound of vowel is quite shorter than normal one.

The contour of Tone 9 shown above is just a marking suggestion, and it's a high-rising tone.

The contours of 0th tone are of variety, and the word/monosyllable morpheme with the 0th sound or the previous word/monosyllable morpheme influences the contour of the 0th tone. The duration of a vowel with the tone is between that of tone 4 or 8 and that of any other tone.

In TL, There are 2 ways to mark tone, formal form and numeral form. Formal form is to use diacritics to mark that. The other one is to use number.

In numerical form, the tone number should added after the vowel (when there is no coda in the syllable), or after the coda. eg. *iau1*, *tsinn5*, *thak8*.

The following is the tone chart (tone1-8) of the writing system of TL Romanization. The tone contour (IPA) is based on Kaohsiung accent.

Vowel *a* is taken for example:

Tone Name	Tone Num.	TL		
		Form. form	Num. form	IPA
Dark level	1	a ⁹	a1	a ^{˥˥}
Light level	2	á	a2	a ^{˨˨}
Dark rising	3	à	a3	a ^{˨˥}
Light rising	4	a + p/t/k/h (eg. <i>ah</i>)	a + p/t/k/h + 4 (eg. <i>ah4</i>)	ǎ+p̚/t̚/ k̚/?+ ^{˥˥} eg. [ǎ ^{˥˥} + ^{˥˥}]
Dark departing	5	â	a5	a ^{˥˥˥}
Light departing	6	(Not available in Kaohsiung accent)		
Dark checked	7	ā	a7	a ^{˥˥˥˥}
Light checked	8	á ¹⁰ + p/t/k/h (eg. <i>ah</i>)	a + p/t/k/h + 8 (eg. <i>ah8</i>)	ǎ+p̚/t̚/ k̚/?+ ^{˥˥} eg. [ǎ ^{˥˥} + ^{˥˥}]

Syllable without coda or with coda m/n/ng can't be in dark/light checked tone.

At least a accent (eg. Lukang accent) have (has) the 6th tone. In formal form, the diacritic for 6th tone is caron (◌̆), for example: *ǎ* (*o6*). The contour of the tone in Lukang accent is [˥˥˥˥].

The diacritic for the 9th tone in formal form is double acute accent (◌̊), eg. *ǎ̊* (*o9*).

Besides, no matter which tone of the syllable after double hyphen (--) is, the syllable is in 0th tone. eg. *ji't* (day) in *āu--ji't* (day after tomorrow) is in 8th tone originally, but it's in 0th tone here. The tone of the syllable ahead of the double hyphens is not changed.

9 Without diacritics. So is the one of 4th tone.

10 ◌̊: the vertical line above is U+030D (unicode).

Tonemark of Some Vowels in Formal Form

In formal form, the diacritic have to be add on only one vowel of diphthong/triphthong.

To determine which vowel should be added a diacritic, a person should follow the order of priority shown below first. The vowel with the biggest priority should be added a diacritic:

Priority: Bigger ←-----→Smaller
a > oo > e/o > i/u > er

Eg: *lâi* (a>i), *Liâu* (a>i/u), *erê* (e>er).

When the diphthong is *ui* or *iu*, the succeeding vowel must be added a diacritic. eg. *uī* and *iû*.

If the vowel is oo, the diacritic must be added on the first o, eg: *ôo*.

When there are no vowel but a syllabic consonant in a syllable ,the diacritic must be added on “m” or “n”. eg: *ng̃* or *m̃*.

Tone Sandhi

Tone Sandhi of Taiwanese Min Nan is pretty complex. The tone changing of 0th tone which is related to double hyphen (--) is introduced in the previous paragraph. Even though there are more rules of tone sandhi or tone changing, only the rule for multisyllabic words is shown here:

As double hyphen is used to split a word and some kinds of words (eg. directional complements), syllables in multisyllabic word is spitted by one hyphen -, For example: *jīt-tsi* (diary). All but the tone of the last syllable in multisyllabic word must be changed.

Eg: The tone of the two syllables *Tâi-tiong* in

Tâi-tiong-tshī (Taichung City) must be changed, and so must that of *tshun* in *tshun-thinn*.

In Kaohsiung accent, the rule for the syllables of which tone must be changed is:

The tone (number) of the syllable that should be changed		Result
1	→	7
5	→	7
7	→	3
3	→	2
2	→	1
4	(if the coda is -h) →	2
	(or else) →	8
8	(if the coda is -h) →	3
	(or else) →	4

For example:

tshun1 in *tshun1-thinn1* is pronounced [tshun^h↑], while *tshun1* is pronounced [tshun^h↑] originally.

Niú in *Niú-iok* (New York) is pronounced [niú^h↑], not [niú^h↑].

References

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