

Only-Focus in Taiwanese: *kan-na* vs. *nia-(nia)*

Introduction. Patterning with Mandarin verb-adjacent *zhi-(you)* and sentence-final *eryi*, Taiwanese has corresponding only-foci expressed by *kan-na* and *nia-(nia)* respectively. It is argued that *kan-na* is a verb with exhaustivity, and *nia-(nia)* is a sentence-final particle (SFP) expressing speaker-oriented exhaustivity at the CP-level (cf. Pan 2018, 2022)

Kan-na. *Kan-na* is typically adjacent to the verb. Components in its c-commanding domain can all be focused. In (1), *kan-na* is adjoined to the matrix verb, focalizing the object NP, the verb, or the entire VP. In the clausal complementation (=2), all that is c-commanded by *kan-na* can be focalized, including the verb, CP-complement, the embedded subject, and the embedded predicate. Interestingly, when *kan-na* is adjoined to the subject, it can only focalize the subject (=3). It is therefore suggested that *kan-na* does not c-command the VP (later explained in (7)).

- (1) 阿明 *kan-na* 买果子 (2) 阿明 *kan-na* 讲阿惠腹肚疼 (3) *Kan-na* 阿明买果子
 ‘A-ming only bought fruit.’ ‘A-ming only said A-hui had a stomachache.’ ‘Only A-ming bought fruit.’
 Only: {buy, fruit, buy fruit} Only: {say, A-hui, had a stomachache} Only: {A-ming}

Even though *kan-na* seems to be verb-adjoined, it does not behave like an adverb or an adjective. Typically, adverbs modify predicates; adjectives modify nouns. *Kan-na* presents mixed properties: The in-situ object cannot be directly modified (=4), while the fronted object (=5) and the subject can be (=6). We suggest *kan-na* is actually a verb, rather than any adverbial-like element, so it appears to be adjoined sometimes with a noun and sometimes with a VP. The verbal analysis receives strong evidence from the existential construction (=8), where *kan-na* serves as the only element heading the predicate, and no other verb co-occurs. Pre-adjacent to the subject or the fronted object, *kan-na* is therefore analyzed as (7) and (8). Crucially, *kan-na* c-commands the subject but not the following VP; therefore, neither the VP nor elements within the VP in (7) is focalized. This also applies to the focalized fronted object in (8), where the subject and the VP are not focalized for the same reason.

- (4) *阿明买 *kan-na* 果子 Intended: ‘A-ming bought only fruit.’
 (5) *kan-na* 果子, 阿明买了 ‘Only fruit, A-ming bought.’
 (6) 桌顶 *kan-na* 一本书 ‘There is only a book on the table.’
 (7) [CP [VP *kan-na* 阿明] [VP 买果子]] (=3)
 (8) [CP [VP *kan-na* 果子] [CP 阿明 [VP 买(矣)]]] (=5)

Nia-nia. Sentence-final *nia-(nia)*, patterning with Mandarin *eryi*, is peripheral to the clause. According to Pan (2018, 2022), only-SFPs are located at the CP-level, expressing speaker-oriented exhaustivity. However, *nia-(nia)* does not scope over the subject (=9) (cf. Pan 2018 for Mandarin *eryi*), unless it is repaired by pre-adjacent *kan-na* (=10) or another contrastive pair (=11). This is aligned with a long-standing view that the Chinese preverbal subject is an A-bar subject (either Topic or Focus). *Nia-(nia)* also focalize elements in its c-commanding domain. As the subject is not c-commanded by *nia-(nia)* but structurally higher, it cannot be naturally focalized or scoped by *nia-(nia)*, as in (12).

- (9) 阿明买果子 *nia-(nia)* ‘A-ming bought fruit only.’ Only: {buy, fruit, buy fruit}
 (10) *Kan-na* 阿明买果子 *nia-(nia)* ‘Only A-ming bought fruit.’ Only: {A-ming}
 (11) 阿明买果子 *nia-(nia)*, # (别人无买) ‘A-ming bought fruit; no one else bought.’ Only: {A-ming}
 (12) [CP Subj [CP-only [VP Verb Obj] *nia-(nia)*]]

Conclusion. The paper examines Taiwanese only-focus led by *kan-na* and *nia-(nia)*, which is aligned with Mandarin *zhi-(you)* and *eryi*. It is argued that *kan-na* is a verb; *nia-(nia)* is an SFP at the CP-level (cf. Pan 2018). Crucially, they can only focalize elements in the c-commanding domain.