To mark or not to mark the cause, that is the question: Causal marking in Taiwanese conversation

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Abstract

The present study investigates the discourse-pragmatic functions of the causal marker *inui* in Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM) conversation and compares them with unmarked causal utterances. It also explores the intonation patterning and distribution of overt and non-overt causal utterances in TSM. The functions of *inui* are categorized into five types: (1) pure-cause marking, (2) explanation marking, (3) justification marking, (4) understanding display, and (5) information interpolation. Among them, the information-interpolating function characterizes *inui* as a non-causal logical connector. The analysis shows that *inui* is interactively driven and used to achieve social comity. It is employed particularly when a speaker recognizes the need to provide the addressee with a better and friendlier ground for conversation in order to avoid face threat, to resolve a trouble of talk, or to fill an information gap. The occurrence of *inui* is sensitive to seriousness of topics, the social relation between interlocutors, and the speaker's attitude to the topic of talk. When the speech situation does not call for an explicitly marked account, *inui* is not used. The lower frequency of *inui* compared with that of English *because* and Mandarin *yinwei* in conversation data further corroborates the interactive nature of *inui*. As for the positioning and intonation patterning, the results conform to previous findings, i.e., causal clauses tend to occur after the materials they modify.
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1. Motivation and goals

Every language has specific means to express causal relations. Since the 1980s, substantial research efforts have been directed at the functions of causal clauses in languages, including English (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987; Sweetser, 1990; Redeker, 1991; Ford, 1993; Couper-Kuhlen, 1996; Iten, 1998; Stenström, 1998; Degand, 2000; Diessel, 2005) and Mandarin Chinese (e.g., Biq, 1995; Wang, 1996, 1998; Song and Tao, 2008). These works have shown that causal markers display several levels of discourse-pragmatic functions other than to indicate pure cause–effect relations. Compared to the rich literature in English and Mandarin Chinese, far less is known about the causal clauses in Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM, or Taiwanese for short), which is a Chinese dialect originating in the Southern Min region of China and now spoken mainly in Taiwan and its outlying islets. Further, crosslinguistically, only a few studies are available that

discuss the motivation behind the marking of causal relations (Crewe et al., 1985; Chaudron and Richards, 1986; Gohl, 2000). The present paper therefore has three goals. First, we investigate the discourse-pragmatic functions of the causal marker *inui* in TSM conversation. Second, as interclausal causal relations can be entailed in the propositions even without the marking with a connective, we compare the motivations that underlie the marking and non-marking, respectively, of causal relations in TSM. Third, we investigate the positioning and intonation patterning of TSM marked and unmarked causal clauses in relation to their functional distribution.

In spite of the extensive study that has already taken place on the pragmatic functions of causal clauses in Mandarin Chinese, their investigation in TSM nevertheless remains important in several ways. First, the two dialects are phonologically distinct (Cheng and Cheng, 1994), which results in mutual unintelligibility among speakers. Second, there are syntactic differences between Peking Mandarin (generally called *Putunghua* at present) and Taiwanese, such as OV word order (Cheng, 1985:371), and other syntactic differences between Taiwanese and Taiwan Mandarin, for instance, the use of the preverbal auxiliary *you* 'have' (Cheng, 1985:359). A third and an even more important feature that distinguishes Taiwanese from Mandarin is the distinction between their pragmatic functions. TSM is a spoken vernacular learned through social interactions and its pragmatical markers are generally distinct from Mandarin. In his study on cognates between Taiwanese and Mandarin, Cheng (1981, cited in Cheng, 1985:353) notes that only 15% of the function words in the two dialects converge, in contrast to the 70% overlap of content words. With the pragmatic and structural differences between these two dialects, we believe that examination of causal clauses in Taiwanese will provide important findings that throw light on crosslinguistic/crossdialectal differences in the use of causal clauses.

The organization of this paper is as follows: section 2 reviews previous literature on causal markers. Section 3 describes the data and methodology used in this study. Section 4 presents a data analysis for the use of Taiwanese *inui*. Section 5 provides a summary and discussion of the findings. Section 6 compares our study with previous research. Finally, section 7 provides a conclusion.

2. Previous studies on causal clauses

Studies on the use of causal clauses have focused on canonical markers that indicate causality. English *because* has likely received the most attention. *Because* is generally characterized as a subordinator denoting a cause–effect relation between the subordinate clause and the main clause (Rutherford, 1970; Quirk et al., 1985). Schiffrin (1987) treats *because* as a discourse marker that operates simultaneously on different planes of talk to achieve coherence: these are "ideational structure", "information state", and "action structure."[2] (*Be*)*cause* can thus hold three different causal relations—fact-based, knowledge-based, and action-based, respectively (p. 202). A fact-based causal relation is realized between events or states that present a cause and a result. In contrast, a knowledge-based causal relation holds between some piece(s) of information and an assumption (made by a speaker or a hearer). Finally, an action-based causal relation holds when a speaker provides a motive for an action: an account justifying a request, an argument for compliance, or grounds for a claim (see also Hughes and McCarthy, 1998:270).

Similar to Schiffrin (1987), Sweetser (1990) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) propose three domains to interpret interclausal connections: content level, epistemic level, and speech act level. Causal conjunction in the content domain marks the real-world causality of an event; in the epistemic domain it links a premise to a belief or a conclusion; and in the speech act domain, the conjunction presents the enablement or justification for the performance of a speech act. An intonation break (or in writing, a comma) is crucial for disambiguating the interpretation of *because.* A *because*-sentence with no comma separating the main clause and the *because*-clause—an intonation pattern defined by Chafe (1984) as a "bound" intonation—is unlikely to force a speech act conjunction or epistemic conjunction. Rather, it evokes a reading in which the main clause carries the presupposed truth, and thus the causal relation is the only idea that is asserted. A comma, or an "unbound" intonation (Chafe, 1984), occurs in utterances where the conjunction does denote a speech act or an epistemic reading. The comma does not mark a pause but "a phrase-final intonation drop at the end of the sentence-initial main clause" (Sweetser, 1990:83). This clause-final intonation drop gives rise to a sense that the main clause is an independent assertion rather than a presupposition that is subordinate to an event. Although the examples provided by Sweetser are limited to the sentence level, she nevertheless provides insight into the role of intonation in causal relations.

A fuller account of the functions of adverbial clauses associated with different intonation contours is given by Ford (1993). Three intonation patterns of *because* are identified in her databank of telephone and face-to-face conversations: initial clauses, which appear before the modified material and always end in a continuing intonation, final clauses after an ending intonation, and final clauses that follow a continuing intonation. In fact, only the latter two types of *because* are found in Ford's databank. Final continuing causal clauses (47%) are assertions that strengthen or elaborate a statement or provide new information, while final ending clauses (53%) are used to perform self-editing and the negotiation of

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[2] Two other planes of talk are proposed by Schiffrin: "exchange structure" and "participation framework". They are not dealt with here.

understanding between conversationalists. They may provide accounts for utterances dispreferred by the interlocutor (see also Ford and Mori, 1994) in order to address an interactional trouble or to display or check understanding.

Ford's study finds support in Diessel (2001, 2005), who argues that in languages with initial subordinators, initial adverbial clauses such as conditionals provide a "framework", "orientation" (Diessel, 2001:448), or "thematic ground" (Diessel, 2005:459) for the subsequent main clause, whereas cause, result, and purpose clauses more often occur as final clauses and provide additional information (Diessel, 2001:449) or function like independent assertions (Diessel, 2005:464). Terming the final ending clause "parataxic *because*", Schleppegrell (1991, 1996) also holds that *because* in this position explains a prior assertion, elaborates a prior proposition, or indicates continuation and response in conversational interaction.

Another fruitful line of inquiry has dealt with the causal clauses in Mandarin Chinese which are marked by the prototypical causal marker *yinwei*. For example, Tsao (1990) contends that *yinwei* operates in both the content-domain and the epistemic domain. Biq (1995) compares the sequencing of causal clauses in conversation and journalistic writing and lists five functions of *yinwei* in spoken discourse: cause, elaboration, discourse-reflexive use, justification for request/question, and topic resumption. The first function marks an ideationally causal relation, in other words, a fact-based or content-based causal relation. The other four types of *yinwei* denote an interactionally causal relation. This interactional use is congruent with one function of Ford's and Diessel's final ending causal clauses: a speaker uses *because* to bring up an afterthought resulting from interactional trouble, in this case, a trouble that is perceived beforehand. Regardless of the functions of *yinwei*, the canonical sequencing of causal clauses is that they follow the materials they modify. This is motivated by the pressure of a speaker's desire to achieve the efficiency by expressing the main clause first.

Based on the analytical framework of Ford (1993), Wang (1996, 1998, 2002) examines the functions of *yinwei* in spoken and written Chinese and finds that most of the functions of *yinwei* have a parallel in *because*. *Yinwei* in initial clauses may be used as a discourse marker introducing an account for the interlocutor's question, as an expressive link explaining the motivation for raising a doubt or question, or as a textual link providing a justification for an evaluative statement. The information of the material that follows *yinwei* can be new information prompted by a recipient's turn to speak. The functions of *yinwei* in final clauses also correspond to those of English *because* (Ford, 1993). That is, *yinwei* in final continuing clauses serves as a marker of evaluation or modification or indicates that the speaker has more to say as an account of the motivation for previous utterances that have the potential to cause problems with understanding. In final ending clauses, *yinwei* precedes an afterthought in the context of self-editing and/or the negotiation of understanding between conversationalists.

Unlike Ford, however, Wang (1998) finds that in spite of the fact that the majority of *yinwei*-clauses occur after the material they modify, initial clauses can still be found in significant numbers (17.6%). This distribution converges with the finding reported in Song and Tao (2008), according to whom initial causal clauses tend to be shorter and occur in patterns like (*cheng*)*yinwei*. . .*soyi jiu/cai/er* '(just) because. . .so then', a structure which is not allowed in English. Like *because*, *yinwei* gives an account for a request in order to invite the addressee's agreement (cf. Maddalena and Belmonte, 2011:899), to justify an unusual question, or to clear the addressee's doubts. In addition, *yinwei* occurs after a negative response and an unexpected answer to make the conversation proceed smoothly. Further, *yinwei* is used after a positive response, a speech environment in which *because* is not noted in English causal clauses.

This positional and functional comparison demonstrates both crosslinguistic tendencies in the occurrence of Mandarin causal clauses and language-specific qualities. Crosslinguistic tendencies in the meaning, use and structure of causal clauses are also attested in Diessel and Hetterle's (2011) recent investigation of 60 genetically and geographically unrelated languages. It is shown that causal clauses in more than half of these languages are expressed by means of balanced or coordinate constructions, in contrast to the temporal/conditional clauses which are expressed by deranked verb forms or which appear as subordinate clauses. Another structural characteristic is that, as also seen in the findings of previous research, the causal clauses tend to occur after the material they modify and generally share the functions of making an assertion or providing an account to justify a problematic statement (Ford, 1993).

In addition to the overt use of causal markers, causal relations may also hold without any connective linking two propositions, e.g., *The ground is wet. It just rained.* Given the existence of such non-overtly marked causal relations, there have been studies concerning how unmarked causal clauses differ from marked ones. In a study on EFL learners' comprehension, for example, Chaudron and Richards (1986) tested the learners' comprehension using lectures including and not including discourse markers. The markers include macro- and micro-markers (the latter comprising temporal conjunctions, causal conjunctions, contrastive markers, etc.). Their results show that a lecture with more macro-markers was easier to comprehend than one with more micro markers. Compatible results are reported by Crewe et al. (1985), who conducted an experiment on students using two versions of an academic text: one with the original conjunctions and the other without. Two groups of students read the text and answered comprehension questions. No statistical difference, however, was found between the two groups in terms of their comprehension of the two versions of texts. It was concluded that conjunctions are not as important in the linking of ideas as the authors had expected.

While the above two studies focus on the effect of discourse markers on comprehension, Gohl (2000) investigates the constructions, specific signals and the sequential environments involving asyndetic, i.e., unmarked, causal utterances. Concerning the means of signaling connectedness, these indicators include the "sequential proximity" (p. 85) of the

asyndetically linked utterances, which characterize "a single intonation contour or continuing intonation at the end of a first contour, or the use of a modal particle" (p. 87). In addition, the way speakers interact, interpret and respond to the causal utterances provides important clues to asyndetic constructions. One possible type of speakers' comment that refers to previous utterances in a causal way is *that is the reason why* (p. 88), which, however, is rare in Gohl's data. A second sequential context that abounds in the author's data is the production of accounts after dispreferred second actions, complaints and reproaches. These actions are sensitive to the social relations between speech parties as they are face threatening or they involve obligation to or criticism of others (p. 104).

In light of the above studies on the functions of explicitly and implicitly marked causal relations, the current study investigates the discourse-pragmatic functions and the intonation patterning of causal clauses in TSM conversation. As there has been much less research on non-overtly marked causal utterances, implicit causal utterances are here also focused on and compared with their overt counterparts. The data and the methodology used for the present study are presented in the following section.

3. Data and methodology

The data used for this study consist of 45 episodes of talk drawn from audio recordings of daily conversations among family members and friends, as well as telephone dialogues and TV and radio interviews. The number of speakers in the database is 111, including 58 females and 53 males. All of them are native TSM speakers, and their age is between 21 and 83, with an average age of 41.26. The total length of the recording material is approximately 7 h and 40 min including 112 min of six telephone dialogues and 42 min of four TV and radio interviews. Although one might argue that telephone dialogues and TV and radio interviews differ from natural conversation, nevertheless, disfluencies, repairs, and hesitations as those found in casual talk can be commonly found in these modes of interactions, at least as represented in our databank. Also, we share Wang's (2002:147) assertion that the interactions in telephone dialogues or TV and radio interviews are "locally managed" and that speech is created "on the spot". Speakers feel the need to address their social need even if the conversation involves predetermined topics. The sensitivity of these talks to recipient design is revealed in the high frequency of causal utterances in both the telephone dialogues and the interviews. In the telephone dialogues, one *inui* is found per 2.49 min (45 in total), and in the interviews, a much higher frequency is noted, with one *inui* occurring per 1.05 min (40 tokens). By contrast, one *inui* occurs only every 4.25 min in daily conversation (72 tokens). This suggests the need to also investigate causal utterances on the telephone talk and in media interviews in addition to daily face-to-face conversation. Furthermore, since Taiwanese does not have a standard orthography, even in interviews, it would be difficult for speakers to follow or read any script. Put differently, the speech is generally created in real time, with each utterance attending to the unfolding interpersonal relation and the addressee's level of understanding. Given these above observations, we include telephone dialogues and TV and radio interviews in our databank.

The transcription of the data follows the Church Romanization system developed by Cheng and Cheng (1994).[3] The units of analysis, the intonation units (IUs), are defined using prosodic cues and paralinguistic signals and mainly follow the notations developed by Du Bois et al. (1993; see Appendix). A total of 157 tokens of *inui* are identified.

As for the identification of non-overt causal clauses, several criteria are used. First, an utterance is defined as a non-overt causal clause when its meaning and its propositional relation with the surrounding text do not change even with the insertion of a causal marker. Second, the utterances that hold causal relations are sequentially "close" to each other, a criterion that generally corresponds to the "sequential proximity" observed by Gohl (2000:85). The causal and main clauses may not be adjacent to each other, since sometimes the hearer may show attention using a minimal reactive token (RT). However, the floor still belongs to the causal-clause user. Further, the causal utterance and the "main" clause may span across several intonation units, as illustrated by (1), where the insertion of *inui* in line 1 does not change or create any oddity for the meaning of the utterances or for the propositional relation between line 1 and lines 3–4:

(1) (The speaker A is chatting with her friend about her nephew's job in a bank.)
1 > A: *sin lai iaukoh chit e chaugina^n m.*
　　　　 new come still one CL girl PAR
2 　B: *hm.*
　　　　 RT
3 　A: *a hongka e daisiu choa^n kau ho hitle chaugina^n.*
　　　　 DM PN AC collection then deliver give that girl
4 　A: *a i kong lengoa–*
　　　　 DM 3S say another

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[3] One change is made for ease of typing: terms such as *ko·* 'ancient' and *ko* 'fruit' are not differentiated except where ambiguity may arise.

A (1): (**Because**) there is another newcomer, who is a girl.
B (2): Hm.
A (3–4): The collection job Hongka originally did was then transferred to that girl, and he said that another...

A fact common to all the non-overt causal utterances is that all of them contain NPs/entities that are coreferential (*I, he*), situationally/textually evoked (*I/his skin*), or inferreable (*his mother*) based on the relations among the NPs (Prince, 1981), as shown in (2):

(2) (A_i is telling a friend that her_i boyfriend has fairer skin than she_i does because of his genes.)
1   A: *wo chitma phoehu pi   i   kha bai._*
              1S now   skin   compare 3S more bad
2   *...anne   li   toh chaiia^n i   phoehu goa ho.*
              this.way 2S then know   3S   skin   how good
3 >   *...(.7) i   toh uithuan in laubu   phoehu ho.*
                      3S just inherit 3S mother skin   good
A (1): Now my skin is poorer than his.
A (2): Then you know how good his skin is.
A (3): (**Because**) he inherited his mother's fair skin.

As will be revealed in the discussion in section 4, unmarked causal clauses in TSM provide explanations or accounts for different actions (cf. Gohl, 2000). However, they differ from overt causal clauses in terms of the degree of severity of the consequences of the causal utterances.

The approach adopted in the present study is conversation analysis (CA) (Sacks et al., 1974; Levinson, 1983; Sacks, 1992). CA is an empirical approach that avoids a priori assumptions from the researcher's intuition (Levinson, 1983:286–287); it is bottom up and data driven in nature. The analysis is made on the basis of the recurring patterns found across a variety of non-artificial texts.

4. Overt and non-overt causal clauses in TSM

Our analysis of the marked cases of *inui* shows that, in common with previous findings as reviewed in section 2, speakers use *inui* mainly to provide an account for an instance or a sequence of talk amid the surrounding discourse. Depending on the relations between ideas and the sequences of talk that surround a token of *inui*, the functions can be categorized into five groups: pure-cause marking (4.1), explanation marking (4.2), justification marking (4.3), understanding display (4.4), and information-interpolation (4.5). The first four types, which constitute the majority of causal clauses, provide an account for their associated materials. The last function, information-interpolation, signals a semantic weakening of *inui*, as here it does not designate any explicit causal relation.[4] After a discussion of the respective functions of overt and non-overt causal clauses, section 4.6 discusses the positioning and intonation patterning of causal clauses in the TSM databank.

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[4] During the analysis, we did encounter borderline cases whose functions are difficult to assign. However, by following the definition of each function (beginning of sections 4.1–4.5, respectively) and by analyzing their propositional content, the sequential environment and the interactive function fulfilled by the causal clause, we still managed to solve the ambiguous cases and eventually assigned each of them to only one of the categories introduced in the beginning of section 4. Where ambiguity arose, the social function served as an important criterion for us to assign a function to each ambiguous case. For example,

Ambiguous case between pure cause and explanation:
(i) (S is explaining to the addressee why her sister had depression.)
S1: **inui**   *chhiu^n i   he   anne   chhiusut   ho^n,*
     because like   3S that his.way undergo.surgery UFP
S2: *he   chiok che   lang   long e   choa^n pi^n <M youuzheng M> la.*
     that very   many people _all_ will then   become   depression   UFP
S1-2: **Because** many (people) like her who had undergone surgery (for their cancers) eventually developed depression.

Example (i) seems to suggest that many people who undergo surgery for their cancer eventually suffer from depression because of the surgery. However, there is in fact not a logical relation between receiving surgery and one's getting depression. Instead, it is the worry and the non-recovery of the cancer itself that lead to the depression. The speaker uses *inui* in S1 to stress the influence of the surgery because many patients were given the impression that if they had an operation, it was because they got a serious cancer. Because of this threat, the protagonist discussed in the talk, S's sister, was extremely depressed after the surgery. In this conversation, speaker S is explaining to the puzzled addressee why S's sister became so depressed after the operation. In other words, the *inui* clause here is used to address a trouble of understanding. It is therefore classified as an explanation clause.

4.1. Pure-cause marking

Pure causal relations exist between two utterance units that hold a strict cause-consequence relation. Despite the fact that this is the prototypical function of *inui* (Cheng, 1989; Chen, 2000), among the 157 occurrences of *inui* in our databank, only three instances (1.9%) signal a pure causal relation. One example is seen in (3), the only initial continuing clause in our databank with this function (see Table 2 in section 4.6 for the ordering and intonation patterning of the causal clauses):

(3) <u>Overt marking</u>
(A is telling B a story about the abuse of a maid because of her improper treatment of a piece of ginger.)
1>	A:	*in-**inui** i_i	*thautoa,_*		
		inui 3S	just.now		
2		*toh si koh*	*ho i_j=,_*		
		just COP again	COV 3S		
3		*me hia toasia^n choa^n*	*chau lipkhi laite khau.*		
		scold that loud then	run into inside cry		
4	B:	*a he sitchai si*	*chiok bo li.*		
		DM that really COP	very NEG reason		
5	A:	*he^n.*			
		RT			

A: (1-3) **Because** she_i was severely and loudly scolded again by her_j, she_i ran into her_i room and cried.
B: (4) It was so unfair.
A: (5) Yeah.

The causal marker *inui* in (3) serves to introduce the cause of the maid's crying. From A and B's remarks, it can be seen that A is in fact showing her empathy for the maid. The use of *inui* strengthens the assertion that the cause is what leads to the weeping. Without any overt marking, however, the causal relation could still be successfully communicated, as in (4). Here, the implicit causal clause also precedes the consequential clause:

(4) <u>Non-overt case</u>
(It is a hot summer. The speaker's daughter just came back from a department store where she went to enjoy the cool air.)
1	*si anna?/*	
	COP what.way	
2>	*lengkhi siu^n leng,_*	
	air.conditioning too cold	
3	*a li e khi ui koa^n hio?*	
	DM 2S will get afraid cold UFP	

(1–3): What happened? Was it **(because)** the air (in the department store) was so freezing that you felt chilly (and came back)?

As seen above, lines 2–3 encode a cause-consequence relation that can be correctly interpreted without any explicit marking. The scarcity of overtly marked causal clauses is in stark contrast with the prevalence of their non-overt equivalents: in 59 out of 285 non-overt cases, cause-consequence relations exist between adjacent clauses without an explicit marking of *inui*. It is worth noting that over half of the non-overt clauses with this function (67.8%, 40/59) precede the materials they modify. This suggests that when the logical relation between the causal and consequential clauses is self-evident or semantically encoded, speakers prefer not to use a causal marker. Instead, *inui* is used when the speakers sense the interactive need to provide an account for a problematic part of their speech. An attendant fact is that the *inui* clause usually follows the modified material, as we discuss below.

4.2. Explanation marking

This function accounts for half of the use of *inui* (78, 49.7%). It is oriented toward the recipient's knowledge state and the speaker's inclination to fill an information gap. When a point of talk is difficult to understand due to insufficiency of knowledge on the part of the addressee, *inui* is employed in a clause introduced to repair the problem. Around seventy percent (69.2%, 54/78) of *inui*s with this function appear after their associated main clause and after an ending intonation. Excerpt (5) illustrates this use:

(5) Overt marking
(S and H are sisters. Their mother lives in southern Taiwan. S and H are talking about the trip their mother is going to take to Taichung, in central Taiwan. Their brother is giving their mother a ride.)

1   S: *i$_i$ kong paiit   beh ka   abu$_j$ chai khilai   m._*
          3S say   Monday want COV Mother carry come.up UFP

2   H: *paiit   o?*
          Monday UFP

3   S: *he^n a._*
          RT UFP

4   *[i$_i$ kong]—*
          3S say

5   H: *[i$_i$ kong] chai khi chhong sia^n?*
          3S say   pick go do   what

6   S: *hit   e   thiu   hoeh   la.*
          that CL draw blood UFP

7>   ***inui** teng chit pian hit   e   iseng u,_*
          inui last one CL   that CL doctor have

8   *u   khui   chit e beh ho   i$_j$ thiu hoeh e   a._*
          have prescribe one CL want COV 3S   draw blood NOM UFP

9   H: *mh.*
          RT

10 S: *khoa^n khoa^n i$_j$ he   hoeh u   lo   ah bo.*
          see   see   3S he   blood have murky or not

S: (1) He$_i$ said he$_i$ will bring Mother$_j$ northward here on Monday.
H: (2) Monday?
S: (3–4) Yeah. He$_i$ said–
H: (5) What did you say he$_i$ wanted to bring (Mother$_j$) for?'
S: (6–8) For a blood test, **because** last time the doctor ordered a blood test,
H: (9) Mh.
S: (10) to see if her$_j$ cholesterol level is high

From the above, we see that the trip was not expected by H, for the sisters' mother does not often visit Taichung. H is curious and inquires about the trip (lines 2 and 5), and S provides the answer in line 6. As a blood test is usually taken when one has health problems, S, being aware that H may worry about their mother's health, supplies the the reason for this medical test, prefaced by *inui* (lines 7, 8, and 10). Since cholesterol problems are often regarded as minor, the clarification made by S is aimed to relieve H of her concern. Note that the absence of *inui* would neither affect the grammaticality of the utterance nor hamper the interpretation of the propositional contents. Its presence here instead serves to highlight the relation between the conversation to that point and the otherwise less overt explanation. The choice to mark overly with *inui* lies in whether the speaker values the previous utterances as important enough to warrant extra-explicit clarification.

In addition to the seriousness of the topic, formality may also play a role in the choice whether to use *inui*. Consider (6), a conversation in a TV interview, where *inui* marks the ground for the speaker's question. As the conversation is about a controversial issue, the account for the question is marked with *inui* to strengthen the logic behind the assertion and thus lessen the degree of imposition posed by the question. As we have also noted in section 3, interview data provide a higher density of *inui* clauses; in other words, there is higher frequency of *inui* compared with that in telephone talk and face-to-face conversation.

(6) *Overt marking*
(In a TV interview, the host, W, asks T, the mayor of Kaohsiung, about a donation T had made, but T does not want to discuss this sensitive topic.)

1   W: *a   sikong tongsi   li   sia^{n}mi tongki la?*
          DM but   that.time 2S what   motive UFP

2>   ***inui** goa chitma toh si   kong ho^n,_*
          inui 1S   now   just COP COM UFP

3   *chhitiu^n goa kinajit e   anne   ka   li   mng che,_*
          mayor 1S   today will this.way COV 2S ask   this

4   *goa chai li* <M *wei shan*   *bu*   *yu*   *ren*   *zhi* M>._
          1S know 2S   do goodness NEG want people know

5   *inui chit pian ho^n,_
          inui this CL   UFP

6   *chit e*   <E *SARS* E> *kau boea*,\
          this CL   SARS   to   end

7   *u*   *lam*   *kau che chengti e* [*mikia^n ho^n* 1],\
          have blend to   this political AC thing   UFP

8   T: [*tioh* 1]._
          right

9   [<P *hm hm hm* P>2].\
             RT RT RT

10 W: [*a*   *toh*   *long* 2] *pi^n*   *hokchap*.\
          DM then all   change complex

W: (1) But what was your motivation for the generous gesture?
(2–7, 10) I am asking this question, Mr. Mayor, **because** I know you don't want to publicize your good deeds and (because) the issues around SARS have political implications. But in the end, the whole thing became complicated.
T: (8–9) Right. Hm hm hm.

In contrast to the explicit marking in (5–6), non-overt explanation marking causal clauses without the use of *inui* can also be found in our database,, such as (1) (discussed in section 3), where the speaker is having a casual chat with her friend about a nephew's job. In addition, if the speaker sees what is being explained as trivial, no causal marker is usually used, as in (7), where *inui* would occur after a final ending intonation, were it present.

(7) <u>Non-overt case</u>
(S is telling K about a trip she is going to take with her husband to attend a wedding banquet.)

1   S: *a*   *goan minga*   *epo*   *toh si=*,_
          DM 1PE tomorrow afternoon just COP

2   *i*   *i*   *ai*   *khi chhautun*.\
          3S 3S must go PN

3>   *in chit e*   *tongsu*,_
          3P one CL   colleague

4   K: *hm*.\
          RT

5   S: *a*   *toh kiathun a*._
          DM just marry   UFP

6   K: *hm hm*.\
          RT RT

S: (1–3) We will go to Chhautun tomorrow afternoon, **(because)** one of his colleagues,
K: (4) Hm.
S: (5) is having a wedding,
K: (6) Hm hm.

The trip to Chhautun is explained in simple clauses without the use of *inui*, as attending a wedding banquet is a common social activity and thus no emphasis is needed. The ordinariness of the event contrasts with the serious health and political topics discussed in (5–6), which raise grave concern among the speakers; in these excerpts, the explanation is therefore overtly marked in order to alleviate the tense situation.

Furthermore, if the speaker has no intention to dwell on a certain topic, even if the other party in the conversation demands a clear explanation, *inui* will not be used. The talk in (8) exemplifies a daughter's impatience toward a question asked by her mother:

(8) <u>Non-overt case</u>
(C's mother, M, is asking C why it took her longer time than average to get her MA degree.)

1   M: *na*   *e*   *ka*   *li*.. *kang khoan*–
          why will COV 2S same kind

2>   C: <MRC *goa siu kho   siu nng ni   a* MRC>._
                1S take course take two year UFP
3   ...(2.6) <L *goa siu kho   siu nng ni,*/
                  1S take course take two year
4   *goa nng ni   iau chiok che   kho   long ah boe siu a* L>._
       1S two year still very many course all   still NEG take UFP
5   ...(1.5) *goa he tang e   kho   long ti   ji   ni lio.*\
                1S that heavy AC course all   ASP second year UFP
6   M: ...(.9) *he^n a   a   si   annoa   li ..thak liau e   khah ban*?_
                RT UFP DM COP what.way 2S study ASP will more slow
7>   C: ...(.7) *a   goan kho   khah che   a,*_
                DM 1PE course more many UFP
8   ...*a chite khaisi m   chaiia^n siami kuiteng.*_
       DM once start NEG know   what regulation
9   M: *a   mku pe^n che   a.*_
       DM but   same many UFP
10   C: ...(1.3) *bo   pe^n che   a.*_
                NEG same many UFP
11   M: *ah si   lin hakhau bo   pe^n che*?_
       or COP 2P school NEG same many
12   C: *goan siu khah che   a.*_
       1PE take more many UFP
13   *goan siu sichap e   hakhun lio*!\
       1PE take forty   AC credit   UFP

M: (1) Why did she, who was also (a graduate student, graduate earlier than you)?
C: (2–4) **(Because)** I needed two years to complete the courses. I had a lot more courses to take (than she did), and there were still many courses to take in the second year.
C: (5) And the more difficult courses were all in the second year.
M: (6) Yes, but why did you have to spend more time studying for the degree?
C: (7–8) **(Because)** our department requires more credits (for a master's degree), and in the beginning I was not clear about the regulations. (So I was slower in getting the degree.)
M: (9) But the required credits (for her and for you) were the same.
C: (10) No, we did not have the same (number of required credits).
M: (11) Or was it because your school had (a) different (number of required credits for a master's degree)?
C: (12–13) We had to take more (courses). We had to take as many as forty credits!

    C's answer to M's question shows no intention of negotiating the meaning. This is evident with the presence of the final particle *a*, indicating obviousness (of the content of the utterance) or impatience (in the speaker; lines 2, 4, and 7; see also Li, 1999:109); the particle *lio*, which carries a negative evaluative meaning (line 5); and the emphatic vocal quality (marked by <MRC MRC> and <L L>). By responding in this manner, C adds a tone of strong defense to demonstrate that the reason for her delayed graduation is so obvious that M should have known it and the question should not have been asked in the first place. The sequence of long pauses (>.7 s) in lines 3, 5, 7, and 10 signals that C is far from eager to answer M's query.
    The discussion in this section has shown that TSM speakers employ *inui* to mark an explanation intended to alleviate some complication in understanding or other trouble in conversation. The causal relation between utterances can be properly interpreted based on the propositions alone without explicitly marking it at all; *inui* is thus used to reinforce, rather than by itself to represent, this logical relation. *Inui* directs the addressee's focus of attention to what the speaker views as worth extra effort to explain further. By contrast, when no part of the utterance is viewed this way or when the speaker does not wish to attach too much importance to an utterance, the explanation is left unmarked. In short, *inui* registers a strong personal affect to promote the enhancement of mutual understanding.

4.3. Justification marking

    The justification-marking *inui* sequences (40%, 62 tokens) are used to avoid conflict in conversation stemming from a face threat or confrontation with opposition. With *inui*, the justifying segment mitigates the tension of the speech situation, which would otherwise imperil the speaker's face. Below, (9) is an exchange featuring *inui* embedded in a dispreferred response:

(9) Overt marking

(Y is talking on the phone with U, Y's cousin. She invites U, who is a construction subcontractor, to drop by for a short visit when U is working in Y's neighborhood.)

1   Y: *bo   ui   chit peng koelai la*.\
            NEG toward this side   come   UFP

2   U: *bo   bo   bo   bo   ha^n ha^n*.\
            NEG NEG NEG NEG RT   RT

3   Y: *o*.\
            RT

4   U: *ha^n ha^n*.\
            RT   RT

5   *a   goa ti hia   toh eng eng,_*
            DM 1S   at there just use use

6   *a   goa toh–*
            DM 1S   just

7   *ma si   khi hia   khoa^n mikia^n chai le   toh   chau._*
            also COP go there see   thing   carry ASP then go

8>   *he i   **inui** hia,_*
            that 3S **inui** there

9   *ti hia   goa <M tingliu de shijian bu   si   hen chang M>./*
            At there 1S   stay   AC time   NEG COP very long

Y: (1) You won't come this way (to my house)?
U: (2) No no no no yeah yeah.
Y: (3) Oh.
U: (4) Yeah yeah.
      (5–7) When I go there, I will just load the goods (into the van) and will leave.
      (8–9) **Because** when I go there, I usually don't stay for a long time.

Line 1 is a question, implying that U could drop by Y's house for a chat. After giving a negative response (line 2), U quickly provides an explanation, saying that the trip is only for the purpose of doing some small tasks (lines 5–7). An *inui*-utterance immediately follows to explain that the stay will not be long, which justifies the fact that U has no time to call on Y. The negative response in line 2 is an act threatening Y's positive face, for Chinese people believe that one should drop by to say hello when one is in a relative's neighborhood. This utterance thus triggers the need to provide a valid excuse. Although lines 5–7 provide some account, they do not seem to fully alleviate the face threat. Therefore, a full justification is presented, introduced with *inui*, to strengthen the excuse for not paying a visit. Notice that the same message can also be conveyed without *inui*; however, the use of *inui* enables the speaker to highlight the relation between the cause, the time limit, and the result of not paying a visit. The marking of the justification with *inui* seems to be particularly useful in telephone conversation, where Y and U cannot see each other. With *inui*, the justification is reinforced and serves to relieve U of the worry of potential offense on Y's part, arising from U's negative response. The greater need for *inui* in telephone conversation is supported by its higher frequency than in face-to-face chat (see section 3 for the distribution).

Inui is also used to end a conversation on a topic so as to reduce an imposition created by previous conversation. Consider (10):

(10) Overt marking

(The speaker T, a guest on a TV show, is asking the host, W, not to continue a discussion on a controversial political issue with which W and T have been engaged during the interview.)

1   W: *si*.\
            yes

2   *ho^n*.\
            RT

3   *ho^n a   lan lan lan che kong kau chia uichi   la   ho^n*.\
            UFP DM 1PI 1PI 1PI this say   to   here as.end UFP UFP

4   T: [@@1].\

5>   W: [**inui** 1] *koh   kong ia   bo   [igi   bo   isu   la 2]*.\
              inui   again say   also NEG meaning NEG sense UFP

6   T: [*tioh la   tioh la* 2].\
            right UFP right UFP

W: (1–5) Right. Let's end this topic here, **because** it is meaningless to keep it going.
T: (6) Right, right.

After perceiving the futility of pursuing the topic of a donation T had made, the interviewer W terminates this topic with an explicit request. As a blatant closure of a conversation poses a threat to the addressee's face, W uses *inui* to justify it.

However, not all conflicts or acts induce an offense that the speaker will wish or care enough to alleviate. The social distance between the interlocutors is one major factor determining how much effort is needed to deal with this threat. If the interlocutors are close or familiar with each other, less effort will be made to play down a conflict. The absence of *inui* in a justification gives rise to a less yielding tone, as in (11):

(11) <u>Non-overt case</u>
(S and K, who are sisters, are talking about another sister P, who is suffering from breast cancer, anorexia, and depression.)

1   S: *a   toa he   hia koan ho^n,_*
          PAR live that so high UFP
2   *khah khut   toh ti hia   ho^n,_*
          also couch just at there UFP
3   *li   ah   bokkoai.*
          2P   also no.wonder
4   *long long long long,_*
          all   all   all   all
5   *bo   toh tihui loe   khi kia^n la.*
          NEG then unless descend go walk UFP
6   *o==!*
          EX
7   *long m   chiah chia^n hai.*
          all   NEG eat   really bad
8   K: *a i   si   ham koan bo   bo   koanhe la!*
          DM 3S COP with high NEG NEG relation UFP
9   S: *ha^n?/*
          what
10> K: *i   chitma si,_*
          3S now   COP
11   *bo   ai   chhutkhi.*
          NEG love go.out
12   S: *bo   ai   chhutkhi.*
          NEG love go.out
13   *sioche^n lang   mng la.*
          compete people ask UFP
14   K: *he^n.*
          RT

S: (1–6) She lived on a high floor, and was confined in the house. No wonder she (was depressed). She (didn't go anywhere) unless she went downstairs and took a walk.
S: (7) Oh! It's too bad that she refused to eat.
K: (8) It does not matter whether she lived on a high floor or not.
S: (9) What?
K: (10–11) It was (**because)** she didn't feel like going out (that her depression was aggravated).
S: (12–13) (She) didn't feel like going out, (because) many people would ask (her why she had suddenly lost so much weight).
K: (14) Yeah.

In (11), S stresses that the highrise P lived in made it inconvenient for her to go out, and this aggravated her depression. But K disagrees, arguing that it was not because of her living arrangement but because P did not like going out to meet people that she stayed at home. K's tone is an argumentative one, as can be seen in the negative statement of line 8 and the impatience and finality suggested by the particle *la* (Li, 1999:57–58). Here, the explanation is provided without *inui*. This can likely be attributed to the social closeness between S and K (Levinson, 1987), which obviates the need to use any extra signal to highlight the cause, as K does beginning in line 10.

A similar case is found in (12), a conversation between familiar neighbors:

(12) <u>Non-overt case</u>
(A is B's neighbor. A asks B whether B would like to keep a rabbit.)
1　A:　*li　kam beh　chhi　thoa*?\
　　　2S dare want raise rabbit
2　B:　*ha^n*?\
　　　what
3　　　*m　　a*.\
　　　NEG UFP
4>　　*goa bo　eng　　ho　　chhi*.\
　　　1S　NEG leisure good raise
5　　　*bo　ai*.\
　　　NEG want
6　A:　*kong kong na li　beh chhi chhi thoa*,_
　　　COM COM if　2S want raise rasie rabbit
7　　　*liah　lai　　ho　　li　chhi*.\
　　　catch come COV 2S raise
8　B:　*m　　a*.\
　　　NEG UFP
9　A:　*chiok kochui e　　ne*.\
　　　very　cute　　AC UFP
10>　B:　*goa bo　　eng　　ho　　chhi*.\
　　　1S　NEG leisure good raise
A: (1) Do you want to keep rabbits?
B: (2–5) What? No. I don't have time to feed (them). I don't want (them).
A: (6–7) If you want to, (I) can give you some rabbits.
B: (8) No.
A: (9) They are really cute.
B: (10) **(Because)** I don't have time to feed them.

As in the case of (11), the tone of the conversation in (12) is casual. Although B's successive and blunt refusal has the potential to seem seriously offensive in other situations, the close social relationship between A and B renders the threshold for what is considered face threatening higher, hence the lesser need to use any marker to highlight the account for the refusal.

4.4. Understanding display

Iuni is also found in interactions whereby interlocutors engage in collaborative or supportive talk by displaying understanding of another speaker's speech (7, 4%). All the *inui* clauses with this function emerge as final clauses, occurring after their associated clauses. The conversation in (13) exemplifies the use of *inui* to co-construct current and previous utterances as a complex syntactic unit.

(13) <u>Overt marking</u>
(R and J are talking about the tuition of an after-school math class R's daughter is attending.)
1　R:　*po　　　chit e　<M shuxue M> toh ai　chheng　goa kho　a*._
　　　make.up one CL　　math　　　just need thousand more dollar UFP
2　　　... *chit ko goeh　ai　　chheng　goa kho*._
　　　　one CL month need thousand more dollar
3　J:　...(1.2) *tioh　a*,_
　　　　　　right UFP
4>　　**inui** *sng　<M tan　　ke M> a*._
　　　inui count　　single subject UFP
R: (1–2) The tutorial fee for math only is more than one thousand dollars a month.
J:(3–4) Right, **because** it is calculated on a single-subject basis.

R is talking about the high price of her daughter's after-school math class. After a pause, Speaker J complies with an affirmative response (line 3), and proffers an *inui*-clause explaining why the tuition is higher. Note that R does not

request for such an explanation. The provision of this information with *inui* signals J's full comprehension and support for R.

The collaborative force would be weakened without the use of *inui*. (14) is a continuation of the talk in (11) (with lines 1–5 in (14) repeating lines 10–14 of (11)). Although S displays her understanding of K's utterances in lines 3–4, *inui* is not used. However, the impatience-indicating particle *la* (Li, 1999:57–58) is present, weakening the explanatory force of the statement and yielding a tone of minimal compliance.

(14) Non-overt case

1	K:	*i chitma si*,_
		3S now COP
2		*bo ai chhutkhi*.\
		NEG love go.out
3	S:	*bo ai chhutkhi*,_
		NEG love go.out
4>		*sioche^{n} lang mng la*.\
		compete people ask UFP
5	K:	*he^{n}*.\
		RT
6		*a be ai chhutkhi*,_
		DM NEG love go.out
7		*li toh si khut tiam hia*.\
		2S just COP couch at there

K: (1–2) It was (**because**) she didn't feel like going out (that her depression was aggravated).
S: (3–4) (She) didn't feel like going out, (because) many people would ask (her why she had suddenly lost so much weight).
K: (5–7) Yeah. She disliked going out and ended up cocooning in the house (all day long).

All the functions of *inui* discussed so far pertain chiefly to its core meaning. In them, *inui* is mainly used in negatively oriented situations. Below, we present a use of *inui* that connects utterances without clear cause-consequence relations.

4.5. Information-interpolation

In the databank, we find uses of *inui* (7, 4%) which have a much less transparent causal meaning. These instances of *inui*, along with the subsequent talk, form a side sequence (Levinson, 1983), inserting information to enrich the main conversational topic. As in the intonation patterning of understanding display, *inui* clauses that introduce inserted information carry a final ending intonation. Observe (15), which occurs in a radio interview about English education:

(15) Overt marking
(The conversation is about preschool English education. B holds that early English learning has resulted in her grandson's good performance in English.)

1	B:	*i si an <M xiao ban M> toh chiapsiok engbun*._
		3S COP since small class then contact English
2	E:	[*he^{n}*].\
		RT
3	B:	(0)<M *wo shi juede ta de fayin man hao de* M>._
		1S COP feel 3S AC pronunciation quite good AC
4		...^*tan i kah* <L<M ^*guosiao de shihou* M>,_
		wait 3S till elementary.school AC time
5>		***inui* *i hit chuna i beh thak kokbinhakhau it ni a*._**
		inui 3S that period 3S will study elementary.school first grade CRS
6		<M *wo na shihou jiu gei ta jianduan yi qi*= M>L>._
		1S that time just COV 3S suspend one term
7		*goa khi ho i thak lan e <M zhongwen ban* M>._
		1S go COV 3S study 1PI AC Chinese class

8   E: ...[hm].\
         RT
9   B: [ho^n].\
         DM
10   *thak <M zhongwen ban M> kah hit jita jipkhi kah <M xiaoxue de shihou M>,_*
         study   Chinese class   till that day enter to elementary school AC time
11   *..a i <M hai shi bu   duan de xue la.*
         DM 3S   still COP NEG stop AC learn UFP
12   *wo shi   meiyou bi   ta._*
         1S COP NEG   force 3S
13   *danshi ta hai shi bu   duan de zai xue M>./*
         but   3S still COP NEG stop AC ASP learn
B: (1) He has learned English since he was in small class (in kindergarten).
E: (2) Hm.
B: (3) I think he has rather good pronunciation.
B: (4–7) **Because** when he was about to enter the first grade of elementary school, I had him stop going to the
English class for a term and sent him to a Chinese class.
E: (8) Hm.
B: (9–10) He studied in the Chinese class until he entered elementary school.
B: (11–13) And he...I didn't force him, but he never stopped learning English.

In the middle of the talk about preschool education, B interpolates a short passage about the suspension of her
grandson's English education (lines 4–7). The information is not directly related to the main line of talk about the benefit of
early English education. Instead, it simply adds to the implication that despite the delay, her grandson was still highly
motivated after he took up English learning again. Here, the core meaning of *inui* is bleached, and there exists only a weak
logical relation between the parenthetical information and the focus of the argument. The use of *inui* serves to warrant the
addition of information and renders it less abrupt. The need to mark the inserted sequence with *inui* may also be related to
the social distance among the speakers. As the interviewee (B) is not a close friend of the host (E), sensing that the
elaboration might sound unusual, incoherent and/or improper, B marks the insertion with *inui* to achieve harmony between
the speakers.

Excerpt (16) illustrates *inui* being used with a similar function. The insertion is initiated by *inui*, yielding a smoother
transition to the side sequence:

(16) Overt marking
(T, the mayor of Kaohsiung, has been talking about a plan to convert shipping containers into a specialized hospital for
SARS. However, the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is against such a plan.)
1   T: *a   kia^{n}e kong che <M suanhua M> u   <M fuzuoyong M>.*
         DM worry COM this   acidification have   side.effect
2   W: *tioh.*
         right
3   T: *a   soyi kau boea choa^n kong,_*
         DM so to   end then   say
4   *<Q iah bo   goan iong pengia^n lai   cho Q>.*
            if NEG 1PL use soldier.camp come make
5   W: *o=.*
         RT
6> T: **inui** *hitchun   khi,_*
         inui that.period go
7   *iong beh iong pengia^n cho e sichun ho^n,_*
         use want use soldier.camp make AC period UFP
8   *he <E CDC E> e lang   ho^n,_*
         that   CDC   AC people UFP
9   W: *he^n.*
         RT
10 T: *ho!*
         EX

11   *khui   chit tiu^n toa^n*.\
        issue one CL   list
12   *kutna   ia   la*.\
        several   page UFP
13   *kong* <Q *chia ai   ai   ai   ai* Q> *o*–
        say   here need need need need   UFP
14   *ai   ai   chiok choe iaukiu*,_
        need need very many request
15   <Q *li   ai   cho   e   kau   chiah esai cho   chit e   choanbunpe^{n}i^n* Q>._
            2S   need make able reach then can make this CL specialized.hospital
16 W: *che pengia^n si=   choia^n*?_
        this soldier.camp COP PN
17 T: *hitle* <M *beishengliqudui* M>.\
        that   PN

(A long conversation continues about the location of the military base.)
T: (1) CDC worried that the acidification (during the sterilization of the metal shipping containers) would bring side effects;
W: Right.
T: (3–4) so in the end we said, ''Then, let's use a military base to build (the hospital).''
W: (5) Oh.
T: (6–8, 10–12) **Because** when we proposed the idea (of using shipping containers), the experts from CDC gave a long list of requirements which lasted several pages!
W: (9) Yes.
T: (13–15) (They) said that we had to fulfill the requirements to build the hospital.
W: (16) Is the military base located in *Choia^n*?
T: (17) The base is called *Beishengli Qudui*.

    At first, T tells a story about CDC's opposition to the use of shipping containers for a specialized SARS hospital. Then he moves on to his idea of converting a military base into a hospital. Instead of providing details about the conversion, however, T shifts to complain about CDC's requirements, in lines 6–8 and 10–15, which is not directly related to the previous talk about acidification. *Inui* here functions like a metalinguistic marker to legitimize the talk inserted.

    Unlike with the other uses of *inui*, which have non-overt counterparts, we do not find any non-overt clauses that bear an interpolating function. At first sight, one may attribute the lack of such instances to the size of our mini-corpus. However, closer scrutiny reveals that the non-overt counterparts of the *inui*-clauses with the other four functions—(4), (7), (8), (11), (12), and (14)—share a common feature: the propositional content of the *inui*-clause and that of the clause that precedes or follows it hold a certain kind of cause–effect relation. Without *inui*, one would still be able to sense the logical relation between the propositions. The interpolating *inui*, conversely, does not introduce a clause with clear explanatory force. Therefore, if *inui* were absent, the logical relation between the propositions of the utterances before and after where *inui* had been would be obscured. This could be the reason for the absence of non-overt cases associated with this function.

4.6. Positioning and intonation patterning of overt and non-overt causal utterances

    In this section, we give an overview of the intonation patterning and distribution of overt and non-overt causal utterances in the TSM databank. The clauses are classified following Chafe's (1984) and Ford's (1993) definitions. A ''bound'' clause is one in which the causal clause and the modified material are not separated by any intonational break, whereas a ''non-bound'' clause has a prosodic break signaling either a continuing intonation, with a comma, or an ending intonation, with a period. Causal clauses are further divided into initial and final clauses according to their positioning in relation to their associated main clause. Altogether, there are six types of clauses distinguished (cf. Tables 2 and 3).

    Before we discuss these types of causal clauses, Table 1 reports the distribution of speakership in the databank in relation to initial and final clauses.

    As shown in Table 1, a majority of the causal clauses are produced by the same speaker as the associated main clause. The tendency is revealed in both initial and final clauses. Even in non-overt causal clauses, same-speakership predominates. The tendency for the same speaker to provide grounds or make assertions in the causal clause agrees with

Table 1
Distribution of same vs. different speaker in different types of clauses.

	Bound	Initial	Final	Total
Overt				
Same speaker	2 (1.3%)	16 (10.2%)	132 (84.1%)	150 (95.5%)
Different speaker	–	0	7 (4.5%)	7 (4.5%)
Total			157 (100%)	
Non-overt				
Same speaker	6 (2.1%)	77 (27.0%)	154 (54.0%)	237 (83.2%)
Different speaker	–	14 (4.9%)	34 (11.9%)	48 (16.8%)
Total			285 (100%)	

Table 2
Positioning and intonation of overt causal clauses.

Function	Initial, bound	Final, bound	Initial, cont.	Initial, ending	Final, cont.	Final, ending	Total
Pure-cause	0 (0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (100%)
Expl.	0 (0%)	1 (1.3%)	9 (11.5%)	4 (5.3%)	10 (12.8%)	54 (69.2%)	78 (100%)
Justifi.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	7 (11.3%)	53 (85.5%)	62 (100%)
Unders. Display	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	7 (100%)
Inform. Interpol.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)
Subtotal	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (1.9%)	4 (0.6%)	18 (11.5%)	121 (77.1%)	157 (100%)
	2 (1.3%)		16 (10.2%)		139 (88.5%)		
Total			157 (100%)				

the preference organization proposed by Levinson (1983:341), wherein a turn transition, repair, or edit initiated by the same speaker is preferred to one initiated by a different speaker.

In terms of the positioning of overt causal clauses, these results lend support to previous findings (e.g., Ford, 1993; Wang, 1998; Song and Tao, 2008; Diessel and Hetterle, 2011) in several ways. First, bound clauses are rare, comprising only about 1% of the overt causal clauses. Second, a preponderance of causal utterances occur after the material they modify (88.5%, 139/157); this is true in particular for final ending clauses (77.1%), which are used as independent, coordinate structures (see, e.g., Ford, 1993; Diessel and Hetterle, 2011). Such a distribution is most apparent when causal clauses are used to justify a dispreferred action, for display of understanding, or for interpolation of information—and almost all final clauses are associated with these functions. As reviewed in section 2 and illustrated in sections 4.1–4.5, final ending clauses provide accounts or assertions addressing a trouble of talk occurring in previous conversation. Third, initial causal clauses mainly occur before a continuing intonation (12/16, or 75% of total initial clauses), showing their subordinate status, as with other adverbial clauses (e.g., temporal clauses). Initial continuing clauses function in complementary distribution with final ending clauses in that most of them carry explanation-marking functions. Table 2 presents the details of the distribution of overt causal clauses.

Non-overt causal utterances display similar ordering and intonation patterning, though to a lesser degree. First, bound clauses are uncommon. However, a slightly higher frequency is noted (2.1%), with most occurring as initial clauses and used to provide a causal base for the modified material in the same IU. Second, final clauses constitute the majority of all tokens (188/285, 66.0%), with most of them falling after an ending intonation. In fact, it is found that the functions of justification and understanding display are exclusively associated with final clauses. The function of information interpolation, however, is not observed in non-overt cases (see section 4.5 for details). On the other hand, initial unmarked causal clauses (91 tokens) tend to mark a pure cause or provide an explanation for a following main clause. In other words, like overt causal clauses, non-overt initial clauses tend to have a canonical causal marking function and behave similarly to other adverbial clauses, which are structurally quite dependent on the main clause. However, as we observe from the great discrepancy in frequency between overt and non-overt clauses with pure-cause or explanation-marking functions (3 and 78 vs. 59 and 208, respectively; see also Table 3), when the clauses bear more typical causal relations, speakers tend *not* to mark the utterance with an explicit marker. This provides further evidence for the motivation for overt causal marking, as will be discussed in detail in sections 5 and 6. In Table 3, we present the distribution of ordering and intonation of non-overt causal clauses.

Table 3
Positioning and intonation of non-overt causal clauses.

Function	Initial, bound	Final, bound	Initial, cont.	Initial, ending	Final, cont.	Final, ending	Total
Causal	3 (5.1%)	0 (0%)	33 (55.9%)	4 (6.8%)	4 (6.8%)	15 (25.4%)	59 (100%)
Expl.	2 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	29 (13.9%)	17 (12.0%)	25 (8.2%)	134 (64.4%)	208 (100%)
Justifi.	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	3 (37.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8 (100%)
Unders. Display	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)
Inform. Interpol.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Subtotal	5 (1.75%)	1 (0.35%)	62 (21.8)	29 (10.2%)	24 (8.4%)	164 (57.5%)	285 (100%)
Initial vs. final	6 (2.1%)		91 (31.9%)		188 (66.0%)		
Total			285 (100%)				

Table 4
Distribution of functions of *inui*-utterances and their non-overt counterparts.

Function	Overt marking	Non-overt marking
Pure-cause	3 (1.9%)	59 (20.6%)
Explanation	78 (49.7%)	208 (72.7%)
Justification	62 (39.5%)	8 (2.8%)
Understanding display	7 (4.5%)	10 (3.5%)
Information interpolation	7 (4.5%)	0 (0%)
Total	157 (100%)	285 (100%)

In general, the positioning and intonation patterning of both overt and non-overt causal clauses in TSM correspond to the findings of previous research. Causal clauses tend to occur after the material they modify. As for their functional distribution, overt and non-overt final causal clauses share the tendency to coextend with the functions of justification and understanding display. A majority of final clauses bearing these two functions follow an ending intonation, showing their independent status. Initial clauses, in contrast, are more commonly associated with pure-cause and explanation-marking functions. They tend to precede a continuing intonation, demonstrating a tighter relation between the causal and the associated main clause.

5. Summary and discussion

In section 4, we have discussed TSM utterances marked with the causal marker *inui* and their non-overt functional equivalents. Table 4 displays their distribution in our database.

5.1. Overt marking of causal utterances

Although most of the uses of *inui* signal a causal relation of some kind, *inui*-utterances used purely for cause-marking are scarce (3, 1.9%). The remaining cases show diverse functions rather than simply indicating a causal relation.

The most prominent function of *inui* is to mark an explanation. Instances of *inui* emerging before an explanation make up almost half of the total number of *inui*-clauses. This use of *inui* enables a speaker to mark an urge or willingness to resolve a crucial misunderstanding or other trouble with communication. Although the explanation function can also be conveyed without *inui*, the causal is used to achieve a particular rhetorical effect: by reinforcing the causal relation, the speaker marks what is being explained as significant enough to be worth the extra effort of elaboration.

Justification-marking *inui* accounts for as much as 40% of all occurrences of *inui*. The high frequency of overt causal clauses for this function (62 tokens, compared to eight non-overt clauses) demonstrates the sensitivity of causal clauses to the propriety of one's social actions. Causals are employed to maintain speaker-hearer harmony in a highly tense situation where a conflict is latent. Attention to social distance is crucial in evaluating the possibility of occurrence of conflict. The interview data comprise about half of justification-marking *inui*s due to the social distance between the interlocutors. In comparison, a close social relationship will yield a higher threshold for serious conflict between speakers and thus lower the need to enlist *inui*.

Inui is also used to do collaborative talk, specifically as a display of understanding. By introducing an explanation with *inui*, the speaker establishes a strong connection with the addressee at turn transitions.

The information-interpolating function of *inui* does not denote a clear causal relation but instead facilitates an interclausal connection. The information prefaced by *inui* is background or peripheral information, the introduction of which would seem abrupt and digressive if *inui* were not used. Although only 5% of *inui*s fall into this category, it still needs to be noted as a significant function because in each instance where a speaker provides loosely connected information, *inui* is present, employed to mark such an insertion. Here, *inui* functions like a metalinguistic marker legitimizing the link between utterances which would otherwise seem unrelated.

5.2. Causal clauses without explicit marking

Several points concerning the distribution of clauses with non-overt marking of *inui* can be summarized. First, the total number of non-overtly marked or ''unmarked'' causal utterances is almost twice that of overtly marked ones (285 vs. 157), and most of the non-overt cases are identified before a pure cause (59, 20.6%, as opposed to 3, 1.9% among the overt cases) and/or an explanation (72.7%). The contrast between the overt and non-overt cases with a pure-causal marking function suggests that when the propositional content and logical relation between utterances are self-evident, a speaker will prefer *not* to mark the relation with *inui*. The skewed distribution demonstrates that the overt expression of causal relations with *inui* is not obligatory for hearer's comprehension of meaning (cf. Chaudron and Richards, 1986; Crewe et al., 1985). Rather, it is interactively motivated and used to perform rhetorical actions.

Second, regarding the explanation marking use, a non-overtly marked causal utterance can be seen in casual talk or when there is not a compelling need for an explanation. In these situations, even when an account is made, it is not highlighted with *inui*.

Third, social relations play a role in non-overtness. Recall that *inui* can be used to alleviate the tension caused by opposing stances taken by the interlocutors. That is, *inui* can be used to provide a justification or account for a potentially face-threatening act, defusing the threat. However, if the relations between the interlocutors are intimate, a mitigating *inui* is sometimes not employed, as the need for solidarity between family members or close friends is less urgent than that between unfamiliar people.

Fourth, the non-overt use of *inui* can show a stance of less compliance with the addressee's speech or imply a defensive tone. The speaker can use *inui* to display partial disagreement or even insist on a strong opposing stance. At the same time, *inui* in this context could suggest the speaker's unwillingness to dwell on a current topic.

Last, the absence of non-overt cases of interpolating utterances can be accounted for by the very weak propositional relation between utterances. The non-occurrence of *inui* in these cases would result in difficulty in comprehension, i.e., the insertion would be abrupt and off-track to the talk if the logical connector were not present.

The above discussion shows that *inui* is other-attentive (Jefferson, 1984), in that it is used to accomplish social actions. It marks a speaker's particular attention to ensure the best understanding of the coparticipant and also signals the speaker's awareness that the explanation is crucial enough to receive special emphasis. Furthermore, the marking of a clause with *inui* is sensitive to topic and to the relationship between the participants. Most tokens of *inui* are found in interactively significant circumstances containing serious conversation topics or involving a greater degree of conflict or more distant relations between the interlocutors. Since TV/radio interviews usually involve formal or serious agenda, *inui* is found most frequent in this type of data (one token of *inui* per 1.05 min), followed by telephone dialogues (one *inui* per 2.49 min), where the lack of face-to-face interaction necessitates the use of *inui* when a face threat is latent. Face-to-face daily conversations, especially those that involve speakers with close relationships or topics concerning light matters, contain the smallest number of *inui*s (one *inui* per 4.25 min). Note, however, that if everyday chat is related to topics of a serious nature, *inui* is recruited to enhance accounts or assertions.

In short, *inui* has interactive consequences and its uses are contextually oriented. Its occurrences are not grammatically driven but are determined by interactive concerns. It displays an orientation and sensitivity to the interlocutor's state of mind. Where a misunderstanding or information gap may occur, *inui* is employed to negotiate meaning with the interlocutor(s) so that social harmony can be maintained. When the speech situation does not call for an explicitly marked account, or when the speaker does not wish to attach too much importance to the talk, *inui* is not used. The different interactive concerns influencing the use of *inui* are even more revealing when we observe different types of speech data, as *inui*s are not evenly distributed across all types of conversation.

6. Comparison between *inui* and its Mandarin Chinese equivalent

In this section, we compare the functional distributions, contexts of occurrence, and the frequencies of causal connectives in TSM and Mandarin. Where statistical comparison is made, the data will be mainly drawn from Wang (1996,

1998). As we have stated in section 3, Wang's two studies (1996, 1998) use similar types of data (Wang, 1996:13; 1998:208) to those in the current study, making them easily comparable.[5] As for Ford's (1993) data, since they are mainly from daily conversation, the results will not be referred to unless necessary.

The first point that needs to be made is that interpolation with *inui* is a function not seen in Mandarin or English. This function, though found only in seven tokens, occurs across the different types of talk in our databank. The speaker uses *inui* to signal a logical connection to link peripheral or background information to the previous utterance so as to enrich the content of the talk.

A second point that distinguishes *inui* from *yinwei* is their different functional distribution. Of *inui*s, 40% are used to avoid social impropriety resulting from opposition in stance (cf. Table 4). Although we find a parallel function in Mandarin *yinwei*, only 7% of *yinwei* occurrences are identified as having this function (Wang, 1996:94).

Regarding situational contexts, while both *because* (Ford, 1993) and *yinwei* (Wang, 1998) occur in both casual and serious topics between speakers with a range of social relationships, the majority of *inui*s are found in topics of serious nature, when a trouble of talk arises, when confrontation between interlocutors is lurking, or when the interlocutors have a relatively distant social relationship. The weightiness of the topic calls for *inui* to highlight an explanation to balance out some negative potential arising from the situation, to neutralize a potentially offensive act, or to justify the stance of the current speaker. Although Wang (1998:216) has pointed out such uses with *yinwei*, they are predominant with *inui*.

The enlisting of *inui* for interactive purposes is further corroborated by the overall relative frequencies of *inui* and *yinwei* in speech. In our databank, which contains 460 min of speech, only 157 tokens of *inui* are found. That is, one token of *inui* is found in every 2.9 min of talk. By contrast, in Wang's databank (1998), which is 113 min in all, 102 tokens are identified, an average of one token every 1.1 min (cf. one token per 1.04 min in her 1996 corpus—a 237-min corpus containing 227 *yinwei*s).

In other words, in both of Wang's 1996 and 1998 corpora, *yinwei* is more than twice as frequent as *inui*. As we have shown above, many instances where *inui* could legitimately be used are nevertheless not marked overtly with *inui*. Its occurrence is highly concentrated on certain topics or in certain situations. The low frequency of *inui* may also result from the fact that Taiwanese is mainly used in daily conversation, where speakers are less often required to put extra effort on expository arguments that serve to explain or justify.[6]

To sum up, the use of *inui* is motivated by the intention of a speaker to cater to the addressee's need to maintain or achieve social comity. *Inui* is not actually employed by a speaker unless the speaker perceives that such a marking is necessary for smoother interaction. Although Mandarin *yinwei* is also employed for interactive purposes, comparison with the unmarked causal clauses provides strong evidence for the other-attentive, interactively driven nature of Taiwanese *inui*.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the functions, positioning, and intonation patterning of causal clauses marked by *inui* in Taiwanese Southern Min, and compared them with functional equivalents where *inui* is not used. Based on a corpus investigation, the study makes valuable contributions to our understanding of the discourse-pragmatic functions of causal marking in a Chinese dialect that has received relatively little scholarly attention. By comparing the ways in which overt and non-overt occurrences of *inui* are used, we have shown that *inui* is socially situated and is predominantly used to accomplish rhetorical actions when the speaker recognizes the need to highlight propositional content so that better, friendlier grounds for conversation can be established.

An issue that has only been touched on in the current study is the correlation between the marking of *inui* and the mode of interaction. Although we have demonstrated that the occurrence of *inui* may be subject to influence by conversation topic, formality, and social distance, we strongly recommend future research looking at modes of interactions as well, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the correlation between contextual variables and the marking of causality.

Acknowledgements

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[5] The data of Wang (1998) are mainly drawn from Wang (1996), as can be seen in the description of her corpus (Wang, 1996:13–15; 1998: 209). Therefore, the statistics from both studies will be used for comparison as they are based on a similar type of database.
[6] We thank Cherry Li for pointing this out.

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Appendix A. Transcription notations

--	truncated intonation unit	. . .	medium pause (0.3–0.6 s)
[]	speech overlap	..	short pause (<0.3 s)
.	final	(0)	latching
,	continuing	@	laughter
_	level	<E E>	code-switching to English
?	appeal	<L L>	loudness
!	exclamation	<M M>	code-switching to Mandarin
^	primary accent	<P P>	piano: soft
=	lengthening	<Q Q>	quotation quality
. . .(N)	long pause (≥0.7 s)	<MRC MRC>	marcato

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