

TAIWANESE VERBS OF DRESS

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Backhouse (1981) examined verbs of dress in Japanese and concluded that these verbs demarcate body space. Schaefer (1985) looked at Tswana and Yoruba verbs of dress and made a cross-linguistic comparison, including information provided in Backhouse's study. Schaefer concluded that verbs of dress demarcate body space following a top-down principle with the torso being the most salient body space marked, followed by the head, the upper limbs, then the lower limbs. Bowerman (1996) studied the structuring of space in general. Her data reveals similar use of clothing verbs in Korean. The semantic clustering of body space is implicational in nature: if a language singles out the upper limbs, it also singles out the head, and likewise, if a language singles out the lower limbs, it also singles out the head and the upper limbs. McCawley (1970) argued that such claims are unfounded. He suggested that body space is not the salient feature speakers use to make lexical choices involving verbs of dress. Rather, manner is the catalyst for such decisions. We examined Taiwanese verbs of dress in light of these claims.

Taiwanese, also known as Southern Min, belongs to the Chinese language family. It is the mother tongue of about 70% of the population in Taiwan, but has no official status. The official language in Taiwan is Mandarin, which is used in official documents, publications, and education. Taiwanese and Mandarin are mutually unintelligible, but Taiwanese has been and continues to be strongly influenced by Mandarin. Although both languages demarcate body space with verbs of dress, they do not do so according to the same exact pattern. On this account, sorting out pure Taiwanese verbs of dress for purposes of this study was challenging.

English does not demarcate body space with its primary verb of dress. The verb put on is used for all articles of clothing and accessories without regard to which body space is being covered. For example, He put on a jacket, He put on gloves, He put on a hat, and He put on shoes all use the same verb to describe the donning of different articles on different parts of the body. In contrast, Taiwanese utilizes five different verbs to describe the process of putting on clothes: /di/ encodes putting clothing on the head, /ɛʌŋ/ the torso and lower limbs, and /gwa/ the face and upper limbs (see Table 1). We identified /ɛʌŋ/ as the unmarked verb because it collocates with the generic nominal clothes /sā/. These three verbs can be used to describe both the process of putting on and the act of wearing. They are strictly confined to the body-clothing domain¹. The typical sentence structure used with these verbs signals a tight collocational restriction between the verb of dress and the noun used to identify the article of clothing, as in the following examples:

1) Head /di/

	<i>Subject</i>	<i>+ Verb</i>	<i>+ Object</i>
Taiwanese	/ɪ he	di put-on-head	mo-a/ hat
English	<u>He</u>	<u>put on a hat</u>	

¹ /gwa/ is used to describe the process of hanging up the phone. Some bilingual speakers (Taiwanese and Mandarin) also use it to refer to hanging things on a wall. We concluded, however, that such usage reflects Mandarin influence rather than an extension of /gwa/ to other semantic domains.

2) Torso /čΛŋ/

	<i>Subject</i>	+ <i>Verb</i>	+ <i>Object</i>
Taiwanese	/i	čΛŋ	šʌtsu/
	he	put-on-torso	shirt
English	<u>He put on a shirt.</u>		

3) Upper limbs /gwa/

	<i>Subject</i>	+ <i>Verb</i>	+ <i>Object</i>
Taiwanese	/i	gwa	ču-t□/
	he	put-on-arms/face	gloves
English	<u>He put on gloves.</u>		

Note that there is no explicit marking of location in these sentence structures. That is, on the head, on the body, and on the hands are not denoted using locative phrases. Location and manner (usually insertion, but hanging for accessory items collocated with /gwa/) are encoded in the verbs, and location is implied, or at least expected, in the nouns. The incorporation of body space location in the verb is suggested by the Taiwanese equivalents of He put a hat on his head, /i di mo-a dwa tau e/, which is reserved for emphatic contexts in storytelling, and He put pants on his body, * /i čΛŋ ko dwa hjuŋ-ku e/, which is ungrammatical. Typically, a verb is assigned according to an expectation that a given clothing article will be put on a given body space in a given manner.

Table 1 Three primary verbs of dress in Taiwanese and their possible noun collocations

Body part	Verb	Taiwanese	English
head	/di/	/di mo-a/	put on a hat
		/di gwe-le-a/	put on a bamboo hat
		/di hon-de-mo/	put on a crown
		/di an-juan-mo/	put on a helmet
torso and lower limbs	/čΛŋ/	/čΛŋ sā/	put on clothes
		/čΛŋ šʌtsu/	put on a shirt
		/čΛŋ ko/	put on pants
		/čΛŋ ku□n/	put on a skirt
		/čΛŋ ju-zoŋ/	put on a dress
		/čΛŋ mwē-a/	put on socks
		/čΛŋ e-a/	put on shoes
		/čΛŋ hju-a/	put on a coat
/čΛŋ t□-zoŋ/	put on a suit		
/čΛŋ ze-h□/	put on a uniform		
arms and face	/gwa/	/gwa ču-tθ/	put on gloves
		/gwa ču-lΛŋ/	put on work sleeve
		/gwa ma□-kŋ□/	put on glasses
		/gwa pwa-len/	put on a necklace
		/gwa ču-kwan/	put on a bracelet

In addition, there are two secondary Taiwanese verbs of dress, /ha/ and /laŋ/, also confined to the body domain, but with peculiarities that distinguish them from the other three (see Table 2) /ha/ indicates covering a portion of the front torso with a garment secured by tied strings. The six noun-verb collocations for /ha/ listed in Table 2 provide a comprehensive list of possibilities. It is noteworthy that brassieres and diapers used to tie, hence their inclusion in Table 2. This verb has carried over and can be used today with newly designed diapers but not with newly designed brassieres. Also, necktie is a borrowed lexical item and collocates with two other verbs as well (/ba□/, to tie and /ga□/, to decorate). This seems to indicate that language users have not fixed on a single aspect of the necktie-putting-on event in selecting a verb. The second verb /laŋ/ collocates with clothing items that are put on the torso and limbs (upper and lower). This means that it can be used in place of /ɛlaŋ/ or /gwa/ in some instances. It cannot, however, be used with formal wear, which collocates with /ɛlaŋ/, due to the sense of carelessness it implies. Nor can it be used for most accessories, which collocate with /gwa/, because it requires an insertion and most accessories are viewed as hanging on the body. /laŋ/ is further restricted in that it is only used to describe the process of putting on, not the act of wearing. Typical sentence structures with /ha/ and /laŋ/, like those with /di/, /ɛlaŋ/, and /gwa/, signal a tight collocational restriction between the verb of dress and the noun used to identify the article of clothing in that locative phrases are not used.

4) Front torso /ha/

	<i>Subject</i>	<i>+ Verb</i>	<i>+ Object</i>
Taiwanese	/i	ha	wesu- ku□n/
	he	put-on-front-torso	apron
English	<u>She put on an apron.</u>		

5) Torso and limbs /laŋ/

	<i>Subject</i>	<i>+ Verb</i>	<i>+ Object</i>
Taiwanese	/i	laŋ	šAtsu/
	he	put-on-torso	shirt
English	<u>He put on a shirt.</u>		

Table 2 Two secondary verbs of dress in Taiwanese and factors distinguishing them from the three primary verbs

Body part	Verb	Noun Collocations	Definition/Connotations
front torso	/ha/	bib, apron, brassiere (old), diaper, belt, necktie	to cover a portion of the front torso with a garment secured by tied strings
torso and limbs	/laŋ/	gloves, work sleeves, and articles of clothing that collocate with /ɛlaŋ/ except for formal wear	to put clothing on the body quickly or carelessly, insertion implied, describes only the process of putting on, not the act of wearing

To test the semantic limitations of these five Taiwanese verbs, we assessed their collocation with items other than clothing that could be put on the body. We investigated peripheral items of clothing,

accessories, cosmetics, things such as blankets and towels, and the use of clothing for other-than-intended purposes. These items required the use of numerous non-dress verbs describing manners of application (see Table 3). All of these verbs extend beyond the domains of body and/or clothing. In these other domains, manner is a salient determinant of lexical choice. Moreover, typical sentence structure for these verbs mandates the use of locative phrases. In this respect, non-dress verbs contrast with dress-verbs.

6) Front torso /ha/

	<i>Subject + Verb +</i>		<i>Object + Locative + Noun + Preposition</i>		
Taiwanese	/i	ba□	hyu-a	dwa	jau e/
English	he	put-on-by tying	jacket	waist	around
	<u>He put a jacket on around his waist.</u>				

Table 3 Verbs used with accessories and cosmetics and their possible extensions

Verb	Definition	Accessories/ Cosmetics	Extensions beyond body/clothing domain
/mwā/	to drape over the shoulders from the back, standing or sitting implied	cape, jacket draped over shoulders or head	blanket on back torso, people side by side with hands on each others' shoulders
/ga/	to drape over the shoulders from the front, lying or sitting implied	jacket laid on front torso as a blanket	blanket on front torso
/ba□/	to tie, to fix in place	necktie, shoe lace, jacket around waist	garbage bag, tomato plant on a stake, "brown paper packages"
/pwa/	to hang or drape over a rigid object	shirt, jacket, pants, socks draped across the arm	clothing draped over a chair, towel on a rack, brain short circuted
/dʒAm/	to cover a very small area	lipstick	eye drops, ear drops, checking attendance
/mwa/	to cover completely with a consistent, uniform coat	powder, blush, lotion	soap, medicinal lotions and creams, mud on dry wall

Recall that McCawley suggested that manner was the salient feature in lexical verb choice. He also argued that this principle could be tested by eliciting responses to atypical situations. Accordingly, we tested Taiwanese verbs of dress in two non-normative situations: verbs used to describe clothing put on unexpected body locations (see Table 4), and verbs used to describe clothing put on the body but no longer functioning as clothing (see Table 5). We asked native speakers to identify the verb used for the events described in Tables 4 and 5. Our results showed that native speakers debated among themselves when choosing verbs for location violations, attesting to the tight collocational restriction that exists between the verbs and the nouns in the body-clothing domain. Situations involving clothing items used in such a way as to cause a loss of their clothing function showed that manner becomes a salient factor of verb choice. Typical sentence structures require an explicit locative phrase marked by /dwa/ when

clothing items are not used in the expected, intended fashion When used in the expected, intended way, a locative phrase with /dwa/ is not employed

7) Non-normative situations

	<i>Subject + Verb +</i>		<i>Object + Locative + Noun + Preposition</i>		
Taiwanese	/ɿ	lŋ	mwe-a	dwa	ču e/
	he	put-on	socks		hands on
English	<u>He put socks on his hands</u>				

8) Normative situations

	<i>Subject</i>	<i>+ Verb</i>	<i>+ Object</i>
Taiwanese	/ɿ	čŋ	mwe-a/
	he	put-on-feet	socks
English	<u>He put on socks</u>		

Table 4 Dress verbs used to describe unexpected, inappropriate situations

Verb	Taiwanese	English	Salient features
/lŋ/	1 /ɿ lŋ mwe-a dwa ču e/	He put socks on his hands	violation of the expected location of the item
/čŋ/	2 /ɿ čŋ mwe-a dwa ču e/		
/gwa/	3 /ɿ gwa mwe-a dwa ču e/		
/lŋ/	4 /ɿ lŋ mwe-a dwa tau e/	He put a sock on his head	violation of the expected location of the item
/dɿ/	5 /ɿ dɿ mwe-a dwa tau e/		

Table 5 Verbs describing acceptable situations involving articles of clothing that have lost their clothing function

Verb	Taiwanese	English	Salient features
/mwã/	1 /ɿ mwã hju-a dwa tau e/	He put a jacket over his head and shoulders	manner and the loss of clothing function
/ga/	2 /ɿ ga hju-a dwa hjuŋ-ku e/	He put a jacket on his body (as a blanket)	manner and the loss of clothing function
/ba□/	3 /ɿ ba□ hju-a dwa jau e/	He put a jacket around his waist	manner and the loss of clothing function
/pwa/	4 /ɿ pwa hju-a dwa ču e/	He put a jacket across his arm	manner and the loss of clothing function

The most difficult situation for native speakers in our assessment test involved what we have coined “violation overload” This scenario included location violations and loss of functional use of the clothing item Asked to provide a Taiwanese verb for The thief put panty hose over his face (to disguise himself), none of our consultants could find a verb This situation seemed to violate the semantic properties of all possible verbs /dɿ/ is used to cover the top of the head with headgear, but the eyes and face cannot be covered, as in the panty hose situation /gwa/ is used to put masks on the face if they are held in place in a hanging manner, but the top of the head cannot be covered, as in the panty hose event

/kʌm/ is used to cover the face, but implies that the person cannot see, which is not true of the panty hose situation /om/ is used to cover the sensory organs to prevent unwanted input, but there is no such input prevention in the panty hose situation Since the head, face, and eyes are covered without preventing input, each of these verbs has been eliminated as a lexical choice list The panty-hose scenario strongly illustrates the tight collocational restrictions that native speakers of Taiwanese have established between verbs of dress and their respective clothing nouns

In conclusion, if clothing is worn as intended, body part, article of dress, and manner are interdependent features that affect verb choice in Taiwanese None is more salient than another, except that location seems to be encoded in the verb which makes the verb-body part relationship very strong Manner becomes salient for less prototypical articles, cosmetics, and situations involving the loss of functional use of a clothing item Atypical situations pose great conflict for native speakers due to the impossibility of maintaining tight collocational restrictions Although the specific demarcation of body space differs between Taiwanese and the other four languages examined, Taiwanese verbs of dress follow Schaefer's top-down principle as did the others the torso is most salient and is identified by the unmarked verb /ʔʌŋ/, the head and upper limbs are singled out by individual verbs /di/ and /gwa/ respectively, and the head is singled out more strongly than the upper limbs by the verb /ʌŋ/

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