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Teochew dialect

Teochew (Chinese: 潮州話; pinyin: *Cháozhōuhuà*, Chinese: 潮汕話; pinyin: *Cháoshànhuà*, Chinese: 潮語; pinyin: *Cháoyǔ*,[1] **Chaozhou** dialect: *Diê⁵ziu¹ uê⁷*, Shantou dialect: *Dio⁵ziu¹ uê⁷*) is a dialect of Chaoshan Min, a Southern Min language, that is spoken by the Teochew people in the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong and by their diaspora around the world. It is sometimes referred to as *Chiuchow*, its Cantonese rendering, due to the English romanisation by colonial officials and explorers. It is closely related to some dialects of Hokkien, as it shares some cognates and phonology with Hokkien, although the two are not largely mutually intelligible.

Teochew preserves many Old Chinese pronunciations and vocabulary that have been lost in some of the other modern varieties of Chinese. As such, Teochew is described as one of the most conservative Chinese languages.[2]

Teochew	
Chaozhou	
潮州話/潮汕話/潮語	
Native to	China, Overseas Chinese communities
Region	Eastern Guangdong (Chaoshan), Southern Fujian (Zhao'an)
Ethnicity	Teochew people
Language family	Sino-Tibetan - Sinitic - Min - Coastal Min - Southern Min - Chaoshan Min (Teo-Swa) **Teochew**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	chao1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/chao1238)
Linguasphere	79-AAA-ji

Teochew dialect	
Traditional Chinese	潮州話
Simplified Chinese	潮州话
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Cháozhōu huà
Wu	
Romanization	zau tseu ghae ho
Hakka	
Romanization	Tshèu-chû-fa
Yue: Cantonese	
Jyutping	Ciu4 zau1 waa2

Contents

Southern Min	
Hokkien POJ	Tiê-chiu-uē
Teochew	Diê⁵ziu¹ uê⁷/Dio⁵ziu¹
Peng'im	uê⁷
Eastern Min	
Fuzhou BUC	Dièu-ciŭ-uâ

Languages in contact

This refers to Chaozhou, the variant of Southern Min (Min Nan) spoken in China.

Mandarin

Teochew children are introduced to Standard Chinese as early as in kindergarten; however, Teochew language remains the primary medium of instruction. In the early years of primary education, Mandarin becomes the sole language of instruction, but students typically continue to speak to one another in Teochew. Mandarin is widely understood, however minimally, by most younger Teochew speakers, but the elderly usually do not speak Mandarin since teaching used to be done in the local vernacular.

Chaozhou accent in Mandarin

Native Teochew-speakers find the neutral tone in Mandarin the most difficult tone to master. Teochew has lost the alveolar nasal ending [-n] and so Teochew-speakers often replace it with the velar nasal [-ŋ] when they speak Mandarin. The southern Min dialects all have no front rounded vowel and so a typical Teochew accent supplants the unrounded counterpart [i] for [y]. Teochew, like its ancient ancestor, lacks labio-dentals and so its speakers use [h] or [hu] instead of [f] when they speak Mandarin. Teochew has no retroflex consonants in its northern dialects and so [ts], [tsʰ], [s], and [z] replace [tʂ], [tʂʰ], [ʂ] and [ʐ] in the Teochew accent in Mandarin.

Hakka

Since Chao'an, Raoping, and Jieyang border the Hakka-speaking region in the north, some people there speak Hakka but they can usually speak Teochew as well. Teochew people have historically had a great deal of contact with the Hakka people, but Hakka has had little, if any, influence on Teochew. Similarly, in Dabu and Fengshun, where the Teochew- and the Hakka-speaking regions meet, Teochew is also spoken, but Hakka remains the primary form of Chinese spoken there.

Cantonese

Because of the strong influence of Hong Kong soap operas, Guangdong provincial television programs and Cantonese pop songs, many young Chaoshan peoples can understand quite a lot of Cantonese even if they cannot speak it with much fluency.

Hmong-Mien languages

In the mountainous area of Fenghuang (鳳凰山), the She language, an endangered Hmong–Mien language, is spoken by the She people, who are an officially recognised non-Han ethnic minority. They predominantly speak Hakka (Shehua) and Teochew; only about 1,000 She still speak their eponymous language.

Phonetics and phonology

Consonants

Teochew, like other Southern Min varieties, is one of the few modern Sinitic languages which have voiced obstruents (stops, fricatives and affricates); however, unlike Wu and Xiang Chinese, the Teochew voiced stops and fricatives did not evolve from Middle Chinese voiced obstruents, but from nasals. The voiced stops [b] and [g] and also [l] are voicelessly prenasalised [$^m_{\circ}$b], [$^{\mathring{\eta}}$g], [$^n_{\circ}$l], respectively. They are in complementary distribution with the tenuis stops [p t k], occurring before nasal vowels and nasal codas, whereas the tenuis stops occur before oral vowels and stop codas. The voiced affricate dz, initial in such words as 字 (dzi˩), 二 (dzi˧), 然 (dziaŋ˥), 若 (dziak˦) loses its affricate property with some younger speakers abroad, and is relaxed to [z].

Southern Min dialects and varieties are typified by a lack of labiodentals, as illustrated below:

Teochew consonants

		Bilabial	**Alveolar**	**Velar**	**Glottal**
Voiced (no frictions)	**nasal**	m 毛	n 年	ŋ 雅	
	plosive or lateral	b 米	l 來/內	g 鵝/牙	
Voiceless stops	**aspirated**	pʰ 皮	tʰ 台	kʰ 可	
	plain	p 比	t 都	k 歌	ʔ
Voiceless affricates	**aspirated**		tsʰ 菜/樹		
	plain		ts 書/指/食		
(af)fricative			s 士/速		h 海/系
			(d)z 爾/貳		

Syllable

Syllables in Teochew contain an onset consonant, a medial glide, a nucleus, usually in the form of a vowel, but can also be occupied by a syllabic consonant like [ŋ], and a final consonant. All the elements of the syllable except for the nucleus are optional, which means a vowel or a syllabic consonant alone can stand as a fully-fledged syllable.

Onsets

All the consonants except for the glottal stop ʔ shown in the consonants chart above can act as the onset of a syllable; however, the onset position is not obligatorily occupied.

Finals

Teochew finals consist maximally of a medial, nucleus and coda. The medial can be i or u, the nucleus can be a monophthong or diphthong, and the coda can be a nasal or a stop. A syllable must consist minimally of a vowel nucleus or syllabic nasal.

Nucleus		-a-			-e-		-o-		-ə-	-i-	-u-	-ai-		-au-	-oi-	-ou-		-ui-	-iu-	∅-
Medial		∅-	i-	u-	∅-	u-	∅-	i-	∅-	∅-	∅-	∅-	u-	∅-	∅-	∅-	i-	∅-	∅-	
Coda	-∅	a	ia	ua	e	ue	o	io	ɨ	i	u	ai	uai	au		ou	iou	ui	iu	
	-Ũ	ã	ĩã	ũã	ẽ	ũẽ		ĩõ	ɨ̃	ĩ		ãĩ	ũãĩ	ãũ	õĩ	õũ		ũĩ	ĩũ	
	-ʔ	aʔ	iaʔ	uaʔ	eʔ	ueʔ	oʔ	ioʔ		iʔ				auʔ	oiʔ					
	-m	am	iam	uam						im										m̩
	-ŋ	aŋ	iaŋ	uaŋ	eŋ		oŋ	ioŋ	əŋ	iŋ	uŋ									ŋ̍
	-p	ap	iap	uap						ip										
	-k	ak	iak	uak	ek		ok	iok	ək	ik	uk									

Tones

Citation tones

Teochew, like other Chinese varieties, is a tonal language. It has a set of eight distinct sounds, but only six of them are considered unique tones. This discrepancy occurs because two of the eight sounds are reduced to stopped syllables, despite already sharing the same pitch as the six main tones. Additionally, depending on the position of a word in a phrase, the tones can change and adopt extensive tone sandhi.

Teochew tones

Tone number	Tone name	Pitch contour	Description	Sandhi
1	yin level (陰平)	˧ (3)	*mid*	1
2	yin rising (陰上)	˥˨ (52)	*falling*	6
3	yin departing (陰去)	˨˩˧ (213)	*low rising*	2 or 5
4	yin entering (陰入)	˨̚ (2)	*low checked*	8
5	yang level (陽平)	˥ (5)	*high*	7
6	yang rising (陽上)	˧˥ (35)	*high rising*	7
7	yang departing (陽去)	˩ (1)	*low*	7
8	yang entering (陽入)	˦̚ (4)	*high checked*	4

As with sandhi in other Min Nan dialects, the checked tones interchange. The *yang* tones all become low. Sandhi is not accounted for in the description below.

Grammar

The grammar of Teochew is similar to other Min languages, as well as some southern varieties of Chinese, especially with Hakka, Yue and Wu. The sequence 'subject–verb–object' is typical, like Standard Mandarin, although the 'subject–object–verb' form is also possible using particles.

Morphology

Pronouns

Personal pronouns

The personal pronouns in Teochew, like in other Chinese varieties, do not show case marking, therefore 我 [ua] means both *I* and *me* and 伊人 [iŋ] means *they* and *them*. The southern Min dialects, like some northern dialects, have a distinction between an inclusive and exclusive *we*, meaning that when the addressee is being included, the inclusive pronoun 俺 [naŋ] would be used, otherwise 阮 [ŋ]. No other southern Chinese variety has this distinction.

Personal Pronouns in Teochew

	Singular		Plural		
1st person	我 ua˦	*I / me*	**Inclusive**	俺 naŋ˦	*we / us*
			Exclusive	阮 uaŋ˦ (uŋ˦ / ŋ˦)	*we / us*
2nd person	汝 lɨ˦	*you*	恁 niŋ˦		*you (plural)*
3rd person	伊 i˦	*he/she/it/him/her*	伊人 iŋ˧ (i˧ naŋ˥)		*they/them*

Possessive pronouns

Teochew does not distinguish the possessive pronouns from the possessive adjectives. As a general rule, the possessive pronouns or adjectives are formed by adding the genitive or possessive marker 個 [kai5] to their respective personal pronouns, as summarised below:

Possessive Pronouns in Teochew

	Singular		Plural		
1st person	我個 ua˦ kai˥	*my / mine*	**Inclusive**	俺個 naŋ˦ kai˥	*our / ours*
			Exclusive	阮個 uaŋ˦ (uŋ˦ / ŋ˦) kai˥	*ours / ours*
2nd person	汝個 lɨ˦ kai˥	*your / yours*	恁個 niŋ˦ kai˥		*your / yours (plural)*
3rd person	伊個 i˦ kai˥	*his / his; her / hers; its / its*	伊人個 iŋ˧ (i˧ naŋ˥) kai˥		*their / theirs*

本書是**我個**。

> [puŋ˦ tsɨ˧ si˥ ua˦ kai˥]
> *The book is mine.*

As 個 [kai˥] is the generic measure word, it may be replaced by other more appropriate classifiers:

我條裙

> [ua˦ tiou˥ kuŋ˥]
> *my skirt*

Demonstrative pronouns

Teochew has the typical two-way distinction between the demonstratives, namely the proximals and the distals, as summarised in the following chart:

The Teochew Demonstratives

		Proximal		Distal	
General	**Singular**	之個 [tsi˧˩ kai˥˩]	*this*	許個 [hɨ˧˩ kai˥˩]	*that*
	Plural	之撮 [tsi˧˩ tsʰoʔ˥]	*these*	許撮 [hɨ˧˩ tsʰoʔ˥]	*those*
Spatial		之塊 [tsi˧˩ ko˨˩]	*here*	許塊 [hɨ˧˩ ko˨˩]	*there*
		之內 [tsi˧˩ lai˧˩]	*inside*	許內 [hɨ˧˩ lai˧˩]	*inside*
		之口 [tsi˧˩ kʰau˨]	*outside*	許口 [hɨ˧˩ kʰau˨]	*outside*
Temporal		之陣 / 當 [tsi˧˩ tsuŋ˥ / təŋ˨˩]	*now; recently*	許陣 / 當 [hɨ˧˩ tsuŋ˥ / təŋ˨˩]	*then*
Adverbial		這生 [tse˥˩ sẽ˥]	*like this*	向生 [hia˥˩ sẽ˥]	*like that*
Degree		之樣 [tsĩõ˨˩]	*this*	向樣 [hĩõ˨˩]	*that*
Type		者個 [tsia˥˩ kai˥]	*this kind*	向個 [hia˥˩ kai˥]	*that kind*

Interrogative pronouns

The Teochew Interrogative Pronouns

who / whom		(底)珍 [ti tiaŋ]
		底人 [ti naŋ]
what		乜個 [miʔ kai]
what (kind of) + noun		乜 + N [miʔ]
which		底 + NUM + CL + (N) [ti]
		底個 [ti kai]
where		底塊 [ti ko]
when		珍時 [tiaŋ si]
how	**manner**	做呢 [tso ni]
	state	在些(樣) [tsai sẽ ĩõ]
		乜些樣 [miʔ sẽ ĩõ]
		什乜樣 [si miʔ ĩõ]
how many		幾 + CL + N [kui]
		若多 + (CL) + (N) [dzieʔ tsoi]
how much		若多 [dzieʔ tsoi]
why		做呢 [tso ni]

Numerals

Pronunciation	Financial	Normal	Value	Notes
liŋ5	零	○	0	○ is an informal way to represent zero, but 零 is more commonly used, especially in schools. also 空 [kang3]
tsek8	壹	一	1	also 蜀 [tsek8] (original character) also 弌 (obsolete) also [ik4] as the last digit of a 2-or-more-digit number e.g. 二十一 [dzi6 tsap8 ik4] or days of a month e.g. 一號 [ik4 ho7] or as an ordinal number e.g. 第一 [tõĩ6 ik4] also 么(T) or 幺(S) [iou1] when used in phone numbers etc.
no6	兩(T)	二	2	also 弍 (obsolete) also 貳(T) also [dzi6] as the last digit of a 2-or-more-digit number e.g. 三十二 [sã1 tsap8 dzi6] or days of a month e.g. 二號 [dzi6 ho7] or as an ordinal number e.g. 第二 [tõĩ6 dzi6].
sã1	叁(T)	三	3	also 弎 (obsolete) also 參 [sã1].
si3	肆	四	4	
ŋou6	伍	五	5	
lak8	陸	六	6	
tsʰik4	柒	七	7	
poiʔ4	捌	八	8	
kau2	玖	九	9	
tsap8	拾	十	10	Although some people use 什, It is not acceptable because it can be written over into 伍.

Note: (T): Traditional characters; (S): Simplified characters.

Ordinal numbers are formed by adding 第 [tõĩ˧] in front of a cardinal number.

Voice

In Teochew passive construction, the agent phrase *by somebody* always has to be present, and is introduced by either 乞 [kʰoiʔ˧] (some speakers use [kʰəʔ] or [kʰiəʔ] instead) or 分 [puŋ˧], even though it is in fact a zero or indefinite agent as in:

伊**分人**刣掉。

[i˧ **puŋ˧ naŋ˥** tʰai˥ tiou˩]
S/he was killed (by someone).

While in Mandarin one can have the agent introducer 被; *bèi* or 給; *gěi* alone without the agent itself, it is **not** grammatical to say

*個杯**分**敲掉。

[kai˥ pue˧ puŋ˧ kʰa˧ tiou˩]
The cup was broken.

cf. Mandarin 杯子給打破了; *bēizi gěi dǎ pòle*)

Instead, we have to say:

個杯分人敲掉。

[kai˦ pue˦ puŋ˦ naŋ˧ kʰa˦ tiou˩]
The cup was broken.

Even though this 人 [naŋ˧] is unknown.

The agent phrase 分人 [puŋ˦ naŋ˧] always comes **immediately** after the subject, not at the end of the sentence or between the <u>auxiliary</u> and the past <u>participle</u> like in some European languages (e.g. <u>German</u>, <u>Dutch</u>)

Comparison

Comparative construction with two or more nouns

Teochew uses the construction "X ADJ 過 [kue˧˩], which is believed to have evolved from the <u>Old Chinese</u> "X ADJ 于 (yú) Y" structure to express the idea of comparison:

伊雅過汝。

[i˦ ŋia˧ kue˧˩ li˧]
She is more beautiful than you.

Cantonese uses the same construction:

佢靚過你。

Keoi5 leng3 gwo3 nei5.
She is more beautiful than you.

However, due to modern influences from Mandarin, the Mandarin structure "X 比 Y ADJ" has also gained popularity over the years. Therefore, the same sentence can be re-structured and becomes:

伊比汝雅。

[i˩ pi˧ li˧ ŋia˧]
She is more beautiful than you.
cf. Mandarin 她比你漂亮; *tā bǐ nǐ piàoliang*

Comparative construction with only one noun

The 過- or 比-construction must involve two or more nouns to be compared; an ill-formed sentence will be yielded when only one is being mentioned:

*伊雅過 (?)

Teochew is different from English, where the second noun being compared can be left out ("Tatyana is more beautiful *(than Lisa)*". In cases like this, the 夭-construction must be used instead:

伊夭雅。

[i1 iou6 ŋia2]
She is more beautiful.

The same holds true for Mandarin and Cantonese in that another structure needs to be used when only one of the nouns being compared is mentioned. Teochew and Mandarin both use a pre-modifier (before the adjective) while Cantonese uses a post-modifier (after the adjective).

- Mandarin

  她**比較**漂亮

  > *tā bǐjiào piàoliang*

- Cantonese

  佢靚**啲**

  > *keoi5 leng3 di1*

There are two words which are intrinsically comparative in meaning, i.e. 贏 [ĩã5] "better" and 輸 [su1] "worse". They can be used alone or in conjunction with the 過-structure:

> 只領裙輸(過)許領。
>
> > [tsi2 nĩã2 kuŋ5 su1 kue3 hɨ2 nĩã2]
> > *This skirt is not as good as that one.*

> 我內個電腦贏伊個好多。
>
> > [ua2 lai6 kai7 tiaŋ6 nau2 ĩã5 i1 kai7 hoʔ2 tsoi7]
> > *My computer (at home) is* far *better than his.*

Note the use of the adverbial 好多 [hoʔ2 tsoi7] at the end of the sentence to express a higher degree.

Equal construction

In Teochew, the idea of equality is expressed with the word 平 [pẽ5] or 平樣 [pẽ5 ĩõ7]:

> 只本書佮許本平重。
>
> > [tsi2 puŋ2 tsɨ1 kaʔ4 hɨ2 puŋ2 pẽ5 taŋ6]
> > *This book is as heavy as that one.*

> 伊兩人平平樣。
>
> > [i1 no6 naŋ5 pẽ5 pẽ5 ĩõ7]
> > *They are the same. (They look the same./They're as good as each other./They're as bad as each other.)*
> > Lit. The two people are the same same way.

Superlative construction

To express the superlative, Teochew uses the adverb 上 [siaŋ5] or 上頂 [siaŋ5 teŋ2]. 上頂 is usually used with a complimentary connotation.

> 只間物上頂好食。
>
> > [tsi2 kõĩ1 mueʔ8 siaŋ5 teŋ2 ho2 tsiaʔ8]
> > *This (restaurant) is (absolutely) the most delicious.*

> 伊人對我上好。

[i1 naŋ5 tui3 ua2 siaŋ5 ho2]
They treat me best.
Lit. The people treat me very well.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Teochew shares a lot of similarities with Cantonese because of their continuous contact with each other. Like Cantonese, Teochew has a great deal of monosyllabic words. However, ever since the standardisation of Modern Standard Chinese, Teochew has absorbed a lot of Putonghua vocabulary, which is predominantly polysyllabic. Also, Teochew varieties in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have also borrowed extensively from Malay.

Archaic vocabulary

Teochew and other Southern Min varieties, such as Hokkien, preserve a good deal of Old Chinese vocabulary, such as 目 [mak] *eye* (Chinese: 眼睛; pinyin: *yǎnjīng*, Hokkien: 目 *bak*), �潐 [ta] *dry* (Chinese: 乾; pinyin: *gān*, Hokkien: 焦 *ta*), and 囥 [kʰəŋ] *hide* (cf. Chinese: 藏; pinyin: *cáng*; Hokkien: 囥 *khǹg*).

Romanisation

Teochew was romanised by the Provincial Education Department of Guangdong in 1960 to aid linguistic studies and the publication of dictionaries, although Pe̍h-ōe-jī can also be used because Christian missionaries invented it for the transcription of varieties of Southern Min.

Initials

Initial consonants of Teochew, are represented in the Guangdong Romanization system as: B, BH, C, D, G, GH, H, K, L, M, N, NG, P, R, S, T, and Z.

Examples:

- B [p] - bag (北 north)
- Bh [b]- bhê (馬 horse)
- C [tsʰ] - cên (青 green), cǔi (嘴 mouth), ciên (槍 gun)
- D [t] - diê (潮 tide)
- G [k] - giê (橋 bridge)
- GH [g] - gho (鵝 goose)
- H [h] - hung (雲 cloud)
- K [kʰ] - ke (去 to go)
- L [l] - lag (六 six)
- M [m] - mêng (明 bright)
- N [n] - nang (人 person)
- NG [ŋ] - ngou (五 five)
- P [pʰ] - peng (平 peace)
- R [(d)z] - riêg/ruah (熱 hot)
- S [s] - sên (生 to be born)
- T [tʰ] - tin (天 sky)
- Z [ts] - ziu (州 region/state)

Finals

Vowels

Vowels and vowel combinations in the Teochew dialect include: A, E, Ê, I, O, U, AI, AO, IA, IAO, IO, IU, OI, OU, UA, UAI, UE, and UI.

Examples:

- A - ma (媽 mother)
- E - de (箸 chopsticks)
- Ê - sên (生 to be born)
- I - bhi (味 smell/taste)
- O - to (桃 peach)
- U - ghu (牛 cow)

Many words in Teochew are nasalized. This is represented by the letter "n" in the Guangdong Pengim system.

Example (nasalized):

- suan (山 mountain)
- cên (青 green)

Ending

Ending consonants in Teochew include M and NG as well as the stops discussed below.

Examples:

- M - iam (鹽 salt)
- NG - bhuang (萬 ten thousand)

Teochew retains many consonant stops lost in Mandarin. These stops include a labial stop: "b"; velar stop: "g"; and glottal stop: "h".

Examples:

- B - zab (十 ten)
- G - hog (福 happiness)
- H - tih (鐵 iron)

See also

- Southern Min
- Hokkien
    - Amoy Hokkien
    - Taiwanese Hokkien
- Languages of China
- List of Chinese dialects
- Thai Chinese

- Chinese in Singapore
- Malaysian Chinese
- Indonesian Chinese

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External links

- 1883 American Presbyterian mission press – "A pronouncing and defining dictionary of the Swatow dialect, arranged according to syllables and tones" – by Fielde, Adele Marion (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_pronouncing_and_defining_dictionary_of_the_Swatow_dialect,_arranged_according_to_syllables_and_tones.djvu) (in English)Link to download(3,022 × 4,010 pixels, file size: 42.21 MB, MIME type: image/vnd.djvu, 648 pages)
- Database of Pronunciations of Chinese Dialects (http://webarchive.loc.gov/all/20020813184944/http://homepage2.nifty.com/gat_tin/fangyin.htm) (in English, Chinese and Japanese)
- Teochew People - Teochew dialect (https://web.archive.org/web/20061104093803/http://www.czpp.com/czfy.htm) (in Chinese)
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