Epistemic downgrading in Cantonese Conversations

Foongha Yap & Winnie Chor[†]

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The Open University of Hong Kong[†]

The study

- Recent works on epistemicity have focused on how speakers negotiate their epistemic stance in a conversation, i.e. how they can convey neutrality, engagement or detachment toward an utterance (see Fox 2001; Kim 2005, 2011).

- This study focuses on how native speakers of Cantonese use different strategies to modulate, in particular downgrade, the epistemic strength of their claims in response to the disaffiliative responses from their addressee(s).

- This study also shows that these strategies are used for politeness reasons – to address the "face" of both the speaker and the addresses.

The Politeness Theory

- Politeness can be manifested through:

  a/ various general social behavior;

  b/ various linguistic means.

- Adopting a face-saving approach to politeness phenomenon, Brown and Levinson's (1987[1978])is regarded as the most influential and best known in the study of politeness.

- politeness = trade in a commodity called 'face'

'Face'

- 'Face' = a universal notion; a public self-image that every member of a society wants to claim for him/herself (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 61)

  → something comparable to self-esteem

- 'And, since face is so vulnerable, and since most participants will defend their face if threatened, the assumption is made that it is generally in everyone's best interest to maintain each other's face and to act in such ways that others are made aware that this is one's intention' (Fraser 1990: 229)

- Being polite = considering people's 'face'!

- We often do some repair work to defend our face when we are being challenged!

Politeness strategies

- Brown and Levinson have listed a number of politeness strategies that are available in our daily interactions (1987[1978]: 102; 131):

→Negative Politeness

Be conventionally indirect

Question, hedge

Be pessimistic

Minimize imposition

Apologize

Impersonalize

State the imposition as a general rule

→Positive Politeness

Notice/attend to hearer's wants

Exaggerate interest/approval

Intensify interest

Use in-group identity markers

Seek agreement

Avoid disagreement

Presuppose/assert common ground

Offer, promise

Be optimistic

Include speaker and hearer in the activity

Give reasons

Give gifts to hearer (goods sympathy, etc.)

The list here is not exhaustive

Data

- 20 interview recordings involving description of pictures of different attractions (15mins each on average)

- Interview data of this kind is particularly useful in seeing how epistemic downgrading is done as a power asymmetry is often involved:

interviewer	vs.	Interviewee
more information		less information
more control/power		less control/power

- When the interviewee is challenged by the interviewer, who has more information, the interviewee can make use of a wide range of strategies to downgrade their claims.

- This epistemic downgrading is often accompanied by a lot of politeness work – to address the 'face' needs of both parties.

  (we don't want to lose 'face', and at the same time, we don't want to damage others' 'face'!)

Downgrading strategies

- Our data reveals that speakers make use of a range of strategies to downgrade their assertions when their claims are queried or challenged, including:

1. Epistemic modals (e.g. *jing1goi1* 'should', *ho2nang4* 'may/might')
2. Epistemic adverbials for a revised conclusion (e.g. *kei4sat6* 'in fact', *si6sat6soeng6* 'in fact')
3. Evidentials
   1. explicit evidentials (e.g. *ngo5 gu2* 'I guess', *ngo5 gok3dak1* 'I feel', *ngo5 nam2* 'I think')
   2. implicit evidentials (e.g. *hou2ci3* 'seems', *jau5 ho2nang4* 'likely')
4. Sentence final particles with weak epistemic strength (e.g. *ge2*, *gwaa3*, *za1maa3*)
5. Discourse-pragmatic strategies (e.g. keep silent, provide a reason, replace a specific claim with a more general one, offer a revised conclusion, etc.)

Examples

- Please refer to the separate handout

Summary & Conclusion

- During a conversation, participants continuously attempt to find common ground.

- As they co-construct the conversation to reach common ground, a wide range of epistemic upgrading and downgrading strategies are often used. In this study, we have particularly focused on those downgrading strategies.

- From the examples, often we see that multiple types of strategies are being deployed within a single utterance.

- The use of these strategies forms an essential part of politeness in social interactions.

References

Brown, P and Levinson, S (1987) *Politeness: some universals in language usage,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fox, B. A. (2001). Evidentiality: Authority, responsibility, and entitlement in English conversation. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 11: 167–92.

Fraser, B (1990) 'Perspectives on politeness', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14: 219–36.

Kim, S. M. (2005). Evidentiality in achieving entitlement, objectivity, and detachment in Korean conversation. *Discourse Studies*, 7(1): 87-108.

—. (2011). Negotiating epistemic rights to information in Korean conversation: An examination of the Korean evidential marker –tamye. *Discourse Studies*, 13(4): 435-459.

Acknowledgments

THANK YOU

Informant 1: Travel_name (10:28-10:59)

Example (1)

01 **IR:** 其實　我　覺得　呢 個 都 似　　德 國

    gei4sat6　ngo5　gok3dak1　ni1　go3　dou1　ci5　　Dak1Gwok3. (0.1)

    Actually　1SG　think　DEM　CL　also　be.like　Germany

    'Actually I think this one also looks like Germany.'

02　　　 你　覺得　　呢

    nei5　gok3dak1　ne1.

    you　think　　SFP

    'What do you think?'

03 **IE:** 我 覺得　　嘩 但 係　點 解　唔 可以 **係 法 國**　呢   *('BE France' – quite certain)*

    ngo5 gwok3dak1:(.) *waa6 daan6hai6*(.) *dim2gaai2 m4　ho2ji3 hai6 Faat3Gwok3 ne1?*

    1SG　think　INTERJ　but　　why　NEG　can　be　France　SFP

    'I think... Wow, but why can't (it) be France?'

04 **IR:** 點解　係 法 國　啊

    dim2gaai2 [*hai6　Faat3Gwok3　aa3*]?   **challenge**

    Why　be　France　SFP

    'Why (it) is France?'

05 **IE:**　都 **似**　法 國　**喎**   *('looks like' – not sure)*

    [*dou1　ci5　　Faat3Gwok3 wo3*].   *(hedge)*

    also　be.like　France　SFP

    'It also looks like France.'

06 **IR:**　你　覺 得 似　　法 國   **challenge**

    nei5　gok3dak1　ci5　Faat3Gwok3.

    2SG　think　be.like　France

'You think (it) looks like France.'

07 **IE:** 法 國 好 多 嗰 啲 e4

Faat3Gwok3 [hou2 do1 go2 di1] e4=

France very many DEM some

'In France, there are many'

08 **IR:** 點解 似 法 國 啊

[dim2gaai2 ci5 Faat3Gwok3 aa3]?

why be.like France SFP

'Why do (you) think (it) is France?'

09 **IE:** 喺 一啲 偏僻 嘅 地方 會 有 有 一啲

hai2 yat1di1: pin1pik1 ge3 dei6fong1 wui3 jau5(.) jau5 yat1di1=

at some remote ATTR place would have have some

'In some remote places, there would be some'

10 大 屋 喺度 咁 樣 架 嘛

=daai6 nguk1 hai2-dou6 gam2 joeng2 gaa1 maa3.

big house be-there such way SFP SFP

'big houses at there in such a way'

observation 1,
reinforced by *gaa1 maa3*

11 有 呢 啲 有 啲 高 檯 咁 樣 囉

jau5 ni1 di1 (.) jau5 di1 gou1-toi4 gam2 joeng2 lo1.

have DEM CL DEM CL high-terrace such way SFP

'(they) have some high terraces in such a way.'

observation 2,
reinforced by *lo1*

12　**係咪**　高檯　嚟架　呢　啲

　　hai6-mai6　gou1-toi4　lei4　gaa3　ni1　di1.

　　be-not.be　high-terrace　come　SFP　DEM　CL

　　'Are they high terraces?'

hai6mai6 – not sure

hedge

13　**定係**　圍牆　嚟　㗎

　　ding6hai6　wai4coeng4　lei4　gaa3.

　　or　　wall　　come　SFP

　　'Or are they the walls?'

give a question/offer a choice

minimize imposition

involve the other party

14 **IR:** 唔… 唔 知 喎 係咪 樓梯 嚟 㗎 咋 嘛

　　m6:: m4　zi1　wo3　hai6-mai6(.) *lau4tai1 lai4　gaa3　zaa3　maa5=*

　　NEG　know　SFP　be-not.be　　stair　come　SFP　SFP　SFP

　　'Hmm… Don't know, aren't they the stairs'

15　　即 係 行 上 去 咁 樣

　　zik1hai6　haang4　soeng5　heoi3　gam2　moeng2.

　　that.be　walk　up　go　such　way

　　'that is, to walk up (there) in such a way.'

15 **IE:** 哦　即 係　**總 之**=

　　o2　[*zik1hai6　zung2zi1*]

　　INTERJ　that.be　in.short

　　'Oh, that is in short'

16 **IR:** 　我　唔　知　啊

　　[*ngo5　m4　zi1　aa*].

　　I　　NEG　know　SFP

　　'I don't know.'

17 **IE:** =係　一　個　高嘅　地方　跟住　有　間　屋　喺　度　囉

hai6　yat1　go3　gou1　ge2　dei6fong1　gan1zyu6　jau5　gaan1　nguk1　hai2　do6　lo1.

COP　one　CL　high　ATTR　place　　then　　have　CL　house　atthere　SFP

' (it) is a place (situated at) a high position, and then there is a house at there.'

18 **IR:** 哦

[*o5*].

PRT

'Oh.'

19 **IE:** 大　宅　咁　樣

[*daai6*] *zak2　gam2 jeong2.*

Big　house　such　way

'Like a big house'

'high position' – less specific

➔ concession

establish common ground

Informant 1: Travel_name (5:22-06:01)

Example (2)

01 **IR:** 咁　呢　一　個　你　估　唔　估　到　係　邊　度

　　　　gam2 (.) nei1　jat1　go3　nei5　gu2　m4　gu2　dou2　hai6　bin1dou6.

　　　　then　DEM　one　CL　2SG　guess　NEG　guess　arrive　COP　where

　　　　'For this one can you guess where is it'

02 **IE:**　呢　個　啊

　　　　Ni1　go3　aa4.

　　　　DEM　CL　SFP

03　　　　呢　個　好　難　　估　　喎

　　　　ni1　go3　hao2　naan4　gu2　　wo3. (0.2)

　　　　DEM　CL　very　difficult　guess　SFP

04　　　　**係**　　中　國　　**囉**　heh

　　　　hai6 *Zung1Gwok3* **lo1**　heh

　　　　COP　　China　　SFP

　　　　'This one… This one is very difficult to guess… (It) is China.'

'BE China' – for certain

05 **IR:**　中　國　　呀　點　解　　覺　得　　係　中　國　　嘅

　　　　Zung1Gwok3　aa4　dim2gaai2　gok3dak1　hai6　Zung1Gwok3　ge2?

　　　　　China　　SFP　why　　think　COP　China　　SFP

　　　　'China, how come you think this is China?'

challenge

06 **IE:**　(**原因省略**)　　　　**應該**　係　中　國　　嘅

　　　　jing1goi1 *hai6　Zung1Gwok3　ge3.*

　　　　(explanation omitted)　should　　COP　　China　　SFP

　　　　'it should be China.'

'should be' – less certain

hedge

07 **IR:** 係 咩

    hai6 me1?

    COP Q

    'Really?'

08 **IE:** 係 啊

    hai6 aa3.

    COP SFP

    'Yes.'

09 **IR:** 但 係 誃 其實 亞洲 好 多 地 方呢 都會

    daan6hai6 e6 kei4sat6 aa3zau1 hou2 do1 dei6fong1 ne1 dou1 wui3(.)=

      but PRT actually Asia very many place PRT also would

10   有 啲 類似 中 國 嘅 建築 個 喎

    =*jau5 di1 leoi3ci3 Zung1Gwok3*(.) [*ge3 gin3zuk1*] *go3 wo3.*

    have some similar China ATTR architecture SFP SFP

    'But actually many Asian countries also have architecture similar to those in China'

11 **IE:**   係   啊

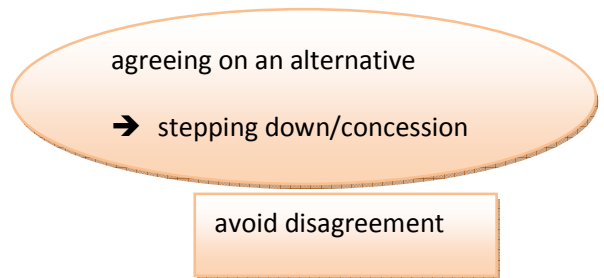   [*hai6 aa.*]

     COP SFP

    'Yes.'

12   咁 你 又 講 得 啱

    Gam2 nei5 jau6 gong2 dak1 aam1=

    Then 2SG also say PRT right

    'Well you are right.'

challenge

agreeing on an alternative

→ stepping down/concession

avoid disagreement

13 **IR:** 係　囉

　　　　[*hai6 lo1*].

　　　　 COP SFP

　　　　'Yes'

Travel_name (08:02-08:35)

Example (3)

01 **IE:** 呢　呢　呢　個　設計　**似**　**古堡**　　　　　　offer a suggestion

　　　　ni1(.) ni1(.) ni1 go3 cit3gai3 ci3   gu2bou2.

　　　　DEM DEM DEM CL   design   (be.)like castle

　　　　'This one looks like a (German) castle'

02 **IR:** 但係　呢　你　睇　吓　佢　呢　有　呢　啲　一　個　個

　　　daan6hai6 ne1 nei5 tai2 haa5 keoi5 ne1 jau5 ni1 di1 jat1 go3 go3=

　　　 but   SFP 2SG see PRT 3SG SFP have DEM some one CL CL

03 　　尖　尖　嗰　啲　呢　其　實　係　啲　似　係　啲　　　　　challenge

　　　=zim1 zim1 go2 di1 [ne1] kei4sat6   hai6 di1 ci5 hai6 di1=

　　　sharp sharp DEM some SFP actually   COP some be.like COP some

04 **IE:** 　　　　　　吓

　　　　　 [*haa6*].

　　　　　 PRT

　　　　　 'Em.'

05 **IR:** 天　主　教　式　嗰　啲　建　築

　　　tin1zyu2gaau3 sik1 go2 di1 gin3zuk1

　　　 Catholic   style DEM some architecture

'But if you look at it, it has some sharp things. Actually this one is…this looks like those Catholic architectures'

06 IE: 咦 咁 你 又 講 講 吓 **又** **好似 係**

ji2(.) gam2 nei5 jau6 (.) *gong2 gong2 haa5* (.) *jau6 hou2ci3 hai6*(.)=

PRT so 2SG both- say say PRT -and be.like COP

> stepping down/mitigate

> establish common ground

07 但 係 佢 都 無 十 字 架

=*daan6hai6 keoi5 duo1 mou5* (.) *sap6zi6gaa2:.*

but 3SG also NEG cross

> defending oneself

> disagreeing by agreeing

'Well after hearing what you said it seems like – but it doesn't have a cross'

08 IR: 咁 佢 唔 一 定 要 喺 呢 個 位 睇 到

gam2 keoi5:: m4 jat1ding6 jiu3 hai6 ne1 go3 wai2 tai2 dou2=

Then 3SG NEG sure need at DEM CL position see PRT

09 十 字 架 嘅 啫

sap6zi6gaa2 ge3 ze1.

cross SFP SFP

challenge

10 但 係 我 覺 得 呢 個 位 似 囉(.)

daan6hai6 ngo5 gok3dak1 ne1 go3 wai2 ci3 lo1

but 1SG think DEM CL position be.like SFP

11 你 覺 得 呢

nei5 gok3dak1 ne1?

2SG think Q

'Well but the cross doesn't need to be seen from here, but I think it looks like (a catholic architecture) from this angle, what do you think?'

12 **IE:**　　唐　　　　我　覺　得　　唔　係　太 =

　　　m6:: **(0.4)** *ngo5 gok3dak1* **(1.0)** *m4 hai6 taai3*=

　　　PRT　　1SG　think　　NEG COP　very

long silence

hedge

13　　即係　係　似　嘅　但係　　如果　你　睇　返

　　　=*ze2*(.)　*hai6 ci5　ge3 daan6hai6*(.) *jyu4gwo2 nei5 tai2 faan1*=

　　　that.COP COP　be.like SFP　but　　if　2SG　look PRT

14　　成　　幅　圖　我　會　覺　得　佢　個

　　　=*seng4 fuk1 tou4*(.)*ngo5 wui3 gok3dak1 keoi5 go3*=

　　　whole　CL picture 1SG would　think　3SG　CL

15　　建　築　　**似　德　國　古　堡　多　啲**

　　　=*gin3zuk1　ci3 Dak1Gwok3 gu2bou2 do1$ di1$* heh.

　　architecture be.like German　castle　many some

stepping down/mitigate

minimize imposition

　　'hm... I think... not so ... it does look like (a catholic architecture) but if you go back to the picture I would still think that this architecture looks like a German castle more'

Travel_ Informant 20_02:17-03:03
Example 4

01 IR: 點　解　　覺　得　都　係　故　宮　　　呢
　　　dim2gaai2　gok3dak3 dou1 hai6　Gu3Gong1　　　ne1?
　　　why　　　think　　also COP Forbidden.City　　Q
　　　'Why do (you) think (this) is also Forbidden City?'

02　　又　或　者　　點　解　你　覺　得　　係　中　國　　先
　　　jau6 waak6ze2 (.) *dim2gaai2 nei5 gok3dak1*(.) *hai6 zung1gwok3 sin1.*
　　　or　perhaps　why　　2SG　think　　COP　China　　PRT
　　　'Or perhaps, why do you think it is China?'

03 IE: 哦　　因　為　佢　有　呢　啲　　中　文　字　　嘅　雕　刻　喺　度.
　　　o3　jan1wai6 heoi5 jau5 li1　di1　zung1man4 zi6　[ge3] diu1hak1 hai2 dou6
　　　PRT　because　3SG　have DEM CL　Chinese　word ATTR sculpture at　there

　　.

9

.
.

04 點 解 你 覺 得 係 即 有 **中 文 字** 就 係 **中 國** 呢
    dim2gaai2 nei5 gok3dak1 hai6(.) zi jau5 zung1man4 zi6 zau6 hai6 Zung1Gwok3 ne1?
    why   2SG   think   COP that.(be)have Chinese character then COP   China   Q
    'But I want to ask you a little bit more : Why do you think it is China when there are
    Chinese words?'

05 IE: 誒 **因 為** 因 為 **通 常 都 係**

offer an explanation

    e4$(.) jan1wai6(0.2) *jan1wai6 tung1soeng4 dou1 hai6=*
    PRT   because   because   often   all COP

minimize imposition

06   即 係 如 果 古 蹟 啊 **嗰 啲 嘢**

use of epistemic verb/modal

    = *zik1-hai6 j yu4gwo2 gu2zik1   aa3 go2 di1 je5=*
    that-be   if   historic.spot SFP DEM CL thing

-   Mitigate/stepping down

07 上 面 有 刻 住 中 文 字 我 **諗 應 該** 都 係 會

minimize imposition

    soeng6 min6 jau5 hak1 zyu6 (.) *zung1man4 zi6   ngo5 lam2 jing1goi1 dou1 hai6=wui5 hai6=*
    above   have carve CONT   Chinese character 1SG think should also COP would COP

08   係 中 國 入 面 嗰 啲 古 蹟 咁 樣 樣
    =*hai6 Zung1Gwok3 jap6min6 go2 di1   gu2zik1   gam2 joeng5 joeng5.*
     COP   China   inside DEM CL historic.spot   as way   way
    'Em... It is because if there are some Chinese characters carved on (somewhere) of the
     historic spots, then I think the historic spots are in China.'

Travel_Informant 20_07:55-08:32
Example 5

01 IR: 咁 你 覺 得 係 似 中 國
    gam2 nei5 gok3dak1 hai6   ci3   Zung1Gwok3.
    So   2SG think   COP be.like China
    'So do you think it seems like China?'

02 IE: 係 係

very sure that's China

    hai6$ hai6$.
    COP   COP
     'Yes, yes.'

03 IR: 點 解 似 中 國 啊
    dim2gaai2 ci3   Zung1Gwok3 aa3?

why   be.like   China   SFP
'Why do you think it seems like China?'

04 IE: 誒   誒   即係   佢   呢   啲   建 築   有   啲   似   嗰 啲
      e4:(0.1) e4   ze1   keoi5 (0.2) li1   di1   gin3zuk1   jau5   di1   ci5   go2 di1(.)=
      PRT   PRT   that.be   3SG   DEM CL architecture   have   a.bit   be.like   DEM CL

05   寺 廟 或 者   誒   庭 院   嗰   啲   感 覺
      zi6miu6 waak6ze2 (0.1) e4 (0.1) ting4jyun4   go2   di1 gam2gok3.

      temple   or   PRT   courtyard   DEM CL   feeling
      'That is, this (kind of) architecture has the sense of those temples or courtyards.'

06 IR: 唔
      m3.
      'Hm.'

07: IE: 係
      hai6.
      'Yes.'

08 IR: 咁   但   係   東   南   亞   其他   地   方   譬 如   韓   國   啊
      gam2 daan6hai6 dung1-naam4-aa3 kei4taa1 dei6fong1 pei3jyu4 [Hon4]Gwok3   aa3=
      So   but   East –South-Asia   other   place   be.like   Korea   PRT

09 IE: 唔
                                          [m3].

      'Hmm.'

10 IR: 日   本   啊 就 算   柬   埔   寨   啊 馬 來 西   亞   啊
      =Jat6Bun2 aa3 zau6syun3 Gaan2Pou4Zaai6 aa3 [Maa5Loi4Sai1   ]Aa3   aa1=
      Japan   SFP   even   Cambodia   SFP   Malaysia   SFP

11 IE: 唔唔唔唔唔
                                     [m3m3m3m3m3].

      'Hmmhmm...'

12 IR: 都   有 呢   啲   中   國   式   嘅   建 築   㗎
      dou1 jau5 ni1   di1   Zung1Gwok3 sik1   ge3   gin3zuk1   gak3.
    also   have   DEM   CL   China   style   ATTR   architecture   SFP
      'But in other Southeast Asian places like Korea and Japan, or even Cambodia and
      Malaysia, there are also this kind of Chinese style architectures.'

13   咁   點   解   你   唔   會   覺   得 係   嗰   啲 地 方   呢
      gam2 dim2gaai2 nei5 m4   wui3   gok3dak1 hai6   go2   di1 dei6fong1 ne1?

So   why   2SG NEG would   think COP DEM CL place   Q
'So why don't you think (this one) belongs to those (Southeast Asian) places?'

14 IE: 唔　點　解　啊
m3: dim2gaai2 aa4?(0.2)
PRT　why　SFP
'Hmm... why?'

15　我　都　**其 實　都 可 能　係**　先　入　為　主　　　　啊
ngo5　dou1=kei4sat6　dou1 ho2nang4 hai6　sin1$jap6$wai4$zyu2$　aa3 heh
1SG　also　actually　also　maybe COP prejudiced.first.impressions　SFP
' Actually I also maybe be prejudiced by my first impressions.'

use of epistemic adverbial/modal for a revised conclusion

- Mitigate/stepping down

minimize imposition

Informant 6 (01:49-02:19)
Example 6

01 IR: 你　估　　下
nei5　gu2　haa5.
2SG　guess　PRT
'You guess.'

02　邊　個　國　家　啊　你　覺　得?
bin1 go3 gwok3gaa1 aa3　nei5　gok3dak1
which CL　country　PRT 2SG　think
'Which country do you think (it is)?'

03 IE: 邊　　個　國　家　啊
bin1　go3　gwok3gaa1 aa4?
which CL　　country　SFP
'Which country?'

04　嗱　又　有　中　文　字　　個　喎
naa4 jau6 jau5 zung1man2　zi6　go3 wo3.
PRT　also have　Chinese character　SFP SFP
'Um, there are also Chinese characters.'

05 IR: 係　啊
haai6 aa3.
'Yes.'

04 IE:有　中　文　字　　　我　估　　　係
　　　jau5　zung1man2 zi6　　　ngo51 gu2　　hai6(0.2)=
　　　have　Chinese　character　1SG　guess　COP

05　　估　**係　中　國**　　**囉**　都　係
　　　=*gu2 hai6　Zung1Gwok3 lo1 dou1 hai6.*
　　　guess COP　China　　　SFP　also　COP
　　　'There are Chinese characters… (So) I guess (it) is… I guess (it) is also China.'

a firm suggestion

- It **is** China ***lo1***

06 IR:吓
　　　haa6.
　　　PRT
　　　'Hm.'

07 IE: 唔
　　　m4.
　　　'Hm.'

08 IR:咁　　但　係　好　多　　　地　方　都　有　　漢　　字　　　㗎
　　　gam2　daan6hai6 hou2　do1　　dei6fong1 dou1 jau5　hon3　zi6　　gak3?
　　　INTERJ　but　very　many　place　also　have　Chinese　character　SFP
　　　'But aren't there also many places which contain Chinese characters?'

09　　未　必　　　　一　定　係　中　　國　　個　喎
　　　[*mei6　bit1*　　] *jat1deng6 hai6 Zung1Gwok3　go3　wo3.*
　　　NEG　necessary　sure　COP　China　　　SFP　SFP
　　　'It needs not be China for sure.'

challenge

10 IE:　　　　　唔
　　　[　　*m4*　　].

11　　你　講　　得　啱　　嘅
　　　nei5　gong2 dak1 ngaam1 ge2. heh
　　　2SG　say　PRT　right　SFP
　　　'You are right.'

concession/agreement

Create common ground

12 IR:但　　你　覺　得　都　係　中　國　　吓　嘛
　　　daan6 nei5 gok3dak1 dou1 hai6 Zung1Gwok3 haa6 maa5?
　　　but　2SG　think　also　COP　China　　　SFP　SFP
　　　'But you still think it is China.'

13 IE:誒　　純　粹　　覺　得　個　印
　　　e4:　*seon4seoi6 gok3dak1 go3 jan3=*
　　　PRT　intuition　think　CL　impression

14 IR: 吓　　吓
　　haa6 haa6.
　　PRT　PRT
　　'Hmhmm.'

15IE: 即係　　　可以　喺　em6
　　ze1 (.)　　*ho2ji6　hai2　em6=*
　　that.COP　　can　　at

offer an explanation

minimize imposition

16　即　係　　雖　然　　話　好　　多
　　zik1hai6　seoi1jin4　　waa6 hou2　do1=
　　that.COP　　although　　say　very　many

17　每　個　國　家　　都　會　　有　　漢　　字
　　mui5 go3 gwok3gaa1 dou1 wui3　　jau5　　hon3　zi6=
　　every CL　country　also would　have　Chinese character

18　但　係　你　話　一　塊　地　磚　都　有　個　漢　　字　　　呢
　daan6hai6 nei5 waa6(.) jat1 faai3 dei6zyun1 dou1 jau5 go3　hon3　　zi6　　　ne1=
　　but　2SG　say　one CL　ground.tile　also have CL Chinese character　SFP

19　就　如　果　喺　外　國　　　　黎　　講　　係　比　較　少　　有　嘅
　　zau6 jyu4gwo2 hai2 ngoi6gwok3　　lai4　　gong2 hai6 bei2gaau3 siu2　jau5 ge3.
　　then　if　　at　foreign.country　come　say　COP　relative　seldom have SFP
　　'That is, although many…every country would also have Chinese characters, it is seldom to find
　　Chinese characters even on the tile of the ground in foreign countries.'

20 IR:唔
　　m3.

21IE:我　相　信　係　中　國　囉　都　係
　　ngo5 soeng1seon3(.)*hai6　Zung1Gwok3 lo1　dou1 hai6.*
　　1SG　believe　COP　China　　SFP　also COP
　　'I believe (it) is also China.'

Restating China with a weaker epistemic verb soeng1seon3

- *mitigate/stepping down*

minimize imposition