

Hokkien is a colloquial name for any dialect of the Xiàmén type. Xiàmén dialects are members of the Southern Mǐn dialect subgroup of the Eastern Mǐn dialects of Chinese. The reference dialect is generally that of Amoy, China, known as Amoy Hokkien. These dialects predominate among Chinese speakers in much of Southeast Asia; the speaker recorded here grew up in Malaysia, where 1.9 million people speak Xiàmén (Li ).

Southern Mǐn dialects are chiefly characterized by the development of a series of nasalized vowels from earlier combinations of a vowel plus a nasal consonant, and the denasalization of /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ before oral vowels (Norman 1988: 235).

The speaker in this recording is a 25 year-old female from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### The Consonants of Malaysian Hokkien

Fortis:	p	t	ts	k	ʔ
Aspirated:	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	ts <sup>h</sup>	k <sup>h</sup>	
Lenis:	b			g	
Fricatives:		s			h
Nasals:	m	n		ŋ	
Sonorants:		l			

[n] and [l] are conditioned variants of the same phoneme (Norman: 236); [n] occurs as a syllable initial only before nasalized vowels. [m] and [b] are similarly related. [ŋ] does not occur as a syllable initial, but may be a nucleus or a coda. A non-phonemic glottal stop occurs before initial vowels, especially when such words are pronounced carefully or enunciated in isolation (Norman: 236).

### Tones and Vowels:

Xiàmén dialects typically have six oral vowel phonemes and four oral vowel phonemes, though five nasal vowels are attested for Amoy Hokkien (Sung 1973):

i ĭ	u ũ
e ě	o
	ɔ ǔ
a ǎ	

These vowels are employed either alone or in a host of possible diphthongs; these occur in both open and closed syllables. The rhyme of a Chinese syllable is called the *final*.

Amoy Hokkien, typical of the Xiàmén dialects, has seven contrasting tones. Sung (1973) gives the following melodic values:

55, 24, 53, 21, 33 are the five full tones employed in syllables ending in sonorants.

32 and 5 are the checked tone values. These are extremely short in duration, and are employed in syllables ending in any of /p, t, k, ʔ/.

The situation in Malaysian Hokkien is not identical to this, however. The full low tones 21 and 33 are very nearly neutralized to a single low tone, and are extremely difficult to distinguish in the recorded utterances. As well, the status of the checked tones is unknown to me, as Amoy standard 32 seems to be pronounced as 5, and examples of 32 in isolation are difficult to find at all. Owing to my own uncertainty, I have continued to transcribe the most common checked tone as 5, using 32 only when the low value is obvious.

## I. Word Lists

### Initials:

1	[p]	[puã <sup>21</sup> ]	"half; to halve"
2		[pak <sup>5</sup> ]	"north"
3	[p <sup>b</sup> ]	[p <sup>b</sup> ai <sup>53</sup> ]	"bad"
4	[b]	[bo <sup>24</sup> ]	existential negative
5	[t]	[tiã <sup>53</sup> ]	"cooking pot"
6		[tek <sup>5</sup> ]	"bamboo"
7	[t <sup>b</sup> ]	[t <sup>b</sup> ai <sup>24</sup> ]	"slaughter, kill"
8		[t <sup>b</sup> i <sup>24</sup> ]	"weep"
9	[ts]	[tsiã <sup>53</sup> ]	"tasteless, insipid, lacking salt"
10		[tsit <sup>5</sup> ]	"this"
11	[ts <sup>b</sup> ]	[ts <sup>b</sup> u <sup>21</sup> ]	"house"
12		[ts <sup>b</sup> im <sup>55</sup> ]	"deep"
13	[k]	[kiã <sup>53</sup> ]	"son, child"
14		[kuã <sup>55</sup> ]	"liver"
15	[k <sup>b</sup> ]	[k <sup>b</sup> uã <sup>21</sup> ]	"to look"
16		[k <sup>b</sup> aŋ <sup>55</sup> ]	"empty"
17	[g]	[gua <sup>53</sup> ]	"I"
18	[s]	[sã <sup>55</sup> ]	"three"
19		[sin <sup>55</sup> ]	"new"
20	[h]	[hit <sup>5</sup> ]	"that"
21		[hɔŋ <sup>55</sup> ]	"direction"
22	[m]	[m <sup>33</sup> ]	ordinary negative

23	[n]	[nuã <sup>21</sup> ]	“saliva”
24	[l]	[lai <sup>24</sup> ]	“come”

Finals:

1	[p]	[tsap <sup>24</sup> ]	“ten”
2	[t]	[ts <sup>h</sup> it <sup>5</sup> ]	“seven”
3	[k]	[pak <sup>5</sup> ]	“north”
4	[ʔ]	[aʔ <sup>5</sup> ]	“duck”
5	[m]	[ts <sup>h</sup> im <sup>55</sup> ]	“deep”
6	[n]	[sin <sup>55</sup> ]	“new”
7	[ŋ]	[taŋ <sup>55</sup> ]	“winter”

Tones:

1	[ <sup>55</sup> ]	[ts <sup>h</sup> ɿ <sup>55</sup> ]	“green”
2		[tɿ <sup>55</sup> ]	“pursue”
3	[ <sup>24</sup> ]	[hu <sup>1</sup> <sup>24</sup> ]	“horizontal; cross-wise”
4		[t <sup>h</sup> ŋ <sup>24</sup> ]	“sugar”
5	[ <sup>53</sup> ]	[buan <sup>53</sup> ]	“full”
6		[tiã <sup>53</sup> ]	“cooking pot”
7	[ <sup>21</sup> ]	[si <sup>21</sup> ]	“four”
8		[ts <sup>h</sup> u <sup>21</sup> ]	“house”
9	[ <sup>33</sup> ]	[ts <sup>h</sup> iu <sup>33</sup> ]	“trees”
10		[tau <sup>33</sup> ]	“bean”
11	[ <sup>5</sup> ]	[hui <sup>ʔ5</sup> ]	“blood”
12		[tek <sup>5</sup> ]	“bamboo”

Tone Contrasts:

1	[ts <sup>h</sup> ɿ <sup>55</sup> ]	“green”
2	[ts <sup>h</sup> ɿ <sup>21</sup> ]	“feed”
3	[ts <sup>h</sup> iu <sup>33</sup> ]	“trees”
4	[ts <sup>h</sup> ɿ <sup>53</sup> ]	“awake”
5	[tŋ <sup>33</sup> ]	“break off”
6	[tŋ <sup>53</sup> ]	“turn”
7	[tŋ <sup>24</sup> ]	“long”
8	[tsia <sup>24</sup> ]	“eat”
9	[tsiã <sup>53</sup> ]	“tasteless, insipid, lacking salt”
10	[t <sup>h</sup> ai <sup>53</sup> ]	“overly”
11	[t <sup>h</sup> ai <sup>24</sup> ]	“kill”

12	[kiã <sup>55</sup> ]	“scared, afraid”
13	[kiã <sup>24</sup> ]	“to walk”
14	[kiã <sup>53</sup> ]	“son, child”
15	[kiã <sup>21</sup> ]	“mirror”
16	[hi <sup>21</sup> ]	“movie, show”
17	[hit <sup>5</sup> ]	“that”

Tone Sandhi Phenomena:

Sung documents a host of tone sandhi phenomena in Amoy Hokkien. Sandhi refers to the change in the value of an “isolation tone” when the word is pronounced in the environment of other words. Sung outlines the following sandhi values:

Isolation	Sandhi	
55	33	
24	33	
53	55	
21	53	
33	21	
<u>32</u>	<u>5</u>	with /p, t, k/ coda
<u>5</u>	<u>32</u>	with /p, t, k/ coda
<u>32</u>	53	with /r/ coda
<u>5</u>	21	with /r/ coda

Not surprisingly, the sandhi in Malaysian Hokkien does not quite follow this neat paradigm; not all of the above changes can be found, but those that remain more or less conform to the above. The sandhi of the high isolation tones seems to have disappeared; these tones are well-preserved in phrasal contexts in the recording. The sandhi of the 33 tone is either absent or impossible to detect as a result of the near neutralization of 33 and 21. Also, the checked tone changes are quite different, probably owing to the mysterious status of the 32 tone.

1	[hɔŋ <sup>55</sup> ]	“direction”	[hɔŋ <sup>55</sup> hiɔŋ <sup>21</sup> ]	“direction”
2	[ts <sup>h</sup> i <sup>55</sup> ]	“green”	[ts <sup>h</sup> i <sup>55</sup> ts <sup>h</sup> ai <sup>21</sup> ]	“vegetables”
3	[mŋ <sup>24</sup> ]	“door”	[mŋ <sup>33</sup> k <sup>h</sup> au <sup>53</sup> ]	“entrance, doorway”
4	[se <sup>21</sup> ]	“power”	[se <sup>53</sup> lik <sup>32</sup> ]	“power, influence”
5	[si <sup>21</sup> ]	“four”	[si <sup>53</sup> kak <sup>32</sup> ]	“forty cents”

6	[kɔk <sup>5</sup> ]	"nation"	[kɔk <sup>5</sup> ka <sup>55</sup> ]	"nation, country"
7	[ak <sup>5</sup> ]	"to wet"	[ak <sup>5</sup> hue <sup>55</sup> ]	"to water flowers"
8	[kuat <sup>32</sup> ]	"the moon"	[kuat <sup>32</sup> kiu <sup>24</sup> ]	"the moon"
9	[lak <sup>32</sup> ]	"six"	[lak <sup>32</sup> k <sup>h</sup> ɔ <sup>55</sup> ]	"six dollars"
10	[tsiaɪ <sup>32</sup> ]	"to eat"	[tsiaɪ <sup>21</sup> pŋ <sup>33</sup> ]	"to eat rice"

## II. Spontaneous Speech

### References:

- Li, Charles N. (1992) "Chinese," in *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, Oxford: Oxford U. Press.
- Norman, Jerry (1988) *Chinese*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press.
- Sung, Margaret (1973) "A study of literary and colloquial Amoy Chinese," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 1(3).