Mock Politeness in Intensifier Constructions

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August, 4-6, 2021

The 16th International Conference on Role and Reference Grammar

York University

Outline

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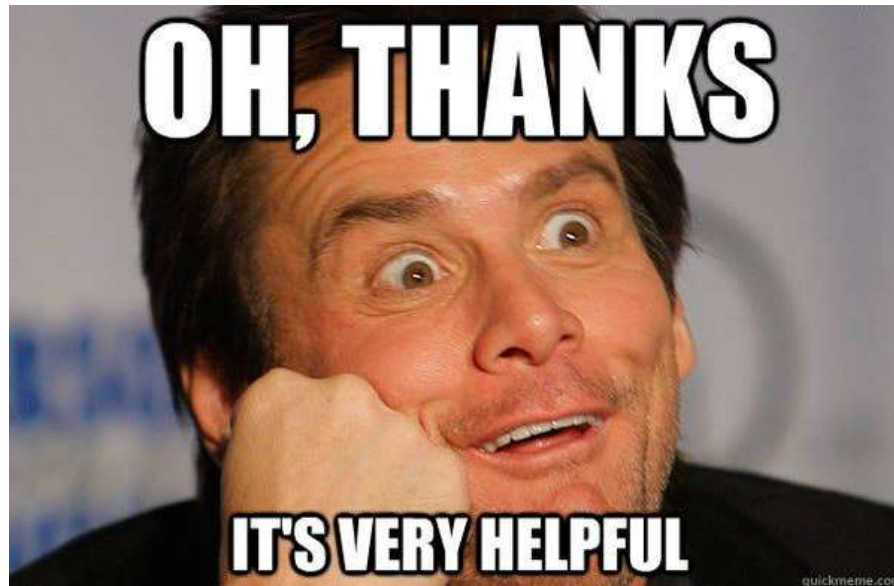- 3. Results and Discussion
- 4. Conclusion

Introduction

Mock politeness example

- [Context: You cut your hair short, and you met your friend.]

- Your friend: But you looked so nice with long hair.

- You:

Mock politeness example

- When the speaker used a seemly polite expression to convey an underlying impolite meaning, this utterance is mock polite (Taylor, 2015)

- Surface

- Underlying

Mock politeness example

- 你　　真　　有禮貌　　三字經　　還　　用　　敬語
- *ni　　zhen　youlimao　sanzijing　hai　　yon　　gjingyu*
- You　truly　polite　　　curse　　　even　use　　honorific
- "How polite you are. You use honorific when you curse."

- Surface
- The speaker compliments the addressee for being truly polite.

- Underlying
- Even if addressee really use honorific, the speaker is saying the addressee is still really rude.

Intensifiers	Semantic meaning (Fang, 2012; J. J. Li, 2003; X. Z. Li, 2011; Shan, 2004)
zhen 'truly'	• 1. Emphasizing something truly exists • 2. Emphasizing the topic • 3. Stating something is beyond a certain degree
zhende 'really'	• Emphasizing something truly exists • Stating something is beyond a certain degree
hen 'very'	• Stating something is beyond average

Examples

- tianqi   zhen   bu   cuo

  Weather   truly   not   bad

- tianqi   zhende   bu   cuo

  Weather   really   not   bad

- Tianqi   hen   bu   cuo

  Weather   very   not bad

- "The weather is very nice"

Mock politeness example

- 你　真　有禮貌　　三字經　還　用　敬語
- *ni zhen youlimao sanzijing hai yon gjingyu*
- You truly polite　　curse　even use　honorific
- "How polite you are. You use honorific when you curse."

- Surface
- The speaker compliments the addressee for being truly polite.

- Underlying
- Even if addressee really use honorific, the speaker is saying the addressee is still really rude.

Research questions

1. Can different intensifiers with similar meanings express different degree of mock politeness?

2. Which of the three intensifiers, *zhen 'truly'*, *zhende 'really'* and *hen 'very'*, are more frequently used to express mock politeness? Why?

Methodology

- **1. Framework**
  - Collecting the intensifier expressions from
    - Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese (Sinica Corpus) (Huang & Chen, 2010)
    - Modern Mandarin eight hundred words (Lu, 1999)
    - Google
  - **Classifying the intensifiers**

- **2. Procedure**
  - Collecting and classifying the intensifier expressions from PTT gossiping board comments
  - Analyzing the intensifier constructions in terms of the mock politeness degree

Framework

Methodology-Framework

Table 1.2 *Operators in the layered structure of the clause*

Nuclear operators:
  Aspect
  Negation
  Directionals (only those modifying orientation of action or event
    without reference to participants)
Core operators:
  Directionals (only those expressing the orientation or motion of one
    participant with reference to another participant or to the speaker)
  Event quantification
  Modality (root modals, e.g. ability, permission, obligation)
  Internal (narrow scope) negation
Clausal operators:
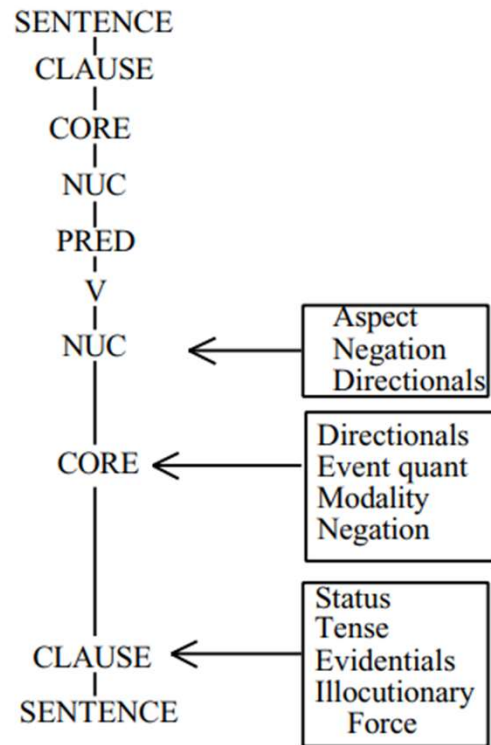 Status (epistemic modals, external negation)
  Tense
  Evidentials
  Illocutionary force

- **Operators and adverbs** (Van Valin, 2005)

- Operators are grammatical categories, and their positions in a sentence are usually fixed. (Van Valin, 2005)

- Operators could interact with adverbs. From the ordering of the operators and adverbs, it is possible to see which layer the adverb is modifying. (Fleischhauer, 2016; Van Valin, 2005)
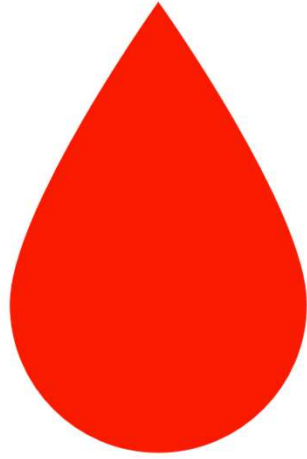
SENTENCE
CLAUSE
CORE
NUC
PRED
V
NUC ← Aspect / Negation / Directionals
CORE ← Directionals / Event quant / Modality / Negation
CLAUSE ← Status / Tense / Evidentials / Illocutionary Force
SENTENCE

Mandarin operator, *keneng* (Fu, 1996)

- 可能, ***keneng***
- **Possible**
- **Epistemic modal verb** (Li & Thompson, 2017)

zhen, 'truly': Clause

"These heritage truly seemed to be lost forever."

"Inflation **seemed** to be **truly** coming."
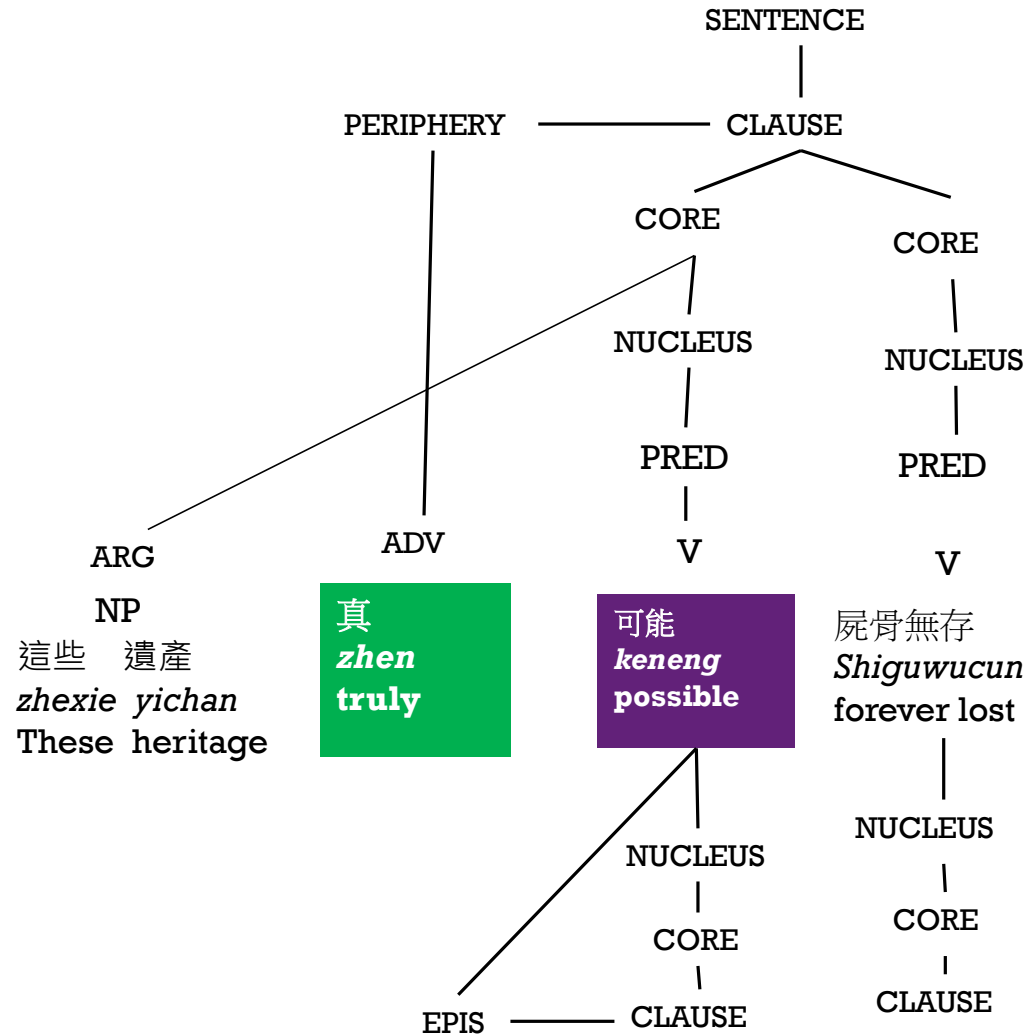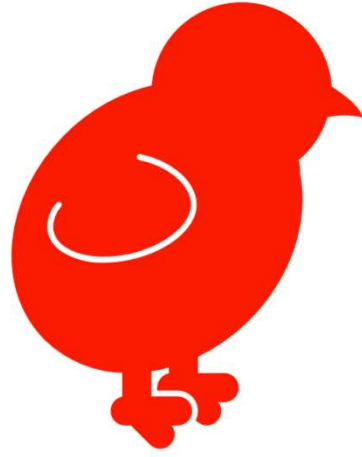
hen, 'very': Nucleus

"He said that he was **very** hard-working."

SENTENCE
|
CLAUSE
|
CORE

ARG — NUCLEUS — ARG CLAUSE

ARG
|
NP
他
Ta
He

NUCLEUS
|
PRED
V
說
shuo
said
|
NUCLEUS
|
CORE
|
CLAUSE

ARG
NP
他
ta
he

PERIPHERY
|
ADV

很
hen
very

CLAUSE
|
CORE
|
NUCLEUS
|
PRED
V
用功
yonggong
hard working
|
NUCLEUS
|
CORE
|
CLAUSE
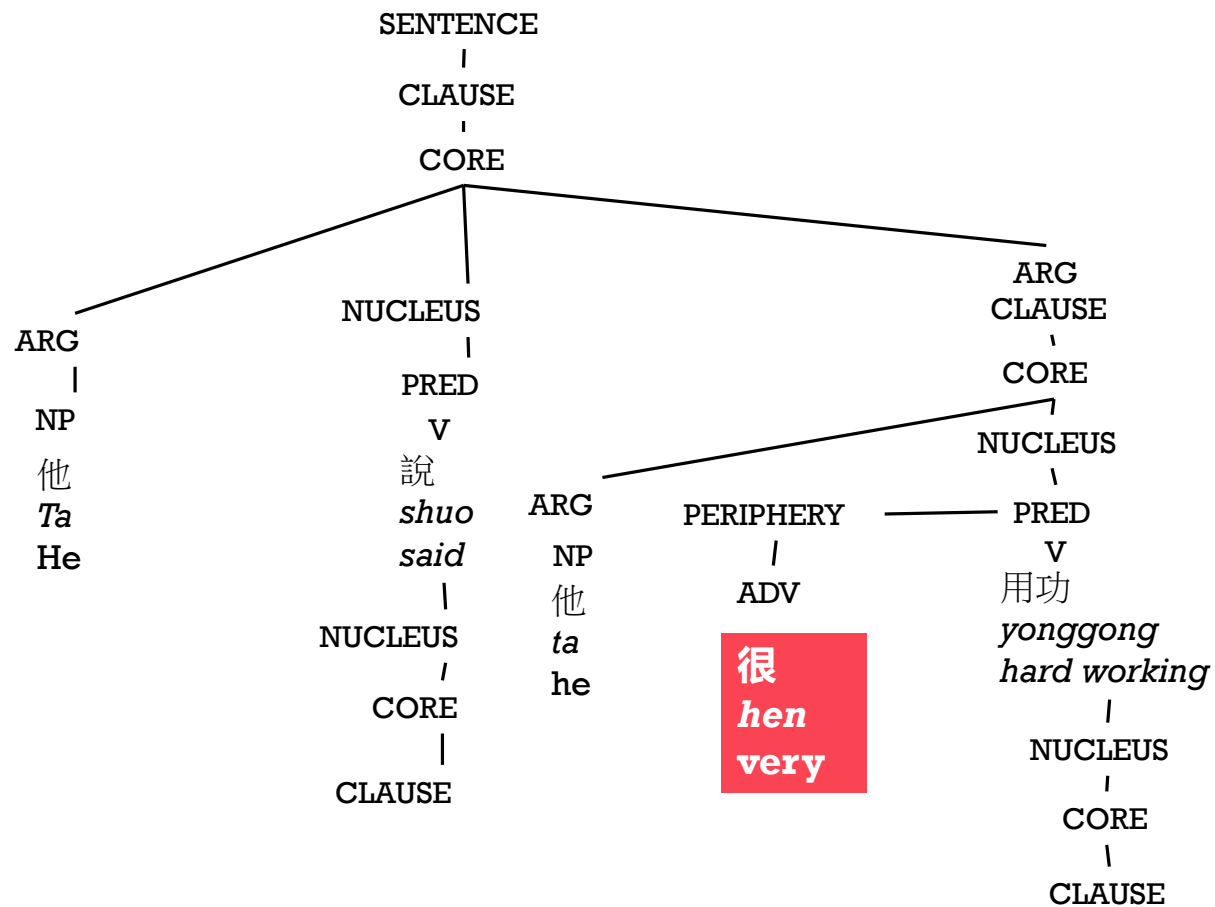
"It is highly possible that he already got home"
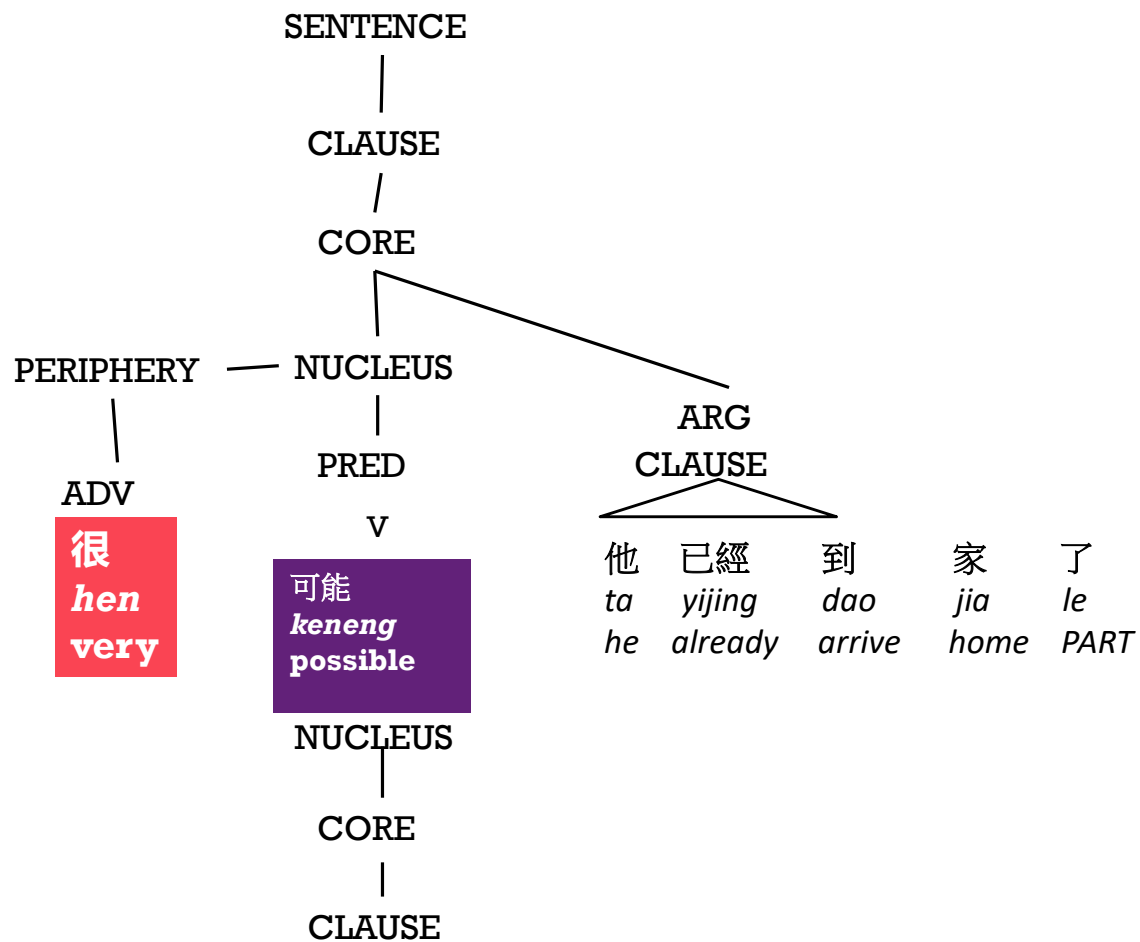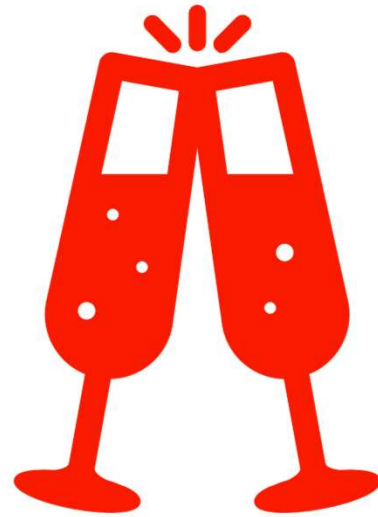
zhende, 'really': 1. Core   2.Clause

Ambiguous

AI	真的	可能	取代	你的	工作
	zhende	*keneng*	qudai	nide	gongzuo
	really	**possible**	replace	your	job

"AI really could replace your job."
➔ There is a high possibility that AI replaces your job
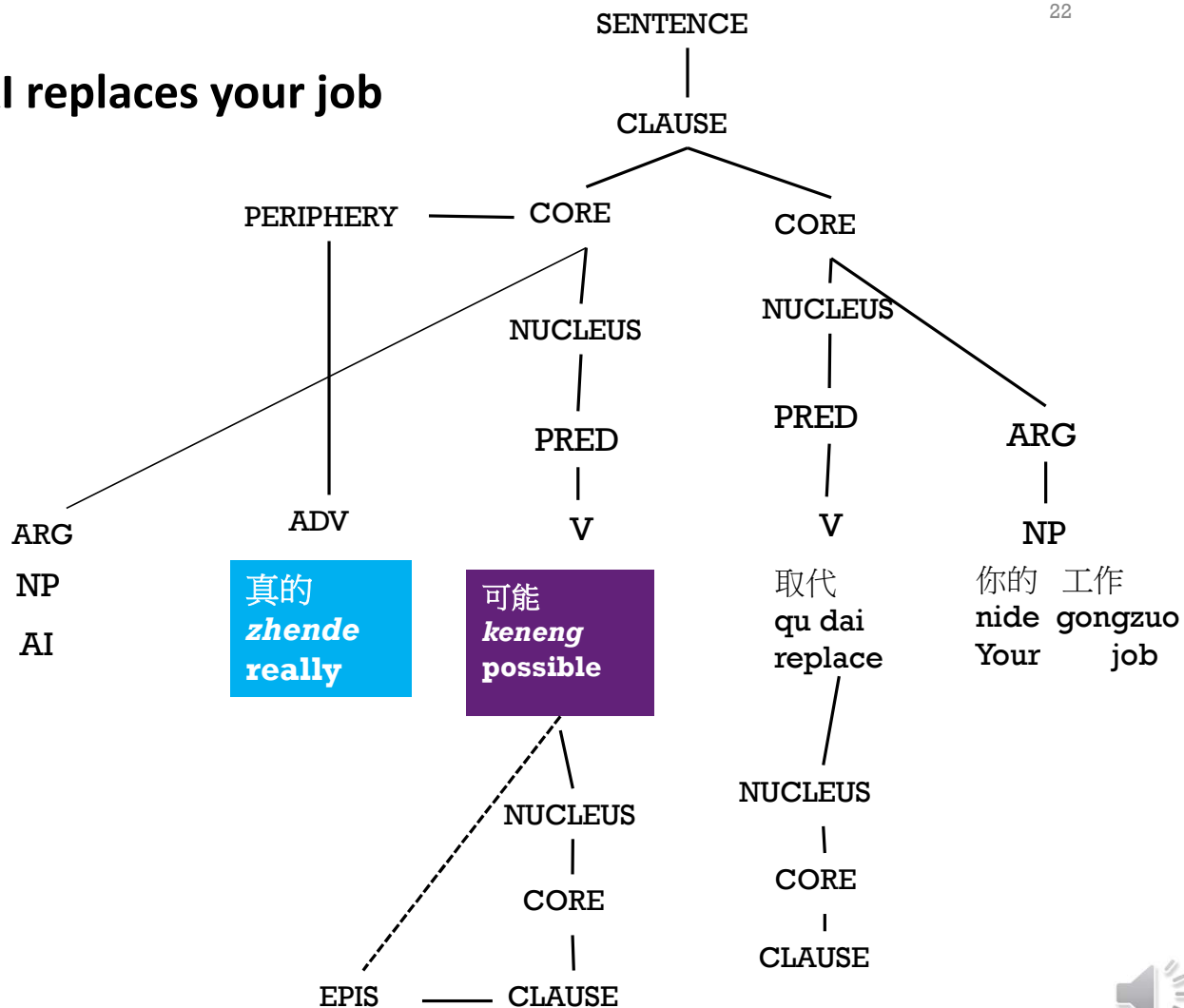
"AI really could replace your job."
➔ **"AI could replace your job, really."**
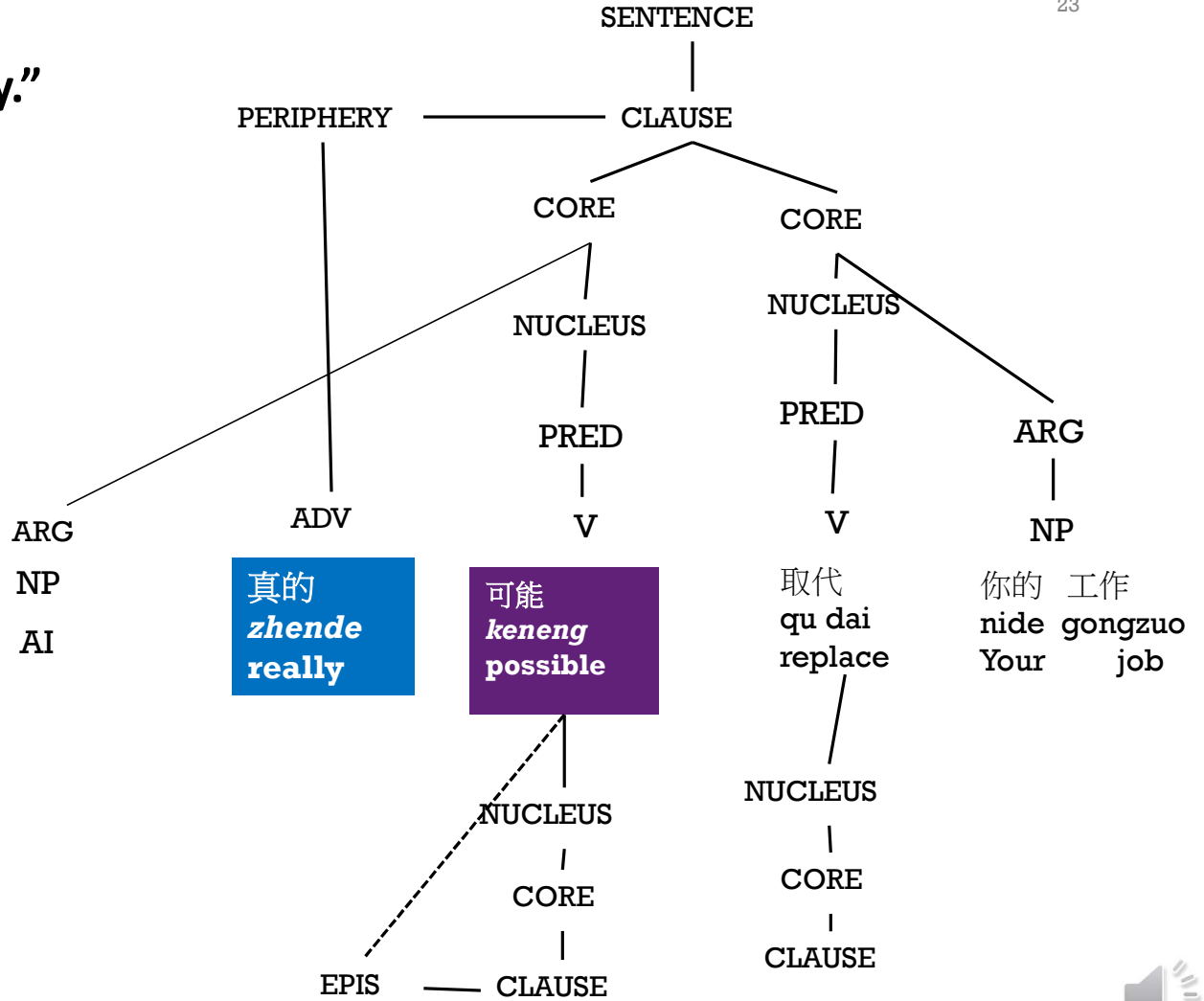
zhende modifying
the core layer

"The self voluntary climate treaty seemed really workable."
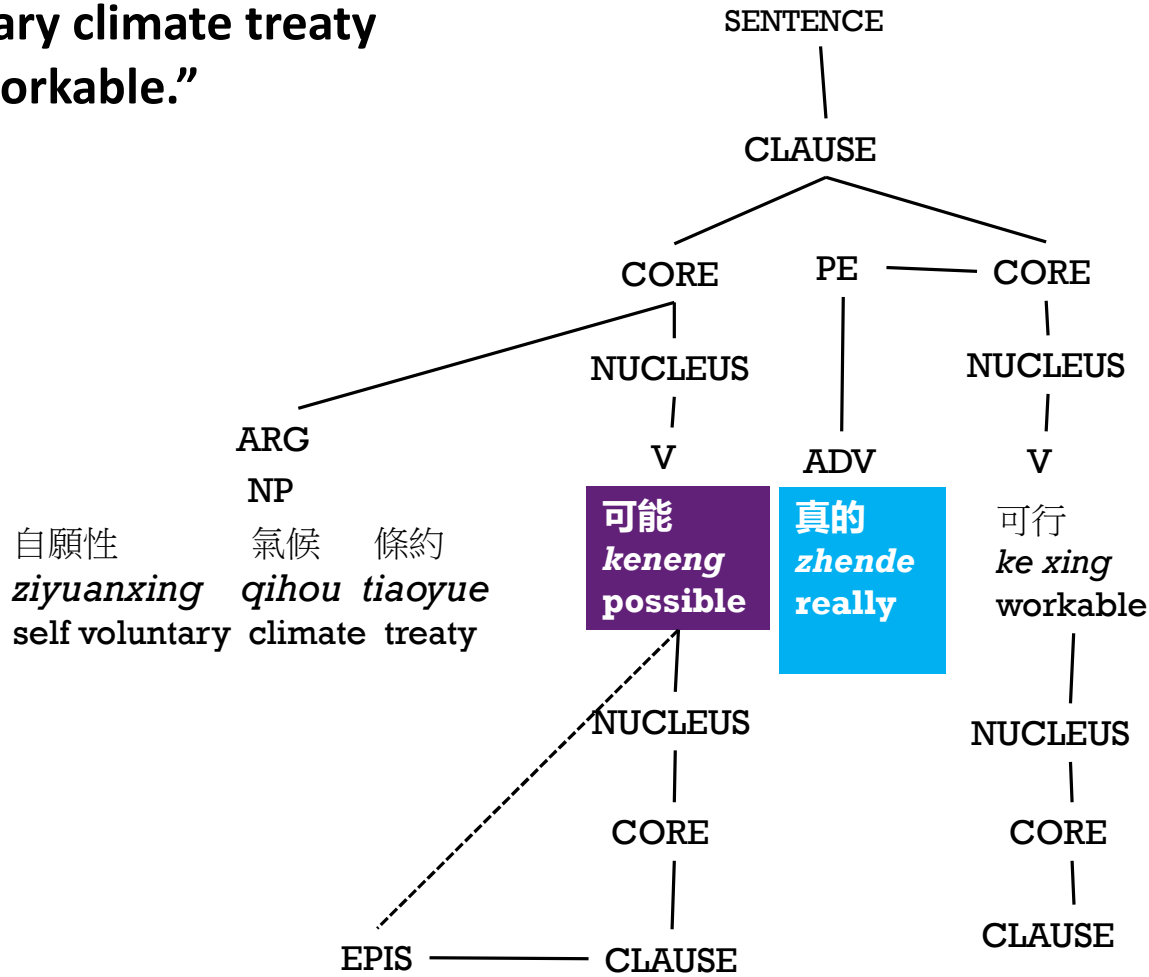
"The picture was really taken down."

SENTENCE

CLAUSE

CORE

PERIPHERY

NUCLEUS

PRED

V

ARG

NP

ADV

照　片
zhao pian
picture

真的
zhende
really

被　　拿
bei　*na*
PAS　take

下來
xia lai
down

了
le
PART

NUCLEUS — DIREC

CORE

CLAUSE — TENSE
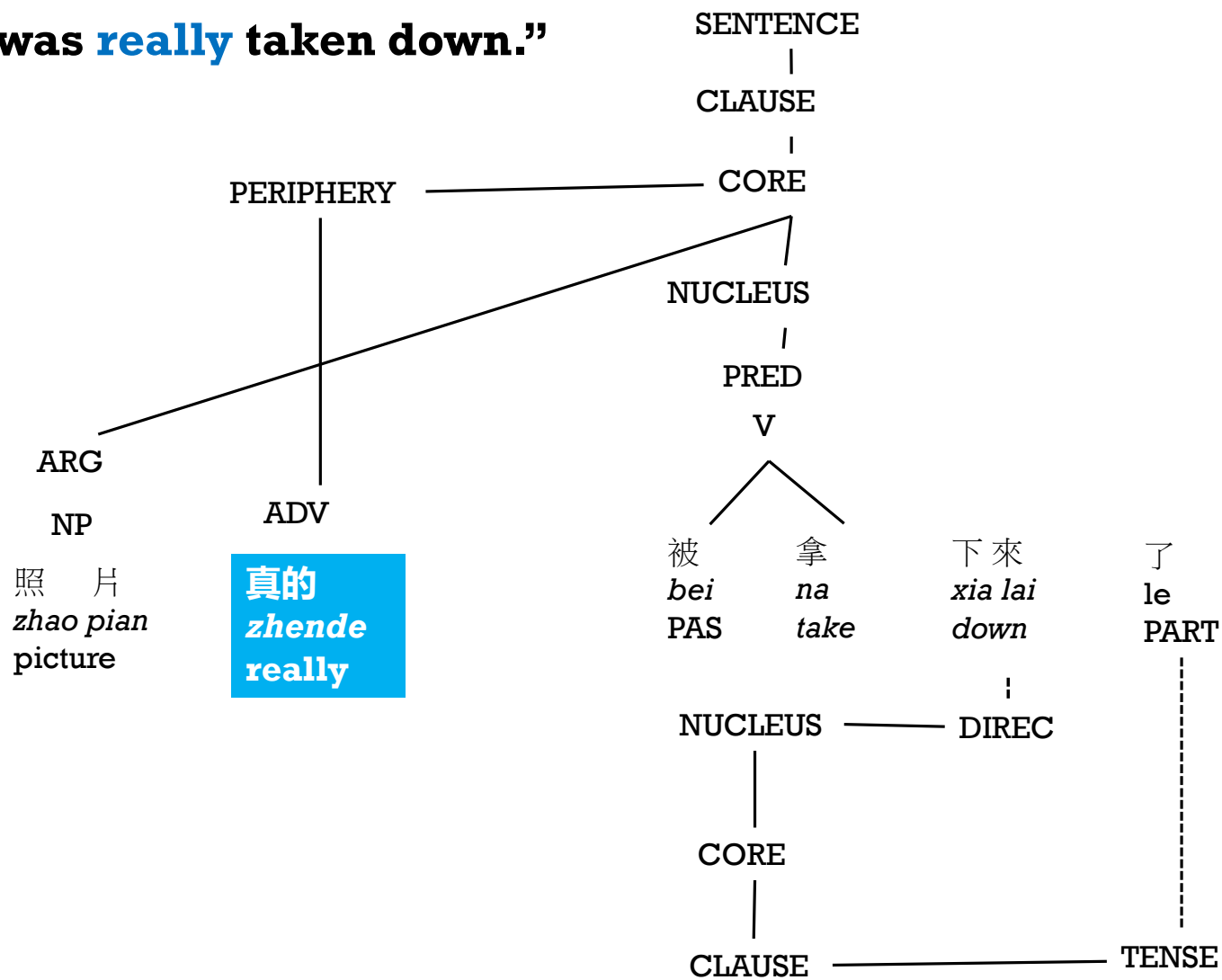
zhende modifying
the clause layer

"Wrinkles seemed to "say hi" to me very soon, really"
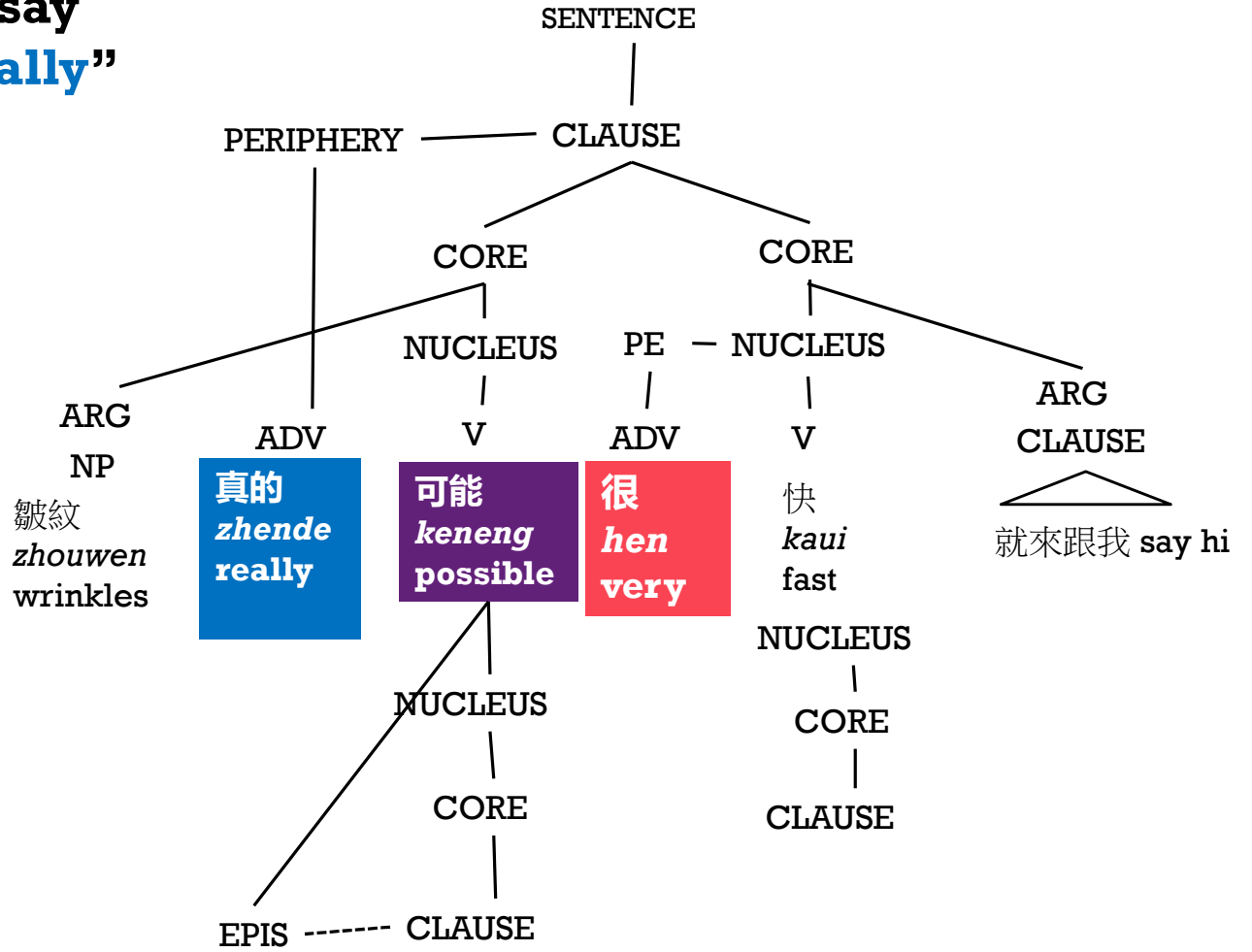
"It is highly possible that typhoon will form, really"

SENTENCE
CLAUSE
PERIPHERY
CORE — CORE
NUCLEUS — NUCLEUS
PERIPHERY — PRED — PRED — ARG
ADV — ADV — V — V — NP

真的
zhende
really

很
hen
very

可能
keneng
possible

成為
chengwei
turn into

颱風
tai feng
typhoon

NUCLEUS
CORE
EPIS — CLAUSE

NUCLEUS
CORE
CLAUSE
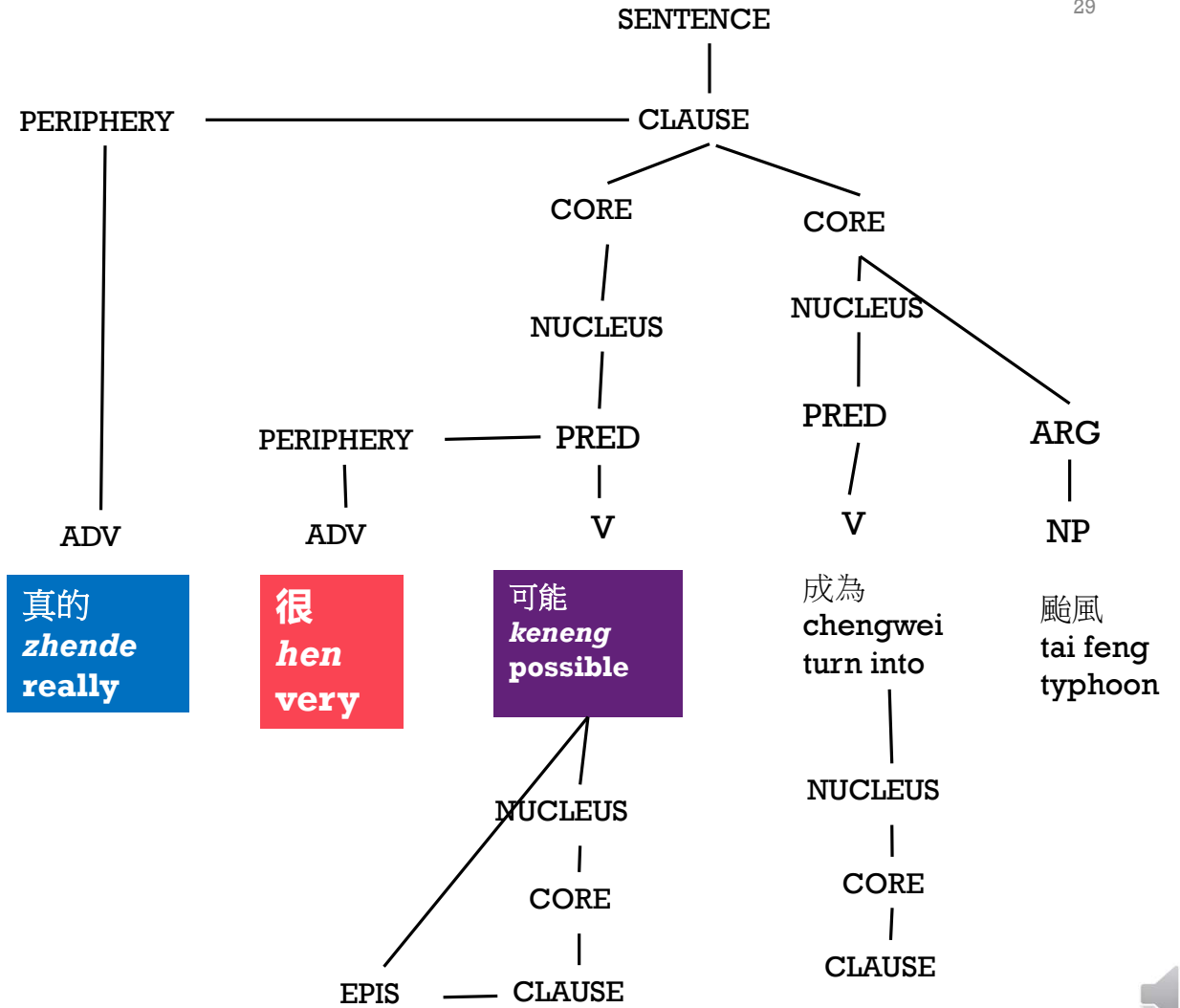
Classification summary

Constructions	Modifying layers
zhen	clause
zhende-clause	clause
zhende-core	core
hen	nucleus

Procedure

Procedures

1. Collecting data from PTT gossiping board (total:4323 characters)

2. Cleaning and parsing the data into utterance level

3. Rating each utterance

4. Analyzing the utterances using One-way ANOVA

Utterances	rater1	rater2	rater3	score	Mock degree
"So you just want his money. You are such a cultured person."	o	o	o	3	mock
"How poor boyfriend is."	o	o	x	2	Some mock
"Being rich and not stingy is rare enough."	o	x	x	1	Little mock
"Seeing what have been commented, it is possible that the car dealer heard the word wrong. I mean, a "camping car" does sound like a "hearse."	x	x	x	0	Not mock

Results and Discussion

RQ1: Can different intensifiers with similar meanings express different degree of mock politeness?

	zhen	zhende-clause	zhende-core	hen
not mock	10.20%	17.14%	41.38%	36.82%
little mock	6.12%	20%	29.31%	21.82%
some mock	51.02%	37.14%	22.41%	28.18%
mock	32.65%	25.71%	6.90%	13.18%

not mock   little mock   some mock   mock   ······· mock
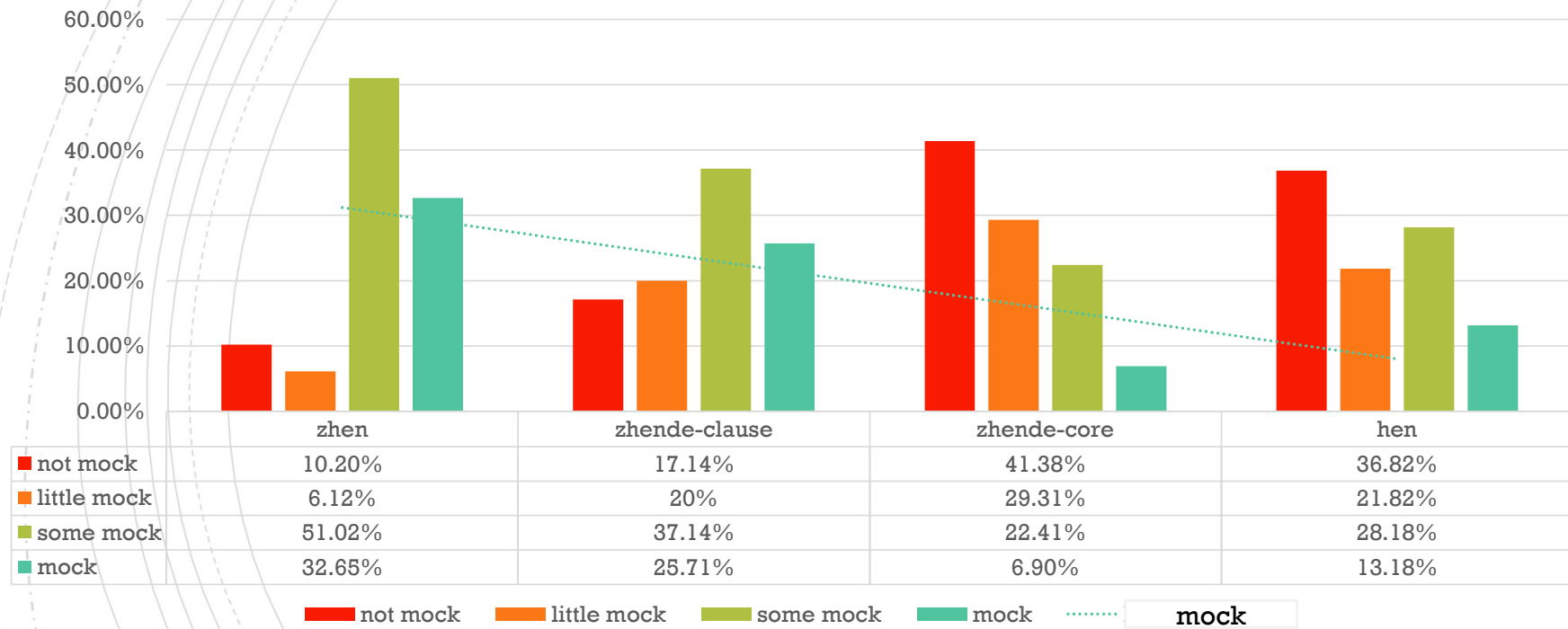
RQ1: Can different intensifiers with similar meanings express different degree of mock politeness?

	group	n	mean	sd
1	*hen*	194	1.1340206	1.0640510
2	*zhen*	49	2.0612245	0.8992627
3	*zhende*-clause	35	1.7142857	1.0451971
4	*zhende*-core	58	0.9482759	0.9628615

- The Welch's ANOVA shows that the four constructions have a significant difference in terms of raters' scores (F = 17.375, *p*<.001).

RQ2: Which of the three intensifiers, *zhen 'truly'*, *zhende 'really'* and *hen 'very'*, are more frequently used to express mock politeness? Why?

- *Zhen* construction, *zhende-clause* > *zhende-core* construction, *hen* construction.

- Finding: If the intensifier could modify the clause layer, it is more likely the intensifier construction could show mock politeness.

Possible explanation for the finding

- It seems that when an adverb could modify a higher layer, it is more related to "mood." (Van Valin, 2005)
  - Nucleus: Aspectual adverbs, 'completely'
  - Core: pace adverbs, 'quickly,' deontic adverbs, 'can'
  - Clause: epistemic adverbs, 'probably.

Conclusion

- RQ1: Can different intensifiers express different degree of mock politeness?
  - YES

- RQ2: Which of these intensifiers are more frequently used to express mock politeness? Why?
  - *Zhen* and *zhende-clause*
  - The layer the intensifier is modifying could influence how much attitude (mock politeness) is shown.

Causative   Closest:
Aspectual   Phases of a single event or acti○
Psych-action
Purposive
Jussive
Direct perception
Propositional attitude
Cognition
Indirect discourse
Conditional
Simultaneous states of affairs
Sequential states of affairs   Loosest:
Unspecified temporal order   Distinct events or actions
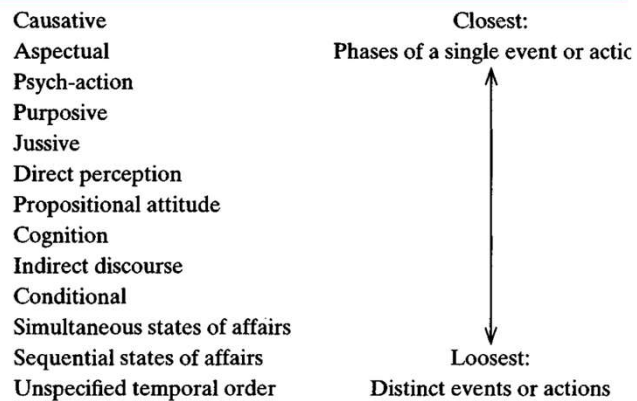
Figure 8.17 Interclausal Semantic Relations Hierarchy

- 1. Could we use interclausal semantic relations hierarchy to explain the phenomenon?

- 2. Other intensifiers, such as as *tai* 'too' (太), *hao* 'very' (好), and *man* 'very' (滿), could be further investigated.

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