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# Evidential marking and the upgrading and downgrading of epistemic strengths in Mandarin conversations

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# Evidential types

(de Haan 2001; Willett 1988)

- **Direct evidence**

我 剛才 看見 他 了。

wǒ gāngcái kànjiàn tā le

1SG just.now see 3SG PERF

'I saw him just now.'

- **Reportative/hearsay evidence**

聽說 你 要 離開 香港。

tīngshuō nǐ yào líkāi xiānggǎng

hearsay 2SG FUT leave HongKong

'(I) heard you're leaving Hong Kong.'

- **Inferential evidence ---- epistemic modality**

裡面 肯定 有 人。

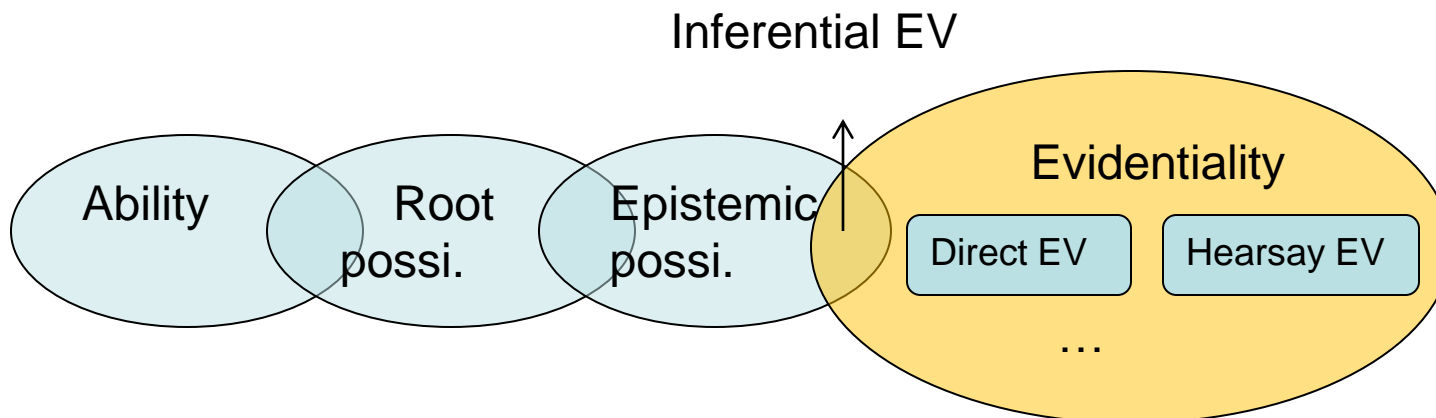
lǐmiàn kěndìng yǒu rén

inside must COP people

'There must be someone inside.'

# Evidentiality vs. Epistemic modality

- “Evidentiality is a category in its own right, and not a subcategory of any modality” (Aikhenvald 2004:7)
- “Evidential distinctions are part of the marking of epistemic modality” (Willet 1988:52)
- Epistemic modality, in the diachronic pathway, often developed extended uses of inferential functions. It is this inferential uses of epistemic modality that intersect with evidentiality.



# What is Evidentiality?

- **Narrow definition:** obligatory markers that are used to encode a speaker's source/type of information (e.g. Aikhenvald 2004; Faller 2002; Lazard 2001; de Haan 2001).
- **Broader definition:** narrow definition+ the degree of the information's reliability, probability or certainty, as well as speaker's access to information (Tournadre & LaPolla forthcoming; Cornillie 2009; Rooryck 2001; Ifantidou 2001; Palmer 1986).

# Previous research on evidentiality

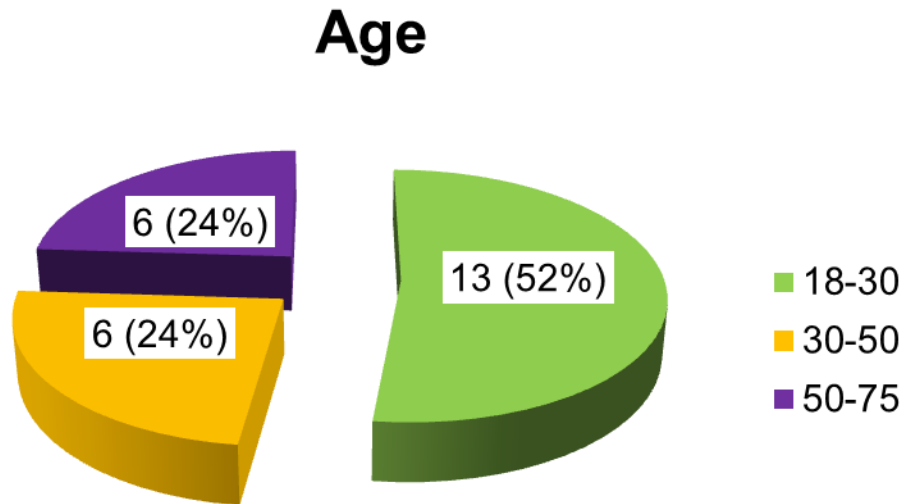
- (1) Sources/types of information  
(Aikhenvald 2004; Faller 2002; Lazard 2001; de Haan 2001)
- (2) Expressions of speaker's attitude towards the information  
(Chafe 1986, Givón 1982, Palmer 1986 )
- (3) Socio-interactional meanings  
(Kim 2011, 2005; Fox 2003, Kamio 1997; Hill & Irvine 1993)

# Research questions

- What types of evidential strategies are found in Mandarin conversations?
- How do these evidential strategies interact with each other in Mandarin conversational discourse?

# Data

25 Mandarin audio and video taped  
conversational interviews  
( $\approx 30$  mins.  $\cdot 25 = 750$  mins.)



鳥居Torii





01 IR: 最後 這 個 =  
zuihòu zhè ge =  
last this CL  
'The last one...'

02 IE: = 哎呀 ? 日本 的 嘛 : 日本 的 神廟 .  
= *aiya* ? *riběn de* **ma** *riběn de shénmiào* .  
PRT Japan ATTR SFP Japan ATTR shrine  
'Come on, Japanese, Japan's shrine.'

03 IR: 哎 ? 為 什 麼 你 就 -  
*ai* ? *wèishénme nǐ jiù* -  
PRT why 2SG just  
'Oh? Why could you (recognize it so quickly)?'

04 IE: 哎 . 動 畫 片 里 經 常 看 [ 嘛 :  
*ai* . *dòng huà piān lǐ jīng cháng kàn* [ *ma* :  
PRT animation inside often see SFP  
'(I've) **seen** (this) a lot in (Japanese) animations.'

05 IR:

Direct evidential

[ hhh 哪 些 - 哪 些 - 哪 些 - 哪 些 地 方 =  
[ hhh *nǎxiē - nǎxiē nǎxiē nǎxiē dìfāng* =  
which which which which part  
'(You can tell from) which part?'

Marks a high degree of the speaker's commitment to the assertion. (Li & Thompson 1982; Li 2006)

06 IE: = 這 個 建築物 經常 是 在 神廟 的 入口處 啊  
 = *zhè gè jiànzhùwù jīngcháng shì zài shénmiào de rùkǒuchù a*  
 this CL architecture often COP at shrine ATTR entrance SFP  
 ‘Quite often this appears at the entrance place of a shrine.’

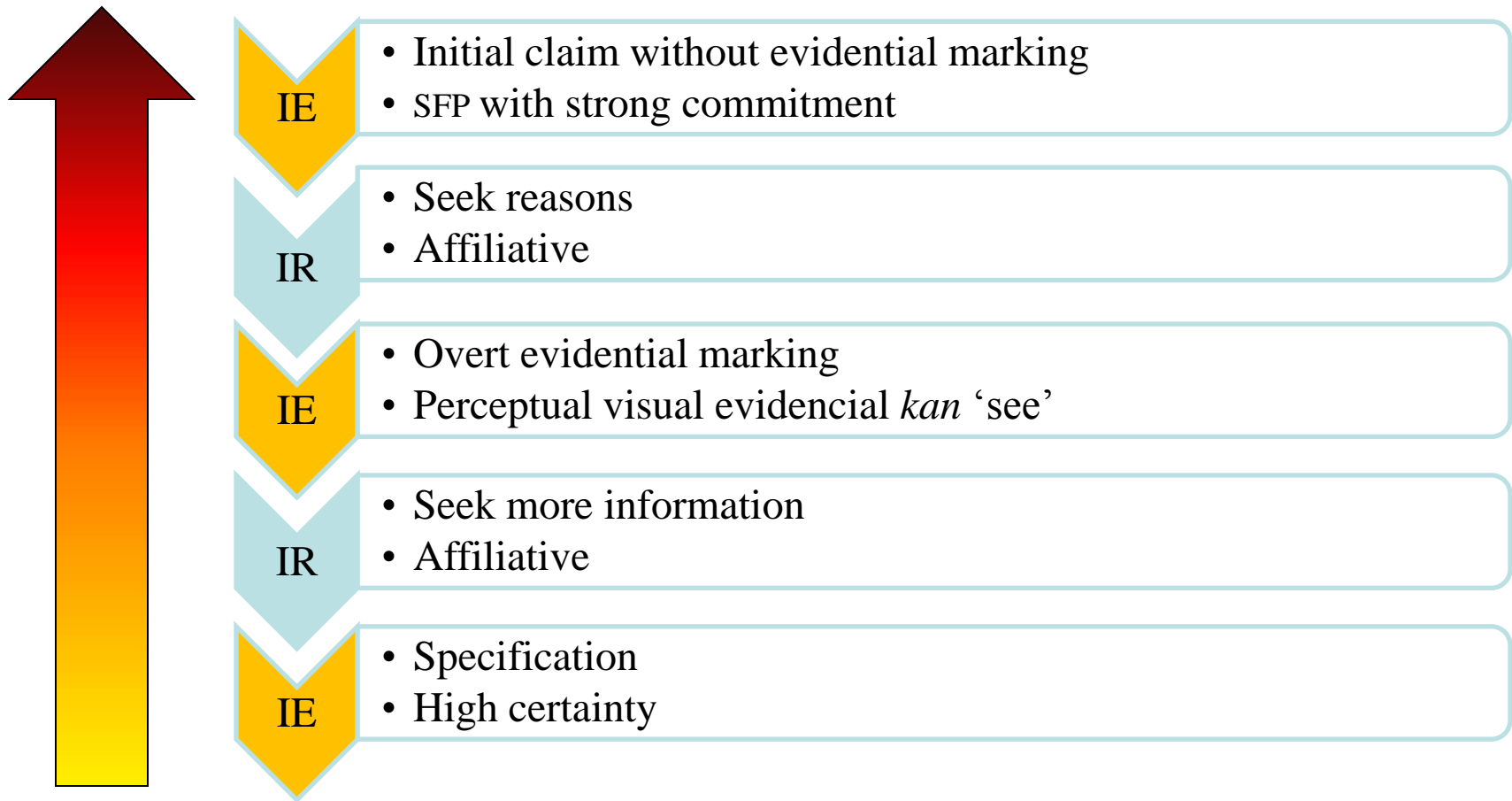
07 IR: 嗯  
*èn*  
 PRT  
 ‘Yeah.’

Strong certainty

08 IE: 日本 的 廟會 的 入口處 就 有  
*riběn de miàohuì de rùkǒuchù jiù yǒu*  
 Japan ATTR shrine ATTR entrance right.on have

這樣 的 - 這樣 的 建築 .  
*zhèyàng de - zhèyàng de jiànzhù .*  
 this.kind ATTR this ATTR architecture  
 ‘Japanese shrines’ entrance place do have this kind of architectures.’

# reinforce the initial epistemic strength



Drainage  
system



01 IE: 是 門 下面 的 那 個 墊 的 墊子 墊子  
*shì mén xiàmiàn de nà ge diàn de diànzi diànzi*  
COP gate beneath ATTR that CL put.underneath ATTR cushion  
'(It) is that cushion thing underneath a gate.'

02 古代 的 那 個 城 門  
*gǔdài de nà ge chéng mén*  
ancient ATTR that CL city gate

Zero marking

03 那 個 下面 的 > 那 個 東西 <  
*nà ge xiàmiàn de > nà ge dōngxi <*  
that CL beneath ATTR that CL thing  
'That cushion thing underneath an ancient city gate'

04 或者 某 個 建築物 下面 (.) 伸出來 的 那 一 小 坨 東西  
*huòzhě mǒu gè jiànzhùwù xiàmiàn (.) shēnchūlái de nà yī xiǎo tuó dōngxi*  
or some CL architecture beneath stretch ATTR that one little CL thing  
'Or something stretching out from an (ancient) architecture.'

05 IR: 為什麼 呢  
*wèishénme ne*  
why SFP  
'Why?'

Direct evidential

06 IE: 它 很 近 啊 ? 你 看 它 离 地  
*tā hěn jìn a nǐ kàn tā lí dì*  
3SG very close PRT 2SG see 3SG from ground

Assertive particle

07 馬上 就 到 地上 了 吧  
*mǎshàng jiù dào dìshàng le ba*  
almost just arrive ground PERF SFP  
'You see, it's so close to the ground, nearly touches to the ground.'

08 IR: 那 你 覺得 上面 是 門 啊  
*nà nǐ juéde shàngmiàn shì mén a*  
then 2SG think above COP gate Q  
'So you think the above is a gate?'

inferential evidential

09 IE: (2.9) 啊 也 有 道理 好像 沒 =  
*a yě yǒu dàolǐ hǎoxiàng méi*  
PRT also have reason seem NEG

'Uh... (your logic) also makes sense, seems that there's not...'

10 = 不 上 面      不 一 定 是 門 啊 上 面      可 能 是 牆 啊  
*bù shàngmiàn bù yīdìng shì mén a shàngmiàn kěnéng shì qiáng a*  
 no above      NEG **must** COP gate SFP above      **may** COP wall SFP  
 ‘No, the above part is not necessarily a gate, could be a wall.’

11 IR: 那 牆: 怎 麼 會 伸 出 這 麼 一 個 一 個 的 這 個 呢  
*nà qiáng: zěnmě huì shēnchū zhème yī gè yī gè de zhè ge ne*  
 then wall why FUT stretch such one CL one CL ATTR this CL Q  
 ‘Then how could a wall has those stretching parts?’

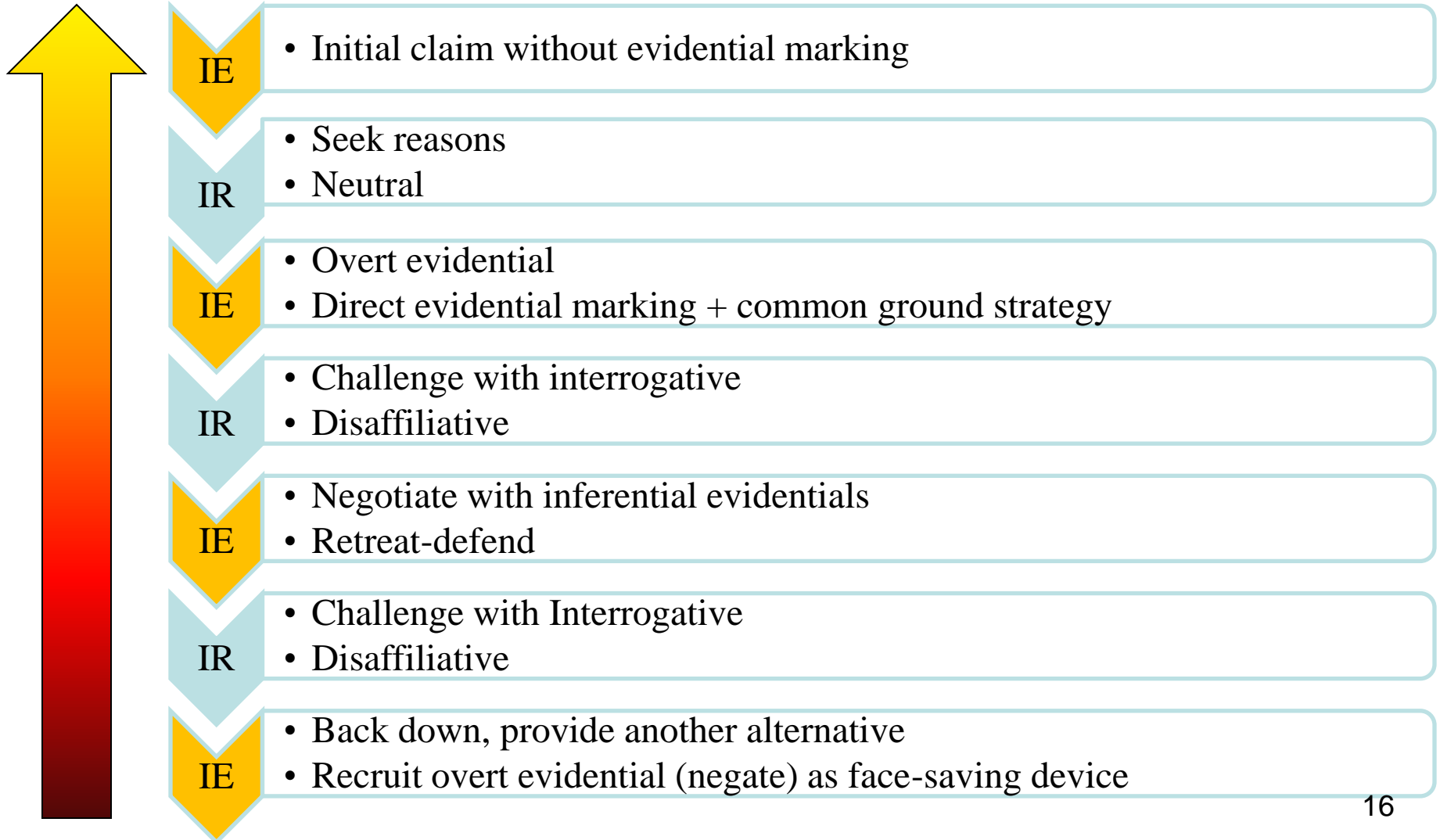
inferential evidentials

12 IE: 哦 那 就 是 房 簷 我 看 不 清 楚  
*o nà jiù shì fángyán wǒ kàn bù qīngchǔ*  
 PRT that just COP eave 1SG **see** NEG clear

Direct evidential

13 它 离 地 有 多 高  
*tā lí dì yǒu duō gāo*  
 3SG from ground have how high  
 ‘Well, so an eave? I can’t **see** clearly how far it is from the ground’

# Mitigate the initial epistemic strength





01 IE: 我 覺得 我 要是 想 去 的 話  
*wǒ juéde wǒ yàoshi xiǎng qù de huà*  
1SG feel 1SG if want to ATTR word  
'I think if I want to travel...'



02 IR: 嗯  
*èn*  
PRT  
'Yeah.'

03 IE: 可能 (.) 嗯 (.) 在 亞洲 範圍 之 內 .  
*kěnéng (.) en (.) zài yàzhōu fànwéi zhī nèi*  
may PRT in Asia range NOM within  
'Maybe, well, within Asia...'

04 IR: 嗯  
*èn*  
PRT  
'Yeah.'

05 IE: 我 想 去 £ 新加坡 £ hhh  
*wǒ xiǎng qù £ xīnjiāpō £*  
1SG want to Singapore  
'I would like to go to Singapore.'

06 IR: 嗯 ? 那 跟 香港 有 什麼 (.) £ 特別 大的 £  
*én ? nà gēn xiānggǎng yǒu shénme (.) £ tèbié dà de £*  
 PRT that with Hong have what special big ATTR  
 Kong

‘Oh? Any big difference between that (Singapore) and Hong Kong?’

Indicate speaker's reservation

07 IE: 他們 說 那邊 好像 (.) 好像 人 會 比 這邊 少 一點 吧 :  
*tāmen shuō nàbian hǎoxiàng (.) hǎoxiàng rén huì bǐ zhèbian shǎo yīdiǎn ba :*  
 3PL say there seem seem people FUT compare here less a.little SFP

‘They said there (Singapore) seems...seems to be less crowded compared with here (HK).’

08 這邊 [ 整體 會 比 新加坡 要 擁擠 一點  
*zhèbian [ zhěngtǐ huì bǐ xīnjiāpō yào yōngjǐ yīdiǎn*  
 here on.the.whole FUT compare Singapore need crowd a.little

‘Here (HK) on the whole is more crowded than Singapore.’

Hearsay evidential

09 IR: [ hhh 那 你 £ 是 去 旅行 的 還 是 看 少 一點 的 人 的 £ hhh  
 [ hhh nà nǐ £ shì qù lǚxíng de hái shì kàn shǎo yīdiǎn de rén de £ hhh  
 that 2SG COP go travel ATTR or COP see less a.little ATTR people ATTR

‘Then you travel there for viewing or seeing less people?’

10 IE: £ 因為 £ 他們 那 (.) 他們 說 那邊 就是 (.)  
*£ yīnwèi £ tāmen nà (.) tāmen shuō nàbian jiù shì (.)*  
 because 3PL that 3PL say there just COP

11   嗯 (.) 美食 £ 比較                    多    嘛 £  
*en* (.) *měishí* £ *bǐjiào*                    *duō*    *ma* £  
 PRT    cuisine    comparatively many SFP

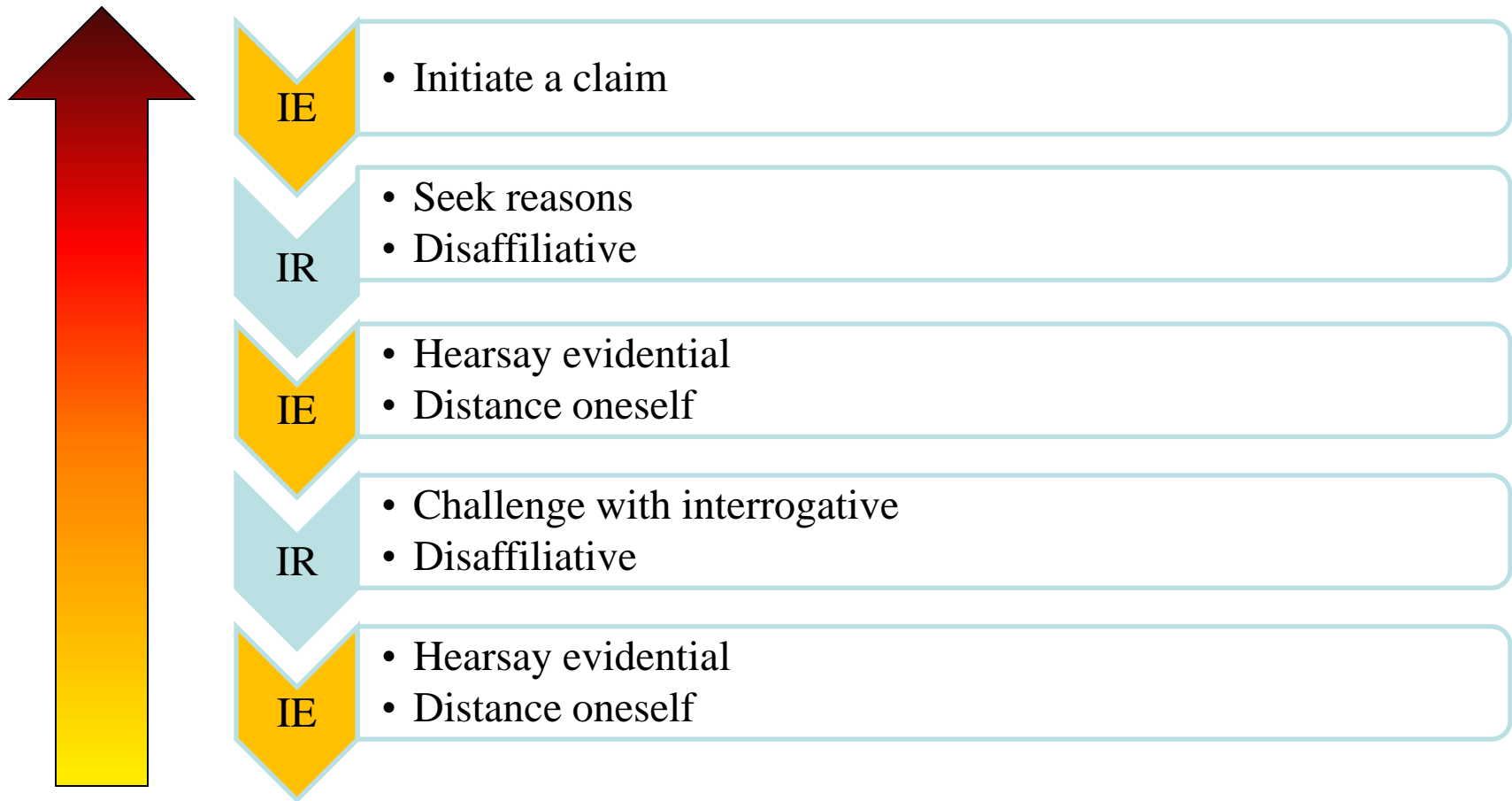
‘Cause they...there...they said there’s, well, a lot of cuisine there.’

12 IR: 哦 :: 啊 . 這 我 還 蠻                    意外                    的 (.)  
*o*    :: *a*    . *zhè wǒ hái mán*                    *yìwài*                    *de* (.)  
 PRT    PRT    this 1SG INTE a.little.bit    out.of.expectation ATTR

13   你 說 你 想 去 新加坡 (.) 旅行  
*nǐ shuō nǐ xiǎng qù xīnjiāpō* (.) *lǚxíng*  
 2SG say 2SG want to Singapore    travel

‘Okay, yeah, this is sort of out of my expectation, you said you would like to go to Singapore.’

# Modify the initial epistemic strength



# Answers to RQs

## Different evidential strategies in Mandarin conversations

- (1). Zero-evidential marking;
- (2). Direct evidentials such as (*ni*) *kan* ‘(as you can) **see**’;
- (3). Inferential evidentials such as *haoxiang* ‘**seems/looks like**’ and *kending* ‘**must**’;
- (4). Hearsay evidential (*tamen*)*shuo* ‘they **say**’

# Answers to RQs—contd.

**How do these evidential strategies interact with each other in Mandarin conversational discourse?**

- To negotiate the source and reliability of the expressed information.
- To modulate (reinforce & mitigate) interlocuter's epistemic strength.

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