Perspectives on Perception: The Unshiftable Implicit Experiencer Introduced by Intensifiers

- 1. Overview: Predicates of Personal Tastes (PPTs) introduce an implicit experiencer, often referred to as 'judge' (Lasersohn 2005, Stephenson 2007, Bylinina 2017, a.o.), which can be spelt out as a prepositional phrase 'to X'. I argue (a) that some degree intensifiers like $zh\bar{e}n$ 'really' in Mandarin also introduce a judge, and (b) that this judge is different from those for PPTs in the following aspects: (i) they are strictly speaker-oriented and unshiftable (ii) they require an 'internal perspective' (Vendler 1979, 1982) and (iii) the first-person pronoun cannot co-refer to the judge when the pronoun has an experiencer θ -role. I propose that **the judge for** $zh\bar{e}n$ **is syntactically represented in an argument-position as PRO in the left periphery**. The semantic representation of PRO accounts for (i) and (ii), and the syntactic representation of PRO accounts for (iii) by the Binding Theory. The first-person pronoun $w\check{o}$ is bound by the speaker-oriented PRO projected by $zh\bar{e}n$, which violates Condition B.
- **2.** Properties of $zh\bar{e}n$'s judge: (i) Unshiftabiliy. The judge for PPTs is not strictly speaker-oriented and can be shifted to other agents based on world knowledge or context, as exemplified by the shift to *vulture* in (1). The judge for $zh\bar{e}n$, on the other hand, is unshiftable. For (2), suppose that a cat is eating cat food and makes a sound that clearly tells the speaker that the cat likes the food, (2) is infelicious with $zh\bar{e}n$ even under this scenario, in which the speaker has solid evidence that the cat likes the cat food. In contrast, the sentence is felicitous with $h\check{e}n$, like the English translation.
- (1) Rotting flesh is delicious (to a vulture). (from Egan et al. 2005, Anand and Korotkova 2018)
- (2) Zhè-ge mǎoliáng {#zhēn / hěn } hǎochī, jǐnguǎn wǒ méi chī-guò. this-cl cat food **really very** tasty though I NEG eat-EXP 'This cat food is really tasty, though I haven't tasted it.'

The unshiftability is also verified by the unacceptability of using $zh\bar{e}n$ in interrogatives (see (3b)) and conditionals (Lai 1999, Wang 2022). In other words, there is no interrogative flip (Speas and Tenney 2003) for speaker-oriented $zh\bar{e}n$ -clauses, in contrast to judges for PPTs. Unlike English, there is no non-clausal expression in Mandarin that corresponds to the English 'to X' to explicate judges.

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(3) a. Zhè-ge dàngāo zhēn hǎochī. b. # Zhè-ge dàngāo zhēn hǎochī mā? this-cl cake really tasty this-cl cake very tasty Q 'This cake is really tasty.'
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(ii) The internal perspective. The internal perspective is a perspective where "the attitude holder self-ascribes as performing an action, or experiencing an emotion or sensation" (Zu 2018, p.122). As discussed in Vendler (1979, 1982), (4a) with PRO only allows the internal perspective reading. For example, the attitude holder has the feeling of their own swimming moves. In contrast, (4b) with yourself also allows the external perspective reading, such as the attitude holder watching him/herself from a cliff.

- (4) a. Imagine PRO swimming in the water. (√internal, # external)
 - b. Imagine yourself swimming in the water. (√internal, √external)

The following example (5) illustrates that $zh\bar{e}n$ -clauses, like (4a) with PRO, only allow the internal perspective uses, as shown in Table 1. (5) with $zh\bar{e}n$ is not acceptable when the speaker takes an external perspective in uttering it.

(5) 'Zhāngsān was watching a video of herself. In the video, she took a bite of the cake and found it delicious with a satisfied smile. After watching the video, Zhāngsān said, '

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      Zhè-ge dàngāo { zhēn / hěn } hǎochī.

      this-CL cake really very tasty

      'This cake was really tasty.'

      Perspectives
      (5a) zhēn (5b) hěn

      As a spectator of the previous self (External) #
      ✓

      As if she were back in the moment (Internal) √
      ✓
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Table 1: The perspective restrictions for (5)

(iii) Non-coreference. Although the judge introduced by $zh\bar{e}n$ is fixed to the speaker, the explicit realization of first-person pronoun is incompatible with $zh\bar{e}n$ in describing internal sensational feelings,

such as $l\check{e}ng$ 'cold' and $y\bar{u}n$ 'dizzy' in (6a). Other intensifiers, like $h\check{e}n$ 'very' or $h\check{a}o$ 'well', are compatible with this configuration, as in (6b). The only possible reading for 'cold' in (6a) is that the speakers objectify themselves, such as touching themselves and feeling that their bodies/hands are cold. The internal feeling is a first-person perspective de se reading (lpp de se, following Liefke 2024), and the objectified feeling is a third-person perspective de se reading (lpp de se, Ibid.).

- (6) a. * Wǒ zhēn lěng/rè/má/yūn.

 I really cold/hot/numb/dizzy.

 'I am (feeling) really cold/hot/numb/dizzy'
- b. Wŏ hĕn/hǎo lĕng/rè/má/yūn.
 I very/well cold/hot/numb/dizzy
 'I am (feeling) very cold/hot/numb/dizzy.'

This raises a problem on co-reference, i.e., the implicit judge introduced by $zh\bar{e}n$ cannot co-refer to the explicit first-person subject. Specifically, in (1a), the first-person singular pronoun $w\check{o}$ naturally refers to the speaker in the context, but it cannot co-refer to the implicit judge of $zh\bar{e}n$.

<u>3 Analysis</u>: I propose that there is a speaker-oriented PRO judge introduced by the intensifier *zhēn*. The properties mentioned above support the proposal as follows. *(i) Unshiftability* indicates that the judge is rigidly speaker-oriented, which naturally calls for an analysis of a strict person indexical. *(ii) The internal perspective* is selected and required by PRO, like the swimming case in (4).

The analysis also accounts for the (*iii*) non-coreference issue, with the Binding Theory. The contrast in (6) can be explained as follows. (a) The ungrammaticality of the *Ipp de se* reading is due to a Condition B violation. Since the PRO judge in the left periphery is always semantically anchored to the speaker, it co-refers with the first-person pronoun. As it also c-commands the first-person pronoun, the PRO judge binds the first-person pronoun, which violates the Condition B Principle. (b) The *3pp de se* reading gets away from Condition B violation for the guise (Heim 1998). That is, the circumvention of a Condition B violation in the *3pp de se* in (6a) is parallel with the typical example for guise in (7), where the use of her that would otherwise induce a Condition B violation indicates the speaker's intention that she and her refer to Zelda in different ways (i.e., through different guises). Due to a different perspective in the *3pp de se* reading, the pronoun has an objectified interpretation, such as body or hands, which makes the first-person pronoun a different referent.

(7) A: Is the speaker Zelda? B: How can you doubt it? She praises her to the sky.

The analysis is also compatible with the grammaticality of the seemingly pro-drop sentence in (8). If it were a pro-drop sentence with the first-person pro as the subject, Condition B would still make (8) ungrammatical. I argue that PRO takes the experiencer position in (8), and the subject is a null expletive and the sentence is interpreted as 'It is cold (for PRO_{judge})', thereby avoiding a condition B violation.

The interpretations of other predicates are also predicted by this PRO proposal. While *coldness* or *hotness* can be objectified, some sentential predicates like *dizziness* or *the numb feeling* are hard to capture from the third-person perspective. Therefore, these feelings cannot be rescued by using the *3pp de se*. This restriction is connected to the requirement on (*ii*) the internal perspective. Other nonsensational properties like *smart* or *tall* in (9), by contrast, only get the *3pp de se* reading, since it is usual to objectify subjects by using evaluative predicates, rather than using the internal perspective to sense these properties.

(8) 'On a warm day, I went outside and realized I did not dress warmly enough and felt cold, I said,'

Zhēn lěng.
really cold
'(I'm feeling) really cold'

(9) Wŏ zhēn gāo/cōngming. I really tall/smart 'I am really tall/smart'

<u>4 Conclusion</u>: This study proposes that there is an implicit PRO experiencer introduced by the intensifier $zh\bar{e}n$ in Mandarin, which is semantically more restricted than the judges for PPTs in that the PRO is rigidly speaker-oriented and requires the internal perspective. It is also syntactically represented since it is subject to the Binding Theory. These properties differentiate this PRO proposal from Stephenson's (2007) PRO/pro analysis for PPTs. The talk will show that the same applies to the gin^1 'really' in Cantonese. This study shows that syntax is sensitive to different semantic perspectives. In this case, the *Ipp de se* interpretation and the *3pp de se* interpretation influence the possible grammatical structures of $zh\bar{e}n$ -clauses.