Taiwan Hakka has three variations of $X \text{det}4$ construction, i.e. $V \text{det}4$ construction, $zo3 \text{det}4 \text{ VP}$ construction and $S/VP/V \ m5 \text{det}4$ construction. According to our analysis on semantic reconstruction, $\text{det}4$ is originally a verb denoting get or obtain and diachronically grammaticalizes into a modal. Synchronically, $\text{det}4$ is usually used as $X \text{det}4$ construction in which its meaning is partially composed of $X$ and something else rather than from the composition of $X$ and $\text{det}4$ ‘obtain’. $X \text{det}4$ construction can be used to simultaneously mark situational dynamic modality. For example, both gi5 hi3 $\text{det}4$ and gi5 $zo3 \text{ det}4 \ hi3$ simultaneously mean ‘he can go’ and ‘he is permitted to go’. In other words, $X \text{det}4$ construction specifies ability and permission, and its meanings partially come from the composition of its components as well as the constructions, which is like what Goldberg (1995, 2006) mentions that the form-meaning correspondences exist independently of particular verbs.

From the examples above, it seems that $V \text{tet}4$ construction is the alternative of $zo3 \text{det}4 \text{ VP}$ construction and that $S/VP/V \ m5 \text{det}4$ construction is the negation of the former two constructions. However, after our analysis, it is found that the alternatives are neither arbitrary nor unlimited. For instance, although $siit8 \text{ det}4$ and $zo3 \text{det}4 \ siit8$ can specify situational dynamic modality ‘is eatable’ and deontic dynamic modality ‘is permitted to eat’, the usage of $gam1za3 \ ge3 \ muk4\ oi3 \ ka3 \ fat4 \ zang3 \ siit8 \text{det}4$ ‘the longer the knot is, the more eatable the sugarcane is’ sounds more natural than other variants. Moreover, $ngi5\ oi3 \ siit8 \ fan3 \ zang3 \ zo3 \text{ det}4 \ siit8 \ diam2 \ sim1$ signifies deontic modality rather than situational dynamic modality.

In this research, we testify that the ambiguity of $V \text{det}4$ and $zo3 \text{det}4 \text{ VP}$ is a result of layering of historical changes caused by the competition between dynamic and deontic modality. It is necessary that the events in these two constructions are specific enough; otherwise, the constructions will become ungrammatical. In addition, animacy of subjects and verb types such as accusative and unaccusative verbs will not only influence meanings of constructions but also affect the choices of constructions. Roughly speaking, $V \text{det}4$ construction favors unaccusative verbs and inanimate subjects when expressing ability/root possibility while $zo3 \text{det}4 \text{ VP}$ construction favors accusative verbs and animate subject when expressing permission. Asymmetry exists in $X \text{det}4$ construction. We have $S/VP/V \ m5 \text{det}4$ construction but never have $S/VP \text{det}4$ construction, which is prevalent in Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese Southern Min (Lien 1997; Wei 2004). It is apparent that more than one property of $X \text{det}4$ construction is not strictly predictable from knowledge of other constructions existing in the Hakka grammar.

\footnote{The component $zo3$ means ‘do’. Here in the variants, $X$ includes $S/VP/V$. The symbol $S$ represents a sentence, $VP$ a phrasal unit, and $V$ a lexical item or a compound.}

\footnote{Situational dynamic modality refers to inherent potential or inherent necessity/inevitability, no matter the potential or necessity ascribed in the entity is an individual, a situation, or a mixture of both (Nuyts 2006: 4).}