

Deconstructing the *shì...de* construction\*  
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Abstract

This article re-examines the controversial *shì...de* construction, which will be shown to involve different types of structures, with different syntactic properties. The core of the analysis proposed in this paper is two folds: (a) *shì* is a copula, which selects a small clause (with a subject and a predicate), and (b) *de* marks the presence of two different non-overt operators (a generalized lambda-operator, and an assertion operator). It is argued that the focus reading connected with *shì* is simply related to its copular/verbal property; it is also shown that phonological prominence can mark narrow and contrast focus, which is argued to show syntactic reflex.

**1. Introduction**

The *shì...de* construction has been and still is an often discussed topic in Chinese linguistics. The general agreement is that it is a focus construction. However, there is no agreement with respect to the analysis of this “construction”. In this article, I argue that there is actually no *shì...de* “construction” (see Paul and Whitman (this volume), who also argue for different structures). In particular, sentences with both *shì* and *de* can have different base-structures. Given the presence of the copula *shì*, we have a general base-structure for all sentences with *shì*. Nonetheless, various types of sentences involving *shì* and *de* will be shown to have different properties. For the rest of the article, I use the term *shì-de* sentences as a cover term.

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The nature of *shì* and *de* in *shì-de* sentences has been under debate. *Shì* for instance, can just be a copula, but then why is there a focus interpretation associated with *shì-de* sentences? As for *de*, it is unclear whether we are dealing with the same *de* that we see in relative clauses and with adjectival modification or not.

Consider first cases with both *shì* and *de* in (1). In (1a), *shì* and *de* mark both ends of the sentence (examples from Zhu 1978). In discussions on *shì-de* combinations, (1a) and (1b) are normally considered to be variations of the same construction, while (1c) is sometimes treated differently; Huang (1982) considers it a pseudocleft sentence.

- (1) a. *shì wǒ xiān késòu de.*  
 COP I first cough DE  
 ‘It’s I who coughed first./I was the one who coughed first.’  
 b. *shé shì kěyǐ chī de.*  
 snake COP can eat DE  
 ‘Snakes can be eaten.’  
 c. *zuótiān wǎnshàng lái de shì Xiǎowáng.*  
 yesterday night come DE COP Xiaowang  
 ‘The one who came last night was Xiaowang.’

Aside from sentences with both *shì* and *de*, it is also very important to consider cases with only *shì* or *de*, in order to see whether or not the combinations of *shì* and *de* really yield a special “construction”, and whether *shì-de* combinations provide different interpretations from *shì* plus *de*. The bare-*de* sentences have been considered to involve a deleted *shì* while the bare-*shì* sentences are often considered to have a deleted *de*.

- (2) a. Bare-*de*  
*wǒ huì dào sǐ dōu xiǎng zhe nǐ de.* (Li, An, Zhang 1998)  
 I will till die DOU think ASP you DE  
 ‘I will think of you till I die.’  
 b. Bare-*shì*  
*shì Zhāngsān míngtiān dào Niǔyuē qù.* (Huang 1988)  
 COP Zhangsan tomorrow to New York go

‘It is Zhangsan who will go to New York tomorrow.’

In the spirit of Cheng and Sybesma (2005), who treat *de* as the spell-out of a non-overt lambda-abstraction operator, I argue in this article that *de* indicates the presence of non-overt operators of different guises; aside from the lambda-abstraction operator, it also marks the presence of an assertion operator, which relates to sentential emphasis/focus (for bare-*de* sentences). *Shì*, on the other hand, I will argue, is the copula. I show that all *shì* sentences involve the copula taking a small clause, with a subject and a predicate. In cases with *de* preceding *shì*, as in (1c), I argue that it is comparable to predicate inversion (see Den Dikken 2006, Moro 1997 among others).

Concerning the focus reading associated with *shì-de* sentences, I show that there are two sources of focus in *shì-de* sentences; one is *shì*, which is the copula, the bare predicate that is used in identificational sentences. Focus reading of post-copular elements conform to the status of copula as a verbal element. The second source is phonological prominence, which I show to have syntactic reflex.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 first examines the bare-*de* sentences, which do not involve the copula. From bare *de* sentences, we can understand the nature of *de* better, and how these sentences are interpreted (differently from *shì-de* sentences). Section 3 is devoted to what I call the predication cases. Here we see the role of the copula as well as the structure involved in typical predication cases. Section 4 deals with the remaining cases (broad *shì-de* and bare-*shì*). It is argued that though a copular structure is involved, a slightly different base structure is called for. In this section, it will also be discussed how phonological prominence yields contrastive focus. I conclude in Section 5.

## **2. Sentential Emphasis: bare-*de* sentences**

Bare-*de* sentences, as the name suggests, contain *de*, and no *shì*. As noted in the introduction, these sentences are generally considered to be reduced *shì-de* sentences, with a deleted *shì*. Here, I argue that bare-*de* sentences are not reduced *shì-de* sentences.

Consider first some examples of bare-*de* sentences, (2a) repeated here as (5). (3)-(5) illustrate that bare-*de* sentences express sentential emphasis, i.e., broad focus. The reading is comparable to “It is the case that ...”. In (3) and (4), we also see the broad focus interpretation since the whole proposition is in focus, in answer to the questions indicated.

(3) Speaker A: what is he doing here?

Speaker B: *tā lái zhǎo wǒ de.*  
 he come look.for me DE  
 ‘(It is the case that) He came to see me.’

(4) Speaker A: how come you got here so late?

Speaker B: *wǒ zǒulù lái de.*  
 I walk come DE  
 ‘(It is the case that) I walked here.’

(5) *wǒ huì dào sǐ dōu xiǎng zhe nǐ de.* (Li, An, Zhang 1998)

I will till die DOU think ASP you DE  
 ‘I will think of you till I die.’

The interpretation of (5) is comparable to “it is the case that I will think of you till I die.”

In these sentences, there is no particular stress needed on any element in the sentence, which also shows the lack of narrow focus in these sentences (see also (8)). Moreover, for both (3) and (4), it is possible to add a sentence contrasting with the whole proposition (6):<sup>1</sup>

(6) *tā lái zhǎo wǒ de, bú shì wǒ qù zhǎo tā de.*

<sup>1</sup> Though of course, (6) cannot be used as an answer to the question in (3).

he come look.for me DE not be I go look.for him DE  
'(It is the case that) He came to see me, not I went to see him.'

(6) further confirms that in a bare-*de* sentence, we have broad focus.<sup>2</sup> I will discuss in 2.2 cases of bare-*de* which appear to have a narrow focus interpretation and why these do not necessarily lead to a reduced *shi-de* analysis.

The fact that bare-*de* sentences have a broad focus interpretation raises the question of what the contribution of *de* is to the broad focus interpretation. We can compare (3) and (4) with their counterparts without *de* (see (7a,b)).

- (7) a. *tā lái zhǎo wǒ.*  
he come look.for me  
'He came to see me.'  
b. *wǒ zǒulù lái.*  
I walk come  
'I walked here.'

(7a) can be used to answer the question “who did he come to see?” and (7b) the question “how did you get here?”. Both of these questions yield narrow focus answers, indicating that (7a) and (7b) have at least the narrow focus readings, focusing on either the object *wǒ* ‘I’ (in (7a)) and *zǒulù lái* ‘walk here’. When *de* is present, the narrow focus reading can be replaced by a broad focus reading, emphasizing the whole sentence.

### 2.1. The contribution of *de*

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<sup>2</sup> Bare *de* sentences appear to prefer an eventive reading. Thus, something like (i) below is not accepted by native speakers. We see the same restriction when it comes to broad *shi-de* sentences.

- (i) *?\*tā xǐhuān zhè-běn shū de.*  
he like this-CL book DE  
Intended: ‘It is the case that he likes this book.’

Some authors (e.g., Zhu 1961, 1978, Paris 1979, Simpson and Wu 1999) have claimed that *de* is related to past tense. The data they use are data involving cases with *de* appearing in a pre-object position, which we will not actually discuss in this article (see Paul and Whitman, this volume). What I would like to emphasize here is that *de* in bare *de* sentences is not necessarily connected to past tense. This can be seen from the co-occurrence of *de* and future adverbials as well as *hui*, which is usually considered to be an element marking/indicating future (certainly not past), in bare *de* sentences:

- (8) a. *tā míngtiān huì lái zhǎo wǒ de.*  
 he tomorrow will come look.for me DE  
 ‘(It is the case that) He will come to see me tomorrow.’  
 b. *tā míngtiān huì qù Táiběi de.*  
 he tomorrow will go Taipei DE  
 ‘(It is the case that) He will go to Taipei tomorrow.’

This indicates that *de* in bare *de* sentences is not a past tense marker. I leave open the possibility that the pre-object *de* has something to do with past interpretation.

What is then *de* in these bare *de* sentences which would yield a broad focus interpretation? I suggest here that *de* in these bare *de* sentences is on a par with the *de* associated with relatives clauses. This is mainly due to the null hypothesis that there is only one *de*. We need to first turn to Cheng and Sybesma’s (2005) analysis of “gapless relatives” in order to understand the potential connection indicated here.

2.1.1. Cheng and Sybesma (2005). Cheng and Sybesma (2005), in a discussion concerning the so-called “gapless relatives”, propose that *de* is a realization of the generalized  $\lambda$ -abstraction operator. Consider first some data on relatives clauses. As shown in (9a-d), relatives clauses are prenominal in Chinese, and *de* appears between

the relative clause and the head noun; there is no relative pronoun present in relative clauses in Chinese.

(9) *De* in Relative clauses

- a. *Zhāngsān mǎi de shū.*  
Zhangsan buy DE book  
'the book(s) that Zhangsan bought'
- b. *xiě zhè-běn shū de rén.*  
write this-CL book DE person  
'the person who wrote this book'
- c. *tā xǐ chē de dìfāng.*  
he wash car DE place  
'the place where he washes his car'
- d. *tā chàng gē de shēngyīn.*  
he sing song DE voice  
'the voice that he has while singing'

(9d) represents the so-called “gapless relative”; in contrast with relatives with an argument (9a,b) or an adjunct gap (9c), gapless relatives require an eventive reading (see Cheng and Sybesma 2005 for details). To have a unified analysis of relative clauses in Chinese (with or without gaps), Cheng and Sybesma (2005) propose that *de* is the realization of a generalized  $\lambda$ -abstraction operator (cf. Butler 2004), which can bind an argument variable (9a,b), adjunct variable (9c) or an event variable (9d). (See Adger and Ramchand 2005 for a syntactic implementation of a generalized  $\lambda$ -abstraction operator.)

The null hypothesis that *de* in bare *de* sentences is also the spell-out of the generalized  $\lambda$ -abstraction operator does not seem to be correct since the interpretation of bare *de* sentences does not appear to be compatible with a  $\lambda$ -expression (with a property reading). However, it is still possible to maintain that we are dealing with

only one *de*, by having *de* as marking the presence of a null operator,<sup>3</sup> albeit the nature of the operator may be different.

2.1.2. Assertion operator. Let us now turn to what kind of operator it can be in the case of bare *de* sentences. As we have seen, the data in (3)-(6) and (8) show that bare *de* sentences are associated with sentential emphasis, which has been dubbed many names, such as *verum focus*, *sentential focus*, etc. Crucially, these sentences focus on the truth of the proposition. We are thus dealing with an operator which has to do with speech act or illocutionary force.

I suggest that *de* in bare-*de* sentences marks the presence of an assertion operator; it does not spell-out the operator, but simply indicates the presence of it.<sup>4</sup> In particular, in bare-*de* sentences, the assertion operator takes a whole proposition as its argument. This is similar to the emphatic operator that Laka (1990) proposed, which she posited to be in  $\Sigma P$ , which is related to speech act. The presence of an assertion operator in bare-*de* sentences, indicating sentential emphasis/assertion, is supported by the fact that bare *de*-sentences cannot be questions (yes/no- or wh-questions) as shown in (10a,b), and (11)<sup>5</sup>.

- (10) a. \* *tā lái zhǎo shéi de.*  
he come look.for who DE

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<sup>3</sup> This implies that in the case of relative clauses, *de* also indicates the presence of a null operator, rather than *de* itself being the spell-out of an operator.

<sup>4</sup> *De* may be the head of the AssertionP, which hosts the assertion operator.

<sup>5</sup> A *ma*-question (with a sentence-final *ma* marking a yes-no question) appears to be possible. Note that A-not-A questions appear to be yes-no questions without presupposition, while *ma*-questions seem to contain presuppositions. I think that with *ma*-questions, we are questioning the assertion, while in the case of A-not-A question, we are attempting to put a question inside the assertion.

- ‘Who is he coming to see?’  
 b. \**shéi lái zhǎo nǐ de.*  
 who come look.for you DE  
 ‘Who is coming to see you?’

- (11) \**tā yǒu-méi-yǒu lái zhǎo nǐ de*  
 he have-not-have come look.for you DE  
 Intended: ‘Did he come to see you?’

A reviewer pointed out some sentences in which *de* apparently co-occurs with wh-phrases, such as (12a,b).

- (12) a. *shéi xiě de?*  
 who write DE  
 ‘Who was it that wrote (it)?’  
 b. *shéi dǎ-pò de?*  
 who hit-broken DE  
 ‘Who was it that broke (it)?’

The grammaticality of (12a,b) strongly contradicts the data in the ungrammatical (10a,b). The reason, I think, is that the sentences in (12a,b) involve the past tense *de*. First, *de* in (12a,b) immediately follows the verb, making it hard to distinguish between the past tense *de* and the Assertive *de*. Second, adding an overt object complement preceding *de* in (12a,b) yields marginality, as shown in (13a,b):

- (13) a. ?\**shéi xiě nèi-běn shū de?*  
 who write that-CL book de  
 ‘Who was it that wrote that book?’  
 b. ?\**shéi dǎ-pò zhèi-ge huā-píng de?*  
 who hit-broken this-CL flower-jar DE  
 ‘Who was it that broke this vase?’

The marginality of (13a,b) suggests that the grammaticality of (12a,b) is due to the use of the past tense *de*, which is unrelated to bare-*de* sentences.

There are two issues related to the assertion operator which I will leave open. One issue relates to the sentential final position of *de*: typical operators appear in the Spec in the left periphery; and if *de* is a head, why is it head-final (as most other Chi-

nese heads are head-initial)? Chinese languages have many sentential final particles, and their final position can be a result of either the whole clause moving leftwards (like what Kayne suggested in his 1994 book, see also Sybesma 1999) or the possibility that certain A-bar heads are final. The second issue relates to the properties and nature of the assertion operator. The assertion operator that I appeal to here may also relate to the assertion operator that Jacobs (1991) posits in focus-background structures. It is generally assumed in the literature that focus is non-presupposed, and propositions with focus also contain a presupposed part or a focus-background (see Geurts and van der Sandt 2004 as well as articles in the same issue of *Theoretical Linguistics*). Jacobs (1991) proposes that a sentence with focus is divided into focus and focus-background, the latter of which is an assertion, which is in the scope of an assertion operator. The assertion operator is sensitive to the set of alternatives associated with focus (see also Vallduví and Zacharski 1994). I will not further discuss whether these two assertion operators are indeed the same, though I will briefly come back to the focus-background assertion in Section 4.4.

## 2.2. *Shifting focus*

I have indicated above that there are cases in which bare-*de* sentences have narrow focus. Consider first the example in (14b) (phonological prominence/stress is indicated by small caps):

- (14) a. Who broke the cup?  
 b. *ZHANGSĀN* *dǎ-pò* *de*.  
 Zhangsan hit-broken DE  
 ‘It is Zhangsan who broke it.’

To answer the question in (14a), it is possible to use a bare-*de* sentence, but it is necessary to put phonological prominence on *Zhangsan*.) (15) provides another example, where the adverbial in the sentence gets narrow focus interpretation.

- (15) *Zhāngsān CHÁNGCHÁNG dǎ-pò dōngxī de.*  
 Zhangsan often hit-broken thing DE  
 ‘Zhangsan OFTEN breaks things.’

The question thus arises when we get broad focus in bare-*de* sentences and when we get narrow focus, since in both cases *de* is present.

What we see in (14b) and (15) is an in-situ focus strategy, using phonological prominence. Take (16a) as an example. In this sentence, there is no particular stress on any constituent in the sentence; it is thus interpreted as a sentential emphasis (with the assertion operator taking the whole proposition in its scope). However, it is possible to indicate a narrow focus by using phonological prominence/stress. This can be seen in (16b-d).

- (16) a. *tā lái zhǎo wǒ de.*  
 he come look.for me DE  
 ‘It is the case that he came to see me.’  
 b. *TĀ lái zhǎo wǒ de.*  
 ‘It is the case that HE came to see me (not someone else).’  
 c. *tā lái ZHǎO wǒ de.*  
 ‘It is the case that he came to SEE me (not to do something else).’  
 d. *tā lái zhǎo WŌ de.*  
 ‘It is the case that he came to see ME (and not someone else).’

As indicated by the translation, all these cases with extra phonological prominence yields contrastive focus. We will see that this mechanism of marking focus is possible in other *shi-de* cases as well, and we will come back to contrastive focus later in Section 4.4.

The co-occurrence of *de* and in-situ marking of narrow focus indicates that we have sentential emphasis, with a secondary narrow focus. In other words, in sentences such as (16b-d), we still have a sentential emphasis, with further focus on one of the constituents.

### 3. Predication: canonical and inverse

Let us turn to cases which involve both *shì* and *de*, sentences such as (1b,c). These are the ones which have been considered to involve a headless relative or a nominalized clause (e.g., Zhu 1978, Paris 1979 and Lee and Yiu 1998 a.o.), which many have considered to not correspond to the interpretation of the sentence (e.g., Huang 1988). Consider first sentences similar to (1b).

- (17) a. *Zhāngsān shì tiāntiān dōu chídào de.*  
Zhangsan COP every.day DOU late DE  
'Zhangsan is late every day.'  
b. *Zhāngsān shì zhù zài Táiběi de.*  
Zhangsan COP live at Taipei DE  
'Zhangsan lives in Taipei.'

(17a,b) do not have a typical headless relative interpretation, which normally yields a uniqueness interpretation (i.e., comparable to a free relative): (17a) does not have the following reading: 'Zhangsan is the one who is late every day', since the sentence is compatible with a situation in which there are more people who have that property in the relevant domain of discourse; and (17b) does not have the interpretation that Zhangsan is the one who lives in Taipei (since it is compatible with a situation where other people in the relevant domain of discourse also live in Taipei).

What (17a,b) have is a property reading: Zhangsan has the property of being late every day; and Zhangsan has the property of living in Taipei. The reading of (17a) for instance is basically the same as the reading of having Zhangsan as a subject and

*being late every day* as the predicate (i.e., *Zhāngsān tiāntiān dōu chídào* ‘Zhangsan is late every day’).

The lack of a uniqueness interpretation in these sentences is also clear from sentences such as (18).

- (18) *zhè-běn shū shì Zhāngsān mǎi de.*  
this-CL book COP Zhangsan buy DE  
‘This book is bought by Zhangsan.’

This sentence asserts that the book is bought by Zhangsan, but it does not imply that nothing else is bought. That is, it does not have an interpretation: this book is what Zhangsan has bought.

Sentences similar to (1c) seem to fit better to a nominalization or headless relative clause analysis. Consider the sentences in (19a,b) (cf. (17a,b)), which are typically considered to be pseudocleft sentences:

- (19) a. *tiāntiān dōu chídào de shì Zhāngsān.*  
every.day DOU late DE COP Zhangsan  
‘The one who is late every day is Zhangsan.’  
b. *zhù zài Táiběi de shì Zhāngsān.*  
live at Taipei DE COP Zhangsan  
‘The one who lives in Taipei is Zhangsan.’

In both (19a) and (19b), there is a uniqueness interpretation; for instance, for (19a): there is one person in the domain of discourse who is late every day, and that is Zhangsan.

I propose that these two sets of sentences are related to each other, though one does not derive from the other. In particular, I differ from Zhu (1978), who derives the pseudoclefts from sentences such as (17).<sup>6</sup> Instead, the two sets of sentences are

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<sup>6</sup> Many of the objections to an analysis connecting what I call canonical predication sentences and the inverse predication sentences have to do with the fact that both broad *shì-de* sentences and sentences

derived from the same base, namely a copular sentence. Below I spell out the analysis, indicating the contribution of *shì* and *de*, as well as the interpretational differences between (19a,b) and (17a,b), the former with a uniqueness interpretation.

### 3.1. Copular structure & *shì*

Aside from appearing in the so-called *shi-de* construction, *shì* is used in predicative sentences and equative/identificational sentences such as the ones in (20a,b). In other words, *shì* is comparable to a copula in other languages.

- (20) a. *Zhāngsān shì ge xuéshēng.*  
Zhangsan COP CL student  
'Zhangsan is a student.'  
b. *Zhāngsān shì wǒ de xuéshēng.*  
Zhangsan COP I DE student  
'Zhangsan is my student.'

Assuming with Stowell (1981, 1983), that all copular sentences involve a small clause, which consists of a subject-predicate structure, *shì*, the copula in Mandarin also takes a small clause, as indicated in (21a).<sup>7</sup> This aligns with Huang's (1988) proposal in that *shì* is not treated as a focus marker (contra Teng 1979). Instead, it is a verbal element.

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involving pre-object *de* are considered to all be canonical predication sentences. Paul and Whitman (this volume) indicate objections to the analysis here based on past tense *de* sentences. I have shown here that both broad *shi-de* and past tense *de* involve structures different from canonical predication structures.

<sup>7</sup> Here I do not indicate any functional structure within the small clause, as I do not know whether Den Dikken's (2006) proposal can be extended to Mandarin.

(21b) is a simplified representation of a sentence such as (20a), which has a nominal predicate. *Zhangsan* subsequently moves out of the small clause to the matrix SpecIP position, yielding (20a).

- (21) a. COP [<sub>sc</sub> [subject] [ predicate]]  
 b. COP [<sub>sc</sub> [*Zhāngsān*] [*student*]]

Consider now cases with both *shì* and *de*. If *shì* is the copula taking a small clause, and in the small clause we have both a subject and a predicate, then for a sentence such as (17a), repeated here as (22a), we may have the representation in (22b). Similar to the case of nominal predication (22a), the subject of the small clause *Zhāngsān*, raises up to the matrix clause, deriving (22a). I thus call this structure “Canonical predication”.

- (22) *Canonical predication*  
 a. *Zhāngsān shì tiāntiān dōu chídào de.*  
    *Zhangsan COP every.day DOU late DE*  
 b. *shì* [[<sub>SUBJ</sub> *Zhangsan*] [<sub>PRED</sub> *e tiantian dou chidao de*]]

Note that the predicate in the small clause is marked by *de*. We have seen above that *de* marks the presence of a null operator. In the case of relative clauses, it is the generalized  $\lambda$ -operator, and in the case of bare-*de* sentences, I claim that it is the Assertion Operator. With the canonical predication, I suggest that it is also the generalized  $\lambda$ -operator, which in this case binds an argument variable, yielding a predicate. And this predicate is predicated of the subject in the small clause. In the case of (22a), this also provides us with the desired interpretation.

One may question why a *de*-structure is needed here to “create” a predicate structure, since a verb phrase such as *being late* is a typical predicate. Note that what is in the *de*-predicate can be bigger than a verb phrase. Further, canonical predication

sentences include more than simple subject-predicate cases that we have seen. Consider for example cases such as (18), repeated here as (23a), and (23b):

- (23) a. *zhè-běn shū shì Zhāngsān mǎi de.*  
 this-CL book COP Zhangsan buy DE  
 ‘This book is bought by Zhangsan.’  
 b. *nèi-ge rén shì wǒ jiàn-guò de.*  
 that-CL person COP I see-ASP DE  
 ‘That person is someone that I have seen before.’

The post-copular part in (23) without *de* cannot be considered on a par with a verb phrase, and it is certainly not a predicate. The interpretation of (23a,b) is a canonical predication interpretation. This is not surprising if we consider that (23a,b) also involve a canonical predication structure, with the *de*-clause as a predicate, as indicated in (24a,b).

- (24) a. COP [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>SUBJECT</sub> this book] [<sub>PREDICATE</sub>  $\lambda$ -Op Zhangsan bought e]]  
 b. COP [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>SUBJECT</sub> that person] [<sub>PREDICATE</sub>  $\lambda$ -Op I have seen e ]]

In both (24a) and (24b), the predicate structure is created by the  $\lambda$ -operator binding an argument variable. Note that there is no need to assume that the pre-copular noun phrase is moved out of the predicate. These noun phrases are simply predicated by *de*-clause (containing a variable), which is a predicate. This is also the case in sentences such as (22a), with the whole *de* clause (a CP) following *shì* as a predicate.

A keen reader should immediately point out that the predicate *de*-clause here is essentially a relative clause. This is indeed correct. This analysis differs from the earlier analyses treating such sentences as a relative clause, in that there is no relative head associated with the *de*-clause (not even a non-overt head). In other words, what we have here for the *de*-clause is only the relative clause part (i.e., the predicate part).

3.1.1. Pseudoclefts? Let us now turn to the so-called “pseudocleft” cases. (1c), repeated here as (25a), and (25b) are considered to be examples of pseudoclefts in Chinese (Huang (1982)).

- (25) a. *zuótiān wǎnshàng lái de shì Xiǎowáng.* (=1c)  
 yesterday night come DE COP Xiaowang  
 ‘The one who comes last night is Xiaowang.’  
 b. *Zhāngsān xiǎng yào de shì zhè běn shū.*  
 Zhangsan want get DE COP this CL book  
 ‘What Zhangsan wants is this book.’

It is in fact difficult to determine whether these are pseudoclefts or not. Here I first discuss two types of tests, one against and one for the pseudocleft claim. I further suggest an analysis of these sentences, which is comparable to treating them as specificational pseudoclefts.

Consider first Merchant’s (1998) argument that Japanese does not have pseudoclefts. He showed that the pivots of pseudoclefts cannot be a *wh*-phrase in English, as we see in (26b,d). He then argued that the purported pseudoclefts in Japanese are actually not pseudoclefts because they allow a *wh*-phrase as a pivot (as we can see in (27a,b)).

- (26) a. [What Ben is] is proud of himself. (Merchant 1998)  
 b. \*What is [what Ben is]?  
 c. ?[Who Ben met] was the director of the institute.  
 d. \*{Who/which director} was [who Ben met]?
- (27) a. *sono hon-o yonda-no-wa dare desu ka?* (Merchant 1998)  
 that book-ACC read.past-NW-TOP who is Q  
 ‘Who was it that read that book?’  
 b. *Jon-ga kubinisita-no-ga dare desu ka?*  
 Jon-NOM fired-NW-NOM who is Q  
 ‘Who is it that Jon fired?’

Interestingly, Chinese is similar to Japanese in that the supposed pseudoclefts also allow a *wh*-phrase as the pivot, as in (28a,b).

- (28) a. *Lǐsì zuì xǐhuān de shì shéi.*  
 Lisi most like DE be who  
 ‘Who is it that Lisi likes most?’  
 b. *Lǐsì méi kàn-wán de shì nǐ-běn shū.*  
 Lisi not-have read-finish DE be which-CL book  
 ‘Which is the book that Lisi has not finished reading?’

These data seem to suggest that these sentences are also not pseudoclefts in Chinese. However, the supposed pseudoclefts display connectivity effects similar to specificational pseudoclefts (for connectivity effects in pseudoclefts, see Higgins 1973, and more recently Heycock and Kroch 1999, Sharvit 1999, and Heller 2002 among others). (29a,b) are from Heycock and Kroch (2002).

- (29) a. \*What he<sub>i</sub> claimed was that Ian<sub>i</sub> was innocent.  
 b. What I don’t have is any bread.

(29a) involves a condition C violation, and (29b) negative polarity licensing. Leaving aside how such connectivity should be treated (see Sharvit 1999 and Heller 2002 for recent discussions), consider the Mandarin counterparts in (30a,b).<sup>8</sup>

- (30) a. \**tā<sub>i</sub> zhǔzhāng de shì Zhāngsān<sub>i</sub> hěn wúgū.*  
 he claim DE COP Zhangsan very innocent  
 ‘\*What he claimed was that Zhangsan was innocent.’  
 b. *wǒ bù xiǎng yào de shì rènhé miànbāo.*  
 I not want get DE COP any bread  
 ‘What I don’t want is any bread.’

Though Heller (2002) argues that connectivity is not necessarily a defining property of specificational pseudoclefts, the fact that the supposed pseudoclefts demonstrate connectivity indicates that we should reconsider whether Mandarin does not have pseudoclefts, as the data with a *wh*-pivot suggest.

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, *wh*-based NPIs cannot appear. The source of the difference between a *wh*-based NPI and *rènhé* is unclear to me.

That there is conflicting evidence, I think, rests upon the fact that the *de*-clause in the pre-copular position is ambiguous in structure. First, as we have already seen in section 2.1.1, *de* is present at the edge of relative clauses and before a head noun. In the canonical predication cases, as well as cases in which the *de*-clause appears before the copula, there is no head noun following *de*. One possibility, a possibility that many previous authors have entertained, is that there is a null head. The relative clause is thus predicated of the relative head.

Another possibility, is that there is no null head at all: the relative clause is all we have, similar to the free relatives in English; this is also what I claim for the canonical predication cases above. Under this analysis, what we have is a predicate in the pre-copular position (and not a headed-relative clause). I propose that these cases are derived from the same base small clause as the canonical predication sentences; these sentences contrast with canonical predication in that the predicate undergoes movement, exhibiting “inverse” predication (see Moro 1997, a.o.).

To illustrate, (25) and (31a) have the base structure, namely, (31b).

- (31) a. *Xiaowang shi zuotian wanshang lai de.*  
 Xiaowang COP yesterday night come DE  
 ‘Xiaowang came last night.’  
 b. *shi* [[<sub>SUBJ</sub> *Xiaowang*] [<sub>PRED</sub> *zuotian wanshang lai de*]]

(31a) shows canonical predication, with the subject moving to the matrix. (25) on the other hand, represents predicate inversion (see Hoekstra and Mulder (1990), Moro (1997), and Den Dikken (2006), a.o.): the predicate undergoes movement instead of the subject. Given this analysis, sentences with both *shi* and *de* in (25) and (31a) result from having a subject-predicate structure selected by a copula. The difference between them is simply a difference between canonical predication and inverse predication.

Under this analysis, the inverse predicate cases are identical to specificational pseudoclefts in both structure and meaning. The possibility of having a *wh*-pivot may in fact be related to the fact that such *de*-clauses can also be interpreted as having a null head (i.e., a headed-relative clause), leading to a predicational pseudocleft sentence. I leave this as an open issue here.

### 3.2. Focus in canonical & inverse predication

Up to now we have only discussed the structure of the copular sentences and how they relate to the *shì-de* sentences. We have not discussed the focus interpretation typically associated with these sentences. We discuss this briefly in this section; see further discussions in section 4.

Yuan (2003) claims that the typical focus of a canonical sentence (without *shi* or *de*) in Mandarin Chinese is the postverbal object. This is comparable to cross-linguistic data in which the postverbal position enjoys a special status concerning focus. Canonical and inverse predication cases are traditionally treated as variations of other *shì-de* sentences (just as the Broad *shì-de* and the bare *shi* cases that we will discuss in section 4 are also treated together with other *shì-de* sentences). As we will see below, we will end up treating the canonical and inverse cases differently from the other cases.

Let us first consider what is focused in the canonical and inverse predication cases. Consider first canonical predication. When there is no special element in the sentence which carries phonological prominence, the whole post-copular constituent is focused (32a).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, as we see in (32b,c), we can put stress on either

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<sup>9</sup> This broader focus reading in canonical predication cases is probably related to the reading that previous authors consider to be assertion (see the discussion in Paul and Whitman, this volume). I think

*zuótiān* ‘yesterday’, or *huǒchē* ‘train’ in the post-copular part. This suggests that other post-copular elements can be focused if there is phonological prominence.<sup>10</sup>

- (32) a. *Zhāngsān shì zuótiān zuò huǒchē lái de.*  
Zhangsan COP yesterday zit train come DE  
‘Zhangsan CAME BY TRAIN YESTERDAY.’  
b. *Zhāngsān shì ZUÓTIĀN zuò huǒchē lái de.*  
‘Zhangsan came by train YESTERDAY.’  
c. *Zhāngsān shì zuótiān zuò HUǒCHĒ lái de.*  
‘Zhangsan came by TRAIN yesterday.’  
d. \**ZHĀNGSĀN shì zuótiān zuò huǒchē lái de.*

In the canonical predication sentences, it is not possible to focus the pre-copular subject, as shown in (32d). To express subject focus, another strategy has to be used, namely inverse predication. Note that with inverse predication, the “pre”-copular element in the canonical predication structure becomes a “post”-copular element:

- (33) *zuótiān zuò huǒchē lái de shì Zhāngsān.*  
yesterday zit train come DE COP Zhangsan  
‘ZHANGSAN came by train yesterday.’

There is only one post-copular element, *Zhangsan*, in such a structure. No stress is needed here to distinguish it from elements which are not focused, though stress is still possible.

It has been pointed out by many (e.g., Higgins 1973, Heycock and Kroch 1999, a.o.) that in cases of specification sentences, such as *the culprit is John*, in contrast

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that it is similar to the case in bare-*de* sentences in that what we have is a broad focus, instead of narrow focus.

<sup>10</sup> A reviewer disputes this claim. I must stress that I have consulted three native speakers, all of whom provided the same judgement. Stress or phonological prominence is relatively not discussed in most studies of focus in Mandarin (see also Paul and Whitman, this volume).

with *John is the culprit*, the focus is on the post-copular constituent. We have argued above that the inverse predication sentences are similar to specificational pseudoclefts, which coincides with the information structure of such sentences. Heycock and Kroch (2002) propose that the pre-copular constituent in specificational sentences is the ground of the assertion made by the sentence, while the post-copular constituent is the focus.

The canonical predication and inverse predication sentences thus share with bare-*de* sentences that phonological prominence can shift the focus in the sentence (see Section 4.4 for more discussion). The remaining question is how the post-copular *de*-clause acquires focus. The answer I think is connected to the copular structure, and can be traced by to pre- vs. post-verbal information structure. That is, in a specificational pseudocleft, it is the post-copular part that hosts the focus. In the canonical predication case, I think that it is also the post-copular part that hosts the focus, in this case, a broad focus in the sense that the whole *de*-clause is focused. To the extent that the whole sentence forms the predicate of the small clause (i.e., post-copular part), we have a sentential focus here as well.

#### **4. More with the copula**

In section 3, we have examined sentences with *shì* and *de* in which *shì* does not appear at the edge of the sentence. In this section, we examine both sentences in which *shì* and *de* wrap around the whole sentence (and I call this the broad *shì-de*) and sentences with only *shì* (i.e., without *de*). We show that though there is some similarity in the base structure because the copula *shì* is used, these sentences differ from the predication cases.

##### *4.1. Broad shi-de*

Consider some basic cases of broad *shì-de*.

- (34) *shì wǒ xiān késòu de.* (Zhu 1978)  
COP I first cough DE  
'It's I who coughed first./I am the one who coughed first.'
- (35) a. Who broke the cup?  
b. *shì Zhāngsān bù xiǎoxīn dǎ-pò de.*  
COP Zhangsan not careful hit-broken DE  
'It is Zhangsan who broke it accidentally.'

Most authors consider these *shì-de* sentences to be a variation of other *shì-de* cases, in particular, the ones which we called canonical predication cases. For instance, recently, Yuan (2003) claims that sentences with *de*, which form the basis of the *shì-de* sentences, are assertions, which can have further focuses marked by *shì*. In other words, *shì* is the marker of focus elements (similar to what Teng 1979 proposed). However, the broad *shì-de* cases differ from the canonical predication cases in a couple of ways.

First, these *shì-de* “wrap-around” sentences must have the canonical word order. That is, the subject-verb-object order cannot be changed. Recall that in the canonical predication cases, it is possible to have sentences with an object in the pre-copular position, as in (36a). However, the object cannot precede the subject-verb in a broad *shì-de* sentence, as indicated by the ungrammaticality in (36b).

- (36) a. *zhè-běn shū shì Zhāngsān mǎi de.*  
this-CL book COP Zhangsan buy DE  
'This book is bought by Zhangsan.'
- b. \**shì zhè-běn shū Zhāngsān mǎi de.*  
COP this-CL book Zhangsan buy DE

If broad *shì-de* is simply a variation of canonical predication *shì-de* sentences, the ungrammaticality of (36b) is unexplained. A further asymmetry is illustrated by the contrast shown in (37a,b) and (38a,b), where the predicates are non-eventive.

- (37) a. *Zhāngsān shì zài Táiběi zhù de.*  
 Zhangsan COP at Taipei live DE  
 ‘Zhangsan lives in Taipei.’  
 b. \**shì Zhāngsān zài Táiběi zhù de.*  
 COP Zhangsan at Taipei live DE
- (38) a. *Zhāngsān shì hěn cōngmíng de.*  
 Zhangsan COP very clever DE  
 ‘Zhangsan is very clever.’  
 b. \**shì Zhāngsān hěn cōngmíng de.*  
 COP Zhangsan very clever DE

Both (37a) and (38a) are simple canonical predication cases. (37b) and (38b), are however, not grammatical. Though it is unclear what leads to the differences between (37a)/(38a) and (37b)/(38b),<sup>11</sup> the fact that (37b) and (38b) are ungrammatical makes a shared base-structure analysis between canonical predication sentences and broad *shì-de* sentences doubtful. I would like to suggest that broad *shì-de* is actually derived differently.

4.1.1. Interpretation of broad *shì-de*. To see that broad *shì-de* actually has a different source/base from canonical predication sentences, let us first consider the interpretation of broad *shì-de*. First, we mentioned earlier that the focused element in a canonical predication sentence is the post-copular *de*-clause, which is related to the fact that we have a copula, a verbal element. Further, putting stress on a constituent yields a narrow focus interpretation on that particular constituent. In the case of broad *shì-de*, every element is post-copula. We thus expect a broad focus interpretation of the post-copular clause. This is indeed possible, as shown in (39) and (40).

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<sup>11</sup> The ungrammaticality of (37b) and (38b) seems to be similar to the eventive restriction in the bare-*de* cases. If this is indeed a similar restriction, it may be related to the presence of the assertion operator (see the discussion below concerning the analysis of broad *shì-de*).

- (39) *shì Xīlǎ rén zuì xiān kāishǐ niàng jiǔ de.* (*all-new*)  
 COP Greece person most first begin brew wine DE  
 ‘It is the Greek that first started to produce wine.’
- (40) a. Speaker A – *Zhāngsān shì wǒ de péngyǒu.*  
 Zhangsan COP I DE friend  
 ‘Zhangsan is my friend.’  
 b. Speaker B – *shì tā dài wǒ qù kàn yīshēng de.* (Continuous clefts)  
 COP he bring I go see doctor DE  
 ‘It was him who brought me to see a doctor.’

(39) is the Mandarin counterpart of *all-new* clefts which Huber (2006) recently has discussed (among different other types of clefts). Though the English translation has a clefted noun phrase *the Greek*, the whole sentence provides new information, and is the focus. (40b) illustrates a similar broad focus; in this case *he* is not new information, but the whole clause after *shì* provides new information.

Aside from a broad focus interpretation, broad *shì-de* also has a rather unexpected narrow focus interpretation. It is unexpected because the narrow focus interpretation that we have had so far is closely connected with prosody (i.e., stress). However, in this case, when there does not seem to be any particular stress, aside from a “all-new” interpretation, it is also possible to interpret the element immediately following *shì* to be the focus.

- (41) *shì Zhāngsān bù xiǎoxīn dǎ-pò de.* (Focus = Zhāngsān)  
 COP Zhangsan not careful hit-broken DE  
 ‘It is Zhangsan who broke it accidentally.’

(41) can be used to answer the question: *who broke the cup?* Note that (41) can also be used to answer the question: *how come the cup is broken?* Furthermore, in broad *shì-de* sentences, it does not seem to be able to shift the focus from the subject to the object, for instance, by using phonological prominence.

We have shown above that broad *shì-de* sentences are not canonical predication cases. Before we discuss the structure of broad *shì-de*, and how the focus interpretation of broad *shì-de* comes about, we need to first look at the bare-*shì* sentences, since these two types of sentences are closely related.

#### 4.2. Bare-*shì*

Most of the discussions on bare-*shì* sentences take the position that these cases have an optional *de*. We will see that bare-*shì* sentences have different properties than *shì* plus *de* sentences. One of the well-known properties of bare-*shì* sentences is that *shì* seems to “float”, though it does not float below the verb, as shown in (42).

- (42) a. *shì* Zhāngsān zuótiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě (bú shì Lǐsì).  
 COP Zhangsan yesterday see Wang Ms not COP Lisi  
 ‘It is Zhangsan who saw Ms Wang yesterday(, not Lisi).’  
 b. Zhāngsān *shì* zuótiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě (bú shì qiántiān).  
 Zhangsan COP yesterday see Wang Ms not COP the.day.before  
 ‘It is yesterday that Zhangsan saw Ms Wang, not the day before yesterday.’  
 c. Zhāngsān zuótiān *shì* kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě (bú shì gēn tā shuō-guò huà).  
 Zhangsan yesterday COP see Wang Ms not COP with her talk-ASP  
 ‘Zhangsan SAW Ms Wang yesterday, not TALK TO her.’

Note that by adding *de*, we will get to different types of *shì-de* sentences under the analyses put forth here. That is, adding *de* to (42a) will give us a broad *shì-de*; by adding *de* to (42b,c), we get canonical predication sentences.

Bare-*shì* sentences are typically considered to be the best examples of *shì* as a focus marker, since the focused element in a bare-*shì* sentence is the constituent immediately following *shì*. Further, all the focused elements in bare-*shì* sentences have a contrastive focus interpretation. This particular property differs from cases in which *de* also appears; that is, in the sentences with both *shì* and *de* (as long as both *shì* and *de* appear), there is not necessarily a contrastive reading.

- (43) a. *shì Zhāngsān zuótiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě de.*  
 COP Zhangsan yesterday see Wang Ms DE  
 ‘It is Zhangsan who saw Ms Wang yesterday.’
- b. *Zhāngsān shì zuótiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě de.*  
 Zhangsan COP yesterday see Wang Ms DE  
 ‘It is yesterday that Zhangsan saw Ms Wang.’
- c. *Zhāngsān zuótiān shì kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě de.*  
 Zhangsan yesterday COP see Wang Ms DE  
 ‘Zhangsan did see Ms Wang yesterday.’

(43a-c) are counterparts of (42a-c). They have mainly an assertion reading, providing a non-contrastive focus. This suggests that the bare-*shì* sentences are not simply *shì-de* sentences with an optional *de*.

In addition, there are also cases of bare-*shì* which disallow the appearance of *de*:

- (44) a. *shì zhè-běn shū Zhāngsān méi kàn-guo (\*de).*  
 COP this-CL book Zhangsan not.have read-ASP  
 ‘It is this book that Zhangsan hasn’t read (not that one).’
- b. *shì zuótiān tā méi qù shàngkè (\*de).*  
 COP yesterday he not go attend.class  
 ‘It is yesterday that he didn’t go to class (not other days).’
- c. *shì Táiběi tā qù-guo bú shì Táizhōng (\*de).*  
 COP Taipei he go-ASP not COP Taizhong  
 ‘It is Taipei that he has been to and not Taizhong.’

As we have already noted above, in cases of broad *shì-de*, only the canonical order of constituents is allowed. All the sentences in (44a-c) involve a word order different from a base order: in (44a), the object, (44b), the temporal adverb, and (44c), a locative phrase is shifted to be immediately to the right of *shì*. All these cases disallow the appearance of *de*. If *shì* is simply a focus marker and *de* an optional element (indicating for instance, tense related properties), ungrammaticality of *de* in (44) would be a surprise.

It should be noted that the impossibility of *de* is not related to the presence of *guo* (in (44a,c)). That is, given an analysis which posits that *de* expresses tense related properties (as in Simpson and Wu (1999), and Paul and Whitman (this volume)), one may suggest that the ungrammaticality of (44a,c) stems from the presence of *-guo*, which is an experiential aspect marker. But (45a,b) show that *guo* and *de* can co-occur.

- (45) a. *tā qù-guo Táiběi de.*  
 he go-ASP Taipei DE  
 ‘He has been to Taipei.’  
 b. *zhè-běn shū, tā kàn-guo de.*  
 this-CL book he read-ASP DE  
 ‘This book, he has read.’

Lastly, a few words about the focus interpretation in bare-*shì* sentences. As noted earlier, bare-*shì* sentences have a contrastive focus reading. The examples above all provided contrastive narrow focus. However, broad sentential focus in bare-*shì* sentences is also possible:

- (46) a. *shì tā lái zhǎo wǒ, bú shì wǒ qù zhǎo tā.*  
 COP he come look.for me, not COP I go look.for him  
 ‘He came to see him, not I went to see him.’  
 b. *shì érzi jiào dàrén bié cǎo, bú shì dàrén jiào érzi bié cǎo.*  
 COP son ask adult not make.noise not COP adult ask son not make.noise  
 ‘The son asked the adult not to make noise, not the adult asking the son.’

There is thus a connection between the presence of *de* and the lack of narrow, contrastive focus.

#### 4.3. Focus and identification

Kenesei (1984, 1986), based on the insight of Chomsky (1971), suggested that the function of focus is ‘exclusion by identification’. Recently, Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi

and Rialland (1999) as well as Kenesei (2006) argue that focusing means identification. For Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi and Rialland (1999), it means that in a cleft sentence such as (47), *who fell down* should somehow have an identification relation with *the boy*.

(47) It is the boy who fell down.

Consider in this respect simple identification in Chinese:

- (48) a. *shì shéi?*  
COP who  
'Who is it?'  
b. *shì wǒ.*  
COP I  
'It is me.'

What we see in (48a,b) is that (a) the copula *shì* is also used in simple identification; and (b) simple identification cases have a null subject (i.e., there is at least no overt element to the left of *shì*), similar to the “broad” *shì-de* sentences as well as *shì* sentences where *shì* is at the front of the sentence.

Moro (1997) proposes that simple identification sentences (i.e., equatives) such as (48a) in Italian involve inverse predication, and what is being moved is a *pro*-predicate (as shown in (49b)).<sup>12</sup>

- (49) a. *sono io.*  
am I  
b. *pro<sub>i</sub> sono [io t<sub>i</sub>]*

(50) *\*pro<sub>i</sub> sono [t<sub>i</sub> io]*

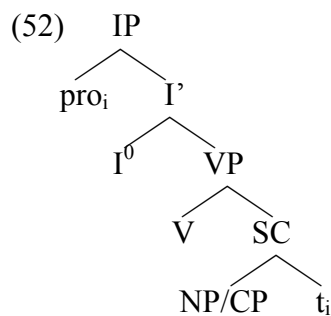
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<sup>12</sup> He has shown that sentences such as (49a) do not simply have a postverbal subject, as in sentences like *telefono io* ‘I telephone’, since it is not possible to make *io* the matrix subject, as in *\*io sono*.

One of his arguments is that the null subject in equative sentences is not the small clause subject (as represented in (50)), since the matrix verb is sensitive to the  $\phi$ -features of *io* (the purported predicative DP in a structure like (50)), as we see in (51).

- (51) a. \**sono noi*.  
           am we  
       b. *siamo noi*.  
           are.1pl we

Moro thus argues that the null element in the matrix subject position is *not* the subject of the small clause: (49a) does not have the structure in (50). Instead, it has a structure as represented in (49b), with a null *pro* as the predicate (see the structure in (52)).



Moro suggests that there are *pronominal* predicates (i.e., *pro* predicates) in other cases as well, for instance, in English sentences such as (53a). (53b) illustrates the representation that Moro proposed for (53a). Note that in this sentence, it is the whole CP which is the subject of the small clause selected by the copula, and *it* serves as the pronominal predicate.

- (53) a. It is that John left.  
       b. COP [[<sub>CP</sub> that John left] [*it* ]

Moro is not alone in proposing that there are *pronominal* predicates. Adger and Ramchand (2003) argue that equatives in Scottish Gaelic have a pronominal augment, which is the predicate (see also Den Dikken 2006).

In the cases of equatives, as well as the sentence in (53), it is the post-copular constituent that is focused. In the case of (53), it is the whole clause following *shì* that is focused. These are cases of focus by identification par excellence. Further, note that all these cases involve inversion predication, yielding focus on the post-copular element (the pre-copular element, in the case, the *pro*, is the background). The question-answer pair in (48a,b) also illustrates this: the question word *shéi* ‘who’ immediately follows *shì*, and so does *wo* ‘I’, the focus-counterpart to the question word.

Let us now turn back the structure of broad *shì-de* sentences and the bare-*shì* sentences. We have argued above that broad *shì-de* sentences differ from canonical predication sentences in that the broad *shì-de* sentences are more restricted when it comes to word order and predicate types. These restrictions are similar to the restrictions that we have seen in bare-*de* sentences. I thus suggest that *de* in broad *shì-de* sentences also marks the presence of an assertion operator, rather than a generalized  $\lambda$ -operator. The remaining question then is if all copular sentences have a small clause structure, what is the structure of broad *shì-de* and *bare-shì* sentences. To answer this question, we need to first consider what the *de*-clause is in broad *shì-de* sentences, since the *de*-clause is not a predicate clause, as in canonical predication cases.

4.3.1. *De*-clause. If the *de*-clause does not form the predicate of a small clause, what is the *de*-clause, and what forms the predicate of the small clause (selected by the copula)? We have seen that in the case of simple identification, the predicate is a null

pronominal predicate. The question then is what is the subject of the *pro*-predicate. Is it the *de*-clause? If *de*-clause is not the subject of the small clause, what is the *de*-clause? Below I will first show that despite of the affinity that broad *shi-de* sentences have with cleft sentences, the *de*-clause is not an adjunct clause, as in recent analyses of clefts in French and Zulu (see below). Then I will show that the *de*-clause is the subject of the small clause.

#### *De-clause as an adjunct clause*

Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi and Rialland (1999), based on semantic and phonological evidence, propose that the typical relative clause part of a cleft sentence is actually adjoined to the matrix. A cleft sentence such as (54a) has a structure such as (54b).

- (54) a. *C'est le petit qui est tombé dans l'escalier.*  
 'It is the young one that fell down the stairs.'  
 b. [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> *C'est*<sub>v</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>v</sub>* [<sub>NP</sub> *le petit*]]] [<sub>CP</sub> *Op<sub>i</sub>* [<sub>C'</sub> *qui* [<sub>IP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* *est tombé ...*]]]]

In this structure, the CP is a base-generated adjunct to the IP, which is an identificational sentence. Semantically, the CP is a predicate (just like a relative clause) which binds a predicate variable (i.e., the variable provided by *ce*).

Cheng and Downing (2006), on the basis of phonological phrasing evidence,<sup>13</sup> similarly argue that clefts in Zulu involve an adjunct clause, which resembles a rela-

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<sup>13</sup> In Zulu, the marking of the right edge of an intonational phrase, which corresponds to a CP-edge, is penultimate vowel lengthening. What we see in (55a) is that the pivot of the cleft is at the edge of an intonational phrase, i.e., at the edge of a CP; this indicates that the relative clause part of the cleft is outside of the main CP.

tive clause. The structure they put forth for (55a) is (55b), which resembles the structure in (54b).

- (55) Q: Who is cooking tonight?  
 a. (*u-Sí:ph'*) (*ó-zo -phéka ku-sí:hlwa*).  
 COP1a-Sipho REL1-TAM-cook evening  
 'It is Sipho who is cooking tonight.'  
 b. [<sub>CP</sub>[<sub>IP</sub> *u-Sí:ph'*]] [<sub>CP</sub> *ó-zo-phéka ku-sí:hlwa* ]

In other words, for both French and Zulu clefts, what we have is an identification/equative with an adjoined modificational clause (see Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi and Rialland 1999 for a semantic implementation).

Turning back to Mandarin broad *shì-de* sentences. Consider first a typical equative in Mandarin such as (56a). Under a Moro type of analysis, it has the structure in (56b).

- (56) a. *shì wǒ*.  
 COP I  
 b. COP [<sub>sc</sub> [I] [*pro*]]

The *pro*-predicate undergoes predicate inversion, yielding (56a). The predicate inversion yields focus on the post-copular element (as in the case of pseudoclefts).

Applying the *pro*-predicate structure as well as the adjunct-CP analysis to the *de*-clause (the relative part of the cleft), a broad *shì-de* sentence such as (35b) (repeated here as (57a)) has the structure in (57b).

- (57) a. *shì Zhāngsān bù xiǎoxīn dǎ-pò de*.  
 COP Zhangsan not careful hit-broken DE  
 b. [*pro*<sub>i</sub> *shi* [<sub>sc</sub> [*Zhāngsān*] [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub>]]] [<sub>CP</sub> Op<sub>j</sub> e<sub>j</sub> *bù xiǎoxīn dǎ-pò de*]

Note that in this case, the subject of the small clause is *Zhangsan*, and in the matrix clause, *pro*-predicate inversion takes place. The *de*-clause is an adjunct clause, as in French and Zulu.

Though this analysis has an appeal in terms of having a cross-linguistic analysis, it has some empirical shortcomings. First, broad *shì-de* always has the canonical word order. That is, it allows only a strict SVO order. As we have noted above, in contrast with a canonical predication case, the logical object cannot precede the logical subject (36b) is repeated here as (58)).

(58) \**shì zhè-běn shū Zhāngsān mǎi de.*  
COP this-CL book Zhangsan buy DE

This is unexpected given this analysis, since there is no such restriction in French or Zulu. It is unclear why we cannot put a semantic object in the subject position of the small clause, just like an English cleft sentence such as (59).

(59) It is this book that John bought yesterday.

Second, in contrast with languages such as French or Zulu, a sentence such as (57a) also has a broad focus interpretation. That is, the whole clause is focused instead of just *Zhangsan* (recall also examples such as the *all-new* clefts in (39)). This suggests a rather different structure.

#### *De-clause as the subject of the small clause*

A possible analysis taking broad focus into consideration is (60a). In this structure, the *de*-clause is the subject of the small clause, while *pro*, the null pronominal, is the predicate. If focus is identification, then given the structure in (60a), a broad focus,

taking the whole clause as focused, is expected. (60a) will thus have a structure in (60b).

- (60) a.  $pro_i$  shi [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>SUBJECT</sub> *de*-clause] [<sub>PREDICATE</sub>  $t_i$ ]]  
 b.  $pro_i$  shi [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>SUBJECT</sub> Zhangsan came by train yesterday DE] [<sub>PREDICATE</sub>  $t_i$ ]]

The structure in (60a) is similar to the structure Moro (1997) posits for the English sentence *It is that John left*, as we noted above in (53).

Two issues remain to be solved in connection with broad *shì-de* and the treatment of the *de*-clause as the subject of the small clause predicate. The first issue is the fact that the canonical word order cannot be changed in broad *shì-de* sentences. And the second issue is the fact that the subject of the *de*-clause can also get a focus reading, if the sentence does not have a broad focus reading. The first issue will be discussed in Section 4.3.2 below, and the second issue is related to contrastive focus, which I will discuss in Section 4.4.

4.3.2. The structure of bare-*shì*. We briefly mentioned earlier that in the unmarked sentence (i.e., without *shì* or *de*), it is the postverbal element that is in focus. In the bare-*shì* cases, either the whole sentence is focused (as shown in (46)), or it is the constituent that immediately follows *shì* which is in focus. Taking the sentential focus as a start, I suggest that the difference between a broad *shì-de* sentence and a bare-*shì* sentence rests upon what is in the CP. Consider the structure in (61), which is the structure that we propose for broad *shì-de* sentences.

- (61) COP [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>SUBJECT</sub> CP ] [<sub>PREDICATE</sub> *pro* ]]

To derive a broad *shì-de* sentence, the *pro*-predicate undergoes predicate inversion in (61). And the whole CP is then in the domain of focus.

One major difference between broad *shì-de* and bare-*shì* sentences is the absence of *de* in the latter. Further, we have also seen that the word order within the CP in broad *shì-de* sentences is restricted (i.e., it has to be the canonical word order), while in the case of bare-*shì*, it can vary. I propose that bare-*shì* shares with broad *shì-de* the base structure in (61). The difference between the two is that in the case of bare-*shì*, different constituents can move to SpecCP, and such constituents will end up being interpreted as contrastive focus.<sup>14</sup> The movement possibility is ruled out in Broad *shì-de* sentences due to the presence of the assertion operator, which is marked by *de*.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, the remaining issue with respect to bare-*shì* sentences is the apparent floating property. If *shì* is a copula, the floating effect can only be apparent – *shì* selects a small clause, whose subject can be a CP as well as a DP. I claim that it is precisely this property which yields the apparent floating effect. In other words, I follow Huang (1988) in assuming that elements that are in the pre-copular position are topi-

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<sup>14</sup> In the case where the subject being interpreted as a contrastive focus, I assume that it also has undergone movement to SpecCP. This implies that contrastive focus results from movement (in the case overt, but see Section 4.4).

<sup>15</sup> This predicts that in the bare-*de* cases, we are also limited to a base word order. At first sight, this does not seem to be correct, as shown in (i).

(i) *zhè-běn shū wǒ zài Bālí mǎi de.*  
 this-CL book I at Paris buy DE  
 ‘This book, I bought it in Paris.’

However, I think that this is not really a counterexample, for two reasons. One is that the sentence does not have a contrastive focus reading; and second, ‘this book’ is interpreted as topic. In other words, we are probably dealing with a base-generated topic here.

calized. (42c) (repeated here as (62a)) for instance, has the structure indicated in (62b).<sup>16</sup>

- (62) a. *Zhāngsān zuótiān shì kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě (bù shì gēn tā shuō-guò huà).*  
 Zhangsan yesterday COP see Wang Ms not COP with her talk-ASP  
 ‘Zhangsan SAW Ms Wang yesterday, not TALK TO her.’  
 b. *Zhāngsān<sub>j</sub> zuótiān pro<sub>i</sub> shì* [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> *pro<sub>j</sub> kàndào Wáng xiǎojiě*] t<sub>i</sub>]

Depending on the content of the CP in the small clause, we derive the different focus interpretations. Crucially, the focused constituent is the CP, i.e., whatever elements that is inside the CP.

#### 4.4. Contrastive focus

One strategy that we have seen to express narrow (contrastive) focus is by phonological prominence/stress. This holds for bare-*de* and canonical predication. I have indicated above that in the case of bare-*shì*, especially cases in which *shì* is at the beginning of the sentence, different constituents can move to the CP and they are subsequently interpreted as contrastive focus (and this is in contrast with broad-*shì-de*, in which such movement is ruled out due to the presence of the assertive operator). There are thus two mechanisms which can lead to contrastive focus: movement and stress.

Here I would like to suggest that these two mechanisms result in the same structure at LF. That is, in the case of stress, it entails that there is covert movement of the constituents to the left periphery. In particular, covert movement is possible

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<sup>16</sup> Since Chinese allows pro-drop, I assume here that such cases involve a *pro* in the CP, instead of having just a VP. However, I leave open the possibility that IP and VP can also form the subject of the small clause in these cases. Note that only in cases where CP is the subject of the small clause do we get a non-canonical word order, by having a non-subject constituent moving to the Spec of CP.

even in the cases of sentences containing *de*, which indicates the presence of either a generalized  $\lambda$ -operator or an assertion operator. This is not so surprising. In the case of relative clauses, we know that it is possible to question out of a relative clause in Mandarin Chinese, as in (63a,b) (see also Huang 1982).

- (63) a. *tā xǐhuān [shéi xiě de shū].*  
 he like who write DE book  
 ‘For which person *x*, such that he likes the book that *x* wrote?’  
 b. *nǐ rènrshì xiě nǎ-běn shū de zuòjiā.*  
 you know write which-CL book DE author  
 ‘For which book *x*, such that you know the author who wrote *x*?’

I assume that these cases involve covert movement of the question words out of the relative clauses. The cases in which a constituent has to move out of a predicate phrase headed by a generalized  $\lambda$ -operator, or an assertion operator yield the same results.

One remaining puzzle concerns broad *shì-de* sentences. That is, in these sentences, we cannot use stress to indicate narrow focus, though the subject of the *de*-clause can have a focus interpretation. The fact that other elements cannot move out of the *de*-clause may have to do with the fact that it is also a subject in the small clause. In other words, movement will have to not only cross a clause with an assertive operator, but the clause is also a subject island. Nonetheless, this does not explain why the subject can have a focus interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

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<sup>17</sup>One idea is to appeal to adjacency (Bobaljik 1995). The subject is phonologically adjacent to the focus projection, while other elements are not. Note that wh-subject is also allowed in broad *shì-de* sentences, while wh-object is not. This is probably the same kind of asymmetry as the focus asymmetry. The fact that we can have wh-subject here is compatible with the assertion operator because it is the matrix sentence that is a question, not the *de*-clause.

Having two elements constant, *shì* (the copula) and *de* (the spell-out of null operators), I have re-analyzed sentences with *shì* and *de*, including cases with only *shì* or only *de*. All of the cases involving *shì* share the copular structure, albeit that the subject or predicate in the small clause selected by the copula can be different.

We have seen that there are two types of small clause predicates involved in the *shì-de* sentences: predicates formed by a generalized  $\lambda$ -operator, and a *pro*-predicate. Both cases allow inverse predication (in the case of the *pro*-predicate, it seems to be the only option).

I have argued that *de* can mark the presence of either an assertion operator, or the  $\lambda$ -operator. We see the former case in both bare *de* sentences and in broad *shì-de* sentences. As for marking the presence of a generalized  $\lambda$ -operator, we see this in the predication cases, just like typical relative clauses.

Lastly, the typical observation that *shì-de* sentences are related to focus follows from the fact that we have a copula in such sentences, and any post-verbal (and thus including copular) elements can yield a focus reading. We have seen that focus can be shifted by adding phonological prominence to a post-copular element.

In short, there is no *shì...de* “construction”. *Shì* has no particular affinity with *de*. We have seen that the *shì-de* combinations can come about due to different structures. These sentences appear to be related because of the presence of the copula. However, abstracting away from the copula, the different *shì-de* sentences have different syntactic properties.

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