

# On *DE* in *SHI...DE* Construction

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## 1. Introduction

The element ‘*de*’ in Chinese is polysemous and has attracted much linguistic attention. Generally, *de* can have various possible interpretations beneath the same pronunciation, though the syntactic properties or sources of different interpretations may differ overtly. Many earlier researchers have discussed the sentence final *de*, such as Zhu (1961), Chu (1979), Tang (1983), Ross (1983), Chiu (1993), Shi (1994), and Simpson & Wu (1999). The facts are recapitulated five points. First, *de* can be genitive, as in (1). *De* in the string of ‘NP<sub>1</sub>+*de*+NP<sub>2</sub>’ denotes that NP<sub>2</sub> belongs to NP<sub>1</sub>. Second, when *de* occurs in the string ‘Adj+*de*+NP’, *de* can be an adjectival modification, as in (2). Third, *de* can appear in the ‘*shi...de*’ focus construction at the final position of the sentence, as in (3). Fourth, *de* can connect a relative clause and an appositive clause to its head noun, as in (4) and (5).

(1) Genitive *de*

Zhangsan de shu  
Zhangsan DE book  
'Zhangsan's book'

(2) Adjectival modification *de*

hou de shu  
thick DE book  
'a thick book'

(3) *De* in ‘*shi...de*’

wo shi zuotian mai shu de  
I SHI yesterday buy book DE  
'It was yesterday that I bought a book.'

(4) Relative clause *de*

wo zuotian mai de shu  
I yesterday buy DE book

‘the book I bought yesterday’

(5) Appositive clause *de*

ta lai meiguo de shishi  
he comeUSA DE fact  
‘the fact that he came to the USA’

This paper focuses on sentence final *de* in ‘*shi...de*’ construction. Since *de* in ‘*shi...de*’ share the same pronunciation with genitive *de*, adjectival *de*, relative clause *de*, and appositive clause *de*, some linguists (Ross 1983, Simpson & Wu 1999) have tried to argue that there is only one word *de* and one Chinese structure involved. This paper aims to find out if sentence final *de* affiliates with the other four or differs from them.

## 2. Previous approaches to *de*

Sentence-final *de* in Chinese has been discussed often in linguistic literature. Generally the linguistic analyses of the sentence-final *de* can be grouped into two main streams: *de* as a modifier marker<sup>1</sup> and *de* as a sentence final particle<sup>2</sup>. Zhu (1961), Chao (1968), Paris (1979), Ross (1983), and Simpson & Wu (1999) consider *de* as a modifier marker. However, Chu (1979), Tang (1983), Cheng (1983), Chiu (1993), and Shi (1994) take sentence-final *de* as a particle. *De* can possibly be a modifier marker when relating to relative clauses and equational sentences. The sentence-final *de* can also be a particle functioning as an aspectual or modal marker or could just show the attitude of the speaker. In this section, we will review the two main approaches of sentence final *de*.

### 2.1 Modifier-marker Approach

#### 2.1.1 Zhu (1961, 1978)

The term ‘modifier-marker approach’ refers to analyzing sentence final *de* as a marker signifying a relative clause. Zhu (1961) categorizes *de* into three subtypes:

<sup>1</sup> Some linguists call it a “complementizer” signifying a relative clause. Some linguists call it a “nominalizer”. Chao (1968: 795) indicates that *de* in *ta kan de shu* ‘the books he reads’ is a particle, in construction with the clause *ta kan* ‘he read’. Ross (1983) assumes such *de* as a “determiner”, while Chen (1979), Shi (1994), Simpson & Wu (1999) considers such *de* as a “nominalizer”.

<sup>2</sup> Chao (1968: 795-814) compares particles with suffixes and interjections. He indicates that particles are like suffixes and interjections by being in the neutral tone. Both particles and suffixes are start-bound, but while suffixes belong to words, particles belong to phrases or sentences. He makes a list of particles, including *de* as in *kao su le ta, ta hui shengqi de* ‘If you tell him, he will get angry, that’s-what’s-to happen’; *le* as in *ta zuotian zhende ku le* ‘He really cried yesterday’; *ma* as in *ni bu pa laohu ma* ‘Aren’t you afraid of tigers?’; *ne* as in *ta ne? ta lai bu lai ne?* ‘Well, then, how about him? Is he coming?’; *ne* as in *hai mei dao shihou ne* ‘It isn’t time yet.’; *a* as in *lai a* ‘Come!’, and etc...

(i) *de* in examples like *zuo de yizi shang* ‘sit on the chair’, (ii) *de* in examples like *kan de jian* ‘can see’, (iii) *de* in examples like *chi de* ‘something to eat’ and in examples like *hong de* ‘red’. As for the sentence final *de* in examples like (6), Zhu analyzes them as belonging to a third subtype, a modifier marker.

- (6) a. ta hui lai de  
he will comeDE  
'He will come.'
- b. ta bu chouyiande  
he not smoke DE  
'He does not smoke.'
- c. dianying piao wo mai de  
movie ticket I buy DE  
'It was I that bought the movie tickets.'

The sentence final *de* in *shi...de* configuration, like (7), is also categorized into the third subtype as a modifier marker. Zhu postulates *de* in *shi...de* configuration as a modifier marker because *de* can be followed by a noun.

- (7) a. wo (congqian) shi hui xie de  
I (before) SHI can write DE  
'I used to be able to write.'
- b. shi wo (zuotian) xie de (shi)  
SHI I (yesterday) write DE (poem)  
'It was I that wrote the poem yesterday.'
- c. wo shi zuotian xie de (shi)  
I SHI yesterday write DE (poem)  
'It was yesterday that I wrote the poem.'

In addition to Zhu (1961), Zhu (1978) specifically discusses the *shi...de* construction and focuses on explaining the ambiguity of examples like (8).

- (8) ta shi qu nian sheng de xiaohai  
she SHI last year bear DE child  
a. 'She is a child who was born last year.'  
b. 'It was last year that she gave birth to a child.'

### 2.1.2 Ross (1983)

Ross argues that there is only one *de* in Mandarin Chinese. She assumes that possessive *de*, adjectival *de*, relative clause *de*, appositive clause *de*, and cleft (*shi... de*) *de* can be unified into one single category as an NP modification marker. Under her analyses, these four *de* should be analyzed to be the structure of the string [NP MOD *de* NP], as illustrated in (9)a-d. The function of *de* seems like a bridge connecting the NP modifier (MOD) and the head NP.

- (9) a. Genitive *de*: [NP [MOD *Zhangsan*] *de* [NP *shu*]]  
‘Zhangsan’s book’<sup>3</sup>
- b. Adjectival modification *de*: [NP [MOD *hou*] *de* [NP *shu*]]  
‘thick book’
- c. Relative clause *de*: [NP [MOD *wo zuotian mai*] *de* [NP *shu*]]  
‘the book I bought yesterday’
- d. Cleft *de*: *wo shi* [NP [MOD *zuotian mai shu*] *de* [NP e]]<sup>4</sup>  
‘It was yesterday that I bought books.’

The primary reason why Ross considers cleft *de* as an NP modification marker is that she proposes cleft sentences to be a special case of equational sentences. She denotes that a null NP occupies the position of the head of NP<sub>2</sub> at deep structure. The null NP can be interpreted as some “situational” NP, to indicate a clause such as “it is the situation that...”

### 2.1.3 Simpson & Wu (1999)

The core of Simpson & Wu’s paper focuses on two main points: firstly, they suggest *de* as a nominalizer or a determiner; secondly, they argue that *de* can undergo reanalysis from category D to category T and become a past tense morpheme base-generated as the head of a TP.

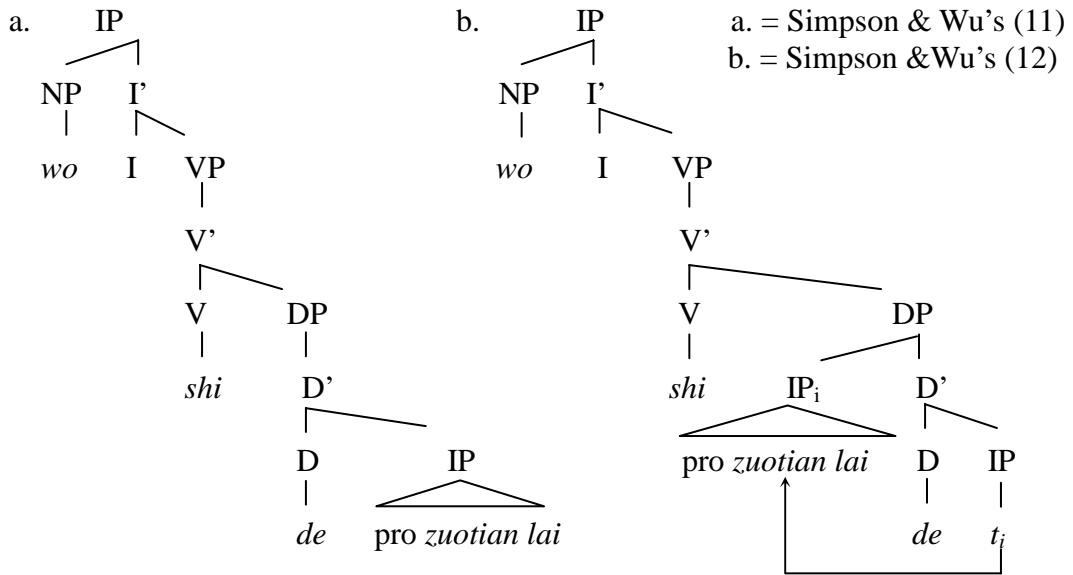
They assume sentence final *de* in the *shi...de* construction to be the same as *de* in relative clauses. Cleft *de* can select a rightward clausal complement and trigger the raising of this clause to SpecDP. The derivation of cleft sentences such as *wo shi zuotian lai de* ‘It was yesterday that I came.’ would be as indicated in (10).

- (10) Simpson & Wu’s analyses of cleft structures

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<sup>3</sup> The data is cited from Ross (1983: e.g. (1))

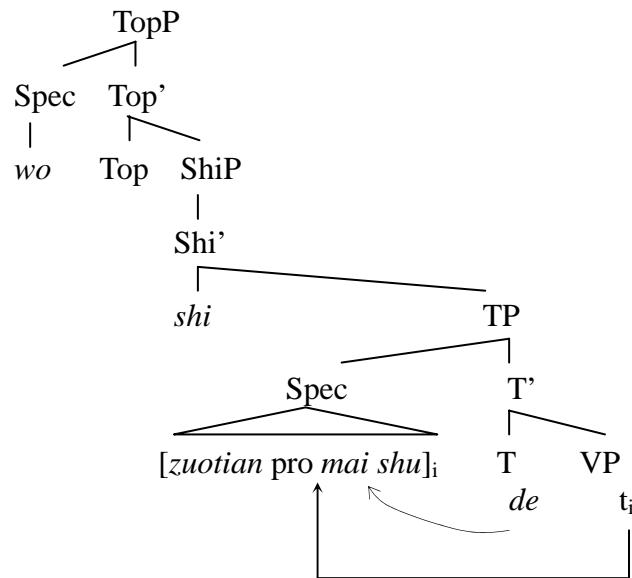
<sup>4</sup> MOD denotes the modifier of the head NP. ‘e’ denotes an empty node.



In order to account for the cleft alternation in which the object appears after *de* as *wo shi zuotian mai de shu* 'It was yesterday that I bought books', Simpson & Wu propose that since the past time implication is strongly associated with the use of *de* in [V-de-Ob] form, *de* should be reanalyzed from  $D^0$  to  $T^0$ , as in (11). *De*, as a verbal clitic, then undergoes movement to attach to the verb.

(11) Simpson & Wu's analysis of the structure postverbal *de*

=Simpson & Wu's (33)



Simpson & Wu also suggest that if a cleft sentence is presented with *de*, it can only allow for a past time interpretation; conversely if a cleft sentence exists without *de*, it can only permit a future type interpretation.

#### 2.1.4 Summary

The modifier-marker approach tries to assume *de* in *shi...de* construction as a modifier marker signifying a headless relative clause. However, there are two main points to refuse the modifier-marker assumption. Firstly, the modifier-marker approach cannot explain the optional omission of *de*. Many linguists (Teng, 1979, Ross, 1983, Chiu, 1993, Hsieh, 1998) agree that sentence final *de* in cleft sentences can be optionally omitted. The fact conflicts with a general rule that Chinese relative-clause marker *de* cannot be optionally omitted, shown as (12)a.

- (12) a. wo xiang mai na ben Zhangsan xie \*(de) shu  
b. wo xiang mai na ben Zhangsan xie de (shu)  
I want buy that CL. Zhangsan write DE book  
'I want to buy the book which was written by Zhangsan.'

The relative clause marker *de* can not be omitted, though the omission of the head noun is acceptable, like (12)b. On the other hand, sentence final particles can possess this grammatically optional property, shown as (13)-(14).

- (13) zhege ren shuo de hua shi kao bu zhu de (a)  
thisCL. person say Poss.words be rely not stop DE particle  
'This man's word is unreliable.'
- (14) ni na cuo le (la)  
you take wrong Asp. particle  
'You took the wrong one!'

Secondly, relative clauses do not have focus interpretations. There are two types of sentences conveying the same '*shi...de*' configuration: sentences with headless relative clauses and cleft sentences. Simpson & Wu display headless relative clauses like (15) and cleft sentences like (16).

- (15) Headless relative clause  
ta baba **shi** zhong tian **de** (= Simpson & Wu's e.g. (8))  
he father SHI grow field DE  
'His father is a farmer'
- (16) Cleft sentence

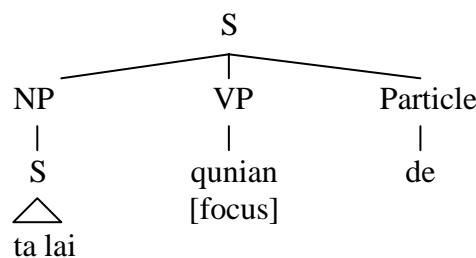
wo **shi** zuotian lai **de** (=Simpson & Wu's e.g. (20))  
I SHI yesterday comeDE  
'It was yesterday that I came.'

Linguists who propose the modifier-marker assumption attempt to unify these two types of structures. In other words, they analyze the cleft *de* to be the same as the relative clause marker *de*. However, the function of a cleft sentence is known to convey focus information, yet a normal relative clause is not. Focus can be roughly viewed as the most informative part of an utterance. A relative clause generally does not function as a focus carrier. Apparently, the semantic and pragmatic meanings and functions of cleft sentences and headless relative clauses are not identical, though syntactically the two constructions spell out with the same configuration '*shi...de*'.

## 2.2 Particle Approach<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Simpson & Wu who propose that *de* becomes a past tense marker through D-to-T reanalysis, Chu (1979) does not suggest that *de* can refer to a past tense marker. He proposes that *de* is a particle instead of a modifier marker and *de* can contain the presupposition. The presupposition of a cleft sentence is defined as the string preceding *de* except the focus. Teng (1979)<sup>6</sup> and Tang (1983) regard *de* as a particle and it occurs independently from the subject and the predicate. The analyses of Teng and Tang are demonstrated as in (17) and (18), marking an example like *ta shi qunian lai de* 'It was last year that he came'.

(17) Teng (1979)

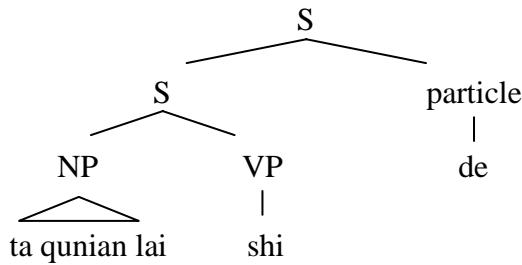


(18) Tang (1983)

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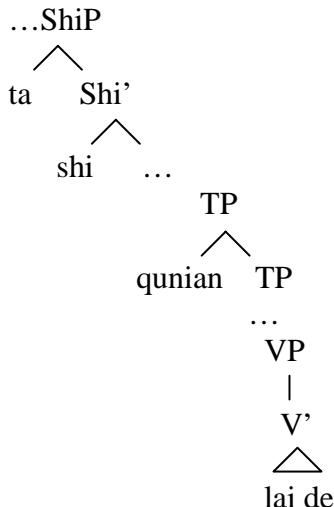
<sup>5</sup> The term 'particle' is functional and does not belong to any syntactic category.

<sup>6</sup> Tang (1983) also considers *de* as a particle to express speaker's attitude.



In addition, Chiu (1993) proposes a maximal projection, ShiP, for the *shi...de* construction. She considers the sentence final *de* as a particle and points out that *de* is an optional element in *shi...de* construction. Probably because of *de*'s optional occurrence, *de* does not occupy a particular position in Chiu's ShiP structure, shown as (19).

(19) Chiu (1993)



Besides, Shi (1994) refuses to accept *de* as a modifier marker. He argues that the constituent between *shi* and *de* does not behave like an NP. He assumes *de* as an aspect marker or a sentence particle, but as Chiu, he does not go into further discussion on *de*.

### 3. Properties of sentence final *de*

This section focuses on the properties of sentence-final *de* in *shi...de* construction. By displaying the distribution of *de*'s co-occurrence with *shi*, we can better clarify the linguistic facts of sentence-final *de*. The distribution of *shi* and *de*'s co-occurrence can be divided into two subgroups according to whether *de* can be omitted or not. The first pattern comprises both *shi* and *de*, and the omission of *de* will cause sentences to be unacceptable, like '*shi...\*(de)*', e.g. (20). The second

pattern indicates that the omission of *de* will not influence the judgment of grammaticality, like (21).

- (20) Pattern A ‘*shi...\*(de)*’  
ta shi jiaoshu \*(de) ‘He is a teacher.’
- (21) Pattern B ‘*shi...(de)*’  
wo shi ztuotian qu taibei (de) ‘It was yesterday that I went to Taipei.’

### 3.1 Pattern A ‘*shi...\*(de)*’

Some sentences are easily confused with cleft constructions because they all surface in the configuration ‘*shi...de*’. However, we argue that sentences in ‘*shi...\*(de)*’ should be categorized as sentences with headless relative clauses, instead of cleft sentences, shown as follows.

- (22) a. ta shi chi su \*(de)  
he SHI eat vegetable DE  
‘He is a vegetarian.’
- b. ta shi jiao shu \*(de)  
he SHI teach book DE  
‘He is a teacher.’

Notice that sentence final *de* cannot be optionally omitted in (22). Normally, *de* is an optional element in the cleft construction. Besides, sentences with relative clauses do not particularly express a focus. On the other hand, the function of the cleft construction is to convey a focus. Cleft sentences contain two fundamental elements: a presupposition and an element which is the focus of the whole sentence<sup>7</sup>. Generally, the cleft construction can be simplified like (23). It is assumed that the presupposition comprises a variable and the focused element stands for a value to fulfill the variable. For instance, the presupposition of the subject-focus cleft example (24) is ‘someone(x) beat Lisi’. The subject, *Zhangsan*, represents the focus which can fulfill the variable *x* in the presupposition.

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<sup>7</sup> Cleft constructions are known as being able to divide into two separated sections, given information and new information. The given information is assumed by the speaker, and that forms the presupposition. Another section is at the center of the speaker’s communicative interest, and that forms the focus of the sentence. The presupposition part is always a proposition which lacks a constituent. The missing constituent turns out to be the focus in cleft construction. Jackendoff (1972: 230) defines the “presupposition of a sentence” as “the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker to be shared by him and the hearer” and the “focus of a sentence” as “the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker not to be shared between him and the hearer”.

- (23) Cleft construction formula: [focus + presupposition]

- (24) shi Zhangsan da Lisi de ‘It was Zhangsan who beat Lisi.’

Presupposition: x beat Lisi

x = Zhangsan

It is assumed that the sentences with headless relative clauses like example (22) do not belong to the same category of cleft construction, though they surface with ‘*shi...de*’ configuration. It is because syntactically they cannot omit *de*; semantically and pragmatically they do not contain a contrastive focus and cannot satisfy the cleft construction formula.

### 3.2 Pattern B ‘*shi...(de)*’

Linguists (e.g. Teng, 1979, Tang, 1983, Chiu, 1993) generally assume *de* as an optional element in the cleft construction. Hardly do linguists mention about the conditions of the omission of *de*. It is assumed that the optional occurrence of *de* is constrained by the focus type of the cleft construction.

*De* can be omitted when the focused constituent falls on the subject or the adjunct, like (25) and (26). However, *de* is not allowed to occur when the emphatic marker *shi* appears immediately preceding the predicate, shown as (27).

- (25) Subject-focus ‘*shi...de*’

shi Zhangsan zuotian qu taibei (de)

SHI Zhangsan yesterday go Taipei DE

‘It was Zhangsan that went to Taipei yesterday.’

- (26) Adjunct-focus ‘*shi...de*’

Zhangsan shi zuotian qu taibei (de)

Zhangsan SHI yesterday go Taipei DE

‘It was yesterday that I went to Taipei.’

- (27) Predicate-focus ‘*shi...de*’<sup>8</sup>

\*Zhangsan zuotian shi qu taibei de

Zhangsan yesterday SHI go Taipei DE

‘\*It was going to Taipei that Zhangsan did yesterday.’

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<sup>8</sup> The predicate-focus structure is defined syntactically as an emphatic marker *shi* immediately preceding a predicate. Likewise, the subject-focus and the adjunct-focus structures are recognized when *shi* precedes the subject and the adjunct.

The occurrence of *de* in the predicate-focus structure is not completely prohibited. When the verb is attached with an aspectual marker, the predicate-focus structure is much more acceptable, like (28). Yet, *de* in subject/adjunct-focus structures can be perfectly acceptable without the aspectual marker, like (25), (26). Besides, unlike subject/adjunct-focus sentences, the predicate-focus sentence is not interpreted as focusing on the constituent immediately following the word *shi*. The most natural interpretation of example (28) is the reading that focuses on the truth value of the proposition. When the sentence focuses on the truth value of the proposition, the emphatic marker *shi* is stressed phonologically.

- (28) Zhangsan zuotian shi qu-le taipei (de)  
 Zhangsan yesterday SHI go-AspTaipei DE  
 'It was true that Zhangsan went to Taipei yesterday.'

Meanwhile, *de* can occur in the postverbal position<sup>9</sup> in subject/adjunct-focus structures, not in predicate-focus structures, shown as (29).

- (29) a. shi Zhangsan qunian bi de ye (subject-focus)  
 SHI Zhangsan last year finish DE studies  
 'It was Zhangsan who got graduated last year.'  
 b. Zhangsan shi qunian bi de ye (adjunct-focus)  
 Zhangsan SHI last year finish DE studies  
 'It was last year that Zhangsan got graduated.'  
 c. \*Zhangsan qunian shi bi de ye (predicate-focus)  
 Zhangsan last year SHI finish DE studies  
 '\*It was finishing studies that Zhangsan did last year.'

Lastly, the focus scope of the predicate-focus structure is different from the focus scope of subject/adjunct-focus structures. The focused constituent in the subject/adjunct-focus structure is the immediate constituent following the emphatic marker *shi*. The other elements, though c-commanded by *shi*, are not appropriate candidates to be focused, like (30)a,b. On the other hand, the focused constituent of the predicate-focus can be the elements included in the predicate, like (30)c.

- (30) a. Zhangsan shi **jinwan** chi-le san wan fan, (bushi zuowan)  
 Zhangsan SHI tonight eat-Asp. three bowl rice not last night

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<sup>9</sup> The alternative structure of the cleft structure is discussed in the next section.

- ‘It was tonight that Zhangsan ate three bowls of rice, (not last night).’
- b. \*Zhangsan shi jinwan chi-le **san**<sup>10</sup> wan fan, (bushi wu wan fan)  
Zhangsan SHI tonight ate three bowl rice not five bowl rice  
‘\*It was tonight that Zhangsan ate **three** bowls of rice, (not five bowls).’
  - c. Zhangsan jinwan shi chi-le **san** wan fan, (bushi wu wan fan)  
Zhangsan tonight SHI ate three bowl rice not five bowl rice  
‘Zhangsan did eat **three** bowls of rice tonight, (not five bowls).’

To sum up, subject/adjunct-focus structures are distinguished from predicate-focus structures according to the four differences: (i) the possibility to omit *de*; (ii) the interpretations of the focused constituent or the truth value of the proposition; (iii) the [V *de* O] alternative and (iv) the focus scope.

### 3.3 Predicate-focus vs. Headless Relative Clause

Compare sentences with headless relative clauses like (31)a, and sentences with predicate-focus like (31)b.

- (31) a. Headless Relative Clause
- Zhangsan shi chi su de  
Zhangsan SHI eat vegetable DE  
‘Zhangsan is a vegetarian.’
- b. Predicate-focus Sentence
- Zhangsan shi chi su le  
Zhangsan SHI eat vegetable Asp.  
‘It is true that Zhangsan has turned to be a vegetarian.’

The relative-clause sentence pattern and the predicate-focus sentence pattern are easily confused since both sentence patterns are represented by a similar structure, [*shi* + predicate]. However, if the focus effect is considered, predicate-focus sentences contain a contrastive focus, while relative clause sentences do not. For instance, example (31)a simply indicates that Zhangsan is a person who is vegetarian, while example (31)b emphasizes that Zhangsan has turned to be vegetarian. His recent dietary habit makes a contrast with his past dietary history. The focus effect can be more clearly shown when the sentence overtly contains a contrastive pair like (32).

- (32) a. Headless Relative Clause

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<sup>10</sup> Words with bold letters indicate an utterance with phonological stress.

Zhangsan shi chuan hong yifu de  
Zhangsan shi wear red clothes DE  
'Zhangsan is the person who is in red.'

b. Predicate-focus Sentence

Zhangsan shi chuan hong yifu de, Lisi shi chuan lan yifu de  
Zhangsan SHI wear red clothes DE, Lisi SHI wear blue clothes DE  
'Zhangsan is in RED, Lisi is in BLUE.'

Example (32)a simply expresses a description of Zhangsan as a person dressed in red. There is no one else in the discourse context to be compared with Zhangsan. However, the predicate-focus sentence displays a contrastive focus on the color comparison of Zhangsan's and Lisi's clothes.

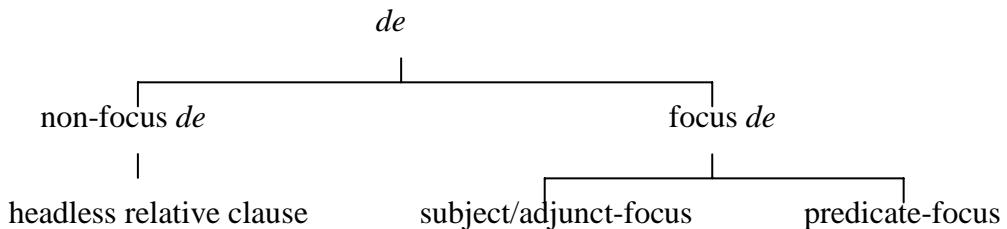
### 3.4 Summary

Generally when researchers refer to cleft sentences, most of them define cleft sentences following Teng's (1979) criteria: (a) the presence of a syntactic marker to single out the focused constituent. (b) The absence in the main clause of an NP which is co-referent to the focused constituent; and (c) the distribution of 'asserted' and 'assumed' in the entire sentence such that the focused constituent always bears the property of 'asserted'. In Teng's description of Chinese cleft construction, sentence final *de* is usually ignored in the definition and description of cleft sentences, because most researchers regard it as an optionally omitted element. This section discussed the distribution of *de* and finds that *de* is not just an optional element which could be ignored.

From the possibility of *de* omission in '*shi...de*' configuration, *de* can function as a helper to distinguish focus structures from non-focus structures. In non-focus structures, *de* occurs obligatorily. By contrast, *de* is an optional element in focus structures. Within the focus structures, *de* also plays a role to distinguish subject/adjunct-focus and predicate-focus structures. Both subject-focus and adjunct-focus structures can undergo [V *de* O] alternation, while predicate-focus structures cannot. Meanwhile, subject/adjunct focus structures can freely omit sentence final *de*, while there are constraints on the omission of *de* in predicate-focus structures.

To sum up, *de* in '*shi...de*' configuration is categorized into two subgroups: focus *de* and non-focus *de*, shown as (33).

(33) The diagram of sentence final *de*



#### 4. The Alternative Form of Cleft Structure

*De* can also be inserted into a verb phrase immediately following the verb and preceding the object. The formula and the examples are illustrated in (34) and (35). (The alternative *de* will be hereby called “postverbal *de*” to distinguish it from sentence final *de*.)

- (34) a. V-O-*de*

- b. V-*de*-O

- (35) a. wo shi qunian **bi** ye **de**

I SHI last year finish studies DE

- b. wo shi qunian **bi de ye**

‘It was last year that I graduated.’

The postverbal *de* possesses a particular property distinct from sentence final *de*; namely, cleft sentences with postverbal *de* can only allow a past time interpretation, which is also the main reason that Simpson & Wu (1999) propose *de* as a past tense marker. Examples (36) and (37) illustrate that normal cleft sentences like (36)a, (37)a can grammatically focus on future-time elements, but alternative cleft sentences with postverbal *de* like (36)b,c, (37)b,c can only allow past-time instead of future-time focused elements.

- (36) a. ta shi ming nian bi ye **de**

he SHI next year finish studies DE

‘It is next year that he will graduate.’

- b. \*ta shi ming nian bi **de** ye

‘Next year, he will graduate.’

- c. ta shi qunian bi **de** ye

‘It was last year that he graduated.’

- (37) a. ta shi mingtian yao jie hun **de**

- he SHI tomorrow will tie marry DE  
 ‘It is tomorrow that he will get married.’
- b. \*ta shi mingtian yao jie **de** hun  
 ‘Tomorrow, he will get married.’
  - c. ta shi zuotian jie **de** hun  
 ‘It was yesterday that he got married.’

In addition to the highly frequent association of postverbal *de* with past time, a common collocation, similar to a compound word, seems to exist between the verb and the object. Examples of common collocations are like *jiehun* ‘marry’, *biye* ‘graduate’, *youyong* ‘swim’, *dajia* ‘fight’, *yimin* ‘immigrate’, *huaiyun* ‘pregnant’, *tonghang* ‘open to navigation’, etc... It is found that the more closely the collocations integrate with each other, the more naturally postverbal *de* inserts between the collocations. For example, the collocation of *dajia* ‘fight’ is much stronger than *daren* ‘beat a person’ or *dagou* ‘beat a dog’; therefore, the acceptability of postverbal *de* will decrease, as shown in (38).

- (38) a. ta shi zuowan da de jia  
 he SHI lastnight beat DE fight  
 ‘It was last night that he got into a fight.’
- b. ?ta shi zuowan da de ren  
 he SHI lastnight beat DE person  
 ‘It was last night that he beat someone.’
  - c. \*ta shi zuowan da de gou  
 he SHI last night beat DE dog  
 ‘It was last night that he beat a dog.’

Similarly, *huahua* ‘draw pictures’ in (39) will be more acceptable than *huaren* ‘draw a person’ or *huagou* ‘draw a dog’, because *huahua* is a more common collocation than the others.

- (39) a. ta shi zai hai bian hua de hua  
 he SHI at sea side draw DE picture  
 ‘It was by the seaside that he drew pictures.’
- b. \*ta shi zai hai bian hua de ren  
 he SHI at sea side draw DE person  
 ‘It was by the seaside that he drew a person.’
  - c. \*ta shi zai hai bian hua de gou

he SHI at sea side draw DE dog  
 ‘It was by the seaside that he drew a dog.’

The third property of postverbal *de* is its indefiniteness tendency. When the object of a cleft sentence is a definite NP, it can only be allowed to co-occur with sentence final *de*, rather than postverbal *de*, illustrated in (40). Specifically, the inserted postverbal *de* prefers the position in front of an indefinite NP to a definite one. If a grammatical sentence with postverbal *de* changes an indefinite object to a definite one, the sentence will also become unacceptable, like (41).

- (40) a. ta shi zuowan qu na jia riben liaoli dian **de**  
 he SHI last night go that CL Japan cooking shop DE  
 b. \*ta shi zuowan qu **de** na jia riben liaoli dian  
 ‘It was last night that he went to the Japanese restaurant.’
- (41) a. ta shi zuotian mai **de** shu  
 he SHI yesterday buy DE book  
 ‘It was yesterday that he bought a book.’  
 b. \*ta shi zuotian mai **de** na ben yuyanxue gailun  
 he SHI yesterday buy DE that CL linguistics introduction  
 ‘It was yesterday that he bought the book ‘*Introduction to Linguistics*’.’

The indefiniteness tendency seems to be a specific tendency for the [V *de* O] structure, not related to the focus nature of the cleft construction. In other words, the indefiniteness tendency does not exist in normal cleft sentences. For example, in (42), the definite object *naben yuyanxue gailun* ‘the book *Introduction to Linguistics*’ can occur grammatically with the sentence final *de*.

- (42) Zhangsan shi zuotian mai na ben yuyanxue gailun **de**  
 Zhangsan SHI yesterday buy that CL linguistics introduction DE  
 ‘It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought the book ‘*Introduction to Linguistics*’’

A final property of postverbal *de* could be its “simplicity”<sup>11</sup> tendency. The

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<sup>11</sup> I used to assume that the less syllables, especially monosyllabic items, that the object bears, the more the acceptable the [V *de* O] structure could be. However, after reconsidering the data, I decided to abandon the analysis from a phonological aspect. Not only monosyllabic words, but also polysyllabic words were tested for the possibility to occupy the object position, shown as below. The data indicates that polysyllabic words can grammatically locate the object position after the word *de*, as long as the words contain only one semantic meaning. The result excludes the phonological factor but supports the morphological factor that may affect the judgment of the grammaticality of the [V

possible target verb phrases of the postverbal *de* mostly contain objects which tend to be syntactically simple, such as *jiehun* ‘marry’, *biye* ‘graduate’, *youyong* ‘swim’, *dajia* ‘fight’, *yimin* ‘immigrate’, *huaiyun* ‘pregnant’, *tonghang* ‘open to navigation’. The “simplicity” tendency indicates that the object in V-*de*-O structures tends to carry a simple noun without being affiliated with a classifier, a numeral, a determiner or an adjective. If the object is not simple, the cleft sentences tend to be odd or even unacceptable, like examples in (43).

- (43) a. ta shi zai yushi li chang **de** ge  
     he SHI in showerin sing DE song  
     ‘It was in the shower that he sang songs.’

b. \*ta shi zai yushi li chang **de** yi shou ge  
     he SHI in showerin sing DE one CL. song  
     ‘It was in the shower that he sang a song.’

c. \*ta shi zai yushi li chang **de** liuxing ge  
     he SHI in showerin sing DE popular song  
     ‘It was in the shower that he sang popular songs.’

d. \*ta shi zai yushi li chang **de** ABBA de dancing queen<sup>12</sup>  
     ‘It was in the shower that he sang ABBA’s song “Dancing Queen”.’

Obviously, postverbal *de* cannot appear with an object with a modifier marker or a classifier, like (43)b; an object with an adjective, like (43)c; or a definite object with a modifier, like (43)d. Namely, the object tends to be represented as bare N<sup>0</sup> without any nominalizers, numerals, classifiers, and adjectival modifiers.

To summarize, the properties of postverbal *de* include the following four points: (1) highly frequent past time association; (2) VP compound tendency; (3)

*de O*] structures.

- (i) a. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **de** hua (hua: one syllable)  
           Zhangsan SHI yesterday buy DE flower  
           'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought the flowers.'

      b. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **de** putao (putao: two syllables)  
           'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought the grapes.'

      c. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **de** yujinxiang (yujinxiang: three syllables)  
           'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought the tulips'

      d. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **de** magelite (magelite: four syllables)  
           'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought the daisies.' (*Magelite* is a nickname of a species of chrysanthemum. It is also commonly called a daisy.)

<sup>12</sup> Generally, a definite object will cause the ungrammaticality of a V-de-O sentence, such as *Zhangsan shi zuotian kai de baoshijie* ‘It was yesterday that Zhangsan drove the Porsche.’

\**Zhangsan shi zuotian qu de haolaiwu* ‘It was yesterday that Zhangsan went to Hollywood.’

However, if the verb and the definite object are strongly fixed, the V-de-O sentence pattern will be more acceptable than other examples, such as *Zhangsan shi zuotian qu de taipei* ‘It was yesterday that Zhangsan went to Taipei.’

indefiniteness tendency of the object; and (4) simplicity tendency of the object. Why do all these properties interact with postverbal *de*? The behaviors of postverbal *de* can be attributed to its being part of the presupposition. *De* cannot be analyzed as a past tense marker only because of its association with past time. The past time implication of *de* should be connected with presupposition, and the elements preceding sentence final *de* are presupposed. When sentence final *de* is inserted into a verb phrase, it becomes part of the presupposition. It forces the verb phrase into the background of the cleft sentence in order to push the focus element into prominence. As the background, the function of the object is to supply necessarily basic semantic information and it needs not reinforce its definiteness.

Because the primary usage of *de* is a modifier marker or a determiner, particle *de* can be reanalyzed as a modifier marker, such as postverbal *de*. It carries all the properties that sentence final *de* possesses, and moves to a position where a modifier marker can occupy. The position should be the nearest one to minimize the cost of movement and there must be a noun to attach on. The optimal position for the sentence final *de* is following the verb and preceding the object. Due to its reanalysis, there will be some syntactic and semantic mismatches between the verb and the object. An adjective or a classifier is normally acceptable to adjoin to a modifier marker, but not in the case of postverbal *de*, like (44)-(45).

- (44) a. \*ta shi qunian jie renao de hun  
           he SHI last year marry lively DE marriage  
       b. \*ta shi qunian jie de renao hun  
           ‘It was last year that he had a lively wedding.’

- (45) a. \*ta shi qunian jie sanci de hun  
           he SHI last year marry three times DE marriage  
       b. \*ta shi qunian jie de sanci hun  
           ‘It was last year that he married three times.’

## 5. Past-Tense Marker and Perfective-Aspectual Marker

### 5.1 Past-Tense Marker: Past-Time Implication with *De*

A sentence with *shi...de* configuration is usually interpreted as a past-time event, like (46). Example (46) does not contain a past tense marker, but it obtains a past-time reading.

- (46) Zhangsan shi zai jia li diedao de  
           Zhangsan SHI at home in fall down DE

‘It was at home that Zhangsan fell down.’

Many linguists attribute the fact that the *shi...de* construction is frequently associated with a past-time implication to the occurrence of the particle *de*. Simpson & Wu (1999) even point out that *de* is a past tense marker.

However, cleft sentences are not necessarily interpreted as past events. Some cleft sentences are interpreted as non-past events even with the occurrence of *de*, such as (47)a, b.

- (47) a. Zhangsan shi jintian mai cai de (bushi zuotian huo mingtian)  
Zhangsan SHI today buy vegetable DE not yesterday or tomorrow  
‘Today, Zhangsan should buy vegetables.’
- b. Zhangsan shi jintian dao taibei de (bushi zuotian)  
Zhangsan SHI today arrive Taipei DE not yesterday  
‘Today, Zhangsan may arrive in Taipei.’

The adverbial noun *jintian* ‘today’ can be interpreted to be affiliated with past, present or even future events. *Jintian* ‘today’ represents the focused element in (47) because it follows *shi* immediately. Example (47)a can be interpreted to mean that there are some people who take turns to buy vegetables and the day for *Zhangsan* to go to the market is today, not yesterday or tomorrow. Likewise, example (47)b can be interpreted to mean that *Zhangsan* is supposed to arrive in Taipei today but it does not imply that *Zhangsan* has arrived.

We assume that the past-time implication of *de* is mainly attributed to the association with the presupposition, which locates immediately preceding the particle *de*. Cleft construction contains a focus and a presupposition. The presupposed information is frequently associated with past events. *De* is assumed to express the speaker’s assertive attitude toward the belief that the action/event of the presupposition (had) happened, has happened, is happening, or even is bound to happen. The restriction indicating that *de* conflicts with future readings is owing to the certainty tendency of events. For instance, example (48)a is naturally acceptable when it is interpreted as a past time event; (48)b is not a fully acceptable form when the focused element is a future-time adverbial noun *mingtian* ‘tomorrow’; but sentence (48)c becomes better when the event is more certain to happen; in example (48)d, the addition of the adverb *tieding* ‘definitely’ helps to reinforce the certainty of the event making the sentence fine.

- (48) a. Zhangsan shi qidian huilai de

- Zhangsan SHI 7 o'clock come back DE  
 'It was at 7 o'clock that Zhangsan came back.'
- b. ?Zhangsan shi mingtian hui huilai de  
 Zhangsan SHI tomorrow will come back DE  
 'It is tomorrow that Zhangsan will come back.'
- c. Zhangsan shi mingtian xiawu qidian hui huilai de  
 Zhangsan SHI tomorrow afternoon 7 o'clock will come back DE  
 'It is at tomorrow 7 p.m. that Zhangsan will come back.'
- d. Zhangsan tieding shi mingtian xiawu qidian hui huilai de  
 Zhangsan definitely SHI tomorrow afternoon 7 will come back DE  
 'It is surely at tomorrow 7 p.m. that Zhangsan will come back.'

If *de* is really a past tense marker, examples (48)c, d should take a past time reading instead of a future one. The addition of the modal *hui* 'will' will cause the sentences (48)c,d to be interpreted inconsistently. However, examples (48)c,d prove that sentences with *de* can be interpreted as future events, and examples (48)c,d also prove that modal verbs with future implication can co-occur with *de* very well. Therefore, sentence final particle *de* is not assumed as a past tense marker<sup>13</sup>.

## 5.2 Perfective Aspectual Marker: Comparison between *DE* and *LE*

Sentences with *shi...le* configuration are frequently misinterpreted to be cleft, because it is easy to overgeneralize sentences with the word *shi*. Secondly, the word

<sup>13</sup> However, we also notice that sentences with postverbal *de* in [V *de* O] configuration can only be interpreted as past events, like (i)a,b. The future-time adverbial nouns can not occur in [V *de* O] cleft constructions, like (i)c.

- (i) a. Zhangsan shi qunian jie de hun  
 Zhangsan SHI last year tie DE marriage  
 'It was last year that Zhangsan got married.'
- b. Zhangsan shi jinnian jie de hun  
 Zhangsan SHI this year tie DE marriage  
 'It was this year that Zhangsan got married.'
- c. \*Zhangsan shi mingnian jie de hun  
 Zhangsan SHI next year tie DE marriage  
 'It is next year that Zhangsan will get married.'

At the moment, we do not have a good explanation for the postverbal *de* and will follow Simpson and Wu (1999)'s suggestion. The postverbal *de* becomes a past tense marker through some kind of reanalysis. The change may come from dialectal or historical reasons, which we will not take up in this thesis.

*le* often occurs together with the word *shi*. Therefore, *de* and *le* are commonly discussed and compared with each other.

Hsieh (1998: 132) points out that *shi...de* and *shi...le* present the same distribution, like (49), and the postverbal distributions of *de* and *le* are also parallel, like (50).

- (49) a. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai shu **de**  
Zhangsan SHI yesterday buy book DE  
'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought books.'
- b. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai shu **le**  
'It was the case that Zhangsan bought books yesterday.'
- (50) a. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **de** shu  
Zhangsan SHI yesterday buy DE book  
'It was yesterday that Zhangsan bought books.'
- b. Zhangsan shi zuotian mai **le** shu  
'It was the case that Zhangsan bought books yesterday.'

However, *de* should not be assumed to be parallel to *le* only according to the distributions like (49), (50). We can also observe that *de* and *le* can present different distributions, like (51)a,b.

- (51) a. xianran Zhangsan shi aishang ni **le**  
obvious Zhangsan SHI love up you Asp.  
'Obviously, Zhangsan has fallen in love with you.'
- b. \*xianran Zhangsan shi ai shang ni **de**  
'\*Obviously, it is falling in love with you that Zhangsan does.'

More interestingly, *de* and *le* can be allowed to co-occur with an aspect marker, like e.g. (52)c, (53)c.

- (52) a. ta shi ku **le**  
he SHI cry Asp.  
'It was the case that he cried.'
- b. \*ta shi ku **de**  
'\*It was crying that he did.'
- c. ta shi ku **guo le de**  
'It is the case that he has cried.'

- (53) a. ta shi chi **le**  
           he SHI eat Asp.  
           ‘It was the case that he ate.’
- b. \*ta shi chi **de**  
           ‘\*It was eating that he did.’
- c. ta shi chi **guo le de**  
           ‘It is the case that he has eaten.’

The fact that the word *le* and the aspectual marker *guo* can co-occur and adjoin to each other, the word *le* is assumed to be as an inchoative aspectual marker (at the sentence final position), rather than a perspective aspectual marker (at the postverbal position). If the word *le* is proposed as a sentence final *le*, the word *de* after *le* should be considered a sentence final particle, rather than a relative clause marker. Besides, Tang (1992: p186) proposes that “final particles do not normally occur inside relative clauses, appositional clauses, sentential subjects and objects”.

- (54) a. [ni zuotian kan wan (\*le ba)] de shu fang zai sheme difang =(Tang (34))  
           you yesterday see finishPart. of book put at what place  
           ‘Where was the book that you finished reading yesterday?’
- b. women jintian yao taolun de shi [jiujing shei lai zhichi zhe ge jihua (\*ne)]  
           we today will discuss of be exactly who come support this plan Part.  
           ‘What we will discuss today is who exactly will support the plan.’

The fact is that *le* and *de* can co-occur and be present immediately adjacent to each other. Following Tang’s assumption, sentence final *le* is not allowed to occur inside a relative clause. Therefore, the constituent XP, which precedes the word *de* in the structure [xp[... *le*] *de*], cannot be analyzed as a relative clause. Since XP is not a relative clause, *de* should not be assumed as a modifier marker.

Besides, the sentence’s final position can allow more than one sentence final element, as long as different particles contain different semantic meanings and pragmatic functions<sup>14</sup>. Apparently, the two sentence final particles *de* and *le* each

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<sup>14</sup> According to Chao (1968: pp. 798-800), sentence final particle *le* can serve several functions, such as (i) inchoative *le*, as in *xia yu le* ‘It’s raining’, (ii) command in response to a new situation, as in *chi fan le* ‘Let’s eat now’, (iii) progress in story, as in *na fangzi jiu ta le* ‘Then the house collapsed’, (iv) isolated event in the past, as in *na tian wo ye qu ting le* ‘That day, I went to listen, too’, (v) completed action as of the present, as in *wo huilai le* ‘I have come back’, (vi) consequent clause to indicate situation, as in *ni yi an men ling, ta jiu lai kai men le* ‘As soon as you ring the doorbell, he will come and open the door’, (vii) obviousness, as in *zhe ge ni dangran dong le* ‘This you understand, of course!’. On the other hand, as for sentence final *de*, Chao indicates that it has the force of ‘the fact is such that’, as in *yiding bu hui xia yu de* ‘It will certainly not rain’, or it means

possesses specific meanings and functions. They can also locate together in the sentence final position because they are not mutually exclusive. They are different particles and lack a chronically etymologic relationship. The structure with the *shi...de* configuration is distinct from the *shi...le* configuration.

After discussing sentence final *le* (*le*<sub>2</sub>), the next topic should fall on the interaction between aspectual marker *le* (verbal suffix *le*<sub>1</sub>) and sentence final *de*. It is interesting to find that the aspectual marker *le*<sub>1</sub> and the sentence final *de* are compatible with each other. Like sentence final *le*<sub>2</sub>, sentences with aspectual marker *le*<sub>1</sub> are also grammatical and may co-occur with sentence final *de*, regardless of whether they are subject-focus, adjunct-focus, or predicate-focus structures, shown as (55).

- (55) a. shi Zhangsan xie **le** zhe feng xin **de**<sup>15</sup> (subject-focus)  
 SHI Zhangsan write Asp. this Cl. letter DE  
 ‘It was Zhangsan that wrote the letter.’
- b. Zhangsan shi zuotian xie **le** zhe feng xin **de** (adjunct-focus)  
 ‘It was yesterday that Zhangsan wrote the letter.’
- c. Zhangsan shi xie **le** zhe feng xin **de** (predicate-focus)  
 ‘It was the case that Zhangsan wrote the letter.’

Since both *le*<sub>1</sub> and *le*<sub>2</sub> can grammatically co-occur with sentence final *de*, the two suffixes should be considered to be different from sentence final *de*.

To sum up, *de* in the *shi...de* configuration is not regarded as a past tense marker or an aspectual marker like *le*.

## 6. Dichotomy Explanation for Sentence Final *de*

As discussed above, *de* in the *shi...de* configuration is classified into two categories: (i) *de* with focus effect and (ii) *de* without focus effect. *De* with focus effect serves as a particle to express the speaker’s attitude. *De* without focus effect serves as a modifier marker.

*De* without focus effect indicates that sentences in *shi...de* configuration do not particularly express the focused information. For example, the sentences in (56)

<sup>15</sup> ‘such is the case’, as in *wo mei sheng ge da zir de* ‘I didn’t save a big penny, that’s what I forgot to do’.

<sup>15</sup> The definiteness or specificity of the object NP will not influence either the judgment of grammaticality or the addition of sentence final *de*, shown as follows:

- (i) a. shi Zhangsan xie le xin
- b. shi Zhangsan xie le zhe feng xin
- (ii) a. shi Zhangsan xie le xin de
- b. shi Zhangsan xie le zhe feng xin de

convey categorical judgment rather than a focus.

- (56) a. Zhangsan shi zhong tian de  
Zhangsan SHI plant field DE  
'Zhangsan is a farmer.'
- b. Zhangsan shi jiao shude  
Zhangsan SHI teach book DE  
'Zhangsan is a teacher.'
- c. Zhangsan shi ai shu de  
Zhangsan SHI love book DE  
'Zhangsan is a book-lover.'

*De* in headless relative clauses is assumed to be a modifier marker. The non-focus *de* cannot be omitted because it represents a relative clause marker. Although Chinese relative clauses allow dropping the head and surface as a headless relative clause, the relative clause marker *de* is never deleted.

On the other hand, *de* with focus effect indicates that sentences in *shi...de* configuration express focused information. Meanwhile, the focused information expresses an exhaustive identification. In other words, the focused element is the only possibility to fit the gap of the presupposition. For example, in (57) the presupposition 'there is an x, such that x beat Lisi' leaves a variable x. There is no one else but the focused constituent *Zhangsan* that can fulfill the variable x.

- (57) shi Zhangsan da Lisi de  
SHI Zhangsan beat Lisi DE  
'It was Zhangsan who beat Lisi.'  
Presupposition: x beat Lisi  
Assertion: x = Zhangsan

In addition, it is found that focus types influence the occurrence of *de*. There are three focus types: subject-focus, adjunct-focus and predicate-focus. These three different focus structures are defined solely from syntactic aspect, rather than from semantic or pragmatic ones. When the element immediately subsequent to the word *shi* is the subject of the sentence, the sentence is described as a 'subject-focus' sentence. Likewise, when the element immediately following the word *shi* is the adjunct, the sentence is defined as an 'adjunct-focus' sentence. Analogically, predicate-focus structure indicates that the element immediately following the word *shi* is the predicate. Unlike the other two focus structures, the predicate-focus

structure does not allow sentence final *de*, like (58). Subject-focus and adjunct-focus sentences can accept the occurrence of *de*, while the predicate-focus sentence cannot.

- (58) a. shi Zhangsan da-le Lisi (de) (subject-focus)  
 SHI Zhangsan beat-Asp. Lisi DE  
 ‘It was Zhangsan who beat Lisi.’
- b. Zhangsan shi zai Wangwu jia da-le Lisi (de) (adjunct-focus)  
 Zhangsan SHI at Wangwu house beat Lisi DE  
 ‘It was at Wangwu’s house that Zhangsan beat Lisi.’
- c. Zhangsan shi da-le Lisi (\*de) (predicate-focus)  
 Zhangsan SHI beat-Asp. Lisi DE  
 ‘Zhangsan did beat Lisi.’

According to the discrepancy<sup>16</sup> between the subject-focus/adjunct-focus structures and the predicate-focus structure, the three focus structures are categorized into two subgroups.

In addition, predicate-focus structure is divided into two subgroups: stative-predicate and dynamic-predicate focus structures. The acceptance of the occurrence of *de* plays a role in distinguishing stative-predicate from dynamic-predicate focus structures, shown as (59).

- (59) a. Zhangsan shi xihuan Lisi de (stative-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI like Lisi DE  
 ‘It is the case that Zhangsan likes Lisi.’
- b. Zhangsan shi da-le Lisi \*de (dynamic-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI beat-Asp. Lisi DE  
 ‘Zhangsan did beat Lisi.’

The adjunction of the verb affix *shang* ‘up’ changes a stative predicate to a dynamic predicate. The examples in (60) demonstrate the same distribution of the occurrence of *de* as (59), in which *de* is acceptable in the stative-predicate-focus sentence, but unacceptable in the dynamic-predicate-focus sentence.

- (60) a. Zhangsan shi ai Li Xiaojiede (stative-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI love Li Miss DE

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<sup>16</sup> It is found that there are nine discrepancies between subject-focus and predicate-focus structures. The findings and discussions are included in my paper ‘On Mandarin SHI in Focus Construction’ which was presented in IACL12.

- ‘It is the case that Zhangsan loves Miss Li.’
- b. Zhangsan shi ai-shang -le Li Xiaojie\*de (dynamic-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI fall in love Asp. Li Miss DE  
 ‘Zhangsan does fall in love with Miss Li.’

In addition, a cardinal complement can also influence a stative predicate to change to a dynamic predicate. A stative predicate (without a cardinal complement) allows the occurrence of *de*, but a dynamic predicate (with a cardinal complement) cannot accept the occurrence of *de*, shown as (61).

- (61) a. Zhangsan shi chou yan de (stative-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI smoke cigarette DE  
 ‘It is the case that Zhangsan does smoke.’
- b. Zhangsan shi chou-le san gen yan \*de (dynamic-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI smoke-Asp. three CL. cigarette DE  
 ‘It is the case that Zhangsan has smoked THREE cigarettes.’

Besides, definite complements can also affect stative predicates. For example, in (62)a, the sentence with a stative predicate is well formed with *de*, while in (62)b the sentence with a dynamic predicate, which contains a definite complement, is not well formed with *de*.

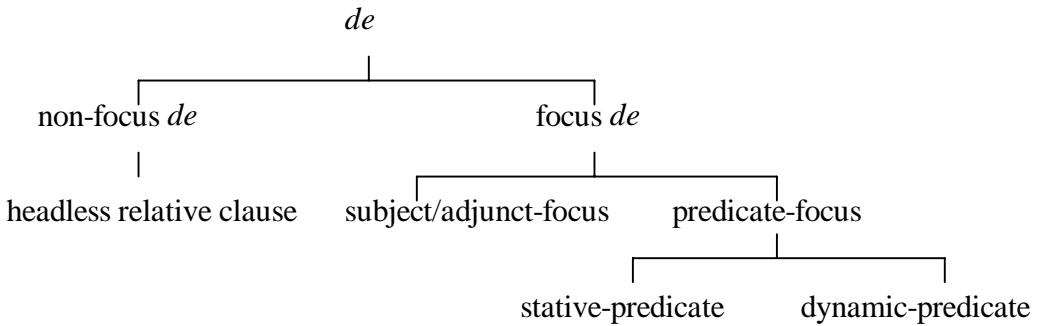
- (62) a. Zhangsan shi pa gou de (stative-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI fear dog DE  
 ‘It is the case that Zhangsan is afraid of dogs.’
- b. Zhangsan shi pa zhe zhi gou \*de (dynamic-predicate)  
 Zhangsan SHI fear this CL. dog DE  
 ‘It is the case that Zhangsan is afraid of this dog.’

Apparently, the distribution of *de* in a stative-predicate-focus structure is distinct from that in a dynamic-predicate-focus structure. Moreover, as in examples (58)-(62), *de* is not allowed to be deleted in a stative-predicate-focus sentence, but oppositely *de* is not allowed to occur in a dynamic-predicate-focus sentence.

According to the above discussion, a dichotomy is taken to analyze the sentence final *de*: (i) *de* with focus effect; (ii) *de* without focus effect. The focus *de* is also divided into two subgroups depending on different focus types. Subject-focus and adjunct-focus sentences are classified as belonging to the same category, while sentences with predicate-focus are another category. The predicate-focus structure is

assumed to be separated into two subgroups depending on different predicate types. The revised diagram of the sentence final *de* is shown as (63).

(63) The diagram of the sentence final *de*



## 7. Concluding Remarks

Basically, the sentence final *de* is assumed to be separated into two subsets: focus *de* and non-focus *de*. The focus *de* and the non-focus *de* are distinguished by the focus effect. The non-focus *de* occurs in headless relative clauses and is assumed as a modifier marker. The focus *de* in the cleft construction is assumed as a sentence final particle. Besides, there are two subsets of the focus *de*, subject/adjunct-focus and predicate-focus structures, and they are distinguished by the acceptance of the occurrence of postverbal *de*. The postverbal *de* is perfectly acceptable in the subject/adjunct-focus structures, but ill-formed in the predicate-focus structure. The predicate-focus structure is split into two subgroups depending on the predicate type. The stative-predicate focus structure is distinguished from the dynamic-predicate focus by the acceptance of the occurrence of sentence final *de*. The occurrence of *de* is obligatory in the stative-predicate structure, but *de* is not allowed in the dynamic-predicate structure.

Notice that the structures with focus *de* are distinguished from each other according to the syntactic distribution of *de*. Therefore, *de* plays a very important role in the *shi...de* construction and it should not be simply considered as an optional element. The fact that *de* can be optional may be due to its semantic meaning. As for the semantic meaning of sentence final *de*, Tang (1983) considers *de* as a marker to present speaker attitude of assertion. Ross (1983) claims that *de* indicates the truth-value originating from the speaker's attitude<sup>17</sup>. Simpson & Wu (1999) propose that *de* represents past time interpretation. We support Tang's assumption to regard *de* as a particle, which refers to the speaker's assertive attitude. The possibility of the omission of *de* may be because the function of *de* overlaps

<sup>17</sup> The truth-value reading of a cleft sentence is argued owing to the function of the word *shi* rather than *de*, demonstrated in my paper "On SHI in Chinese Focus Construction" presented in IACL-12.

with the function of *shi*. The emphatic marker *shi* conveys an assertion and *shi* acts as an essential element in the cleft construction. In the correlative structure ‘*shi...de*’, *shi* serves as a head of the focus phrase and *de* serves to assist in pushing the focused element forward.

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