Deconstructing the shì . . . de construction

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Abstract

This article re-examines the controversial shì . . . de construction, which is shown to involve different types of structures, with different syntactic properties. The core of the analysis proposed in this article is twofold: (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. Furthermore, Mandarin allows an in-situ focus strategy using phonological prominence; this strategy interacts with shì and its postverbal constituent.

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 Yang 1997, who argues against a shì . . . de “construction”; and Paul and Whitman 2008, who also argue for different structures). In particular, sentences with both shì and de can have different base-structures. Given the presence of

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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.

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 kèsòu de.
   COP I first cough DE
   ‘It’s I who coughed first. / I was the one who coughed first.’

b. shè shì kěyǐ chī de.
   snake COP can eat DE
   ‘Snakes can be eaten.’

c. zuótiān wǎnhàng 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 sī dōu xiǎng zhe nǐ de.
   I will till die DOU think ASP you DE
   ‘I will think of you till I die.’ (Li, An, Zhang 1998)

b. Bare-shì
   shì Zhāngsān míngtiān dào Niúyǔ qu.
   COP Zhangsan tomorrow to New York go
   ‘It is Zhangsan who will go to New York tomorrow.’ (Huang 1988)

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). Shi, 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 cop-
ula, 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 sen-
tences, which do not involve the copula. From bare de sentences, we can un-
derstand the nature of de better, and how these sentences are interpreted (differ-
ently 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.
    I will till die DOU think ASP you DE
    ‘I will think of you till I die.’ (Li, An, Zhang 1998)

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):²

(6) tā lái zhǎo wǒ de, bú shì wǒ qù zhǎo tā de.
    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.³ I will discuss in Section 2.2 cases of bare-de which appear to have a narrow focus interpretation and why these do not necessarily lead to a reduced shì-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

² Though of course, (6) cannot be used as an answer to the question in (3).
³ 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 shì-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.’
answers, indicating that (7a) and (7b) have at least the narrow focus readings, focusing on either the object wǒ ‘I’ (in (7a)) or 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

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 2008). 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 huì, 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 λ-abstraction operator. Consider first some data on relatives clauses. As shown in (9a–d), relative 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 2003 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,\(^4\) 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.\(^5\) In particular, in bare-*de* sentences, the assertion operator takes a whole

\(^4\) 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.

\(^5\) *De* may be the head of the AssertionP, which hosts the assertion operator.
proposition as its argument. This is similar to the emphatic operator that Laka (1990) proposed, which she posited to be in ΣP, 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)6.

(10) a. *tā lái zhāo shéi de.
    he come look.for who DE
    ‘Who is he coming to see?’

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

(11) *tā yǒu-méi-yǒu lái zhāo 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 dà-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 dà-pò zhèi-ge huā-píng de?
    who hit-broken this-CL flower-jar DE
    ‘Who was it that broke this vase?’

6. A ma-question (with a sentence-final ma marking a yes-no question) appears to be possible. The difference between these two forms of yes–no questions here can be 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.
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 Chinese 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 in this article whether these two assertion operators are indeed the same.

### 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):

\[
(14) \begin{align*}
\text{a. Who broke the cup?} \\
\text{b. Zhangsan dà-pò de.} \\
\text{Zhangsan hit-broken DE} \\
\text{‘It is Zhangsan who broke it.’}
\end{align*}
\]

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.

\[
(15) \begin{align*}
\text{Zhangsan chángcháng dà-pò dòngxī de.} \\
\text{Zhangsan often hit-broken thing DE} \\
\text{‘Zhangsan often breaks things.’}
\end{align*}
\]

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 wǒ 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 shì–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)
Lisa Lai-Shen Cheng

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., Ẓhāngsān tiántiān 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 māi 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 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. tiántiān 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). 7 Instead, the two sets of

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7. 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 involving pre-object de are often considered to be canonical predication sentences. Paul and Whitman (2008) indicate objections to the analysis here based on past tense
sentences are 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 and shì

Aside from appearing in the so-called shì-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). 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.

(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 [sc [subject] [ predicate]]  

     b. COP [sc [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.

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8. 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.
(22) Canonical Predication

a. Zhāngsān shì tiāntiān dōu chídào de.
   Zhangsan COP every.day DOU late DE
   ‘Zhangsan is late every day.’

b. shì [[SUBJ Zhāngsān] [PRED e tiāntiān dōu chídào 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 λ-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 λ-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-guo 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 [ISC [SUBJECT this book] [PREDICATE λ-Op Zhangsan bought e]]

b. COP [ISC [SUBJECT that person] [PREDICATE λ-Op I have seen e]]

In both (24a) and (24b), the predicate structure is created by the λ-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 wǎnshānghǎi le de shí Xiǎowáng. (=1c)  
yesterday night come DE COP Xiaowang  
‘The one who came 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?  
that book-ACC read.past-NW-TOP who is Q  
‘Who was it that read that book?’ (Merchant 1998)

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).
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 claimed was that Iani 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).9

(30) a. *tā zhāzhāng de shì Zhāngsān 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.

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.

9. In this context, wh-based NPIs cannot appear. The source of the difference between a wh-based NPI and rènhé is unclear to me.
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. \(Xiaowang \text{ shì zuótiān wǎnshāng lái de.}\)
      Xiaowang COP yesterday night come DE

      ‘Xiaowang came last night.’

b. \(\text{shì} \ [	ext{[subj Xiaowang]} \ [	ext{pred zuótiān wǎnshāng lái de}]]\)

(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 \(\text{shì}\) and \(\text{de}\) 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 and inverse predication

Up to now we have only discussed the structure of the copular sentences and how they relate to the \(\text{shì-de}\) 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 \(\text{shì or de}\)) 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 \(\text{shì-de}\) sentences (just as the broad \(\text{shì-de}\) and the bare \(\text{shì}\) cases that we will discuss in Section 4 are also treated together with other \(\text{shì-de}\) 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). On the other hand, as we see in (32b,c), we can put stress on either zuòtiān ‘yesterday’, or huǒchē ‘train’ in the post-copular part. This suggests that other post-copular elements can be focused if there is phonological prominence.

b. Zhāngsān shì zuòtiān zuò huǒchē lái de. ‘Zhangsan came by train yesterday.’
c. Zhāngsān shì zuòtiān zuò huǒchē lái de. ‘Zhangsan came by train yesterday.’
d. * Zhāngsān shì zuòtiān 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) zuòtiān zuò huǒchē lái de shì Zhāngsān. yesterday sit 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 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 specification pseudoclefts, which coincides with the information structure of such sentences. Heycock and Kroch (2002) propose that the pre-copular constituent

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10. 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 2008).
I think that it is similar to the case in bare-de sentences in that what we have is a broad focus, instead of narrow focus.

11. 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 2008).
Deconstructing the shì . . . de construction

in specificalional 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 back to pre- vs. post-verbal information structure. That is, in a specificalional 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 shì-de

Consider some basic cases of broad shì-de.

(34) shì wǒ xiān kēsòu de.
    COP I first cough DE
    ‘It’s I who coughed first./I am the one who coughed first.’ (Zhu 1978)

(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 shi-de cases differ from the canonical predication cases in a couple of ways.

First, these shi-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 shi-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 shi-de is simply a variation of canonical predication shi-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), the fact that (37b) and (38b) are ungrammatical makes a shared base-structure analysis between canonical predication sentences and broad shi-de sentences doubtful. I would like to suggest that broad shi-de is actually derived differently.

12. 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 shi-de).
4.1.1. Interpretation of broad \textit{shì-de}. To see that broad \textit{shì-de} actually has a different source/base from canonical predication sentences, let us first consider the interpretation of broad \textit{shì-de}. First, we mentioned earlier that the focused element in a canonical predication sentence is the post-copular \textit{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 \textit{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).

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(39)] \textbf{shì Xīlā rén zú xiān kāishī niàng jiǔ de} (all-new)
  \textit{COP Greece person most first begin brew wine de}.
  \textit{DE}
  \textit{‘It is the Greek that first started to produce wine.’}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(40)] a. Speaker A
    \textit{Zhăngsān shì wǒ de péngyǒu}.
    \textit{Zhangsan COP I DE friend}
    \textit{‘Zhangsan is my friend.’}
  \item b. Speaker B
    \textit{shì tā dài wǒ qù kàn yīshēng de} (Continuous clefts)
    \textit{COP he bring I go see doctor de}.
    \textit{DE}
    \textit{‘It was him who brought me to see a doctor.’}
\end{itemize}

(39) is the Mandarin counterpart of \textit{all-new} clefts which Huber (2006) recently has discussed (among different other types of clefts). Though the English translation has a clefted noun phrase \textit{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 \textit{shi} provides new information.

Aside from a broad focus interpretation, broad \textit{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 \textit{shi} to be the focus.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(41)] \textbf{shì Zhăngsān bù xiǎoxīn dà-pò de} (Focus = Zhăngsān)
  \textit{COP Zhangsan not careful hit-broken DE}
  \textit{‘It is Zhangsan who broke it accidentally.’}
\end{itemize}
(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 shi-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 shi-de sentences are not canonical predication cases. Before we discuss the structure of broad shi-de, and how the focus interpretation of broad shi-de comes about, we need to first look at the bare-shi sentences, since these two types of sentences are closely related.

4.2. Bare-shi

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

(42)  a. shì Zhăngsàn zuòtiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojié (bú shì Lísì)  
     COP Zhangsan yesterday see Wang Ms not shì COP Lisi
     ‘It is Zhangsan who saw Ms Wang yesterday, not Lisi.’

b. Zhăngsàn shì zuòtiān kàndào Wáng xiǎojié (bú shì qián tiān).  
     COP yesterday see Wang Ms not shì the.day.before
     ‘It is yesterday that Zhangsan saw Ms Wang, not the day before yesterday.’

c. Zhăngsàn zuòtiān shì kàndào Wáng xiǎojié (bú shì gèn tā shuò-guò huà).  
     COP with her talk-ASP
     ‘Zhangsan saw Ms Wang yesterday, not talked to her.’

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

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

(43)  
a. \( \text{shi} \) Zhangsan zuōtiān kàndào Wang xiāojī \( \text{de} \).  
   \( \text{COP} \) Zhangsan yesterday see Wang Ms \( \text{DE} \)  
   ‘It is Zhangsan who saw Ms Wang yesterday.’

b. \( \text{shi} \) Zhangsan zuōtiān kàndào Wang xiāojī \( \text{de} \).  
   Zhangsan COP yesterday see Wang Ms \( \text{DE} \)  
   ‘It is yesterday that Zhangsan saw Ms Wang.’

c. \( \text{shi} \) Zhangsan zuōtiān kàndào Wang xiāojī \( \text{de} \).  
   Zhangsan yesterday COP see Wang Ms \( \text{DE} \)  
   ‘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-*shi* sentences are not simply *shi-* *de* sentences with an optional *de*.

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

(44)  
a. \( \text{shi} \) zhè-bèn shū Zhangsan méi kàn-guo (*de).  
   \( \text{COP} \) this-CL book Zhangsan not have read-ASP  
   ‘It is this book that Zhangsan hasn’t read (not that one).’

b. \( \text{shi} \) tā méi qù shàngkè (*de).  
   \( \text{COP} \) yesterday he not go attend.class  
   ‘It is yesterday that he didn’t go to class (not other days).’

c. \( \text{shi} \) Táiběi tā qù-guo bù shì Táizhōng (*de).  
   \( \text{COP} \) Taipei he go-ASP not \( \text{COP} \) Taizhong  
   ‘It is Taipei that he has been to and not Taizhong.’

As we have already noted above, in cases of broad *shi-* *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 *shi*. All these cases disallow the appearance of *de*. If *shi* 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 2008), 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.
Lastly, a few words about the focus interpretation in bare-ší sentences. As noted earlier, bare-ší sentences have a contrastive focus reading. The examples above all provided contrastive narrow focus. However, broad sentential focus in bare-ší sentences is also possible:

\[(46)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{shí } tā \text{ lái zhǎo wǒ, bú shì wǒ qù zhǎo } \text{COP he come look.for me, not COP I go look.for } tā, \text{ him} \\
\text{b. } & \text{shí } érzi jiao dárén bié chāo, bú shì dárén jiao érzi bié chāo. } \text{COP son ask adult not make.noise not COP adult ask son not make.noise} \\
\end{align*}
\]
‘He came to see him, not I went to see him.’

‘The son asked the adult not to make noise, not the adult asking the son.’

There is thus a connection between the presence of \textit{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-Darben, Rebuschi and Rialland (1999) as well as Kenesei (2006) argue that focusing means identification. For Clech-Darben, Rebuschi and Rialland (1999), it means that in a cleft sentence such as (47), \textit{who fell down} should somehow have an identification relation with \textit{the boy}.

\[(47)\] It is the boy who fell down.

Consider in this respect simple identification in Chinese:

\[(48)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{shí shéi? } \text{COP who} \\
\end{align*}
\]
‘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)).

(49)  
   a.  sono  io.
       am  I
       ‘It’s me.’
   b.  pro, sono [io ti]

(50)  *pro, sono [ti io]

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 φ-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
       ‘It’s us.’

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)).

13. 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.
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 [[CP 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 this 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 to 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 λ-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
the affinity that broad shì-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 who is fallen on the.stairs
   'It is the young one that fell down the stairs.'
   b. \[ IP \[IP
   \] \[CP Opi \[C'
   'qui [IP ti
   est . . . ]]]]

In this structure, the CP is a base-generated adjunct to the IP, which is an identifi-
cational 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 evi-
dence,14 similarly argue that clefts in Zulu involve an adjunct clause, which re-
sembles a relative clause. The structure they put forth for (55a) is (55b), which
resembles the structure in (54b).

(55) Q: Who is cooking tonight?
   a. u-Síph’ ó-zo-phéka ku-stíhlwa.
   COP1a-Sipho REL1-TAM-cook evening
   'It is Sipho who is cooking tonight.'
   b. \[CP\[IP
   u-Síph’\]]\[CP ó-zo-phéka ku-stíhlwa ]

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

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14. In Zulu, the marking of the right edge of an intonation 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 intonation 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.
Turning back to Mandarin broad *shi-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. *shi* wǒ.  
    COP I  

b. COP [SC [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 pseudo-clefts).

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

(57) a. *shi* Zhāngsān bù xiăoxīn dà-pò de.  
    COP Zhangsan not careful hit-broken DE  
    ‘It is Zhangsan who broke it accidentally.’

b. [pro, *shi* [SC [Zhāngsān] [t₁]] [CP Opj ej bù xiăoxīn dà-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 *shi-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) *shi* 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 pronoun, 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, shi [SC [subject de-clause] [predicate ti]]
   b. pro, shi [SC [subject Zhangsan came by train yesterday DE] [predicate ti]]

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 [SC [subject CP] [predicate 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.15 The

15. In the case where the subject being interpreted as a contrastive focus, I assume that it also has
movement possibility is ruled out in Broad shi-de sentences due to the presence of the assertion operator, which is marked by de.\textsuperscript{16}

Lastly, the remaining issue with respect to bare-shi sentences is the apparent floating property. If shi is a copula, the floating effect can only be apparent – shi 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 topicalized. (42c) (repeated here as (62a)) for instance, has the structure indicated in (62b).\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(62)] a. Zhăngsăn zuòtuăn \textit{shi} kàndào Wáng xiăojìè \textit{(bú)}
ZHANGSAN yesterday \textit{COP} see Wang Ms \textit{not}
\textit{shi} gĕn tā shuō-guo huà).
\textit{COP} with her talk-ASP
\textit{‘Zhangsan SAW Ms Wang yesterday, not TALKED TO her.’}

\item[(b)] Zhăngsăn, zuòtuăn \textit{pro, shi} [SC \textit{pro, kàndào Wáng xiăojìè} t$_{i}$]

\end{enumerate}

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-shi, especially cases in which shi is at the beginning of the sentence, different constituents can move

\textsuperscript{16}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).

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(i)] zhè-běn shǔ \textit{wǒ zài Bālì mǎi \textit{de}.}
this-CL book I at Paris buy DE
\textit{‘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.

\textsuperscript{17}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.
to the CP and they are subsequently interpreted as contrastive focus (and this is in contrast with broad-\( \text{shi-de} \), 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 even in the cases of sentences containing \( \text{de} \), 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. \( \text{ta \ xihuan \ [shi \ xie \ de \ shu]} \)?
    he like who write DE book
    ‘For which person x, such that he likes the book that x wrote?’

b. \( \text{nir \ renshi \ xie \ na-ben \ shu \ de \ zuoji} \)?
    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 \( \text{shi-de} \) sentences. That is, in these sentences, we cannot use stress to indicate narrow focus, though the subject of the \( \text{de} \)-clause can have a focus interpretation. The fact that other elements cannot move out of the \( \text{de} \)-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.\(^{18}\)

5. Conclusion

Having two elements constant, \( \text{shi} \) (the copula) and \( \text{de} \) (the spell-out of null operators), I have re-analyzed sentences with \( \text{shi} \) and \( \text{de} \), including cases with

\(^{18}\) 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 \( \text{shi-de} \) 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 \( \text{de} \)-clause.
only *shi* or only *de*. All of the cases involving *shi* share the copular structure, albeit that the subject or predicate in the small clause selected by the copula can be different. (64) provides an overview of the analyses proposed above.

(64) Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canonical Predication</td>
<td>XP; COP [sc [t₁] [de-clause]]</td>
<td>e.g., (1b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverse Predication</td>
<td>[de-clause]; COP [sc [XP] [t₁]]</td>
<td>e.g., (1c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad <em>shi</em>-de</td>
<td>pro₁; COP [sc [de-clause] [t₁]]</td>
<td>e.g., (1a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare-<em>shi</em></td>
<td>pro₁; COP [sc [CP] [t₁]]</td>
<td>e.g., (2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare-<em>de</em></td>
<td>[OP [IP] -de]</td>
<td>e.g., (2a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have seen that there are two types of small clause predicates involved in the *shi-de* sentences: predicates formed by a generalized *λ*-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 *λ*-operator. We see the former case in both bare *de* sentences and in broad *shi-de* sentences. As for marking the presence of a generalized *λ*-operator, we see this in the predication cases, just like typical relative clauses.

Lastly, the typical observation that *shi-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 *shi...de* “construction”. *Shi* has no particular affinity with *de*. We have seen that the *shi-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 *shi-de* sentences have different syntactic properties.

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Deconstructing the shì... de construction


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