On Shi ... De Construction in Mandarin Chinese

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Abstract

In discussing shi ... de construction, Cheng (2008) argues that shi is a copula just like be in English, and following Moro (1997), she claims that the construction involves a small clause structure underlyingly. As for de, she takes it as a marker of the assertion operator. However, the present thesis shows that this analysis by Cheng has quite a few problems. To be more specific, the thesis points out empirical flaws in Cheng's analysis of focus reading associated with sentences that are said to have shi ... de construction. It also shows inappropriateness of extending Moro's reverse predication analysis, which is based on Italian data, to sentences that contain shi and de in Mandarin Chinese. Arguments from statistical data and logical deduction are provided for the purpose of illustrating these weaknesses of Cheng's analysis.