

On the formation of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts

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Abstract: In this paper we argue that Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts (e.g., *Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng* 'It was by train that he went to Beijing' and *Shì tā zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng* 'It was he who went to Beijing by train') originate from bi-clausal copulative constructions in Early Modern Chinese with the interaction between particular word order (SVO order, but the relative clause before the head noun) and the adjacency effect commonly observed in the focus clefts of SVO languages. The adjacency effect is locally constrained by the presupposition effect of the particular relative clause to produce a special head-noun focus cleft in Mandarin (*Tā shì qù de Běijīng* 'It was Beijing that he went to'). The past time meaning, the negation restriction, and the TAM (tense, aspect, and modality) restrictions that Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts exhibit all come from the syntactic requirement that O in a Mandarin *VdeO* focus cleft should be specific in reference.

Keywords: *VdeO* focus clefts; word order; adjacency effect; presupposition effect

1. Introduction

The forms, the functions and the syntactic behaviour of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts have been discussed controversially both in the generative (cf. e.g., Huang 1990; Simpson & Wu 2002; Paul & Whitman 2008; Hole 2011, and others) and in the functionalist literature (cf. e.g., Li et al. 1998; Li 2008; Shen 2008, and others). This paper argues from a functional perspective that Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts originate from copulative constructions with the post-copula NP¹ being modified by a relative clause. In this section we give a brief introduction of Mandarin focus clefts (1.1), and

¹ In this paper, the following abbreviations are used: AD = adjunct, ADJV = adjectivizer, CAUS = causative marker, CLASS = classifier, COP = copula, DEM = demonstrative, EXP = experiential aspect marker, FP = focus phrase, NEG = negation marker, NP = noun phrase, NP1 = the first of two noun phrases, NP2 = the second of two noun phrases, O = object, PERF = perfective aspect marker, RC = relative clause, S = subject, V = verb.

Mandarin copulative constructions (1.2), while 1.3 outlines the structure of the paper.

1.1. Mandarin focus clefts

The literature on Mandarin usually identifies two types of focus construction that contain *shì*: **bare *shì*** focus constructions (1a) and ***shì*...*de*** focus constructions (1b):

- (1) a. Bare *shì* focus construction:
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing
 ‘He goes to Beijing **by train**./He goes to **Beijing** by train./He **goes to Beijing** by train./He **goes to Beijing by train**.’
- b. *Shì*...*de* focus construction:
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de.
 他是坐 火车 去 北京 的
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing *de*
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

Paul and Whitman (2008, 415–416) argue that the position of focus is flexible in bare *shì* focus constructions (cf. our translations of (1a)), while it is fixed in *shì*...*de* focus constructions (1b), and that bare *shì* focus constructions do not exhibit exclusive conditions like *shì*...*de* focus constructions, cf. (2a) and (2b):

- (2) a. Bare *shì* focus construction:
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng,
 他是坐 火车 去 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing
 yě shì zuò fēijī qù Běijīng.
 也是坐 飞机 去 北京
 also *shì* taking plane go to Beijing
 ‘He goes to Beijing by train, and also by plane (e.g., first by train, then by plane).’

b. *Shì*...*de* focus construction:

Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de,
 他 是 坐 火车 去 北京 的
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing *de*
 *yě shì zuò fēijī qù Běijīng de.
 *也 是 坐 飞机 去 北京 的
 *also *shì* taking plane go to Beijing *de*

‘It was by train that he went to Beijing; *it was also by plane that he went to Beijing.’

Based on the above diagnostic features that the two kinds of focus constructions exhibit, Paul and Whitman (2008, 416) define Mandarin bare *shì* focus constructions as **association-with-focus constructions**² and Mandarin *shì*...*de* focus constructions as focus clefts. This definition is inherited by Hole (2011, 1708) and will also be our basic assumption in this paper.

In typical Mandarin focus clefts, *shì* can precede an AD (AD-focus cleft)³ or an S (S-focus cleft),⁴ and *de* can stand before an O (*VdeO*, namely Verb *de* Object) or it can follow an O (*VOde*, namely Verb Object *de*). Mandarin focus clefts have at least four basic forms:

² By “association-with-focus constructions” we mean constructions in which any item to the right of the focus operator (e.g., *shì* in (1a)) may be associated with focus by assigning it intonational prominence, cf. Rooth (1992), Paul & Whitman (2008, footnote 6).

³ Yuan (2003, 4) argues that apart from regular nominal phrases, AD in AD-focus clefts can also be “the first part of serial verb phrases, prepositional phrases, etc”.

⁴ *Shì* can also precede an O like in the following example:

Tā zuò huǒchē qù de shì Běijīng.
 他 坐 火车 去 的 是 北京
 he taking train go to *de shì* Beijing

‘Where he went to by train was Beijing.’

This construction is syntactically similar to an English pseudo-cleft (as indicated by the translation) and will not be dealt with in the present paper.

(3) AD-focus clefts

a. AD-focus *VOde* cleft

Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de.
 他是坐 火车 去 北京 的
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing *de*
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

b. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

(4) S-focus clefts

a. S-focus *VOde* cleft⁵

Shì tā zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de.
 是他坐 火车 去 北京 的
shì he taking train go to Beijing *de*
 ‘It was he who went to Beijing by train.’

b. S-focus *VdeO* cleft

Shì tā zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 是他坐 火车 去 的 北京
shì he taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was he who went to Beijing by train.’

Mandarin focus clefts also display a special form (5):

⁵ It is worth mentioning that although the S-focus *VOde* cleft has been widely discussed in the literature (cf. Tang 1981; Huang 1990; Lee 2005; Paul & Whitman 2008; Hole 2011), in reality, it does not exist in the northern dialects of Mandarin (especially in the Beijing dialect). Li et al. (1998, 100) find that Beijing locals would judge (4a) as “unnatural”. We have also conducted a research on the historical data of Beijing local dialect and come to the conclusion that S-focus *VOde* cleft structures have never existed in the history of the Beijing dialect.

Surprisingly, people speaking Mandarin in Taiwan would happily accept (4a) as natural. Note that a number of researchers use Taiwan Mandarin as their testing data sample (e.g., Tang 1981; Huang 1990; Lee 2005). They do not doubt the naturalness of (4a).

- (5) O-focus cleft (O-focus
- VdeO*
- cleft)

Tā shì qù de Běijīng.

他是去 的 北京

he *shì* go to *de* Beijing

'It was Beijing that he went to.'

The O-focus *VdeO* cleft is briefly discussed in Paul & Whitman (2008, 428), and is dealt with in more detail in Hole (2011) (but cf. Yuan 2003 for arguments against the existence of O-focus *VdeO* cleft).⁶

Also for reasons to be disclosed in section 4.1, we will refer to the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and the S-focus *VdeO* cleft as **RC-focus *VdeO* clefts** (short form for “relative-clause-focus *VdeO* clefts”).

1.2. Mandarin copulative constructions

Mandarin is an SVO language. Its copulative (or equative) constructions usually take (but are not confined to) the form of NP1 *shì* NP2 (where *shì* is a copula). In a typical Mandarin copulative construction, NP1 and NP2 usually have the same reference, cf. (6):

- (6) Typical NP1
- shì*
- NP2 construction:

Zhè shì huǒchēpiào.

这 是 火车票

this *shì* train ticket

'This is a/the train ticket.'

Mandarin also has a copulative construction that takes the form of NP1 *shì* NP2, but the two NPs differ in reference (see (7); cf. Chao 1968, 45; Ward 2004; Shen 2008, 389–390; Zhang & Tang 2010, 20–21 for more discussion).

⁶ Parallel with (3a) and (4a), one would assume that there exists a Mandarin *VOde* focus cleft like the following:

*Ta shì qù Běijīng de.

*他 是 去 北京 的

he *shì* go to Beijing *de*

*'It was Beijing that he went to.'

We agree with Hole (2011, 1711), and argue that this kind of O-focus *VOde* cleft does not exist in Mandarin.

- (7) NP1 *shì* NP2 construction with two NPs differing in reference:

Wǒ shì huǒchēpiào; (tā shì fēijīpiào).

我 是 火车票 他 是 飞机票

I shì train ticket (he shì plane ticket)

‘As for me, it is the train ticket; (as for him, it is the plane ticket).’

A Mandarin relative clause usually precedes the head noun that it modifies and ends with the relativizer *de*. When the object of the verb (V) is missing in the relative clause – as in (8a) and (8b) – the head noun is usually the implied object of V; when the subject of the relative clause is missing, as in (8c), the head noun is usually the implied subject of V.

- (8) Mandarin relative clauses

a. wǒ mǎi de huǒchēpiào

我 买 的 火车票

I buy *de* train ticket

‘the train ticket that I bought’

b. zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào

在 网上 买 的 火车票

on Internet buy *de* train ticket

‘the train ticket that was bought on the Internet’

c. mǎi huǒchēpiào de rén

买 火车票 的 人

buy train ticket *de* person

‘the person who bought the train ticket’

Coming back to the two copulative constructions in (6) and (7), since the two NP2s (*huǒchēpiào*, ‘train ticket’) are NPs of reference, it follows naturally that we add a modifying RC before NP2, thus (9a) and (9b) (cf. Shen 2008 for a similar treatment):

- (9) NP1 *shì* NP2 constructions with NP2 being modified by an RC

a. Zhè shì wǒ mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

这 是 我 买 的 火车票

this shì I buy *de* train ticket

‘This is the train ticket that I bought.’

- b. Wǒ shì zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.
 我 是 在 网 上 买 的 火 车 票
 I shì on Internet buy de train ticket
 ‘As for me, it is the train ticket that was bought on the Internet.’

The structure in (9a) and (9b) is shown in (10):

(10) [TP NP1 [VP *shì* [NP [RC S/AD *Vde*] NP2]]]

Harris and Campbell (1995, 153) specify a bi-clausal copulative construction with the following three features: (i) it contains a superordinate clause (S_1) and a subordinate clause (S_2), (ii) the former containing a copula, and (iii) the latter having the structure of a relative clause. Since (9a) and (9b) exhibit the exact three features specified by Harris and Campbell (1995), we argue that they are bi-clausal copulative constructions.⁷ For further evidence that the two bi-clausal copulative constructions are essential for the present analysis of the formation of *VdeO* focus clefts, see sections 3 and 4.

1.3. Outline of the paper

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews three important papers that deal with the formation of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts. We will review Simpson & Wu (2002) in 2.1, Paul & Whitman (2008) in 2.2, and Hole (2011) in 2.3. Section 3 discusses the formation of RC-focus *VdeO* clefts (including AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft). We will argue in 3.1 that the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft developed from a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese.⁸

Due to its syntactic similarities to the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft, the S-focus *VdeO* cleft is frequently mentioned but seldom specifically discussed in the relevant literature (but cf. Paul & Whitman 2008, 424–428, Hole 2011, 1710; Xiao & Long 2012). We will argue in 3.2 that the S-focus *VdeO* cleft evolved from a bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *Vde*NP2 construction, and the whole evolution is parallel to that of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft.

⁷ Some doubt the bi-clausal copulative status of (9b) (cf. Simpson & Wu 2002; Paul & Whitman 2008; Hole 2011) because for them, (9b) is a typical example of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft. We will argue against these views in section 3.1.

⁸ “Early Modern Chinese” refers to the Mandarin spoken between 960 AD and 1900 AD, cf. Sun (2006, 18).

Based on the diachronic treatment of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and the S-focus *VdeO* cleft in section 3, in section 4 we will further discuss the reasons why Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts are different from clefts in other SVO languages, such as English. We will suggest in section 4.1 that the formation of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts is the result of an interaction between an adjacency effect widely observed in SVO languages of the world (see e.g., Harries-Delisle 1978; Heine & Reh 1984; Harris & Campbell 1995; Heine & Kuteva 2002), and the unique word order of Mandarin (i.e., the SVO order but the modifying relative clause placed before the head noun). Section 4.2 argues that the adjacency effect is locally constrained by a presupposition effect of the relative clause in a bi-clausal copulative construction. The interaction between the two effects leads to the formation of a peculiar sentence type in Mandarin, the O-focus *VdeO* cleft.

Section 5 will discuss two issues: the formation of past time meaning in *VdeO* focus clefts, and the reason why Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts should have negation restriction and TAM (tense, aspect, and modality) restrictions. We will argue that the formation of past time meaning and the negation/TAM restriction(s) are natural results of the requirement that O of *VdeO* focus clefts should be specific in reference.

Section 6 puts forth some generalizations on Mandarin *VOde* focus clefts.

2. Recent analyses

VdeO focus clefts have given rise to a number of discussions in the literature in the past three decades (see e.g., Tang 1981; Huang 1990; Li et al. 1998; Simpson & Wu 2002; Yuan 2003; Lee 2005; Li 2008; Paul & Whitman 2008; Hole 2011; Long & Xiao 2009; 2011; Xiao & Long 2012). Among these papers, Simpson & Wu (2002), Paul & Whitman (2008) and Hole (2011) are the ones that deal with the formation of *VdeO* focus clefts.

2.1. Simpson & Wu (2002)

VdeO focus clefts have puzzled the scholars of Mandarin for a long time; furthermore, there is no information on the areal distribution of this construction among the dialects of Mandarin. Probably beginning with Tang (1981, 113), the general position has been to assume that the two *VdeO* focus clefts in (3) and (4) are variants of the two *VOde* focus clefts in the

northern dialects of Mandarin ((3b) of (3a), (4b) of (4a), respectively; cf. Simpson & Wu 2002, 169; Paul & Whitman 2008, 427–428; Hole 2011, 1710).

Since the only difference between the AD-focus *VOde* cleft, the S-focus *VOde* cleft and their supposed “variations” concerns the relative position of *de vis-à-vis* O, it would be convenient to assume that movement is involved in the formation of *VdeO* focus clefts. This is exactly what is proposed in Simpson & Wu (2002).

Simpson and Wu (2002) argue that sentence-final *de* in AD-focus *VOde* cleft involves a strong past time conversational implicature, and that *de* is undergoing a category change from a nominal D^0 constituent to a verbal T^0 morpheme encoding past tense⁹ the authors do not mention the S-focus *VOde* cleft). Due to cliticization reasons,¹⁰ *de* moves over the direct object and cliticizes to the verb, cf. (11b).

- (11) a. AD-focus *VOde* cleft
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de.
 他是坐 火车 去 北京 的
 he *shì* taking train go to Beijing *de*
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’
- b. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

Hole (2011, 1716) points out two problems with the analysis of Simpson & Wu (2002): (1) placing T as the sister of aspectual projection, lower than modal projection is against the standard assumption of generative analyses; (2) many sentences are ambiguous between past tense and non-past tense in their analysis.

Problem (1) is certainly serious from a generative perspective, but it will not concern us in this paper since we are dealing with the formation of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts from a functional perspective. We are, however, concerned with the second problem, namely the failure to define the exact nature of the past time meaning in the AD-focus *VOde* cleft.

⁹ “D” is a short form for “determiner” and “T” is the abbreviation of “tense” (see (11a); in Simpson & Wu (2002).

¹⁰ According to Simpson & Wu (*op.cit.*, 189–198), tense markers always cliticize to verb stems.

Simpson and Wu (2002) are right in claiming that the past time meaning in AD-Focus VO*de* clefts is a “strong conversation implicature”, but they do not specify the contexts in which the past time meaning occurs and the contexts in which past time meaning does not. Let us take a look at two possible contexts of (11a):

- Context (1): A (*tā* ‘he’) is already in Beijing when B (in Shanghai) mentions him to C (also in Shanghai).
- Context (2): There are two linguistic seminars. One is already completed in Shanghai and the other is beginning in Beijing in two days. For the linguists attending both seminars, they have the choice of taking a train to Beijing or flying to Beijing. A (*tā* ‘he’) will take a train to Beijing. B mentions A to C.

In context (1), (11a) definitely has a past time meaning. But in context (2), (11a) has a non-past time meaning. The difference between the two contexts lies in the fact that the action *qù Běijīng* ‘go to Beijing’ has completed in context (1) but not completed in context (2).

If this observation is correct, then the so-called “past time conversational implicature” may actually come from the meaning of VO structure in AD-focus VO*de* cleft: if VO structure indicates past time, then AD-focus VO*de* cleft has past time meaning; if VO structure indicates non-past time, then AD-focus VO*de* cleft has non-past time meaning. The *míngtiān*-test¹¹ of a Mandarin AD-focus VO*de* cleft with a VO structure that only permits the interpretation of completed action seems to support our observations, cf. (12a) and (12b):

¹¹ This test inserts *míngtiān* ‘tomorrow’ before AD in an AD-focus VO*de* cleft, cf. the example in (i) below. Hole (2011, 1713) argues that if the AD-focus VO*de* cleft is still grammatical after insertion, then it “allows for non-past interpretation in the presence of materials contradicting a past tense interpretation”; see also Simpson & Wu (2002, 176–177) for similar treatments.

(i) *Míngtiān*-test of an AD-focus VO*de* cleft:

Tā shì míngtiān zuò huǒchē qù Běijīng de.
 他是明天坐火车去北京的
 he *shì* tomorrow taking train go to Beijing *de*

‘It is tomorrow that he will go to Beijing by train.’

- (12) a. AD-focus *Vde* cleft with VO indicating completed action:
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē chénggōng dàodá Běijīng de.
 他是坐 火车 成功 到达 北京 的
 he shì taking train successfully arrive at Beijing de
 ‘It was by train that he arrived at Beijing successfully.’
- b. *Míngtiān*-test of an AD-focus *Vde* cleft with VO indicating completed action:
 Tā shì *míngtiān zuò huǒchē chénggōng dàodá Běijīng de.
 他是 *明天 坐 火车 成功 到达 北京 的
 he shì *tomorrow taking train successfully arrive at Beijing de
 ‘*It is tomorrow that he will arrive at Beijing by train successfully.’

In a Mandarin VO structure like *chénggōng dàodá Běijīng* ‘arrive at Beijing successfully’, *dàodá Běijīng* indicates a completed action and the adverb *chénggōng* ‘successfully’ enhances that meaning. Since the VO structure indicates a completed action by itself, the sentence is no longer compatible with elements contradicting a past tense interpretation (e.g., *míngtiān* ‘tomorrow’), thus the ungrammaticality of (12b).

If the above argumentation is correct, we would like to suggest that the past time meaning of an AD-focus *Vde* cleft comes from VO structure, and has nothing to do with *de* (which, we argue, is still a relativizer). If *de* is not a tense marker (T⁰ according to Simpson & Wu 2002), it has no motivation to move over O and cliticize to V. The movement hypothesis of Simpson & Wu (2002) should thus be rejected.

2.2. Paul & Whitman (2008)

Paul and Whitman (2008) mainly deal with the formation of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft. The authors assume a *de*_T-headed aspect phrase that serves as the complement of a matrix V node. The *VdeO* order is formed with the verb head-adjointing to *de*_T, see (13).

- (13) AD-focus *VdeO* cleft:
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he shì taking train go to de Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

Hole (2011, 1718) points out that the problem with the analysis of Paul and Whitman (2008) is placing *de*_T (which Hole 2011 claims to have clearly

deictic past tense entailments) in Asp and not in T (similarly to Simpson & Wu 2002). We will argue later in this paper that *de* in *VdeO* focus clefts is not a *de_T* but a relativizer.

Paul and Whitman (2008, 430) also discuss in detail some features of *VdeO* focus clefts that deserve our attentions in this paper, namely the negation restriction (cf. (14a) and (14b)) and the TAM restrictions (cf. (15a), (15b), (16a) and (16b)).

(14) Negation restriction of *VdeO* focus clefts

- a. Tā shì zuò huǒchē *bù/*méi qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 *不/*没 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train *NEG/*NEG go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he *would not/*did not go to Beijing.’
- b. Shì tā zuò huǒchē *bù/*méi qù de Běijīng.
 是 他 坐 火车 *不/*没 去 的 北京
shì he taking train *NEG/*NEG go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was he who *would not/*did not go to Beijing by train.’

(15) Modality restriction of *VdeO* focus clefts

- a. Tā shì zuò huǒchē *néng/*yìnggāi qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 *能/*应该 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train *can/*should go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he *could go/*should have gone to Beijing.’
- b. Shì tā zuò huǒchē *néng/*yìnggāi qù de Běijīng.
 是 他 坐 火车 *能/*应该 去 的 北京
shì he taking train *can/*should go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was he who *could go/*should have gone to Beijing by train.’

(16) Tense/aspect restrictions of *VdeO* focus clefts

- a. Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù *le/*guò de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 *了/*过 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to *PERF/*EXP *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he *has gone to/*tried to go to Beijing.’
- b. Shì tā zuò huǒchē qù *le/*guò de Běijīng.
 是 他 坐 火车 去 *了/*过 的 北京
shì he taking train go to *PERF/*EXP *de* Beijing
 ‘It was he who *has gone to/*tried to go to Beijing by train.’

Negation restriction requires that *VdeO* focus clefts should not contain negation markers before *V* (cf. (14a) and (14b)); TAM restrictions require that *VdeO* focus clefts should not contain modality markers before *V* (*néng/yìnggāi* ‘can/should’; cf. (15a) and (15b)) or tense/aspect markers behind *V* (*le/guò*; cf. (16a) and (16b)).¹² We will argue in section 5 that negation restriction and TAM restrictions are natural results of the specificity requirement of *O* in *VdeO* focus clefts (i.e., *O* in *VdeO* focus clefts should have specific reference, cf. sections 2.3, 5.1 and 5.2).

2.3. Hole (2011)

Hole (2011) argues that the shift of *de* from post-object to pre-object position in both AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft (17) involves object shift (18a), combined with remnant movement (“Prosodic Inversion at PF”; cf. (18b)). The object moves to the specifier of an aspectual head, and then the remaining string underneath the object moves around *de*.

(17) AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Tā shì zuò	huǒchē	qù	de	Běijīng.
他 是 坐	火 车	去	的	北 京
he	shì taking train	go to	de	Beijing

‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

(18) a. Object Shift

[_{AspP} Běijīng _i ...[_V qù t _i]]
北京 去
Beijing go to

b. Remnant PF Movement/Prosodic Inversion

[(qù) _{PF} [C- <i>de</i> ...[_{Asp} Běijīng _i ... (qù) _{spell out}]]]
去 的 北京 去
go to <i>de</i> Beijing go to

Hole (2011) analyzes *de* as a *C* heading a complementizer phrase (18b), which our functionalist approach in this paper also proposes. Hole (*op.cit.*, 1725–1726) also analyzes the O-focus *VdeO* cleft as a structure involving

¹² Paul and Whitman (2008: 430) call Mandarin *le* a “perfective aspect marker” and *guò* an “experiential aspect marker”. The terms are also employed by Hole (2011, 1713). We will also use these two terms in this paper.

procrastinated LF movement of the shifted object to cleft focus position ((19) is the sentence at spell-out), which is, to our knowledge, the first time in the literature to include this kind of focus cleft in a treatment of *VdeO* focus clefts.

(19) O-focus *VdeO* cleft

Tā shì qù de Běijīng.

他是去 的北京

he *shì* go to *de* Beijing

‘It was Beijing that he went to.’

Another contribution from Hole (2011, 1722), which will prove essential to our discussion of *VdeO* focus clefts (see sections 5.1 and 5.2), is the argument of “the ban on explicitly marked indefiniteness” for the position of O in Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts ((20a) is the author’s original example of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and (20b) is our inferred example of S-focus *VdeO* cleft; cf. Li et al. 1998, 97 for opposite views). We will further argue in section 5.1 that O in Mandarin *VdeO* focus should be more strictly restricted. It should be of specific reference instead of non-indefinite reference.

(20) a. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Wǒ shì zài túshūguǎn kàn de *yì-běn shū.

我 是 在 图书馆 看 的 *一本 书

I *shì* in library read *de* *one-CLASS book

‘*It was in the library that I read a book.’

b. S-focus *VdeO* cleft

Shì wǒ zài túshūguǎn kàn de *yì-běn shū.

是 我 在 图书馆 看 的 *一本 书

shì I in library read *de* *one-CLASS book

‘*It was I who read a book in the library.’

The most important contribution from Hole (2011, 1731) is the claim that past time meaning of *VdeO* focus clefts comes from “a realis event that has occurred before the speech time” and that *de* should not be a tense marker or an aspect marker. In section 5.1 we will argue that the past time meaning comes from the requirement that O in *VdeO* focus clefts should have specific reference.

3. Formation of RC-focus *VdeO* clefts

Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts consist of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and an S-focus *VdeO* cleft. Next, in section 3.1, we will focus on the formation of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft.

3.1. Formation of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

In this subsection we will argue that Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft originates from a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction in Early Modern Chinese. For this purpose we first hypothesize that these early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft are examples of the bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction.

3.1.1. Hypothetical bi-clausal interpretation of early examples

Liu (2006, 61) reports the earliest example of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft in Mandarin from the mid-13th century (21a). Similar examples can be found between the mid-13th century and early 17th century, (21b) displays one of them. Before hypothesizing that they are examples of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction, we provide a bi-clausal copulative interpretation and a focus cleft interpretation for both of them.¹³

(21) Early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

- a. Tiānxiàrén zǒng shì cān dé de chán.
 天下人 总 是 参 得 底 禅

worldly people all *shì* meditating obtain *de* Buddhism

Bi-clausal copulative interpretation: ‘As for all the worldly people, it is the Buddhism that was obtained through meditating.’

Focus cleft interpretation: ‘It is through meditating that all the worldly people obtained their Buddhism.’ (Puji 1984, 1131; mid-13th century)

¹³ (21b) is also reported in Chen (1958), a collection of *Yuánzǎjù* (an opera style of the Yuan Dynasty, 1271–1368). The problem with this collection is that it was completed more than two centuries later, in 1588. It is very likely that its language exhibits the Mandarin of later years; however, it still does not date later than (24a), (24b), and (32), and thus it can support our hypothesis that the Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft had probably undergone an early stage of bi-clausal copulative construction.

- b. Cáiláng mòbù shì xiàng tiāngōng mǎibō lái de cōngmíng.
 才郎 莫不 是 向 天公 买拨 来 的 聪明
 you probably *shì* from heavenly god buy come *de* intelligence
 Bi-clausal interpretation: ‘As for you, it probably has been the intelligence that was bought from the heavenly god.’
 Focus cleft interpretation: ‘It probably has been from heavenly god that you bought your intelligence.’
 (Zhang & Wang, 1081; late 13th century to late 16th century)

Liu (2006) argues that (21a) is an example of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft with the structure of formula (22a). We think that most in the literature would accept (21a) and (21b) as examples of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft because they all accept other similar examples as AD-focus *VdeO* clefts, cf. e.g., (22b) from Hole (2011, 1710).

- (22) a. [TP S [VP [FP *shì* AD] [_v V *de* O]]]
 b. Zhāngsān shì yòng máobǐ xiě de shī.
 张三 是 用 毛笔 写 的 诗
 Zhangsan *shì* with brush write *de* poem
 ‘It was with a brush that Zhangsan wrote the poem.’

The reader may notice that (21a) and (21b) are also structurally similar to the example of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction ((23a) = (9b)), whose structure is (23b).

- (23) a. Bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction
 Wǒ shì zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.
 我 是 在 网上 买 的 火车票
 I *shì* on Internet buy *de* train ticket
 ‘As for me, it is the train ticket that was bought on the Internet.’
 b. [TP NP1 [VP *shì* [NP [RC AD *Vde*] NP2]]]

Among a dozen of other early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* clefts we found, there are at least two that can only be interpreted as examples of bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* constructions, see (24a) and (24b).

(24) Bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Nǐ shì nǎlǐ lái de jūnmǎ?
 你 是 那里 来 的 军马
 you *shì* where come *de* troops
 ‘As for you, it is the troops that come from where?’ (Luo 2001, 344; 1598)
- b. Wángxǐ cǐshí zhēn shì tiān luòxià lái de fùguì.
 王喜 此时 真 是 天 落下 来 的 富贵
 Wangxi the moment really *shì* heaven falldown come *de* fortune
 ‘As for Wangxi at the moment, it was really the fortune that fell down from the heaven.’ (Lu 2000, 72; 1630s–1640s)

In the two examples, V (*lái* ‘come’ in (24a) and *luòxià lái* ‘fell down’ in (24b)) have a subject–verb relationship with NP2 (*jūnmǎ* ‘troops’ and *fùguì* ‘fortune’) instead of NP1 (*nǐ* ‘you’ and *Wángxǐ*). If we consider them as examples of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft, S should have a subject–verb relationship with V (cf. (22a)), but in a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction, NP1 does not necessarily have a subject–verb relationship with V (cf. (23b)), and thus we argue that the two examples have the structure of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction instead of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft.

If (24a) and (b) are examples of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction, we argue that the rest of the early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* clefts in Mandarin between the mid-13th and early 17th centuries are also likely to have bi-clausal copulative interpretations. They exhibit at least two bi-clausal copulative features: (i) the [RC + head noun] relationship between AD *Vde* and NP2, and (ii) the impossibility of omitting *shì*.

As the name of the bi-clausal copulative construction indicates, AD *Vde* in the construction always has an [RC + head noun] relationship with NP2 (cf. *zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào* ‘the train ticket that was bought on the Internet’ in (23a)). AD *Vde* in an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft is different. It does not necessarily form an [RC + head noun] relationship with O, cf. (25a) = (3b), and (25b).

- (25) a. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他 是 坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

- b. *zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng
 *坐 火车 去 的 北京
 taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘*Beijing that (he) went to by train.’

In all the early examples of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft (including (21a) and (21b)), AD *Vde* has an [RC + head noun] relationship with O (or NP2), without any exception. Considering that examples like (25a) are very common in Mandarin after the early 18th century (cf. section 3.1.2), we can hypothesize that the early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* cleft in Mandarin are at least in some way different (i.e., they are capable of bi-clausal copulative interpretations).

(26) shows an example of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction in which the copula *shì* cannot be omitted.

- (26) Bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction

*Wǒ zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.
 *我 在 网上 买 的 火车票
 I on Internet buy *de* train ticket
 ‘*As for me, it is the train ticket that was bought on the Internet.’¹⁴

Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft ((25a)) is different. *Shì* as a focus marker may be omitted and the construction may resort to the device of intonational prominence to achieve the same effect, cf. (27).

- (27) AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Tā zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他 坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’

Based on our own intuition of contemporary Mandarin, we still find the omission of *shì* highly ungrammatical in (21a) and (21b), cf. (28a) for (21a) and (28b) for (21b):

¹⁴ When *shì* is omitted in (26), the sentence will not be grammatical as an example of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction meaning ‘as for me, it is the train ticket that was bought on the Internet’, but will be grammatical as an example of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft meaning ‘it was on the Internet that I bought the train ticket’.

- (28) a. *Tiānxiàrén zǒng cān dé de chán.
 *天下人 总 参 得 底 禅
 worldly people all meditating obtain *de* Buddhism
 ‘*It is through meditating that all the worldly people obtained their Buddhism.’
- b. *Cáiláng mòbù xiàng tiāngōng mǎibō lái de cōngmíng.
 *才郎 莫不 向 天公 买拨 来 的 聪明
 you probably from heavenly god buy come *de* intelligence
 ‘*It probably has been from heavenly god that you bought your intelligence.’

We found no evidence of *shì*-omission in what we referred to as the “early examples” of AD-focus *VdeO* clefts. Considering that the omission of *shì* is very common in the examples of Mandarin after the late 17th century, we consider this as another evidence that the early examples have a bi-clausal copulative interpretation.

As far as the two bi-clausal copulative features argued above are concerned, feature (i) is an indication that the early examples of AD-focus *VdeO* clefts consist of a relative clause, while feature (ii) is an indication that the examples consist of a superordinate clause containing the copula *shì*. These two features are the ones that Harris and Campbell (1995, 153) also argue for as exhibiting a bi-clausal copulative construction (cf. section 1.2). If our argumentations of the two features are correct, we would like to hypothesize that at least in mid-13th- to early-17th-century Mandarin, AD-focus *VdeO* clefts are examples of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* construction rather than an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft.

With these arguments above in mind, one may wonder how we can interpret examples like (22b), which is commonly regarded as an example of a focus cleft in the literature. We argue that they are also capable of bi-clausal copulative interpretations because AD *Vde* also forms an [RC + head noun] relationship with O (or NP2) in (22b), cf. (29a) and (29b):

- (29) a. Example of an [RC + head noun] structure
 yòng máobǐ xiě de shī
 用 毛笔 写 的 诗
 with brush write *de* poem
 ‘the poem that was written with a brush’

- b. Example of a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction

Zhāngsān shì yòng máobǐ xiě de shī.

张三 是用 毛笔 写 的诗

Zhangsan *shì* with brush write *de* poem

‘As for Zhangsan, it is the poem that was written with a brush.’

(30) shows that in a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction, a subject (*pro* in (30a)) that does not necessarily co-index with NP1 is permitted before AD (cf. (30a) for the formula and (30b) for the demonstration of the formula). But in an AD-focus *Vde*O cleft, a *pro* is not permitted before AD (cf. (31a) for the formula and (31b) for the demonstration of the formula).

- (30) a. [TP NP1_i [VP *shì* [NP [RC *pro*_{i/j} AD *Vde*] NP2]]]

- b. Zhāngsān shì Zhāngsān zìjǐ/ wǒ yòng máobǐ xiě de shī.

张三 是 张三 自己/ 我用 毛笔 写 的诗

Zhangsan *shì* Zhangsan -self/ I with brush write *de* poem

‘As for Zhangsan, it is the poem that was written with a brush by Zhangsan himself/by me.’

- (31) a. [TP S_i [VP [FP *shì* **pro*_{i/j} AD] [_v V *de* O]]]

- b. Tā shì *tāzìjǐ/ *tāmāma zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.

他 是 *他自己/ *他妈妈 坐 火车 去 的 北京

he *shì* *himself/ *his mother taking train go to *de* Beijing

‘It was *himself/*his mother that went to Beijing by taking a train.’

The grammaticality of (30b) is convincing evidence to our hypothesis that examples like (22b) have bi-clausal copulative interpretations. We further hypothesize that all NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 sentences are capable of bi-clausal copulative interpretation except that they exhibit one of the following features (which are opposite to the features indicating a bi-clausal copulative construction): (i) AD *Vde* and NP2 do not show an [RC + head noun] relationship, cf. (25a) and (25b), and (ii) *shì* can be omitted, cf. (27).

3.1.2. Formation of AD-focus *Vde*O cleft

In the previous section we have demonstrated that the status of AD in early examples of bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 constructions may be questioned (24a). This structure is very frequent in late 16th-century

and early 17th-century Mandarin (32). AD here is assumed to provide new information within a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction.¹⁵

(32) NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese

Nǐ	shì	nǎshì	xiū		lái	de	yuánfǎ?
你	是	那世	修		来	的	缘法
you	<i>shì</i>	which life	practice religious doctrines		come	<i>de</i>	luck

‘As for you, which life is it that you practiced religious doctrines to obtain such good luck?’
(Wu 2007, 13; late 16th century)

Heine and Reh (1984, 147–182) argue that when the copula of a bi-clausal copulative construction grammaticalizes into a focus marker, it usually emphasizes WH-words first. This is exactly what seems to take place in Early Modern Chinese. In (32) for example, the copula *shì* attracts WH-words (*nǎshì* ‘which life’) from the relative clause AD *Vde* and takes it as its complement. The formulae in (33) illustrate the change:

- (33) a. [TP NP1 [VP *shì* [NP [RC AD V *de*] NP2]]]
 b. [TP NP1 [FP *shì* AD] V *de* NP2]

AD, which used to be part of the relative clause ADV*de* (33a), has become the complement of *shì* (33b). We argue that the change had impacts on the structure of both the subordinate relative clause and the superordinate copulative clause within a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction.

The impact on the subordinate relative clause AD *Vde* is that AD is taken away (33b). This is undoubtedly an important change because besides the relativizer *de*, the subordinate relative clause only consists of an AD and a V. But it is syntactically insignificant because *Vde* may also function as a relative clause (cf. *xiū lái de* ‘that was obtained by practicing religious doctrines’ in (32)).

The impact on the superordinate copulative clause is, however, more significant syntactically because it changes the constructional status of the

¹⁵ In a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction, AD *Vde* as a relative clause naturally provides new information for the whole construction. And within the relative clause AD *Vde*, V has a close semantic relation with the head noun NP2, and is semantically predictable. The constituent AD provides almost new information and has much lower degree of predictability compared with V. We argue that this lower degree of predictability makes AD the natural provider of new information within a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction.

whole structure. The function of AD's focus marker requires that *shì* only take AD as its complement, which will deprive the syntactic status that *Vde* and NP2 had as the complement of *shì* in the bi-clausal copulative stage.¹⁶ The syntactic status of the two constituents requires a reconfiguration.

When one examines all the constituents in the construction (cf. (33b)), they will be convinced with no doubt that V is the only constituent that has the capacity of syntactically linking all the other constituents (including NP1, [*shì* AD] structure, and NP2) together as a new construction, and the choice for V is to be a predicative verb of the new construction. With V functioning as the predicative verb of the new construction, NP1 will be the subject, NP2 the object, and the [*shì* AD] structure the adverbial phrase (34):

(34) [TP S [VP [FP *shì* AD] [_{V'} V *de* O]]]

We have argued in section 3.1.1 that any example of an NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction is capable of bi-clausal copulative interpretation unless they exhibit one of the two features: (i) AD *Vde* and NP2 have no [RC + head noun] relationship, (ii) *shì* can be omitted. With *shì* becoming a focus marker, the NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction seems to display feature (ii) in Mandarin in the late 17th century, cf. (35a) and (35b).

(35) NP1 AD *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Jīnrì zhè lái'ān hé Zhāngxiǎoqiáo zuò zéi jié
 今日 这 来安 和 张小桥 做 贼 劫
 today these Lai'an and Zhangxiaoqiao do thief rub
 lái de jīnzi.
 来 的 金子
 come de gold
 'Today it was by stealing that Lai'an and Zhangxiaoqiao got the gold.'
 (Ding 2001, 75; 1655)

¹⁶ It may not necessarily influence the syntactic status of NP1 as NP1 can form a small copulative structure with AD (e.g., *nǐ shì nǎshì* 'as for you, which life is it' in (32); for similar examples, see (7)), thus maintaining its status as a pre-copula NP.

- b. Yěbà yěbà, yǐ shì rú cǐ, wǒ pòshàng
 也罢 也罢 已 是 如 此 我 破上
 That'sit that's it already shì like this I wasting a lot
dǎ lái de zhè yínzi, diū le biàn liǎo.
 打 来 的 这 银子 丢 了 便 了
 beat come *de* this money throw away PERF thus finish
 'That's it. That's it. It's already like this. **It was by wasting a lot that I obtained the money.** Everything will be OK if I throw it away.'
 (Pu 1998, 547; early 18th century)

According to Harris & Campbell (1995, 166–167), the omission of the copula is a common feature of focus clefts in the languages of the world. Exactly this seems to have happened in Mandarin between the mid-17th century and early 18th century. With the omission of *shì*, the construction has eliminated the possibility of bi-clausal copulative interpretations, thus the formation of an AD-focus *VdeO* cleft.

The *VdeO* structure (formerly *VdeNP2* structure) in the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft is more complex. Its morphosyntactic development is now free from the constraints of the [RC + head noun] relationship of the bi-clausal copulative stage. With O evolving along its own route, we detect the following examples in Mandarin from the early 19th century, cf. (36a) and (36b).¹⁷

(36) S *Shì* AD *VdeO* construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Zhè yòu qí le, nǐ fāngcái bú shì
 这 又 奇 了 你 方才 不 是
 this again be strange PERF you just now NEG shì
zhègèyànger jiàn de wǒ me?
 这个 样儿 见 的 我 么
 this look meet *de* me question particle
 'This again is very strange. **Wasn't it with this look that you met me just now?**
 (Wen 1991, 79; 1820s)

¹⁷ In (36b) *qǐ shēn* (literally: 'raise one's body') means 'set off' in Mandarin. It is a single verb, into which no other constituent may be inserted. The insertion of *de* in (36b) has been a special usage of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft since the early 19th century. For more examples like (36b), see Lee (2005, 144–146) and Long & Xiao (2009, 27).

- b. Núcái shì núcái dàye
 奴才 是 奴才 大爷
 I:self-depreciating shì I:self-depreciating Elderly Master
 fàngxiàlá de dì'èrtiān qǐ de shēn.
 放下来 的 第二天 起 的 身
 settle down de secondday raise de body
 'It was the day after my Elderly Master had settled down that I set off.'
 (*Ibid.*, 558; 1820s)

In early 19th-century Mandarin, O had evolved to allow personal pronouns (36a) or the second parts of a verb (36b). Whatever O is, it is no longer possible to interpret it as forming an [RC + head noun] relationship with AD *Vde* structures of the examples.

3.2. Formation of S-focus *VdeO* clefts

In section 3.1 we argued that the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft originates from a bi-clausal copulative construction. As far as the evolution of another RC focus cleft – the S-focus *VdeO* cleft – is concerned, we propose that it developed in parallel with the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft. In this section, we will cite some Early Modern Chinese examples to demonstrate its evolution:

- (37) Examples of the bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *VdeNP2* construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Cǐ shì nǐ cān dé de chán yě.
 此 是 你 参 底 的 禅 也
 this shì you meditating obtain *de* Buddhism final particle
 'This is the Buddhism that you obtained through meditating.'
 (Zezangzhu 1994, 588; early 12th century)
- b. Yǐn Zhāng dào nàlǐ jiàn nǐdiē shíjié, zé shuōdào
 引 张 到 那里 见 你爹 时节 则 说道
 take Zhang go to there meet your father time shouldsay
 shì zǒu le... Zhègè shì pópó shǐ de jiànshi.
 是 走 了... 这个 是 婆婆 使 的 见识
 shì go away PERF this shì Grandmother do *de* plan
 'When you take Zhang to your father's place, you should say that he's gone...
This was the plan that was thought out by the Grandmother.
 (Zhang & Wang 1996, 623; late 13th century to late 16th century)

(38) *Shì* S *VdeNP2* construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Zhāngquán... dǎjié Páng Xiànchéng, shì nǐ qǐ de huògēn.
 张权... 打劫 庞县丞 是 你 起 的 祸根
 Zhangquan rob Magistrate Pang shì you initiate de conspiracy
 Bi-clausal copulative interpretation: ‘Zhangquan... We robbed Magistrate Pang. **This was the conspiracy that was initiated by you.**’
 Focus cleft interpretation: ‘Zhangquan... We robbed Magistrate Pang. **It was you who initiated the conspiracy.**’ (Feng 1956, 413; 1627)
- b. Cháotíng míngmíng shì yí wǒ... dàn bù zhī
 朝廷 明明 是 疑 我... 但 不 知
 Imperial Court clearly shì doubt me but NEG know
shì shuírén qǐ de xìnduān?
 是 谁人 起 的 衅端
 shì who initiate de conflict
 ‘It is clear that the Imperial Court doubts my loyalty... But I don’t know **who it was that initiated the conflict.**’ (Konggulaoren 1988, 34–35; 1630s)

(39) *Shì* S *VdeO* construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. (dōngrén) zhāo chū Wèimíng lā de qiàn.
 (东人) 招 出 魏名 拉 的 纤
 (Dongren) confess out Weiming make de deal
 ‘(Dongren) confessed that **it was Weiming who made the deal.**’
 (Pu 1998, 2598; early 18th century)
- b. Dōu shì Lǎotàitai guàn de tā.
 都 是 老太太 惯 的 他
 all shì Old Grandmother spoil de him
 ‘It was Old Grandmother who spoiled him.’ (Cao & Gao 1956, 489; 1784)

We claim that the S-focus *VdeO* cleft originates from a bi-clausal copulative construction in Mandarin of the early 12th century, having the structure of (40).

(40) [_{TP} DEM [_{VP} *shì* [_{RC} S *Vde*] NP2]]

(37a) is an example of (40). It is a DEM *shì* NP2 copulative construction (*cǐ shì chán* ‘this is the Buddhism’) with NP2 (*chán* ‘Buddhism’) being modified by the relative clause S *Vde* (*nǐ cān dé de* ‘that you obtained through

meditating'). As a typical feature of copulative constructions, DEM (*cǐ* 'this') in this period cross-references the head noun NP2.

The typical features of the bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *Vde*NP2 construction changed in Mandarin between the late 13th and late 16th centuries. (37b) indicates that in this period, DEM (*zhègè* 'this') acquired an "extensive reference reading", referring to a series of events in the context (e.g., *Yǐn Zhāng dào nàlǐ jiàn nǐdiē shíjié, zé shuōdào shì zǒu le* 'When you take Zhang to your father's place, you should say that he's gone') and does not cross-reference the head noun NP2 (*jiànshì* 'plan') any more. The difference of reference between DEM and NP2 has two syntactic consequences: (1) Since DEM has obtained extensive reference and is referring to antecedent clauses, as part of the pragmatic strategy, DEM may also be omitted for contextual reasons; (2) since DEM does not cross-reference the head noun NP2, the structure S *Vde*NP2 may evolve according to its own path like what we observed in the development of AD-focus *Vde*O cleft in section 3.1. These two syntactic consequences are reflected respectively by examples (38a) and (38b) in early 17th-century Mandarin.

DEM is omitted in (38a) for contextual reasons. We provide both bi-clausal copulative interpretation and focus cleft interpretation for (38a) because we find that almost at the same time of (38a), there appear examples of the same DEM *shì* S *Vde*NP2 construction that specifically question S (cf. (38b)). We argue that (38b) exhibits the structure of (41):

(41) [TP [FP *shì* S] *Vde* NP2]

(41) indicates that in early 17th-century Mandarin, the copula *shì* in the bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *Vde*NP2 construction evolved into a focus marker specially focalizing S. With the omission of DEM and *shì* becoming a focus marker, we argue that the other constituents – including V and NP2 – need to redefine their syntactic status.

Parallel with the formation of an AD-focus *Vde*O cleft, we argue that V in (41) takes S as its subject and NP2 as its object. The formation of the S-focus *Vde*O cleft also underwent two stages of further development: the omission of copula *shì* (cf. (39a)) and the further development of NP2 (or O).

The omission of *shì* (as indicated in (39a)) has eliminated the bi-clausal copulative status that may be argued for in examples like (38b). The construction thus has the structure of (42):

(42) [TP S [VP *Vde* O]]

With the elimination of bi-clausal status in examples like (39a), the [RC + head noun] relationship between *SVde* and NP2 also disappear. The *VdeO* structure began to develop along its own path, appearing in examples like (39b) in late 18th-century Mandarin.

3.3. Universal bi-clausal-to-focus process

Sections 3.1 and 3.2 dealt with the diachronic development of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts (i.e., AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft). We came to the conclusion that the two constructions evolved from bi-clausal copulative constructions in Early Modern Chinese. Based on a three-stage scenario, Harris and Campbell (1995, 166–167) illustrate a universal bi-clausal-to-focus process for the formation of focus clefts out of bi-clausal copulative constructions.¹⁸ The authors argue that the resulting focus clefts should have the following three features:

- (a) The two clauses of the (bi-clausal) cleft constructions become a single clause in surface structure.
- (b) The highlighted (focused) constituent is realized in the grammatical relation that the clefted constituent bore in the content clause in the input.
- (c) A discourse marker (highlighter, or focus marker) is formed from some combination of (i) the copula, (ii) the relativizer, and (iii) the expletive pronoun.

By comparing the formation of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts with the bi-clausal-to-focus process proposed by Harris and Campbell (1995), we are convinced that it conforms to the bi-clausal-to-focus process.

Based on above, we will discuss the formation of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts from a cross-linguistic perspective in the next section. We will show that our argumentations would naturally lead to the formation of another *VdeO* focus cleft, the O-focus *VdeO* cleft.

¹⁸ Harris and Campbell (1995) name the process *cleft-to-focus process*. For the authors a bi-clausal copulative construction is a regular cleft construction and a focus cleft is a special cleft construction. In order to avoid possible confusion, we borrow the term *bi-clausal copulative construction* from Harris & Campbell (1995) and rename the process *bi-clausal-to-focus process*.

4. Selection of focused constituents and the formation of the O-focus *VdeO* cleft

The discussion in section 3 have left two very important issues untouched: (1) Why should Mandarin develop RC-focus *VdeO* clefts (i.e., the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and the S-focus *VdeO* cleft) so differently from other SVO languages like English? (2) Does the diachronic development of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts also apply to the Mandarin O-focus *VdeO* cleft? These are the issues that we are dealing with in this section.

4.1. Word order, adjacency effect and formation of RC-focus *VdeO* clefts

As we indicated in section 1.2, Mandarin is an SVO language. In section 3.3 we argued that the development of Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts conforms to the universal bi-clausal-to-focus process, as suggested by Harris and Campbell (1995). It is then reasonable to compare Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts and with focus clefts of other SVO languages, such as English.

English is a typical SVO language. Its focus cleft takes the form of an *it*-cleft (43),¹⁹ which is also typical of focus clefts in SVO languages. Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts are different. They take the form of (44a) and (44b), and may be formulated as (44c).

(43) English *it*-cleft

- a. It was Mary that John loved.
- b. general structure: *it* COP NP *that* clause

¹⁹ Our assumption of the English *it*-cleft is that it originated from bi-clausal copulative constructions in Old English. Ball (1991, 501) agrees with Delahunty (1982) and Hedberg (1990) and suggests that English *it*-cleft originated from bi-clausal copulative constructions that consisted of “a copula sentence with non-expletive *hit* (‘it’) or *þæt* (‘that’) and a post-copula relative clause” in Old English; cf. the following example:

- (i) *Þæt wæs geocor sið, þæt se hearmscaþ a to Heorute ateah!*
‘That was a painful journey that the loathsome despoiler had made to Heorot.’

In Old English bi-clausal copulative constructions like (i), the head noun of the [NP + RC] structure was focused by the copula, hence the formation of the *it*-cleft (see Harris & Campbell 1995 for a cross-linguistic overview).

- (44) a. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft
 Tā shì zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 他是坐 火车 去 的 北京
 he *shì* taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was by train that he went to Beijing.’
- b. S-focus *VdeO* cleft
 Shì tā zuò huǒchē qù de Běijīng.
 是 他 坐 火车 去 的 北京
shì he taking train go to *de* Beijing
 ‘It was he who went to Beijing by train.’
- c. S/(DEM) COP AD/S V *de* NP

When we compare the formulae in (43b) and (44c), we can see that the English *it*-cleft differs from Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts in both the pre-copula and post-copula constituents.

In English *it*-clefts, *it* is in pre-copula position while Mandarin RC-focus clefts employ a nominal or an omissible demonstrative. The difference may be further analyzed in terms of two questions: (1) Can we replace *it* in the English *it*-cleft with a demonstrative like the omissible DEM in the Mandarin S-focus *VdeO* cleft?, and (2) Can *it* in the English *it*-cleft be some other nominal like S in the Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft?

As far as question (1) is concerned, Bolinger (1972), Ball (1977), Hedberg (1990), Calude (2007) show that not only *it* but demonstratives like *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, etc. may also stand in the English *it*-cleft. This kind of focus cleft is generally called *th*-cleft in the literature. Ball (1991) also shows that at least in Old English, examples of a focus cleft employing the demonstrative *þæt* ‘that’ were more common than examples of a focus cleft employing *hit* ‘it’. It has been also observed in the literature that demonstratives can appear in the *it* position of focus clefts in many other languages, such as Ambulas, Mokilese, Cahuilla, French (cf. Diessel 1999, 149–150), German, Dutch, and Russian (cf. Hedberg 1990, 86–88).

For question (2), our answer is “probably yes”. Bolinger (1972), Hedberg (1990) and Hedberg (2008) argue that apart from demonstratives like *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, etc., other nouns like *the stuff*, *they* and *we* may also appear in the *it* position of an English *it*-cleft, cf. (45a) and (45b):

- (45) a. What are you so upset about? – **The stuff**’s my money you’re spending!
 (Bolinger 1972; adopted from Hedberg 1990, 76)
- b. **They**’re just fanatics who are holding him. (Hedberg 2008, 14)

Apart from the above English examples, a Somali example for focus cleft cited by Harris and Campbell (1995) also seems to show that other referential nominals may occupy the initial position of a focus cleft in Somali.²⁰

- (46) anigu muuska baan cunayaa
 I banana focus marker eat
 ‘It is the banana that I am eating.’ (Harris & Campbell 1995, 159)

The English examples in (45) and the Somali example in (46) show that nominals other than third person pronouns (like English *it*) or demonstratives may also appear in the *it* position of the English *it*-cleft.

The observations we made above point to the following conclusion: the pre-copula difference between English *it*-cleft and Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts is not so large if looked at from a cross-linguistic perspective. We will leave aside the pre-copula difference and focus primarily on the post-copula difference, see (47).

- (47) Post-copula constituents
 a. English *it*-cleft: COP NP [_{RC} *that* clause]
 b. Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts: COP [_{RC} AD/S V *de*] NP

(47) indicates that the post-copula difference between English *it*-cleft and Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts lies in the relative position of NP and RC. Here we will introduce an effect commonly observed in the evolution of the focus clefts of SVO languages across the world, the **adjacency effect**. A cross-linguistic analysis of focus clefts seems to indicate that the focused constituents tend to occupy the position adjacent to the focus markers (originating from copulas), cf. (48):²¹

²⁰ Notice that some readers may interpret (46) as an example of an association-with-focus construction that we argued for in section 1.1. At least for the authors, it is an example of Somali focus cleft. Cf. Harris & Campbell (1995, 159–169) for evidence in favor of a focus cleft interpretation.

²¹ On this issue Harris and Campbell (1995) seem to be far more ambitious than us. The authors argue that their bi-clausal-to-focus process (which presupposes the adjacency effect) applies to languages of all word orders, including English (SVO order), Breton (claimed to have an VSO order by the authors), Japanese (SOV order), and others. Since we are examining the adjacency effect only, we tend to be more conservative. We seldom found counterexamples of the adjacency effect in SVO languages, but if one looks at SOV languages like Korean (SOV order, relative clause before head noun, cf. Jhang 1994) and Kanuri (SOV order, relative clause behind head noun, cf. Fiedler 2010), one is led to argue that it does not affect SOV languages as much as it does SVO languages.

(48) Kihung'an focus cleft (Harries-Delisle 1978, 443)

(kwe) kít ki a-swiim-in Kipes zono.
 (COP) chair that bought Kipes yesterday
 'It is a chair that Kipes bought yesterday.'

According to the adjacency effect, the focus marker *kwe* in (48) (also originating from a copula) focalizes its adjacent constituent *kít* 'a chair' but not any other constituent. This effect was first observed by Harries-Delisle (1978, 430), and has been commonly quoted in the literature (e.g., Heine & Reh 1984, 147–182; Harris & Campbell 1995, 151–168; Heine & Kuteva 2002, 95–96, 111–12). Paul and Whitman (2008) and Hole (2011, 1712) invoke this effect to discriminate focus clefts from other sentence types in Mandarin.²²

If the adjacency effect applies to the English *it*-cleft, one would expect the NP, the nominal constituent next to the copula (focus marker), to be a focused constituent (cf. Ball 1991 for a detailed discussion). Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts are different. Their relative clauses are placed before the head nouns (cf. the discussion of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft in section 3.1 and the discussion of the S-focus *VdeO* cleft in section 3.2). Thus, in Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts, an RC takes the position adjacent to the copula (focus marker) rather than the head noun.

Most of the time, the copula (focus marker) *shì* would just focus AD (or S) within the RC (*ADVde* or *SVde*). This is because AD (or S) within the RC always carries discriminating features. If we look at ((49) = (21a)), we will find that in the AD *VdeNP* structure (*cān dé de chán* 'the Buddhism that was obtained through meditating'), AD (*cān* 'meditating') is the only constituent that helps the relative clause AD *Vde* (*cān dé de* 'that was obtained through meditating') narrow down the scope of the head noun NP (*chán* 'Buddhism').

(49) Tiānxiàrén zǒng shì cān dé de chán.
 天下人 总是参得底禅

worldly people all *shì* meditating obtain *de* Buddhism

'As for all the worldly people, it is the Buddhism that was obtained through meditating.'

²² But cf. Cheng (2008) for arguments against applying the adjacency effect to Mandarin focus clefts. The author's counterexample is the O-focus *VdeO* cleft. We will discuss this issue in section 4.2.

We argue that this discriminating feature makes AD (or S) more vulnerable to focalization than any other constituents within the [RC + NP] structures of a Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft or S-focus *VdeO* cleft:

- (50) a. Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts: S/DEM [COP AD/SV] *de* NP
 b. English *it*-cleft: *it* [COP NP] *that* clause

If the above arguments are justified, we seem to be challenging a view commonly accepted in the literature: clefted constituents should be syntactically separated from the rest of the sentence in a focus cleft. Harris and Campbell (1995, 154) assume that “in a true cleft, the copula and focus cannot be intercalated with (presupposed content clause) *S'*”. The authors take this assumption as a basic principle in analyzing the agreement and case structures of Breton, East Cushitic, Japanese, French, and Mingrelian focus clefts (*op.cit.*, 155–164). Hole (2011, 1709) also assumes that “there is a syntactic partition between the clefted constituent and an open sentence (presupposed content clause of Harris and Campbell 1995)”. Yet, if we observe Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* clefts and S-focus *VdeO* clefts, we will find that the above statements should be amended: focused constituents may also be syntactically intercalated with the presupposed content clause.

4.2. Presupposition effect and formation of the O-focus *VdeO* cleft

In section 3.1 we explored the formation of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft. We argued that in the original bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP*2 construction, the copula/focus marker *shì* focalizes the adjacent nominal constituent AD, thus forming the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft. We took it for granted that the relative clause AD *Vde* is sensitive to focalization and avoided the discussion of another issue: what happens if the discriminating features of the relative clause AD *Vde* are suppressed by the context? Consider the following example in (51) first.

- (51) Zhè shì wǒ mǎi de gāngbǐ;
 这 是 我 买 的 钢 笔
 this shì I buy de pen
 bú shì wǒ mǎi de qiānbǐ.
 不 是 我 买 的 铅 笔
 NEG shì I buy de pencil
 ‘This is the pen that I bought; (it) is not the pencil that I bought.’

If we look at the copulative construction *zhè shì wǒ mǎi de gāngbǐ* ‘this is the pen that I bought’ out of context, the discriminating constituents (hence the focused constituent) may either be the relative clause (including the pronoun *wǒ* ‘I’ within the relative clause) or the head noun *gāngbǐ* ‘pen’. But when coordinated with a contrastive sentence *bú shì wǒ mǎi de qiānbǐ* ‘(it) is not the pencil that I bought’, which happens to have the same relative clause modifying the head noun, the relative clause loses its discriminating function and becomes presupposed information. Here, the head noun *gāngbǐ* ‘pen’ gains focalized status. We call this the **presupposition effect** (for similar arguments cf. Paul & Whitman 2008, 429; Shen 2008, 392).

In (21a) we discussed the bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction of mid-13th-century Mandarin, repeated here as (52):

- (52) *Tiānxiàrén zǒng shì cān dé de chán.*
 天下人 总 是 参 得 底 禅
 worldly people all *shì* meditating obtain *de* Buddhism
 ‘As for all the worldly people, it is the Buddhism that was obtained through meditating.’

Since the relative clause in Mandarin may be suppressed for contextual reasons, we are interested in what will become of the bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction with the relative clause AD *Vde* being suppressed. For lack of historical data, we have no way of reconstructing the context for the bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction with presupposed relative clause AD *Vde*. But we have found similar examples in Mandarin from the late 13th to the late 16th centuries, such as (53).

- (53) Bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese

Fāng xìndào xiāngsī shì dǎi zhēnghòu, hài dé
 方 信道 相思 是 歹 症候 害 得
 just believe lovesickness *shì* bad symptom fall(sick) get
lái bùmíng bùjiǔ, shì zuò de zhānlián.
 来 不明 不久 是 做 的 粘连
 come not knowing not long *shì* do *de* inseparable linkage

‘I just began to believe that lovesickness is a bad symptom. When you fall lovesick, you don’t feel it. It does not last long either. **It is an inseparable linkage that was done.**’
 (Zhang & Wang 1996, 3082; late 13th–late 16th century)

At first sight, (53) would suggest that the relative clause *Vde* (*zuò de* ‘that was done’) is the focused constituent like other examples of the bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì*AD *Vde*NP2 construction in Mandarin of the period. But verbs like *zuò* ‘do’ are pro-verbs, which, according to Matisoff (1991, 432) and Heine & Kuteva (2002, 119), are verb forms with little semantic content. We argue here that the head noun *zhānlián* ‘inseparable linkage’ is the focal constituent in this sentence. If the above arguments are justified, then one would expect a series of changes parallel with those of the AD-focus *Vde*O cleft and the S-focus *Vde*O cleft in Early Modern Chinese:

(54) Evolution of an O-focus *Vde*O cleft from a bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* *Vde*NP2 construction in Early Modern Chinese

- a. Qílíngé shàng shì huà de shèn gōnghóu?
 麒麟阁 上 是 画 的 甚 公侯
 Qilin Pavilion up *shì* draw (pictures) *de* what nobility
 ‘What nobility was it whose picture was drawn high up on the Qilin Pavilion?’
 (Zhang & Wang 1996, 1604; late 13th–to late 16th century)
- b. Shīfù, nǐ shuō de nǎlǐ huà?
 师傅 你 说 的 那里 话
 Master you say *de* where words
 ‘Master, **why do you say that?**’ (Wu 2007, 192; late 16th century)
- c. Nǐ shì wèn de wǒ.
 你 是 问 的 我
 you *shì* ask *de* me
 ‘It was me that you asked.’ (Pu 1998, 3182; early 18th century)

(54a–c) demonstrate a pathway for the formation of the O-focus *Vde*O cleft that is parallel with the formation of the AD-focus *Vde*O cleft and the S-focus *Vde*O cleft. The structure was first used to focalize WH-words in Mandarin in the 13th–16th centuries (54a). In late 16th-century Mandarin, the *Vde*O structure had evolved to omit *shì* (54b),²³ which led to the formation of the O-focus *Vde*O cleft. At the beginning of the 18th century, O began to evolve into nominal forms that may no longer be analyzed as the head noun of a relative clause (cf. *wǒ* ‘I’ in (54c)).

²³ One anonymous reviewer rightfully points out that the construction in (54b) may have evolved from a pseudo-cleft construction like the following:

The examples above demonstrate how the O-focus *VdeO* cleft evolved in Early Modern Chinese under the presupposition effect of the relative clause. Similarly to the formation of RC-focus *VdeO* clefts in section 4.1, we formulate the structure of the O-focus *VdeO* cleft in (55).

(55) Mandarin O-focus *VdeO* cleft

S COP V *de* NP

With the adjacency effect being cancelled by the presupposition effect of the relative clause, the copula *shì* focalizes a constituent not adjacent to it (O), forming the Mandarin O-focus *VdeO* cleft.

One may wonder what changes would happen to an English *it*-cleft if there was a presupposition effect active in this language as well. Riester (2009, 77–78) sets up various contexts to test the informational focus shift of an English sentence with a relative clause:

(56) Information focus shift of an English relative clause

The passengers who were saved were happy.

a. A plane had a crash landing.

b. A plane with 155 passengers on board had a crash landing.

a.' The passengers who were saved_F were happy.²⁴

b.' The passengers_F who were saved were happy.

(56) indicates that the informational focus in an English [head noun + RC] structure is not always on the head noun but rather can be on the relative clause, or else constituents of the relative clause may also be focalized (56a'). If we apply this shift of informational focus to the English *it*-cleft, it means that a special context may presuppose the NP of an *it*-cleft (57):

(i) Pseudo-cleft construction

Qí líng gé shàng huà de shì shèn gōng hóu?

麒麟阁 上 画 的是甚 公侯


Qilin Pavilion up draw (pictures) *de shì* what nobility

‘What nobility was it whose picture was drawn high up on the Qilin Pavilion?’

With the omission of *shì*, the pseudo-cleft construction in (i) may also evolve into (54b) construction. We claim that both (54a) and (i) may have contributed to the formation of (54b). But the pseudo-cleft construction in (i) does not contribute to the formation of (54c). Therefore, the evolutionary pathway of (54a), (54b), and (54c) is regarded as distinct.

²⁴ “F” in Riester (2009) stands for “Focus”.

(57) English *it*-cleft with NP being presupposed

- a. The leaders of the militant homophile movement in America generally have been young people. **It was they who fought back during a violent police raid on a Greenwich Village Bar in 1969, an incident from which many gays date the birth of the modern crusade for homosexual rights.** (Prince 1978, 898)
- b. *it* COP NP *that* clause
- 

In (57a) the context presupposes the reference of *they* in the *it*-cleft, thus cancelling the syntactic status of *they* as a focused constituent. With *they* losing its focused meaning, the *it*-cleft begins to employ the *that*-clause (i.e., *who fought back during a violent police raid on a Greenwich Village Bar in 1969*) to convey new information. We argue that (57a) is a typical example of an *it*-cleft employing a *that*-clause to convey new information when the assumed focused constituent (NP) is presupposed.

The reader may have noticed that sentences like (57a) essentially depend on the context. Ball (1994) notices that this kind of *it*-cleft may evolve to be independent of the context. She calls it an **informative-presupposition *it*-cleft**, cf. (58).

(58) English informative-presupposition *it*-cleft

- It is with deep regret and after long and searching thought that I hereby submit my resignation as Attorney General, to take effect upon the appointment and qualification of my successor. (Ball 1994, 603–604)

The existence of this RC-focalizing *it*-cleft is also discussed by Geluykens (1984, 38), who calls it **theme-focus cleft**, and Delin (1989), who randomly selects 50 English *it*-clefts and finds 38 to be informative-presupposition *it*-clefts (also cf. Declerck 1988; Hedberg 1990; Delin 1992).

If the above argumentations are correct, we may be dealing with a conventionalized *it*-cleft also constrained by a presupposition effect in English. The only difference is that Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts are basically RC-focal, thus, the presupposition effect produces a special focus cleft that is head-noun-focal; the English *it*-cleft is basically head-noun-focal, and thus the presupposition effect produces a special *it*-cleft that is RC-focal.

5. Specificity of O and its syntactic implications

This section discusses two issues concerning Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts: (1) the specificity of O and the formation of past time meaning, (2) the

negation restriction and TAM restrictions. As we have shown in section 4.2, Mandarin O-focus *VdeO* cleft is derived from Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* cleft, and so here we will neglect the discussion of Mandarin O-focus *VdeO* clefts, and only discuss Mandarin RC-focus *VdeO* clefts (including AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft).

5.1. Specificity of O and the formation of past time meaning

By specificity of O we mean that both the speaker and the hearer of a Mandarin *VdeO* focus cleft know the unique identity of O. Hole (2011, 1722) argues that the O position of a Mandarin *VdeO* focus cleft exhibits a “ban on explicitly marked indefiniteness”. We further argue that the O position of a Mandarin *VdeO* focus cleft exhibits specific reference because it prefers modifications that indicate specific reference, cf. (59b) and (60b).²⁵

(59) AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

a. Wǒ (shì) zài wǎngshàng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

我 (是) 在 网上 买 的 火车票

I shì on Internet buy de train ticket

‘It was on the Internet that I bought the train ticket.’

b. Wǒ (shì) zài wǎngshàng mǎi de zhèzhāng/*yìzhāng/

我 (是) 在 网上 买 的 这张/*一张/

I shì on Internet buy de this-CLASS/one-CLASS

*hěnguì de huǒchēpiào.

*很贵 的 火车票

very expensive ADJV train ticket

‘It was on the Internet that I bought this train ticket/*a train ticket/*a very expensive train ticket.’

(60) S-focus *VdeO* cleft

a. (Shì) wǒ mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

(是) 我 买 的 火车票

shì I buy de train ticket

‘It was I who bought the train ticket.’

²⁵ Notice that (59a) and (60a) (examples of *VdeO* focus clefts) are different from (9a) and (9b) (bi-clausal copulative constructions) because *shì* in (59a) and (60a) can be omitted. We argued in sections 3.1 and 3.2 that the possibility of omitting *shì* is a discriminating feature of the *VdeO* focus cleft.

- b. (Shì) wǒ mǎi de zhèzhāng/ *yìzhāng/
 (是) 我 买 的 这张/*一张/
shì I buy *de* this-CLASS/*one-CLASS
 *hěnguì de huǒchēpiào.
 *很贵 的 火车票
 very expensive ADJV train ticket
 ‘It was I who bought this train ticket/*a train ticket/*a very expensive train ticket.’

It is commonly accepted in the literature that Mandarin [DEM+CLASS] modification indicates specific reference while Mandarin [numeral+CLASS] modification or adjectival modification indicates non-specific reference. (59b) and (60b) show that the O position of a Mandarin *VdeO* focus cleft exhibits specific reference rather than non-specific reference.

We showed in sections 3.1 and 3.2 that Mandarin AD-focus *VdeO* and S-focus *VdeO* clefts originate from bi-clausal copulative constructions, and that O originates from the head noun NP2 of these constructions ((61a)/(61b)). If O is of specific reference, then the head noun NP2 of the original bi-clausal copulative constructions should be of specific reference, too.

- (61) a. S (*shì*) AD *VdeO* ← NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2*
 b. (*shì*) S *VdeO* ← DEM *shì* S *VdeNP2*

As in a bi-clausal copulative construction (e.g., NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* or DEM *shì* S *VdeNP2*), the head noun NP2 forms an [RC + head noun] relationship with the relative clause AD/S *Vde*, the following question needs to be answered: what kind of [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures are specific in reference? Let us look at two examples of [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures first (62).

The difference between (62a) and (62b) is due to the verbal phrases in the position of V: (62a) has a verbal phrase (*mǎi dào* ‘succeed in buying’) that affects NP2 (*huǒchēpiào* ‘train ticket’), while (62b) has a verbal phrase (*xiǎng mǎi* ‘want to buy’) that does not affect NP2 (*huǒchēpiào*, ‘train ticket’).²⁶

²⁶ Beavers (2011, 338) defines *affectedness* as follows: “ Ψ is a new state that obtains and maintains for some entity x due to the event” (for a similar definition cf. Dowty 1979, 140–144). Jackendoff (1990, 125–130) uses *What Z did to X is Y* to test the affectedness of X . We can also use this test to examine the affectedness of NP2 in S V NP2 events as in (i):

(62) [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures

- a. Zuótiān/ wǒ mǎi dào de huǒchēpiào shì zhèzhāng,
 昨天/ 我 买 到 的 火车票 是 这张
 yesterday/I buy get *de* train ticket *shì* this-CLASS
 *jīntiān/*tā mǎi dào de huǒchēpiào yě shì zhèzhāng.
 *今天/*他 买 到 的 火车票 也 是 这张
 today/he buy get *de* train ticket also *shì* this-CLASS
 ‘The train ticket that (someone) succeeded in buying yesterday/that I succeeded in buying was this one; the train ticket that *(someone) succeeded in buying today/*that he succeeded in buying was also this one.’
- b. Zuótiān/ wǒ xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào shì zhèzhāng,
 昨天/ 我 想 买 的 火车票 是 这张
 yesterday/ I want to buy *de* train ticket *shì* this-CLASS
 jīntiān/ tā xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào yě shì zhèzhāng.
 今天/ 他 想 买 的 火车票 也 是 这张
 today/ he want to buy *de* train ticket also *shì* this-CLASS
 ‘The train ticket that (someone) wanted to buy yesterday/that I wanted to buy was this one; the train ticket that (someone) wanted to buy today/that he wanted to buy was also this one.’

Because (62a) uses a verbal phrase (*mǎi dào* ‘succeed in buying’) that affects NP2 (*huǒchēpiào*, ‘train ticket’), its [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structure

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- (i) Wǒ mǎi dào/xiǎng mǎi huǒchēpiào.
 我 买 到/想 买 火车票
 I buy get/want to buy train ticket
 ‘I succeed in buying/want to buy the ticket.’
 ‘I succeed in buying/want to buy the ticket.’
- (ii) Wǒ duì huǒchēpiào suǒ zuò de shì shì mǎi dào/*xiǎng mǎi tā.
 我 对 火车票 所 做 的 事 是 买 到/*想 买 它
 I to train ticket what do *de* thing *shì* buy get/want buy it
 ‘What I did to the train ticket is succeeding in buying it/*wanting to buy it.’

The test in (ii) indicates that if an S V NP2 event contains *mǎi dào* ‘succeed in buying’ as V, then NP2 (*huǒchēpiào* ‘train ticket’) is affected by V; if the event contains *xiǎng mǎi* ‘want to buy’ as V, NP2 is not affected by V. Since the Mandarin [S *VdeNP2*] structure comes from a S V NP2 clause (see section 1.2), (ii) supports our argument that NP2 (*huǒchēpiào* ‘train ticket’) is affected by V in (62a) but it is not affected by V in (62b). The affectedness of NP2 in an [AD *VdeNP2*] structure may be argued for in a similar fashion.

(*zuótiān/wǒ mǎi dào de huǒchēpiào*) is specific in reference. The structure co-references with the post-copula *zhè zhāng* structure ('this-CLASS', which is supposed to have specific reference) and excludes other [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures (*jīntiān/tā mǎi dào de huǒchēpiào*) from co-referencing with it, thus the ungrammaticality of the second clause in (62a).

(62b) is different. It employs a verbal phrase (*xiǎng mǎi* 'want to buy') that does not affect NP2 (*huǒchēpiào* 'train ticket'). Its [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structure (*zuótiān/wǒ xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào*) is non-specific in reference and may not co-reference with the post post-copula *zhè zhāng* structure. The structure permits other [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures (*jīntiān/tā xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào*) to co-reference with post-copula *zhè zhāng*, hence the grammaticality of the second clause in (62b).

Both [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] in (62a) and [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] in (62b) may form bi-clausal copulative constructions, cf. (63a) and (63b):

(63) a. Bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *Vde*NP2 construction

Wǒ shì zuótiān mǎi dào/xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

我 是 昨天 买 到/想 买 的 火车票

I shì yesterday buy get/want to buy de train ticket

'As for me, it is the train ticket that someone succeeded in buying/wanted to buy yesterday.'

b. Bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *Vde*NP2 construction

Zhè shì wǒ mǎi dào/xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

这 是 我 买 到/想 买 的 火车票

this shì I buy get/want to buy de train ticket

'This is the train ticket that I succeeded in buying/wanted to buy.'

But only examples of bi-clausal copulative constructions that adopt (62a) structures may evolve into *VdeO* focus clefts (cf. (64a) and (64b)); examples of bi-clausal copulative constructions that adopt (62b) structures may not evolve into *VdeO* focus clefts (also cf. (64a) and (64b)).

(64) a. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Wǒ (shì) zuótiān mǎi dào/*xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

我 (是) 昨天 买 到/*想 买 的 火车票

I shì yesterday buy get/want to buy de train ticket

'It was yesterday that I succeeded in buying/*wanted to buy the train ticket.'

b. S-focus *VdeO* cleft

(Shì) wǒ mǎi dào/*xiǎng mǎi de huǒchēpiào.

(是) 我 买 到/*想 买 的 火车票

Shì I buy get/want to buy *de* train ticket

'It was I who succeeded in buying/*wanted to buy the train ticket.'

Based on the above, we can conclude that in Mandarin bi-clausal copulative constructions (i.e., bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* and bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *VdeNP2*) that may evolve into *VdeO* focus clefts, the post-copula head noun (NP2) should be affected by the verb of the subordinating relative clause (V).

If an action V has affected an NP, then V should have existed before NP. If the NP uniquely exists in the present world, like NP2 in the original bi-clausal copulative constructions, then V should be a completed action existing in the past time. This explains why V in Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts should have past time meaning. This is compatible with our explanations of past time meaning in *VOde* focus clefts (cf. section 2.1) because they all come from the completed action of the VO structures within these constructions.

Since the past time meaning of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts comes from the VO structures and has nothing to do with *de*, we argue that *de* is still a relativizer. Our historical argumentations are in accordance with Hole (2011) (who claims *de* to be a complementizer), but are against Simpson & Wu (2002) (in which *de* is claimed to be T⁰) and Paul & Whitman (2008) (where *de* is *de_T*).

5.2. The negation restriction and TAM restrictions

In the previous section we discussed the past time meaning of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts, and we also pointed out that Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts originate from bi-clausal copulative constructions (i.e., bi-clausal copulative NP1 *shì* AD *VdeNP2* and bi-clausal copulative DEM *shì* S *VdeNP2*) and that the [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures in the original bi-clausal copulative constructions should be specific in reference.

[AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures will not be specific in reference when V takes negation forms, modality forms, or *guò*-form (the “experiential aspect form” in Paul & Whitman 2008, 430 and Hole 2011, 1713) because they make the second clauses of (65a) and (65b) grammatical.²⁷

- (65) a. [AD *Vde* + NP2] structures with V in negation forms, modality forms, and *guò*-form

Zuótiān bù mǎi/méi mǎi/néng mǎi/yìnggāi mǎi/
 昨天 不 买/没 买/能 买/应该 买/
 yesterday NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/should buy/

mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào shì zhèzhāng,
 买 过 的 火车票 是 这张

buy EXP *de* train ticket *shì* this-CLASS

jīntiān bù mǎi/méi mǎi/néng mǎi/yìnggāi mǎi/
 今天 不 买/没 买/能 买/应该 买/

today NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/should buy/

mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào yě shì zhèzhāng.
 买 过 的 火车票 也 是 这张

buy EXP *de* train ticket also *shì* this-CLASS

‘The train ticket that someone would not buy/did not buy/could buy/should have bought/tried to buy yesterday was this one; the ticket that someone would not buy/did not buy/could buy/should have bought/tried to buy today was also this one.’

²⁷ Some readers may doubt our linguistic intuition of the [AD/S *Vde*NP2] structures with V taking *guò*-form. We would like to argue that a V would undoubtedly indicate past time action when it takes *guò*-form. But V in *guò*-form does not affect NP2:

- (i) Wǒ zuótiān mǎi guò zhèzhāng huǒchēpiào, dàn méi mǎi zháo.
 我 昨天 买 过 这张 火车票 但 没 买 着
 I yesterday buy EXP this-CLASS train ticket buy NEG but get

‘I tried to buy this train ticket yesterday, but I did not succeed.’

Since V in *guò*-form (*mǎi guò* ‘tried to buy’) does not affect NP2 (*huǒchēpiào* ‘train ticket’), it has no way of preventing other Vs from interacting with NP2, hence the grammaticality of the second clauses that adopt V in the *guò*-forms in (65a–b).

- b. [S *Vde* + NP2] structures with V in negation forms, modality forms, and *guò*-form

Wǒ bù mǎi/méi mǎi/néng mǎi/yìnggāi mǎi/

我 不 买/没 买/能 买/应该 买/

I NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/should buy/

mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào shì zhèzhāng,

买 过 的 火车票 是 这张

buy EXP *de* train ticket *shì* this-CLASS

tā bù mǎi/méi mǎi/néng mǎi/yìnggāi mǎi/

他 不 买/没 买/能 买/应该 买/

he NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/should buy/

mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào yě shì zhèzhāng.

买 过 的 火车票 也 是 这张

buy EXP *de* train ticket also *shì* this-CLASS

‘The train ticket that I would not buy/did not buy/could buy/should have bought/tried to buy was this one; the ticket that I would not buy/did not buy/could buy/should have bought/tried to buy was also this one.’

When V takes negation forms, modality forms, or *guò*-form in bi-clausal copulative constructions, the constructions did not evolve into *VdeO* focus clefts, cf. (66a) and (66b):

- (66) a. AD-focus *VdeO* cleft

Wǒ (shì) zuótiān *bù mǎi/*méi mǎi/*néng mǎi/

我 (是) 昨天 *不 买/*没 买/*能 买/

I *shì* yesterday NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/

*yìnggāi mǎi/*mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào.

*应该 买/*买 过 的 火车票

should buy/buy EXP *de* train ticket

‘It was yesterday that I *would not buy/*did not buy/*could buy/*should have bought/*tried to buy the ticket.’

b. S-focus *VdeO* cleft

(Shì) wǒ *bù mǎi/*méi mǎi/*néng mǎi/

(是) 我 *不 买/*没 买/*能 买/

(Shì) I NEG buy/NEG buy/can buy/

*yìnggāi mǎi/*mǎi guò de huǒchēpiào.

*应该 买/*买 过 的 火车票

should buy/buy EXP de train ticket

‘It was I who *would not buy/ *did not buy/ *could buy/ *should have bought/
*tried to buy the ticket.’

We have not yet discussed [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures with *V* assuming *le*-form, as in (67).

(67) [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures with *V* in *le*-form

?zuótiān/?wǒ mǎi le de huǒchēpiào

?昨天/?我 买 了 的 火车票

yesterday/I buy PERF de train ticket

‘?the train ticket that (someone) bought yesterday/ that I have bought’

We tested native speakers of Mandarin on the grammaticality of [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures like (67). They found them to be very unnatural and could not associate an intended meaning to it. Since [AD/S *Vde* + NP2] structures like (67) may not exist in Mandarin, they cannot form bi-clausal copulative constructions, let alone evolve into *VdeO* focus clefts. This explains – we argue – why *V* of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts do not take *le*-form.

6. Conclusions

In this paper we have argued that Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts, including AD-focus *VdeO* cleft and S-focus *VdeO* cleft, originate from bi-clausal copulative constructions in Early Modern Chinese via the interaction between the particular word order of Mandarin (SVO order, but the relative clause before the head noun) and the adjacency effect commonly observed in focus clefts of SVO languages. The O-focus *VdeO* cleft is a derivation of the AD-focus *VdeO* cleft with the special presupposition effect of the relative clause in a bi-clausal copulative construction. Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts usually exhibit past time meaning, negation restriction, and TAM restric-

tions. They all come from the requirement that *O* in Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts should be specific in reference.

Our discussion was mainly confined to *VdeO* clefts with little mention of *VOde* clefts in Mandarin. According to Long (2007) and Long & Xiao (2009; 2011), *VOde* sentences like (3a) and (4a) (as spoken in Taiwan Mandarin) are also focus clefts originating from bi-clausal copulative constructions. We are confident that our conclusions may be easily extended to *VOde* focus clefts. Since the present paper specifically deals with the formation of Mandarin *VdeO* focus clefts, we will save this issue for further research.

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