Reflections on the Morphological Nature of Mandarin Functional Homophones –

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Introduction

There are several homophonic grammatical morphemes in Mandarin sharing the form –de [da] represented by the characters 的, 底, 地 and 得 respectively. These homophones can be quite easily divided into two distinct groups: one group including those written as 的, 底, 地, and the other consisting of those written as 得. The present study deals only with the former. For the sake of simplicity, we can call them ‘phonological morphemes’ in analogy to the phonological word, putting aside the purely theoretical question whether they

1 Unless otherwise specified, in the present article the term ‘Mandarin’ shall be used in the sense of ‘Modern Standard Mandarin’ (MSM) as a generic term including both the ‘common speech’ (pǔtonghuà 普通話), the official language of the PRC, and the ‘national language’ (guóyǔ 國語), the official language of the ROC; most examples in this study are taken from PRC sources, though. I use the adjective ‘Chinese’ only when speaking about the country or the people but I refrain from using it (unless in quotations) when referring to the languages spoken by ethnic Chinese (Hánzú 漢族) and their predecessors because of the ambiguity of the term and because I do not regard ‘Chinese’ as a single language but rather a group of related languages. Therefore I use the term ‘Sinitic’ to designate the whole group and ‘Mandarin’ (in a broader sense) to refer to one language (or dialect continuum) of this group.

2 This character was used to represent –de in the 1920s and 1930s (and it had a similar function in as early as the 9th century, i.e. in the period of Late Middle Sinitic) but it is not commonly used this way anymore.

are homonyms or constitute a polyseme instead. The phonological morpheme -de represented by the character 的 is, regardless of the language register or style, by far the most frequent one in Mandarin. It has been of increased interest to scholars in the field of Sinitic linguistics since the 1950s when first specialized articles on this subject appeared in China. In the period from the 1960s up to the early 1990s, the many functions of -de were described by the well-known linguist Zhu Déxi 朱德熙 (1920–1992). In recent years the research continues predominantly in the generative framework and it is no more limited to the pages of China’s domestic linguistic journals.

Although a considerable amount of literature has been published on -de with more than 300 articles in China alone, far too little attention has been paid to its morphological nature. Based on Zhu Déxi’s research, this study argues that all three morphemes represented by -de, i.e. -de₁, -de₂, and -de₃, are affixes with morphological, not syntactic functions. That is to say they are used to mark neither phrases nor clauses, but words.

The present paper has been divided into three parts. The first part summarizes the language structures in which -de occurs, the second part gives a brief overview of the linguistic discourse concerning -de while the third part deals with the morphological nature of -de and of the so-called ‘-de structures’.

Abbreviations and Symbols

The following abbreviations are used in the present study: A—attributive, ABS—absolutive, ACC—accusative, ACT—active, Adj—adjective, AdjNonP—non-predicative adjective, Adv—adverb, AdvCompSup—adverb expressing the comparative or superlative degree,AdvDeg—adverb of degree, AM—adverbal modifier, Cla—classifier, F—feminine, FE—fixed expression, IND—indicative, INF—infinitive, LOC—locative, M—masculine, MOD—modality, N—noun, NLoc—noun of locality, NEG—


6 I divide what is usually labelled as ‘classifiers’ or ‘measure words’ liàngcí 箇詞 in Sinitic grammar into two categories, ‘classifiers’ (e.g. běn 本, zhāng 張, tiào 條 etc.) and ‘quantifiers’ (e.g. jīn 斤, mǐ 米, bēi 杯 etc.).

Structural patterns are given in curly brackets {x} with upper-case letters denoting roots and lower-case letters denoting affixes. Additional distinctions are provided in the form of lower indices after the curly brackets. Syntactic functions of X–de are given in square brackets [x] and parts of speech of the heads in attributive constructions are in angle brackets <x>. The hyphen (–) is used to connect an affix with its root, while the equals sign (=) connects a clitic with its host (these symbols are applied only in language examples). The so-called 'erization' (ěrhuà 兒化), which often remains unmarked in original Mandarin texts outside textbooks, is marked by a lower-index simplified character (ɜ). The upper-index letter U marks ungrammatical structures, the upper-index letter I marks children's speech and the upper-index letter R marks structures that have little or no currency in the spoken language (although they may be common in the written vernacular báihuà 白話文) and can be considered somewhat artificial, due to either Classical Sinitic (wényán 文言文) or Western influence.

1 Classification of X–de

I use Zhū Déxi’s formula ‘X–de’ for all kinds of language structures containing a phonological morpheme –de. All these constructions (known as ‘de zi jiéguò “的”字結構 “–de structures’ in Mandarin) can be classified according to two basic criteria: (a) syntactic function and (b) internal composition.

When classifying according to the syntactic function, the main dividing line lies between modifying and non-modifying functions. Modifying functions include the attributive and the adverbial modifier while non-modifying functions include the subject, the predicate and the object. The complement (biyù 補語), although logically having a modifying function, should be classified separately because its relation to the head is expressed anaphorically in contrast to the other modifiers.

8 I mean the so-called ‘complement of degree’ (chēngdù biyù 程度補語). I do not analyse most of other traditional ‘complements’ such as the ‘resultative complement’ (jiéguò biyù 結果補語), the ‘directional complement’ (qùxiàng biyù 趨向補語) or the ‘potential complement’ (kěnéng biyù 可能補語) as complements but rather as integral parts of the verb.
The classification according to the composition of the structure can be based primarily on the nature of X and in attributive constructions also on the part-of-speech membership of the head. In this way, constructions with adjectival, adverbial, nominal (including pronouns and numerals), onomatopoetic, verbal and phrasal modifiers that can modify nouns, pronouns, numerals, adjectives and verbs can be distinguished.

I have first divided all X–de on the basis of the nature (part of speech) of X into six main categories. Most categories have been further subdivided according to more subtle inner differences. Examples within each (sub)category are arranged according to the syntactic functions of X–de and attributives also according to the part of speech of the modified.

Sources of Mandarin examples: the language of everyday conversation, Chinese internet, data from the Center for Chinese Linguistics Corpus (these are marked as ‘CCL’), examples often used in various studies on –de, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese by Yuen Ren Chao and Collected Works of Wáng Shuò. All examples have been verified by a native speaker of Mandarin.

1.1 Adjectives

1.1.1 Base Forms

1.1.1.2 Adj [AB]₁: [A] <N> gānjīng-de yīfù 乾淨的衣服 'clean clothes', <Pro> gānjīng-de tā 乾淨的她 'the one who is clean', <Num/ProDemCla> gānjīng-de nèitiāo 乾淨的那條 'that clean one', <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] gānjīng-de zāi zhèr 乾淨的在這 'the clean one is here', wǒ yāo gānjīng-de 我要乾淨的 'I want the clean one', [P] zhèige pán-zì shì gānjīng-de 這個盤子是乾淨的 'this plate is clean'.

1.1.1.3 Adj [AB]₂: [A] <N> dàdān-de rén 大膽的人 'bold people', <Pro> ̀dàdān-de nǐ 大膽的你 'bold you', <Num/ProDemCla> dàdān-de nàrèi 大膽的那位 'that bold one', <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] dàdān-de xiànggùn 大膽地想 'to think boldly' [C] o, [S/O] dàdān-de yè bùbàō 大膽的也不少 'there are quite a few bold ones', wǒ xiǎoyào dàdān-de 我需要大膽的 'I need bold ones', [P] zhèige rén shì dàdān-de 這個人是大膽的 'this person is enthusiastic'.

1.1.1.4 Adj [A, AB]₃: [A] <N> fāng-de zhùō-zì 方的桌子 'a square table', gōngtóng-de liyì 共同的利益 'common interest', <Pro> èmes yuánlái-de wǒ 原來的我 'original me', <Num/ProDemCla> yuánlái-de nèizhāng 圓的那張 'that round one', gōngtóng-de yǐtiāo 共同的一條 'the one in common', yuánlái-de zhuīzhāng 圓的這張 'this original one', <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] fāng-de bāō 方的 'the square one is better', gōngtóng-de bāō 共同的好 'the common one is better', wǒ yāo fāng-de 我要方的 'I want a square one', wǒ yāo yuánlái-de 我要原來的 'I want the original one', [P] zhúīzhāng zhùō-zì shì fāng-de 這張桌子是方的 'this table is square', liyì shì gōngtóng-de 利益是共同的 'CLC the interest is common', jǐjiù shì yuánlái-de 家具是原來的 'the furniture is original'.

1.1.1.5 Adv₁₃: [A] <N> gěnbāō-de rén 更好的人 'a better man', zhuībāō-de dōngxi 最好的東西 'the best thing', <Pro> o, <Num/ProDemCla> o, <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] gěnbāō-de chūlì 更好地處理 'deal with (something) better', [C] o, [S/O] gěnbāō-de zāi zhèr 更好的在這 'the better one is here', wǒ yāo zhuībāō-de 我要最好的 'I want the best one', [P] zhěnghóng (shì) zhuībāō-de 這種 (是) 最好的 'this kind is the best'.

13 The majority of adjectives of this category cannot take the suffix -de in predicative position: the native speaker would only say e.g. zhe bái zì běn dādān 這孩子很大膽 (or even better zhe bái zì dǐn zì dā 這孩子膽子大) but not zhe bái zì (shì) dādān-de 這孩子（是）大膽的 'the child is bold' etc.

14 Cf. Waltraud Paul, ‘Adjectives in Mandarin Chinese’, in Adjectives: Formal Analyses in Syntax and Semantics, ed. by Patricia Cabredo Hofer and Ora Matushansky (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010), 118–119. My examples invalidate Paul's argument that non-intersective adjectives in Mandarin, e.g. gōngtóng 共同 'common' or yuánlái 原來 'original', are completely excluded from the predicative function, irrespective of shì...de (118).
1.1.2 Complex Forms

1.1.2.1 Adj [AA]: [A] <N> lǜlì-de cǎo 綠綠的草 ‘green grass’, bāo bāo-de dōngxi 好好的東西 ‘good things’ <Pro> 8bāo bāo-de tā 僂儂的他 ‘stupid he’, bāo bāo-de nǐ 好好的你 ‘good you’ <Num/ProDemCla> bāo bāo-de yīge 好好的一個 ‘a good one’, bāo bāo-de zhèzì 好好的這支 ‘this good one’ <Adj> 0, <V> 0, [AM] bāo bāo-de kǎnzhe 僂儂地看着 ‘to watch stupidly’, bāo bāo-de xuéxi 好好的學習 ‘to study well’, [C] yàng-de féifēi-de 養得肥肥的 ‘to fatten up’, [S/O] bāi bāi-de bāo 白白的你 ‘the white one is better’, wǒ yào dàdà-de 我要大大的 ‘I want a big one’, [P] zhèbāng zhī (shì) bāi bāi-de 這個紙（是）的 ‘this sheet of paper is white’, zhè dōngxī (shì) bāo bāo-de 這東西（是）的好好的 ‘this thing is good’.

1.1.2.2 Adj [AABB, A-li-AB]: [A] <N> gāng ào xīngxìng-de rén 高高興興的人 ‘happy people’, bù-lì-bùtú-de jiàosbōu 糊裡糊塗的教授 ‘a muddleheaded professor’ <Pro> 9gāng ào xīngxìng-de wǒ 高高興興的我 ‘happy I’, bù-lì-bùtú-de tā 糊裡糊塗的他 ‘muddleheaded he’, <Num/ProDemCla> 0, <Adj> 0, <V> 0, [AM] gāng ào xīngxìng-de wǎnér 高高興興地玩兒 ‘to play joyfully’, bù-lì-bùtú-de bān rì-zi 糊裡糊塗地混日子 ‘to muddle along’, [C] wǎnér-de gāng ào xīngxìng-de wǎnér 高高興興地玩兒 ‘to play joyfully’, gāo-de bù-lì-bùtú-de 搞得糊裡糊塗的 ‘to make a muddle’ [S/O] gāng ào xīngxìng-de duō bāo 高高興興的多好 ‘how good it is to be happy!’, wǒ bāo bāo-de bù-lì-bùtú-de 我不要糊裡糊塗的 ‘I don’t want muddleheaded ones’, [P] zhè xiǎobāi (shì) gāng ào xīngxìng-de 這小孩（是）高高興興的 ‘this child is happy’, tā zhēngtiān (shì) bù-lì-bùtú-de 他整天（是）糊裡糊塗的 ‘he is confused all day long’ (NB: the variant without shì is considered better by the native speaker).

1.1.2.3 Adj [A-bb, A-bcd, AB-cc]: [A] <N> páng bā bā bāi-de xiōngmāo 胖乎乎的熊貓 ‘fat pandas’, zāng le bāi-de lǐn dān 脾氣的熊貓 ‘dirty panda’, kē lián xī xi-de yāng zī 可憐兮兮的樣子 ‘a pitiful appearance’, <Pro> 9pāng bā bā bāi-de wǒ 胖乎乎的我 ‘fat me’, zāng le bāi-de tā 脾氣的他 ‘dirty he’, kē lián xī xi-de nǐ 可憐兮兮的你 ‘poor you’, <Num/ProDemCla> páng bā bā bāi-de yīzì 胖乎乎的一只 ‘a fat one’, zāng le bāi-de bāi bāi bāi 脾氣的這條 ‘dirty this one’, kē lián xī xi-de nà zuì 可憐兮兮的那位 ‘pitiful that one’, <Adj> 0, <V> 0, [AM] mān yǒu yōu-de zuì 慢悠悠地睡 ‘to walk unhurriedly’, kē lián xī xi-de fán yī de wǒ 可憐兮兮地看着我 ‘looking at me pitifully’, [C] zōng-de mān yǒu yōu-de 走得悠悠的 ‘to walk unhurriedly’, nòng de zāng le bāi-de nòng de 走得脾氣的 ‘to make dirty’, xiāng de kē lián xī xi-de 得脾氣的 ‘to seem pitiful’, [S/O] páng bā bā bāi-de bāokān 胖乎乎的好看 ‘a fat one is nicer’, bū yào zāng le bāi-de 不要脾氣的 ‘I don’t want a dirty one’, [P] wǔ lī (shì) bēi bā bā bāi-de 屋裡（是）黑乎乎的 ‘it is dark in the room’ (NB: the variant without shì is considered better by the native speaker).
speaker), zhèixie yífù (šì) zàng-lebāi̇-de 這些衣服（是）髒了吧唧的 ‘these
clothes are dirty’, zhè hài-zi (šì) kēliăn-xīxi̇-de 這個孩子（是）可憐兮兮的 ‘this
child is pitiable’ (NB: the variant without šì is considered better by the
native speaker).

1.1.2.4 Adj [AB]N/Adv: [A] <N> bīngliá̇ng-de shui 陰涼的水 ‘ice-cold water’,
<Pro> bīngliá̇ng-de tā 冰涼的他 ‘ice-cold she’, <Num/ProDemCla> bīngliá̇ng-de
zheīge 冰涼的這個 ‘ice-cold this one’, <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O]
bīngliá̇ng-de bāo 冰涼的好 ‘the ice-cold one is better’, wò yāo bīngliá̇ng-de 我要冰
涼的 ‘I want an ice-cold one’, [P] tā-de shuò (šì) bīngliá̇ng-de 他的手（是）冰涼
的 ‘his hands are ice-cold’.

1.1.2.5 AdvDem-Adv: [A] <N> bēnhào-de rén 很好的人 ‘a very good man’,
féichángpiányi̇-de dōngxì 非常便宜的東西 ‘extremely cheap things’, <Pro>
tíngbăowán-de tā 挺好玩的他 ‘quite funny he’, <Num/ProDemCla>
féichángbào-de yīgě 非常好的一個 ‘an extremely good one’, <Adj> o, <V> o,
[AM] bēnhào-de wáncbíng rēnwù 很好地完成任務 ‘to accomplish the task (very)
well’, féichángpiányi̇-de màidiào 非常便宜地賣掉 ‘to sell off extremely cheaply’,
[C] mài-de bēnpìányi̇-de 賣得很便宜的 ‘to sell cheaply’, jiěshuo-de féichángbào-de
解釋得非常好的 ‘to explain extremely well’, [S/O] běnpìányi̇-de bābāo 很便宜的
不好 ‘very cheap ones are not good’, wò yāo běnpìányi̇-de 我要很便宜的 ‘I want a
very cheap one’, [P] xiōngmāo (šì) tíngbăowán-de 熊貓（是一個）挺好玩的
的 ‘pandas are quite funny’.

1.2 Adverbs

1.2.1 Adv [AB]: [A] <N> o, <Pro> o, <Num/ProDemCla> o, <Adj> o, <V> o,
o.

1.3 Nominals

1.3.1 N/Pro: [A] <N> péngyōu-de chē 友的車 ‘a friend’s car’, wò-de shū 我
的書 ‘my book’, <Pro> wéitā̇-de wò 未來的我 ‘me in the future’, <Num/
ProDemCla> wò-de zhēibèn 我的這本 ‘this, (book, magazine etc.) of mine’, <Adj>
Míngxuě-de qióngdà 美國的強大 ‘the USA’s (being) strong’, wò-de qióng 我的窮
‘my (being) poor’, i̇ <V> Hányu̇-de xuéxí 漢語的學習 ‘the learning of the

15 Wò-de qióng shì rénrén zhīdào-de. 我的窮是人人知道的 ‘My (being) poor is
what everyone knows.’ (Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 292).
Chinese language, ṭā-de bù-dōng 他的不懂 ‘his not understanding’, ṭā-de shuōbùwàng 他的說謊 ‘his lying’,16 ṭā-de bā-bà-de shì jiù-de 爸爸的是舊的 ‘Daddy’s one is old’, tāmén bā-yào nǐ-de 他們不要你的 ‘they don’t want yours/you’,18 [P] zhebǐang chē shì péngyou-de 這輛車是朋友的 ‘this car is (my) friend’s’, nàbēn shù shì wò-de 那本書是我的 ‘that book is mine’.


1.3.3 NumQua: [A] <N> liàngbāng-de ròu 兩磅的肉 ‘two pounds of meat’,22 yīdié-de shuǐ 一地的水 ‘a floorful of water’ <Pro> bǔsīu-de wǒ 十歲的我 ‘ten-year-old me’, <Num/ProDemCla> sānjiùn-de zhēngzi 三斤的這個 ‘this three-jin one’, <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] liàngmǐ-de tài-cháng-la 兩米的太長啦 ‘the two-metre one is too long’, wǒ yào yìtiān-de 我要一天的 ‘I want a daily one’, [P] zhè shí wùmǐ-de 這是五米的 ‘this is a five-metre one’.

16 Ni xin tā-de bù-dōng! 你信他的不懂！ ‘Don’t you believe his not understanding (you)!’ (Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 292).
17 Tā-de shuōbùwàng shì ge xīquàn. 他的說謊是個習慣。 ‘His lying is a habit.’ (Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 292).
18 As –de may refer to either the object or the verb here, this example is ambiguous and can be also included under 1.5.3.1 below.
19 I have separated the nominals of locality for the sake of comparative studies because some of these nominals behave differently in certain Sinitic languages, see Wū Yánjī 伍云姬, A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of the Grammar of the Chinese Xiang Dialects (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), 288.
20 Wáng Shù wénjí, 4: 1.
21 Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 290.
22 Ibid., 290.
1.4 Onomatopoeia


1.5 Verbs

1.5.1 Verbs without Expressed Object

1.5.1.1 V: [A] <N> kàn–de rén 看的人 ‘watching/watched people’, zōu–le–de rén 走了的人 ‘people who have left', zōu–guó–de lù 走過的路 ‘a path that had been walked (before)', <Pro> hǎo bāo wǒ wèixiāo–de [...] tā 朝我微笑的〔…〕她 ‘she, who was smiling at me’,\(^{25}\) <Num/ProDenCla> o, <Adj> o, <V> o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] shōu–de jiū shì tā 說的就是他 ‘it is he who is spoken about’, wǒ méiyǒu kàn–de 我沒有看到 ‘I haven’t got anything to read’, [P] shū shì kàn–de 書是看的 ‘books are for reading', wǒ (shì) cóng Běijīng lái–de 我（是）從北京來的

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24 Zhū Déxi states in 「Shuō–de」(1:4): «Monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic onomatopoeia can only serve as adverbial modifiers and cannot serve as predicates, complements and attributes.» As seen from these examples this is not entirely true as the aforementioned onomatopoeia can function as attributes of nouns, although they are rather limited in this usage because they mostly modify nouns with the meaning of various kinds of sounds.
25 Wáng Shuò wénjí, 4: 249.
1.5.1.2 S (M) V: [A] Tā (xiǎnzài) kàn–de rén 他（現在）看的人 ‘the people he is looking at (now)’, [Pro] o, [Num/ProDemCla] o, [Adj] o, [V] o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] wǒ (xiǎnzài) kàn–de shì yìběn chǎngqùn xiǎoshūō 我（現在）看的是 一本長篇小說 ‘what I am reading (now) is a novel’, yǒu nǐ kàn–de 有你看的 ‘there are plenty for you to read’, [P] zhèbèn shū shì wǒ (xiǎnzài) kàn–de 這本書 是我（現在）看的 ‘this book is what I am reading (now)’.


1.5.2 Verbs with an Incorporated Object


1.5.2.3 S (M) VOA: [A] <N> wǒ (gāngcái) chīfàn–de pān–zi 我（剛才）吃飯的 盤子 ‘the plate I have (just) eaten from’, [Pro] o, [Num/ProDem + Cla] o, [Adj] o, [V] o, [AM] o, [C] o, [S/O] wǒ (gāngcái) chīfàn–de zài nà 我（剛才） 吃飯的在那 ‘the one I have (just) eaten from is over there’, [P] o.

1.5 Verb-Object Constructions

1.5.3 V-O: [A] <N> cíngbì jiào yì yì yán de míng zuò de rén 人们工作在教育, yán jì yì yán de mù dì 研究语言的目的, yán jì yì yán de nà wèi 研究语言的那位 ‘staff who work in education’, yán jì yì yán de mù dì ‘the purpose of studying language’, yán jì yì yán de wò 我‘the purpose why people studied language (in the past)’, wò (shí) zuò dāng xiàng 作者 ‘people (in the past)’. 

1.5.3.1 V-O: [A/N] cóng shì jiào yìng zuò de rén 人们工作在教育, wǒ (shí) zuò dāng xiàng 我‘the purpose why people studied language (in the past)’, wò (shí) zuò dāng xiàng ‘the purpose why people studied language (in the past)’. 

1.6 Fixed Expressions

1.6.1 FE: [A] <N> 0, <Pro> 0, <Num/Pro Dem> 0, <Adj> 0, <V> 0, <AM> 0, <C> 0, <S/O> 0, <P> 0. yi guì yì yi guì de niàn ‘to read syllable by syllable’, ni běi shí wǒ suǒ jí ‘don’t make such a fuss’.

1.6.2 FE: [A] <N> méi kū yǎn xiào de yáng zǐ 眉开眼笑的音子, méi kū yǎn xiào de ná wèi 眉开眼笑的那位 ‘the person who is beaming with joy’, méi kū yǎn xiào de xiàng 眉开眼笑的音子 (CCL) ‘to speak joyfully’, méi kū yǎn xiào de shuò 眉开眼笑地 (CCL) ‘don’t make such a fuss’.

2 Overview of Earlier Research

2.1 Earliest Studies

As already has been mentioned in the Introduction, first specialized articles on -de were published in the 1950s. It does not mean that no one had touched upon this issue before, but all the previous study was done within more general treatises on grammar. First grammatical descriptions of -de can be found in the earliest Mandarin grammars authored by European missionaries and early sinologists. In these works, -de is usually referred to as a ‘particle’ (Spanish la particula, French la particule). The Spanish Dominican Francisco Varo (1627–1687) in his work Arte de la Lengua Mandarina (1703, completed in 1682), which is considered to be the earliest published grammar
of any form of Chinese,” had already mentioned various functions of ‘the postposed particle tîĕ’ (artícula tīĕ pospuesta). Varo in his description relied heavily on the grammatical categories inherited from the Greco-Roman tradition. So did other early works dealing with –de in Mandarin including Notitia linguae sinicæ (1831, completed in 1728) by the French Jesuit Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736), two works by British Protestant missionaries, namely Elements of Chinese Grammar (1814) by Joshua Marshman (1768–1837) and A Grammar of the Chinese Language (1815) by Robert Morrison (1782–1834), Éléemens de la grammaire chinoise (1822) by the French sinologist Jean Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832) and finally Anfanggründe der chinesischen Grammatik mit Übungsstücken (1883) by the well-known German sinologist and general linguist Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893). In spite of its age and methodological inadequacies, I consider Varo’s treatment of –de as one of the most detailed among these early works. Also Marshman’s description of –de is of some interest: although it is rather sketchy, the author’s remarks appear to be thought-provoking even today.


27 Its probable phonetic value is [ti😊]; the ‘Mandarin’ described by Váro is a Nanking-based koine, not Peking Mandarin. See Francisco Varo’s Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703), xiv–xv.


2.2 The 20th Century

Since the first half of the 20th century, the Chinese linguistic community has opened discourses on both diachronic and synchronic issues concerning Mandarin –de. While the main interest of diachronic research has been the etymology of –de, synchronic debates have centred on its function(s) (gōngnéng 功能) and classification (fēnlèi 分类), i.e. the number of morphemes that ought to be distinguished and their subsequent classification into lexical categories (parts of speech). In fact, all these issues are interrelated: morphemes are distinguished on the basis of their functions and so is their part-of-speech membership. As far as the number of morphemes is concerned, the issue is whether –de is one morpheme or whether it represents two or more morphemes, and, if the latter is true, how many morphemes should be distinguished. Should modifying and non-modifying uses be considered one or two morphemes/functions? Should we distinguish between –de of adverbial modifiers and attributives or even between adjectival and nominal attributives? As for the classification, the basic problem has been whether –de should be a word (root) or an affix.

The earliest known domestic Sinitic grammar is Mǎshì wéntōng 马氏文通 (1904) by Mǎ Jiānzhōng 马建忠 (1845–1900). The book was, however, devoted to Classical Sinitic, so I will not deal with it here. In the period from the publication of Mǎshì wéntōng until the 1930s many grammatical works imitating Western grammars had been published. This ‘period of imitation’ reached its peak in the work of Lí Jǐnxī 黎锦熙 (1890–1978). Lí’s New Grammar of the National Language (1924) was a synthesis of previous work and despite its faults influenced greatly later studies, unlike other grammar books of this period. As for –de, Lí distinguished four basic morphemes, a suffix (yǔwěi 语尾) and three root morphemes (words) belonging to different parts of speech: adpositions (jiēcí 介词), relative pronouns (liánjiē dài míngcí 联接代名詞) and particles.

33 Usually the year 1898 is stated because the prefaces are dated 9 April and 23 October 1898, respectively, but according to Peter J. Peverelli’s doctoral thesis «The History of Modern Chinese Grammar Studies» (Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1986), «the complete work was not published until 1904» (49).
34 The term used by Peverelli in «The History of Modern Chinese Grammar Studies», 102.
36 I translate the Chinese term as ‘adposition’ because the term jiēcí itself tells nothing of its position. Although often translated as ‘preposition’, it literally means ‘an introducing word’ (cf. Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 254). In the case of –de, Lí clearly states that it is placed...
Within each morpheme he distinguished further subcategories: adjectival (síngróngcí yíwèi 形容詞語尾) and adverbial suffixes (fùcí yíwèi 劉詞語尾), possessive adpositions (língbèi jiécí 聲攝介詞) and quasi-adpositions (zhùnjiécí 業介詞), nominal and adjectival relative pronouns.

In the 1940s, grammatical monographs of some of the most influential Chinese linguists, such as Lú Shùxiàng 呂叔湘 (1904–1998), Gào Míngkāi 高名凯 (1911–1969) and Wáng Lì 王力 (1900–1986), appeared. Their works dealt also with –de. Lú Shùxiàng and Gào Míngkāi even published special studies on this subject.

In the first volume of his Outline of Chinese Grammar (1941) Lú Shùxiàng divided –de into three categories: a suffix (cíwèi 詞尾), a relation word (quánhúcí 關係詞) and a modal particle (yúqící 語氣詞). However, Lú did not think that the suffix and the relation word were different morphemes. He kept them separated only because he thought that the latter was a syntactic-level element but he was well aware of a contradiction inherent in his analysis:

The character –de is often added after the adjective, e.g. cóngróng –de báizi 聲的 聞小孩子 ‘a clever child’, qìngqíng –de shuòhū 輕輕地說話 ‘to speak in a low voice’.

This –de should be also considered a suffix. However, the character de in phrases such as wǒ rènshì –de báizi 我認識的小孩子 ‘the child that I know’ and the like cannot be considered a suffix in any way because wǒ rènshì 我認識 ‘I know’ cannot be considered a word and the character de does not exclusively belong to rènshì 認識 ‘know’. It is not easy to say whether these two de are identical. As far as guóyǔ 国语 [‘national language’, i.e. Mandarin] is concerned, if both their sound (de) and their function are identical, they should be one character [i.e. one morpheme, SV]. This is a theoretical problem which we do not have to investigate thoroughly.

In the practical application, the question whether it is a suffix or not a suffix only arises when joining syllables of compound words in phonetic transcription. This is not an issue when writing in characters [...]..

after the head unlike other jiécí that are placed before the head, therefore translating jiécí as ‘preposition’ would be highly inappropriate. When describing other languages, Mandarin usually renders prepositions as qiánzhìcí 前置詞 and postpositions as hòuzhìcí 後置詞.


38 "形容詞後面常加的字，例如聰明的孩子，輕輕的說話。這個的字應該也可以算是詞尾。但是在「我認識的孩子」這類語句裏面的「的」字可不能算是詞尾，因為「我認識」不能算是一個詞，而「的」字並非專屬於「認識」的。這兩個「的」字是不是同一個字呢，這就很不容易說。就國語而論，聲音相同（de），作用相同，應該認為一個字。這
Two years later Lü Shuxiang used the term yìzbùcì 身助詞 (‘particle’) which corresponded to both his earlier terms ‘suffix’ and ‘relation word’.

In 1944, Gao Mingkai published a study on –de. He criticised the usage of grammatical categories of Western (i.e. Indo-European) languages when describing Mandarin and came up with the idea that grammatical categories of a language should be established on the basis of their formal differentiation within that language: «If one studies the grammar of a language one should look if there is a particular grammatical form expressing a particular grammatical category in this language, in other words, if there is a particular grammatical form expressing a particular grammatical meaning.» Based on the above consideration, Gao argued that –de should constitute only one single morpheme (‘word’, yìcì 詞, in his terminology), which he called ‘the determinative word’ (guìdìnɡcì 規定詞) and defined its function as expressing a determinative relationship (guìdìnɡ ґuānɡì 規定關係). From a diachronic point of view, he recognized the existence of two determinative words, the adverbial and the ‘other’ one (yìcì bēi qìtā guìdìnɡcì 副詞和其他規定詞), but he emphasized that this distinction had been lost already by the end of the Song dynasty and does not exist in contemporary Mandarin any more.

Wang Li in his Theory of Chinese Grammar (1944) opposed the assertion of Li Jixi that what in Wang’s view was »a word of the same nature« (tīnyàng xìnɡbìde yìcì 同性質的一個詞) should be called several different names, such as the adposition, the pronoun and the suffix. Wang analysed –de as a marker of modifying ranks (xiūshì pìnè de jìhào 修飾品的記號), i.e. a secondary

40 Gao Mingkai 高名凯, »Hānyǔ guìdìnɡcì –de 漢語規定詞“的” [The Determinative –de in Chinese; 1944], in Gāo Mínɡkǎi ɡōnjì xuèlùn jū, Gāo Mínɡkǎi’s Linguistic Studies (Beijing: Shànghǎi yǐnshūguǎn, 1990), 26–73.
41 “要研究一種語言的語法，應當着重在這種語言中，是不是有一種特殊的語法形式去表達一種特殊的語法意義，換言之，即是不是有一種特殊的語法形式去表達一種特殊的語法意義。” (Gao Mingkai, »Hānyǔ guìdìnɡcì –de, 32).
various practical grammars for foreigners published in the PRC such as textbooks are based on it, including several publications with the title *educational materials*. A number of Chinese school grammars and language Shōā Grammar for Teaching Chinese from a homonymous modal particle.

Wáng also distinguished a ‘modal particle’ (yūqì 語氣詞) indicating explanation (biáoming yuǎn 表明語氣) and he thought that this particle had developed from the aforementioned marker. As seen above, Lǚ, Gāo and Wáng shared basically the same opinion of –de as a single morpheme, possibly distinguishing it from a homonymous modal particle.

In the second half of 1950s and at the beginning of 1960s two important grammatical syntheses appeared. The first one was the *Provisional System of Grammar for Teaching Chinese* (shortly just the *Provisional System*) published in 1956 under the editorial care of Zhāng Zhīgōng 張志公 (1918–1997) and the second one was *Talks on Modern Chinese Grammar* that came out in 1961 and was edited by Dīng Shēngshū 丁聲樹 (1909–1989).

The *Provisional System* still has considerable influence, especially in educational materials. A number of Chinese school grammars and language textbooks are based on it, including several publications with the title *Xiàndài Hányǔ* 現代漢語 (Modern Chinese) designed for Chinese universities as well as various practical grammars for foreigners published in the PRC such as *A Practical Chinese Grammar for Foreigners* by Lì Déjīn 李德津 and Chéng Méizhēn 程美珍. In the *Provisional System*, –de is analysed as one of the so-called jiégōu

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43 Wáng defines it as follows: “凡語法成分·附加於詞或短語或句子形式的前面或後面·以表示它們的性質者·叫做記號。” *All grammatical elements [Wáng’s translation of Vendryès’ morphèmes], added initially or finally to a word, a phrase or a sentence pattern [i.e. a ‘nexus’, liánxiē 连係式] in order to express their quality, are called markers*. Wáng Lì, *Zhōngguó yǐfù ǐlún*, v: 263.


47 See Note 23.
zbúci 結構助詞 that can be translated as ‘constructional particles’⁴⁸ or ‘structural particles’.⁴⁹ It seems that the term itself had been coined in the frame of the Provisional System.⁵⁰ The Provisional System distinguished de as an indicator of the attributive (dìngyú–de biǎozhì 定語的標誌), written as 的, from de as an indicator of the adverbial modifier (zhuencia–de biǎozhì 狀語的標誌), written as 地.

The Talks on Modern Chinese Grammar had summarized the views of Lú Shūxiāng, Gāo Míngkǎi and Wáng Lǐ. Two morphemes are distinguished in this book: the suffix (cuòwéi 詞尾) attached after a word or phrase (practically corresponding to Lú’s ‘particle’, Gāo’s ‘determinative word’ and Wáng’s ‘marker of a modifier’) and the (modal) particle (yízhúci 語助詞) expressing indicative mood (Lú’s and Wáng’s ‘modal particle’).

2.3 Zhū Děxi’s Analysis

Perhaps the most elaborate analysis of –de can be found in the works of Zhū Děxi. In 1961, Zhū published his famous article «Shuō –de 想“的” (On –de) in the bi-monthly journal Zhōngguó yìwén 中國語文 (Chinese Language, 1952ff). The study launched a vigorous debate on the said morpheme(s). Lú Shūxiāng also participated in these discussions, but it was mainly representatives of the younger generation of linguists who took part in the discourse—namely Huáng Jīngxīn 黃景欣 (1933–1962), Lù Jiānmíng 郭俊明 (b1935), Yān Yìbīng 言一兵 (1928)⁵¹ and Ji Yǒngxīng 季永興 (b1936). The debate addressed several fundamental questions: (1) Is –de a postposed element (biǎozhì chéngfēn 後附成分) or a linking element (jiējié chéngfēn 間接成分)? (2) How many different morphemes does –de represent? (3) What method should be used to differentiate these morphemes? (4) Should the attributive and non-attributive –de be treated as one morpheme or two morphemes? (5) Is there a modal particle (yíqì 語氣詞) de? For reasons of space I will not summarize the whole debate but focus solely on Zhū Děxi. Readers who are interested will find more information in the relevant articles of the discussants.⁵²

⁴⁹ This is the usual English translation.
⁵⁰ See Zhāng Zhìgōng, Yìfǔ běi yìfǔ jiǎoxué, 24.
⁵¹ Original name Wáng Yán 汪 넘어, also known as Wáng Gǎng 王鋼 or Wáng Tán 汪坦.
⁵² Huáng Jīngxīn 黃景欣, «Dū “Shuō –de” bǐng lǎn xiǎndài Hànyǔ yǔjiùde jǐge fǎngfǎlùn wèntì» 讀《說“的”》並論現代漢語語法研究的幾種方法論問題 [Review of «On –de» and
Zhū Déxī considered “de a postposed element (biòufū chéngfèn 後附成分) and used the method of substitution to determine its functions (grammatical meanings). He added “de to different parts of speech and expressions (X) and observed what grammatical functions these constructions (X “de) acquired. He found three distinct functions whereupon he sorted out three homophonous morphemes: “de1, “de2 and “de3.

Table 1 Classification of “de according to Zhū Déxī (1961).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Functions of X “de adrenal (fùcìxing 副詞性)</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• disyllabic adverbs (1.2); monosyllabic, disyllabic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and trisyllabic onomatopoea (1.4.1); some fixed expressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.6.1); some disyllabic adjectives (1.1.1.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• complex forms of adjectives (1.2.2); four-syllable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onomatopoea (1.4.2); some fixed expressions (1.6.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the aforementioned article, Zhū was careful enough not to specify whether X-\textit{de} should be analysed as a word or a bigger unit, neither he specified whether \textit{de} should be an affix or an independent word.\textsuperscript{53} However, in his later works Zhū spoke of \textit{de}, and \textit{\textit{de}}, as of adverbial and adjectival suffixes (\textit{\textit{fúcì bōzhùbāi} 副詞後綴 and \textit{xìngróngcì bōzhùbāi} 形容詞後綴,\textsuperscript{54} in his last article, Zhū used the term \textit{\textit{cuíwēi} 詞尾 rather than \textit{bōzhùbāi} 後綴} to express \textit{\textit{suffix}}\textsuperscript{55}) and he called \textit{\textit{de}}, a nominalizing marker (\textit{\textit{míngcìhuà bǐàoji} 名詞化標記}).\textsuperscript{56} As for the remaining problems, Zhū treated the attributive and non-attributive uses of \textit{\textit{de}}, as \textit{one} morpheme rightly observing that if we considered them two mor-phemes and postulated \textit{\textit{de}}, this \textit{\textit{de}}, would be in fact in complementary distribution with \textit{\textit{de}}, Zhū refused the opinion that the sentence-final \textit{\textit{de}} ought to be analysed as a modal particle and considered it \textit{\textit{de}}, instead. Later, Zhū shifted his attention to the comparative studies of adverbial and adjectival suffixes and nominalizers in various Sinitic languages and dialects. He published these studies in the journal \textit{Fāngyán} (Dialect; 1979ff).\textsuperscript{57} This comparative research seems to support Zhū’s basic division.

As mentioned above, Zhū assumed that the function of \textit{\textit{de}}, was a nominalizing one and this was the weakest point of his theory. He must have been well aware that the difference between N and N-\textit{\textit{de}}, could hardly be explained by sheer nominalization. The noun has a nominal character by itself; however, its function \textit{does} change by adding \textit{\textit{de}}, unlike X-\textit{\textit{de}}, and X-\textit{\textit{de}}, where

\textsuperscript{53} Zhū Děixī, \textit{\textit{Shuò \textit{\textit{de}}}}, 98.

\textsuperscript{54} Zhū Děixī, \textit{\textit{Yǔfá jiāngyì 語法講義 [Lectures on Grammar] (Běijīng: Shāngwù yīnshūguǎn, 1982).}}

\textsuperscript{55} Zhū Děixī, \textit{\textit{Cóng fāngyán hé lǐshì kàn zhuǎntái xìngróngcì mǐngcìhuà} 從方言和歷史看狀態形容詞的名詞化 [Nominalization of Descriptive Adjectives from Dialectal and Historical Points of View], Fāngyán 方言 2/1993, 81.}

\textsuperscript{56} Zhū Děixī, \textit{\textit{Cóng fāngyán hé lǐshì kàn zhuǎntái xìngróngcì mǐngcìhuà}, 82.}

\textsuperscript{57} Zhū Děixī, \textit{\textit{Bēijīnghuà, Guǎngzhōuhuà, Wènshūhuà hé Fǔzhōuhuà li de \textit{\textit{de}} zì 北京話、廣州話、文白話和福州話裡的“\textit{de}”字 [The Character \textit{\textit{de}} in Pekinese, Cantonese and Foo-chownamese], Fāngyán 方言 3/1980, 161–165; \textit{Cóng fāngyán hé lǐshì kàn zhuǎntái xìngróngcì mǐngcìhuà}, 81–100.}
X (both the adverb and the adjectival roots) preserves its function basically unchanged after taking an affix. N–de does not refer to N but to someone or something else and its function corresponds to the genitive or possessive of Indo-European languages, e.g. *fùqìn* 父親 (‘father’) is something different than *fùqìn–de* 父親的 (‘father’s’). In order to account for this contradiction, Zhū later coined the terms ‘self-referentiality’ (zìzī 自指) and ‘transreferentiality’ (zhuǎnzǐ 轉指) and explained X–de3 as sometimes being self-referential, other times transreferential (the majority of cases). However, as early as 1965, a simpler explanation was suggested by Yán Yìbīng who came up with the idea that the function of Zhū’s –de3 was to turn the preceding word or phrase into a ‘unit of nominal–adjectival nature’ (jìngshǔ xíngróngxíngde dànwèi 靜屬形容詞的單位).

### Table 2

*Mandarin –de: correspondence between its sound, the current character orthography based on the Provisional System (1956) and the respective morphemes according to Zhū Dēxī’s analysis (1961, 1993).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[da]</td>
<td>地</td>
<td>–de1 (adverbial suffix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>的</td>
<td>–de3 (nominalizing marker)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58 Here is a striking difference between Mandarin and Old Sinitic. The formally similar Old Sinitic construction *fù–zhě* 父者 does not mean ‘father’s’ but ‘he who is the father’ and corresponds to Mandarin *zuò fùqìn–de* 做父親的 rather than *fùqìn–de* 父親的.


60 Yán Yìbīng, «Qūfēn de de tōngyín yǔsū wèntí», 258.
2.4 The Last Few Decades

All major Mandarin grammars have paid attention to \( -de \) in varying degrees. Yuen Ren Chao in his *opus magnum* published in 1968 distinguished the suffix \( -de \) having the function of possessive (\( kēxué\-de fēnxi \) 科學的分析 ‘the analysis of sciences’), adjectival (\( kēxué\-de fēnxi \) 科學的分析 ‘scientific analysis’) and adverbial ending (\( kēxué\-de fēnxi \) 科學地分析 ‘analyses scientifically’) on the one hand and the particle or phrase enclitic \( -de \) expressing subordination—as a marker of explicit modification (\( kōngwán 空碗 ‘an empty bowl’ vs kōng\=-de wán 空的碗 ‘a bowl that is empty’) or a marker of nonlexical phrases (\( lǎoyúmǐ 老玉米 ‘corn’ vs lāo\=-de yúmǐ 老的玉米 ‘corn which has grown tough’) and nominalization on the other hand. Another well-known grammar book *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar* by Charles N. Li and Sandra A. Thompson (1981) also makes a distinction between the suffix and the particle. The suffix derives manner adverbs from adjectives and from abstract nouns (\( tā kuàikuài\=-de zǒu 他快快地走 ‘he walked quickly’, \( kēxué\-de 科學地 ‘scientifically’) while the particle forms associative phrases according to the formula \( \text{NP} \-de \text{NP} \) (\( nǐ de nièbīn shū 你的那本書 ‘that book of yours’) and relative clauses \( \text{VP} \-de \text{NP} \) or \( \text{Adj} \-de \text{NP} \) (\( hóng de huā 紅的花 ‘a flower that is red’). *Chinese: A Comprehensive Grammar* by Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington (2004) distinguishes the particle \( de \) and the adverbial marker \( de \) 地 which is reminiscent of the *Provisional System*.

Over the last two decades a large number of studies on \( -de \) of varying quality appeared in China. The topics often involve various practical grammatical and orthographic problems, e.g. ‘hiding and appearing’ (\( yǐnxiàn 躲現) of \( -de \) (the rules when \( -de \) can be omitted and when not), the problem of ‘division vs unity’ (\( fēnbié 分合), i.e. if the written language should distinguish between 的 and 地 or if it is an artificial distinction etc. The majority of the studies are journal articles, but in 2006 a monograph with a title *A Study on Form Word \( -de \) and its Related Matters* by Xū Yāngchūn 徐陽春 came out. It has been based on the so-called ‘three-level grammatical theory’ (\( gāngé píngmiàn yìfǎ lìlún 三個平面語法理論, also called ‘three-dimensional grammar’,

61 See Note 10.
64 See Note 5.
sànweǐ yìfū 三維語法) that has been quite popular in China recently but it makes use of other branches of linguistics, such as cognitive linguistics, dialectology and historical linguistics, as well. Although the monograph does not bring really new insights and neither is it very accurate in some descriptions, it lists an extensive bibliography that makes it a useful reference book on the subject.


65 This theory or ‘linguistic school’ was created in the PRC in the 1980s. It encompasses three language levels, i.e. the syntactic (jīfǎ 句法), semantic (yǐyì 語義) and pragmatic (yǐyòng 語用) level, hence the name. As far as I know, it is hardly known outside China; however there are some Western studies in the field of applied linguistics based on similar concepts; cf. Diane Larsen-Freeman, »Teaching Grammars«, in Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, ed. by Marianne Celce-Murcia (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2nd ed. 1991), 279–283. Among the pioneers of the ‘three-level grammatical theory’ are Hú Yùshù 胡裕樹 (1918–2001), Záng Bīn 黑斌 (1920) and Fán Xióng 翔雄 (1933), who is also the author of Sāng píngmiànde yìfūguān 三個平面的語法觀 [Three-Level Grammar View] (Beijing: Beijing yìyuàn wénhùa dàxué chūbānshè, 1990), the representative work of this Chinese linguistic school.

66 Anne Yue Hashimoto [Yue Or-kan 余潤芹], Unicorn / Chi-Lin 騁麟 8 (1971), 1–149.


72 Yǔyánxué lǎncāng 語言學論叢 vol. 39 (Beijing: Shāngwǔ yīnshūguān, 2009), 123–156.
3.1 Nominal Adjectivals

At the beginning of this chapter, I would like to emphasize that what I propose here is a possible interpretation. Definitely, I do not think this is the only correct solution and I am well aware that »in every language, everything always applies only to a certain extent«.73

I start my considerations from Zhū Déxi’s analysis, which I basically agree with except one point. This point is the designation of ~de₁ as a nominalizing marker. Zhū’s analysis was based primarily on the syntactic and functional criteria and paid little attention to semantic aspects. I therefore share the view of Yán Yībīng that the function of ~de₁ is rather a sort of adjectivization which, however, is quite different from the adjectivization by the means of the suffix ~de₂. As Yán Yībīng argues in his article, the Mandarin adjective, unlike adjectives in Indo-European languages, has a verbal character, not a nominal one. Such are the non-derived adjectives as well as the adjectives marked by the suffix ~de₂. However, ~de₁ forms adjectival constructions of nominal nature similar to Indo-European adjectives.74 Yán Yībīng refers to these constructions as 'grammatical units of nominal-adjectival nature'75 and I will call them simply ‘nominal adjectivals’ (hence NA). Here I would like to note that Mandarin nominal adjectivals differ from English adjectives in that they can stand alone both in modifying and non-modifying functions just like adjectives in some Indo-European languages other than English, for instance in Slovak.

Slovak

1. chc-e-m čist-ů košel-ů
   want-PRES.IND.ACT+1.SG clean-F.SG.ACC shirt-F.SG.ACC
   'I want a clean shirt'

2. chc-e-m čist-ů
   want-PRES.IND.ACT+1.SG clean-F.SG.ACC
   'I want a clean one'

73 »v každém jazyce vždy všechno platí jen do jisté míry« from Vladimír Skalička, Souborné dílo [Complete Works], 3 vols, ed. by František Čermák & al. (Praha: Karolinum, 2004), 1: 15.
74 Particularly interesting in this regard is the fact that it is the adjectival forms affixed with ~de what is given in bilingual dictionaries as Mandarin equivalents of English, German, Czech etc. adjectives.
75 Yán Yībīng, «Qūfēn ~de de tōngyīn yǔshì wèntì», 253–263.
Mandarin

(3) 我 要 一件 乾净的 袜衣
wǒ yào yījiàn gānjìng-đe chényī
'I want a clean shirt'

(4) 我 要 一件 乾净的
wǒ yào yījiàn gānjìng-đe
'I want a clean one.'

So we know that ‘đe’ forms ‘something’ of nominal-adjectival nature. Naturally, the question arises what this ‘something’ is. Both Zhū and Yán left this question open and to my knowledge it has remained without a satisfactory answer to this day.

Although Zhū as early as 1961 convincingly demonstrated that ‘đe’ is a postposed element, in some recent articles we still encounter the view that it is a linking element. In my opinion, this is what makes the appropriate explanation of ‘đe’ so difficult. Referring to Zhū’s analysis, I reject the assertions that ‘đe’ is a linker or a subordinator etc. If we agree with the argument that ‘đe’ is a postposed element, only two possibilities remain how to interpret X-đe: it must be either a clause or a word. In the former case, ‘đe’ would be a syntactic marker, while in the latter case it would be an affix. X-đe cannot be a phrase because ‘đe’ is a marker of nominal adjectivization, not a marker of attributive relation. Zhū Déxī proved quite convincingly that the attributive function is only one of several functions that X-đe can take up in the sentence.78

As Paul has demonstrated, in the case of adjectives, it is quite problematic to consider X-đe a clause since adjectives that cannot be used predicatively can be used adnominally in conjunction with de.79 Such non-predicative adjectives include fāng 方 ‘square’, gòngtóng 共同 ‘common’, yuánlái
On the other hand, in the case of verbal constructions Paul regards X–de3 as a relative clause. We can consider two possibilities here: (i) –de1 is sometimes a suffix and other times a syntactic marker or (2) –de3 is always a suffix and X–de3 is a word just like X–de1 and X–de2. In my view, it is problematical to regard a semantically and phonemically identical morpheme as a suffix in some cases and as a function word in others; on the other hand, it is pointless to postulate two morphemes because it would be an artificially created complementary distribution. These considerations lead us to the conclusion that it is substantiated to regard –de3 as an affix and X–de3 as a word. Yán Yībǐng also suggested this as an option, but he did not go on pursuing this idea in greater detail. ⁸⁰

The proposed solution can be easily accepted in cases where X is a noun or a pronoun (1.3.1, 1.3.2), an adjective (1.1) or a simple verb (1.5.1.1). However, in cases where X seems to be a co-ordinate construction, a V-O construction (1.5.2) or even a clause (1.5.1.2, 1.5.2.3, 4, 1.5.3.2), my assumption may look controversial at first glance. In fact, the use of affixes in these constructions is not impossible. The use of –de3 after a co-ordinate construction can be explained as suspended affixation and analyzed not as X–de3, but as X + X–de3, with an empty slot after the first X which may or may not be filled up with an affix. A similar phenomenon is found in Turkish, where the first noun of a co-ordinate construction can be in the absolute case, which may stand for any case, or its empty slot may be filled with a case-ending (although this is less usual):

**Turkish** ⁸¹

(5) *sibbat vee afiyet-te*

health and well-being-LOC

‘in health and well-being’

(6) *sibbat-te vee afiyet-te*

health-LOC and well-being-LOC

‘in health and in well-being’

**Mandarin** ⁸²

(7) 我 和 哥哥的

*wò bì gége–de*

I and elder brother-NA

’mine and my elder brother’s (i.e. one belonging to both of us)’

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⁸⁰ Yán Yībǐng, «Qūēn –de de tóngyīn yǔsū wèntí», 263.

In the case of clauses, I believe that ‘de’ is not necessarily related to the whole clause but only to the verb. This means that I analyze clauses such as 我昨天看见的 ‘what I saw yesterday’ as [我 [昨天 [看见–de]]] and not as [[我 [昨天 [看见–de]]]–de]. Evidence supporting my arguments includes the fact that if the prefix suō- with a similar meaning like –de is used, we put it before the verb and not before the whole clause:

(9) 我 昨天 所看见的
wǒ zuótiān suō-kānjiàn–de
I yesterday suō-see-NA
‘what I saw yesterday’

(10) 所 我 昨天 看见的
suō– wǒ zuótiān  kānjiàn–de
suō- I yesterday see-NA
‘what I saw yesterday’

3.2 Edge Inflection and Object Incorporation

If a verb takes an object, then ‘de’ is suffixed to the object.82 We can regard this phenomenon as ‘edge inflection’ as described by Zwicky (1987) referring to the English possessive.83 In these constructions, ‘de’ is semantically linked to the verb but formally it is connected with the object:

(11) 吃饭的
chī-fàn–de
cat-meal-NA
‘(s)he who is) eating’

82 Here I do not mean phrases such as chī–de fàn 吃的饭 ‘eaten meal, meal for eating’ where ‘de’ can be analysed as added to a simple verb.
Edge inflection can be understood as a consequence of the relatively close connection between the verb and its object in Mandarin. As far as the type in the example (11) is concerned, we can even consider the whole V-O construction a verb with an incorporated object (Vo) as it is often the case in polysynthetic languages. The reasons for this interpretation are as follows: (a) the connections of monosyllabic transitive verbs with generic monosyllabic objects are to a large extent (not absolutely) obligatory when no specific object is expressed, (b) these generic objects are ‘dummy’ objects, they just complete the verbs prosodically and semantically, (c) bound morphemes can also be used as objects in these constructions, e.g. lǐfà 理髮 ‘to have one’s hair cut’ where fà 髮 ‘hair’ is a bound morpheme that cannot be used independently,85 (d) Mandarin has a strong tendency to create disyllabic words, (e) Vos are often lexicalized items occurring in dictionaries, e.g. lǐfà 理髮, chīfàn 吃飯 ‘to eat, to make a living’ and zǒulù 走路 ‘to walk’ are all listed in the Modern Chinese Dictionary as separate entries.86

One may raise objections that (a’) syntactic level units can be inserted between the verb and its incorporated object, (b’) tense-aspect suffixes are attached directly to the verb and not to the object, (c’) unlike many languages commonly referred to as polysynthetic there is no morphological indication of incorporation in Mandarin.

Well, I admit that in Mandarin the connection between the verb and its incorporated object is not as tight as in the case of other types of compounds, on the other hand, it is tighter than in normal syntactic V-O constructions. As far as the insertion of syntactic units between two parts of a word is concerned, there is a similar situation with separable prefixes of German, Dutch or Hungarian verbs.

84 Mao Zhuxi yulu 毛主席語錄 [Quotations from Chairman Mao], ed. by People’s Liberation Army General Political Department (s.l.: Xinhua shudian, 1968), 4.
85 The corresponding free morpheme would be tóufa 頭髮.
German

(13) ich muß aufstehen
'I have to get up.'

(14) Ich stehe jeden Tag um sechs Uhr auf
'I get up at six o'clock every day'

Mandarin

(15) ńǐ chīfàn-ne
'I am eating'

(16) jīntiān wǒ chī-le liàngdùn fàn
today I eat-PERF two-Cla meal
'I have had two meals today'

(17) chī nǐ-đe fàn
cat you-NA meal
'eat your meal'

Moreover, sometimes even 'straight' disyllabic verbs tend to be separated in Mandarin, therefore separability cannot be viewed as evidence proving absence of lexical integrity:

(18) tā zài zhèr gòngzuò-le sănniàn=le
he be (at) here work-PERF three-year=MOD
'he has worked here for three years'

(19) gòng nǐ-đe zuò
work you-NA work
'do your work'

Although tense-aspect suffixes are usually attached directly to the verb, sometimes they happen to be attached to the incorporated object. Such usages, although may be considered grammatically incorrect (but not ungrammatical),
demonstrate that tightening of the relationship between the verb and its object is in progress.

(20) 有些 人 說 他 從來 沒 吸煙。

\[
yǒu\text-xiē\ rěn\ sī\ sbū\ tā\ cóng\fái\ měi\ xī\ \text-yán\-guō\n\]

'some people say he all along NEG inhale-smoke(N)-PAST'

Indeed, except the aforementioned facts (1–5) there are no other indicators, i.e. morphological markers, of object incorporation in Mandarin. This can be seen very clearly when compared to the notoriously well-known examples of object incorporation in Nahuatl that have been often quoted since Humboldt’s times:

**Nahuatl**

(21) ńi-\text-naca-\text-qua

\[
I\text{-meat}\text{-eat}
\]

'I eat meat, I am a meat-eater'

(22) ńi-\text-c-\text-qua in naca-\text-tl

\[
I\text{-it}\text{-eat} \text{the} \text{meat}\text{-ABS}
\]

'I eat the meat'

**Mandarin**

(23) 我 吃飯

\[
wō\ chī\-fàn\n\]

'I (will) eat'

However, as claimed by Skalička already in 1955, »the compounds are clearest where the polysynthetic type is the weakest, that is to say where the word is absolutely clear [...]«. In genuine polysynthetic languages (e.g. Chinese, Indone-

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88 Wilhelm von Humboldt, Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts (Berlin: Druckerei der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1836), 165.
sian), the compound can not be determined so uniquely because we can not see so clearly the elements that make up the word and those that do not.«

3.3 Affixes vs Clitics

As already mentioned in 3.1, there is a problem whether to classify \(\text{-de}_1\), \(\text{-de}_2\), or \(\text{-de}_3\) as an affix or a word. I have argued that it is quite legitimate to consider it an affix. However, some authors (Yuen Ren Chao,\(^90\) Lin Hua\(^91\) or Sun Chaofen,\(^92\) to mention just a few) use to analyse \(\text{-de}\) together with other Mandarin 'particles' as clitics which, in my opinion, is only a different way of saying it is a word. Sets of criteria have been worked out to distinguish clitics from inflectional affixes—the most widely used being those by Zwicky and Pullum:

A. Clitics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their hosts, while affixes exhibit a high degree of selection with respect to their stems.
B. Arbitrary gaps in the set of combinations are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.
C. Morphophonological idiosyncrasies are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.
D. Semantic idiosyncrasies are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.
E. Syntactic rules can affect affixed words, but cannot affect clitic groups.
F. Clitics can attach to material already containing clitics, but affixes cannot.\(^93\)

The degree of selection in (A) is a very relative criterion; however, it seems that \(\text{-de}_1\), \(\text{-de}_2\), and \(\text{-de}_3\) are less selective not only than affixes in Indo-European languages but also than the Mandarin plural marker '\(\text{-men}\) that is usually considered a suffix.\(^94\) There are some arbitrary gaps (B) as far as \(\text{-de}_1\) and \(\text{-de}_2\).
are concerned, e.g. there are some adjectives that do not take \( \sim de_1 \) (1.1.1.2) or do not have complex forms and therefore do not take \( \sim de_2 \) (1.1.1.3). On the other hand, there seem to be no such gaps within \( X \sim de_3 \). According to the criterion (C) all the morphemes in question should be analysed as clitics but this criterion is hardly applicable to Mandarin because to my knowledge there are virtually no morphological idiosyncrasies in this language and I am inclined to believe that this criterion is fully applicable only to languages that are fusional to some degree. \( X \sim de_1 \) unlike \( X \sim de_1 \) and \( X \sim de_2 \) shows some semantic idiosyncracies (D), e.g. \( cbr \sim de_3 \) 吃的 normally means 'food' not 'eating/eaten (one)' (cf. \( k\text{àn} \sim de \) 看的 'looking/looked at') and \( n\text{ǚ} \sim de_3 \) 女的 means just 'a woman' not 'feminine' or 'woman's'. 95 (E) is in my view the most important criterion. As shown in examples in the first part of this paper as well as fully testified in the above mentioned studies by Zhū Déxī and others, \( X \sim de_3 \) is one unit and it is treated as such by syntactic operations. That is to say \( \sim de_3 \) is not let us say a marker of attributive but it together with its host (root) makes up a unit that can enter an attributive relation as a whole. The last criterion (F) depends to a large extent on what one considers clitics and what not and even then it is still quite arguable as it may be in contradiction with 'edge inflection' mentioned above. If we regard the plural markers and tense-aspect markers as suffixes and consider the unstressed personal pronouns in postverbal position to be vehicles of edge inflection, then we can analyze \( \sim de_1, \sim de_2 \) and \( \sim de_3 \) as affixes. I have summarized my analysis in Table 3:

95 An interesting situation occurs when one wants to say for instance \( n\text{à}g\text{è} n\text{ǚ} \sim de_3 \) \( b\text{ā} \) ３ 'that woman's bag'. According to Yuen Ren Chao, 'nobody says de de ever in any context' (A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, 298) and it seems that this is true with the older generation; however, the younger generation may not follow this rule. My parents-in-law, who are both native of Hánlán 河南 in Héběi 河北 Province, would always say only one \( \sim de \) in the aforementioned phrase, but my wife would prefer \( \sim de \sim de \) and so would another native Mandarin speaker about the age of 30 I have interviewed about this topic. It seems that this difference of language usage has something to do with modern language education at schools and greater awareness of formal grammar. This issue would deserve further investigation.
Table 3  Mandarin Morphemes
\(-de_1, -de_2, and -de_3: Affixes vs Clitics According to the Zwicky-Pullum Criteria\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>(de_1)</th>
<th>(de_2)</th>
<th>(de_3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Clitic</td>
<td>Affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Affix</td>
<td>Affix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table above, the Zwicky-Pullum criteria are not particularly helpful as far as Mandarin is concerned—and there is a similar problem regarding for instance bound pronouns in French. However, if we disregard the criterion C that can be hardly applied outside fusional languages, the arguments in favour of affixation are slightly more numerous and according to the important criterion E all three morphemes can be analyzed as affixes.

3.4 Derivation vs Inflection

Another question is what kind of affixes do \(-de_1, -de_2, and -de_3\) represent. Do they derive new words or do they create inflectional forms within the same paradigm? According to Stump\(^97\) the following five criteria are commonly used to distinguish inflection from derivation:

1) the criterion of change in lexical meaning or part of speech (derivation usually changes lexical meaning, part of speech, or both)
2) the criterion of syntactic determination (inflection is syntactically determined)
3) the criterion of productivity (inflection is usually more productive)
4) the criterion of semantic regularity (inflection tends to be more regular)
5) the criterion of closure (inflection closes words to further derivation)

1) \(-de_1\) makes adverbs from adjectives (1.1.1.3), onomatopoeia (1.4.1) and fixed expressions (1.6.1) or stresses the adverbial character of adverbs (1.2); \(-de_3\)

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\(^97\) Stump, «Inflection», 14–18.
produces adjectives from onomatopoeia (1.4.2) and fixed expressions (1.6.2) and complements the complex forms of adjectives (1.1.2); and finally –de₃ makes nominal adjectivals from adjectives (1.1.1), nominals (1.3) and verbs (1.5). That is to say –de₁ and –de₃ sometimes involve the change of part of speech but not the change of lexical meaning. –de₃ on the other hand does change lexical meaning (wǒ–de 我的 ‘my, mine’ is something different than wǒ 我 ‘I, me’ and màicài–de 賣菜的 ‘vegetable vendor’ is different than màicài 賣菜 ‘to sell vegetables’) but it is difficult to decide if NA should be considered a part of speech (e.g. a sort of adjective) or a grammatical category (e.g. something analogous to participles in Indo-European languages).

2) –de₁ is not syntactically determined as there is no syntactic context requiring –de-modified adverbs (fēichǎng–de 非常地 ‘extremely’) and excluding –de-less ones (fēichǎng 非常) but –de₃ and –de₂ are (e.g. in the subject or object positions they are not interchangeable with –de-less adjectives).

3) As to productivity, all three morphemes are highly productive; however, –de₃ seems to be more productive than –de₁ and –de₂.

4) All three morphemes are semantically quite regular, only –de₃ shows rare cases of semantic idiosyncrasy.

5) By the criterion of closure, which, however, is quite questionable in some languages, all the three morphemes in question close words to further derivation. Again, I have summed up the results of my analysis in tabular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
<th>–de₁</th>
<th>–de₂</th>
<th>–de₃</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td>Inflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the case of affixes vs clitics in the previous chapter, there is no clear-cut distinction between derivation and inflection either. It seems that –de₁,
behaves more like a derivative affix while \( \sim de \) and \( \sim de \) more resemble inflectional affixes. Nevertheless, I prefer treating \( de \) as a derivative affix rather than an inflectional one on the ground that it does not produce anything that could be considered a grammatical form. It does not even create so-called ‘complex forms’ of adjectives. They are made primarily through reduplication, composition or by adding suffixes other than \( \sim de \) and \( \sim de \) is added to these adjectives merely to complete them morphologically and/or to allow them enter certain syntactic relations. On the other hand, \( \sim de \) is preferably analysed as an inflectional suffix. This is also supported by its edge inflection that excludes the possibility of derivation because verbs with affixes on the edge (i.e. on their objects) can hardly enter the lexicon as distinct units. The only problem is how to define the grammatical form it represents for it is far from usual in Indo-European languages for verbs, nouns and adjectives to share a common grammatical category. However, in other language families there are cases when a grammatical morpheme can belong to one generic category shared by different parts of speech. For instance, in Algonquian languages personal prefixes appear both on verbs and nouns attributing the action or state expressed by the verb to one of the grammatical persons or expressing the possession of a thing by a person, cf. Nishnaabemwin (Ojibwe), a language spoken in the Canadian province of Ontario: 98 99

Conclusions

In the present paper I have proceeded from Zhū Déxi’s concept of the Mandarin homophone \( \sim de \) 地 / 的 as a representation of three grammatical morphemes. I claim that all of these morphemes are affixes: the derivational

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99 There is an optional ‘possessed theme suffix’ in parentheses.
100 Cf. personal pronouns in Nishnaabemwin: nii - nii ‘I’, gii - gim ‘you (sg.)’
adverbial suffix –de₁, the derivational adjectival suffix –de₂ and the inflectional suffix of nominal adjectivals –de₃. My analysis implies that what I call tentatively ‘nominal adjectivals’ is in fact a grammatical form. I conceive this form as something similar to Indo-European participle or the genitive case; however, this issue still deserves more detailed investigation. Further comparisons with similar phenomena in other languages and dialects are needed as well as finer diachronic analyses.

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