

KAN GE ZIXI AND KAN DE ZIXI: DISTINCTION BETWEEN POST-VERBAL GE AND DE ON CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR ACCOUNT

*Ziming Lu*¹

ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify particles *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position when followed by descriptive expressions with Construction Grammar approach. These two particles are studied in separate constructions and these two constructions in which *ge* and *de* occur show distinct syntactic behaviours as well as different semantic properties. Therefore, *ge* and *de* do not have the same function in post-verbal position because the constructions they construct are different.

KEYWORDS: *ge*, *de*, Construction, Mandarin Chinese

1. INTRODUCTION

De in Mandarin Chinese in post-verbal position is traditionally referred as a complement² marker, which is followed by a descriptive expression. In (1.1), *de* in post-verbal position introduces an adjective phrase.

(1.1)他听**得**仔细

Ta ting **de** zixi

He listen **de** attentive

He listens with attention

¹ University of Edinburgh, s1023442@sms.ed.ac.uk.

² In this research, the term 'complement' is not used as a parallel in European language studies. It is defined as an element in a post-verbal position with the function of explaining the predicator by filling it out, following the Chinese linguistics research tradition (McDonald, 1996)

(1.1) can also be translated as ‘He pays attention when listening’ depending on the analysis of its syntactic structure. But it is commonly accepted that the two words connected by *de*, e.g. *ting* ‘listen’ and *zixi* ‘attentive’, are both predicates (Huang 1988) since they both provide information about the subject. By following Huang (1988)’s hypothesis, the first predicate, e.g. *ting* ‘listen’ (1.1), is considered as a primary predicate that designates the main action that the subject is doing and the one following *de* is a secondary predicate that functions as an adverbial modifier. In order to avoid confusion, the primary predicate here is referred as V and the secondary predicate following *de* is referred as SP. SP in this position can be an adjective as in (1.1) or can be another grammatical category with a predicative function in Mandarin Chinese, such as Chinese four character idiom, VP and even embedded clause. The particle *de* in this [V *de* SP] structure connects the two predicates and I simply refer it as a marker of adverbial modifier.

In (1.1), *de* can be replaced, as in (1.2), by *ge* that is widely considered as a general classifier in Mandarin Chinese (Li and Thompson 1981, Zhu 1982, Lü 1984).

(1.2) 他听个仔细

ta ting **ge** zixi

He listen **ge** attentive

He listens with attention (until he understand)

A classifier like *ge* in Chinese helps to denote the concept of individualized entities from a nominal type (Allan 1977, Tai 1994, Cheng and Sybesma 1998). Thus, *ge*, as a classifier, is used between numerals and nouns to form NPs. In (1.2), in the post-verbal position, *ge*, like *de* in (1.1), is followed by an adjective *zixi* ‘attentive’. Thus, *ge* in (1.2) is less possible to be a classifier and the function of *ge* here is a controversial matter (Li and Thompson 1981, Zhu 1982, Lü 1984, He 2001, Zhang 2003, Biq 2004, Shi and Lei 2004). The debates mainly focus on identifying the post-verbal *ge* (1.2) followed by non-nominals and adverbial modifier marker *de* (1.1), since they are able to appear in the same contexts.

You (1983), Wu (1982) and Song (1993) believe *ge* in (1.2) is also a marker of adverbial modifier, the same as the particle *de* in (1.1). First of all, *de* and *ge*, in (1.1) and (1.2) respectively, cannot be deleted without affecting the grammaticality of the sentences. Second, in many cases, *ge* and *de* can be interchangeable as illustrated in (1.1) and (1.2). Third, both *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position can be followed by descriptive expressions, e.g. *zixi* ‘attentive’. In addition, Song (1993) and You (1983) also noticed that *ge* as a marker of adverbial modifier, however, constructs a resultative structure as indicated by the English translation in (1.2) and *de* in (1.1) introduces a descriptive expression. At the same time, Zhang (2003), Shi and Lei (2004) argued that *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position have different syntactic behaviours in addition to the above mentioned meaning differences, and they do not belong to the same category. As the analogy between post-verbal *ge* and *de* remains problematic, the expressions following *ge* is referred as X, to distinguish from SP following *de*.

This research aims to distinguish *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position when followed by non-nominals and try to suggest an explanation for the appearance of *ge* in this unusual collocation. This paper will tackle the issues from a different perspective, i.e., by studying *ge* and *de* in constructions. Constructions, in term of Construction Grammar, are considered as basic language units, whose properties, either form or meaning, ‘are not strictly predictable from the properties of their component parts’ (Goldberg 1995: 4). The size of a construction can vary from a word to a phrase, as long as they are considered as ‘form-meaning’ pairs. By applying this approach the focus of study is shifted from individual words to larger language units and the collocational aspects are taken into consideration. Thus, in this research, the task of distinguishing *ge* and *de* is shifted to identifying if [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] are distinct constructions encoded with different meanings. In the following, section 2 compares [V *ge* X] with [V *de* SP] in both form and meaning. Section 3 tries to offer an explanation of using *ge* in [V *ge* X] construction. Section 4 is a conclusion.

2. COMPARISON BETWEEN [V *GE* X] AND [V *DE* SP]

As constructions are form-meaning pairs, this section will compare [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] in both aspects respectively.

2.1 Syntactic Behaviours of [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP]

As illustrated above, *de* as a well-entrenched marker of adverbial modifier, can be replaced by *ge*. In other words, in terms of the surface structure, [V *de* SP] and [V *ge* X] can be identical. After careful investigation, many instances suggest that [V *de* SP] and [V *ge* X] do not construct in the same way.

First of all, according to Huang (1988), *de* in [V *de* SP] cliticizes to the preceding verb and it does not permit suffixation to the verb or other kind of insertion between V and *de*. But this is not true in [V *ge* X].

(2.1) a. 张三 把 这 件 事 忘 了 一 个 一 干 二 净

Zhangsan ba zhe jian shi wang-le ge yi.gan.er.jing

Zhangsan BA this CL thing forget -PERF *ge* one.dry.two.clean

Zhangsan completely forgot this thing.

b.* 张三 把 这 件 事 忘 了 得 一 干 二 净

Zhangsan ba zhe jian shi wang-le de yi.gan.er.jing

Zhangsan BA this CL thing forget-PERF *de* one.dry.two.clean

Ge in (2.1a) in the post-verbal position is not interchangeable with *de* like in (2.1b) because [V *ge* X] allows insertion of other elements between V and *ge*, such as the perfective *-le* (2.1a) but [V *de* SP] does not (2.1b).

[V *ge* X] takes pronouns including expletive pronouns between V and *ge* (2.2a), but [V *de* SP] does not (2.2b).

(2.2) a. 他要喝它个大醉

ta yao he **ta ge** dazui

He want drink **it ge** drunk.

He wants to drink until drunk.

b.*他要喝它得大醉

ta yao he **ta de** dazui

He want drink **it de** drunk.

He wants to drink until drunk.

In (2.2), *ta* ‘it’ is an expletive pronoun that denotes an empty set and does not have explicit meaning. But if a pronoun is referential and is the object of V, it can fit in [V *de* SP] as in (2.3).

(2.3) 张三打得他半死

Zhangsan da **de ta** bansi

Zhangsan beat **de him** half.dead.

Zhangsan beat him badly.

In (2.3), the pronoun *ta* ‘him’ is a referential pronoun and functions as the object of the verb *da* ‘beat’ and at the same time the subject of SP *bansi* ‘half.dead’. In this instance, *ta* ‘him’ as a required argument has to be moved after *de* in order to make the expression grammatical. (2.1) (2.2) and (2.3) indicate that in [V *de* SP] *de* is more associated with the preceding verb like a clitic or suffix. On the contrary, *ge* in [V *ge* X] does not show this affiliation between V and *ge*. Furthermore, since *ge* in [V

ge X] is not a classifier, it does not attach to the following X, either. So in [V *ge* X], *ge* does not tend to be bracketed with either V or X while *de* in [V *de* SP] tends to be bracketed with preceding verb as [[V *de*] SP].

Second, X in [V *ge* X] cannot be negated (2.4) or questioned (2.5) like SP in [V *de* SP].

(2.4) a. 说得什么话，让人听得不明白

shuo de shenme hua, rang ren ting **de bu** mingbai.

Say ASP what speech, make people listen **de not** clear

What do you mean? We do not understand.

b.*说得什么话，让人听个不明白

shuo de shenme hua, rang ren ting **ge bu** mingbai.

Say ASP what speech, make people listen **ge not** clear

(2.5) a. 你们睡得如何?

Nimen shui **de ruhe**?

You sleep **de how**?

How was your sleep?

b.*你们睡个如何?

Nimen shui **ge ruhe**?

You sleep **ge how**?

In (2.4), *mingbai* '(understand) clear(ly)' following *de* could be negated but it is not accepted in [V *ge* X]. Similarly, in (2.5), the descriptive expression following *de* is questioned by *ruhe* 'how' but *shui ge ruhe* 'sleep *ge* how' in (2.5b) is not grammatical. These facts imply that the compositionality of these two constructions is not the same.

Third, degree modifiers can modify SP in [V *de* SP] but not X in [V *ge* X]. In (2.6), the degree modifier *hen* ‘very’ can modify *tongkuai* ‘happy’ as SP (a) but *hen* ‘very’ cannot modify the same adjective in [V *ge* X] (b)

(2.6) a. 我们 喝 得很 痛快。

women he **de hen** tongkuai

we drink **de very** happy.

We had a very good drink.

b.*我们 喝 个 很 痛快。

women he **ge hen** tongkuai

we drink **ge very** happy.

To sum up, [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] are syntactically different because (a) *de* is associated with V but *ge* is not; (b) SP in [V *de* SP] can be negated or questioned but X in [V *ge* X] cannot; (c) SP in [V *de* SP] can be modified by degree modifier but X in [V *ge* X] cannot. Since constructions are form-meaning pairs, the semantic distinction between these two constructions will be discussed in the section 2.2.

2.2 Meaning dissimilarities between [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP]

Zhang (2003) mentioned that X in [V *ge* X] indicates the achievement of the action designated by the preceding verb while SP in [V *de* SP] denotes the status. According to the English translation, (1.2) means the listening action will cease until the listener understands but (1.1) only describes a manner of the listening action and it does not involve changing of status. Therefore, [V *ge* X], in contrast to [V *de* SP], denotes an event with an endpoint and, therefore, [V *ge* X] has a telic and bounded aspectual reading while [V *de* SP] does not have. We can test this intuition by putting these two constructions in a context requiring telic and bounded reading, as in (2.7).

(2.7) a. 我们 玩 个 痛快 再 走。

Women wan **ge** tongkuai zai zou.

We play **ge** happy again leave.

Let's leave after having enough fun.

b.*我们 玩得 痛快 再 走。

Women wan **de** tongkuai zai zou.

We play **de** happy again leave.

(2.7) consists of two clauses designating two temporal sequential events. The later event will occur when the first one finishes. This context requires the first event is bounded and telic. Since [V *de* SP] construction does not have telic and bounded aspectual reading, (2.7b) is not accepted; while (2.7a) is grammatical because [V *ge* X] meets the aspectual requirement in this context.

Zhang (2003) associated this semantic difference simply to the elements following *ge/de*. The problem is he did not attach enough importance to the constructions as a whole. First of all, SP and X in [V *de* SP] and [V *ge* X] respectively contribute part of the event designated by the preceding verb. In [V *ge* X], X indicates the ending point of the event while in [V *de* SP], SP describes the status of the subject while doing the action designated by V. The information conveyed by X is closely associated with the action designated by the verbs and therefore they cannot be analyzed independently. Second, obviously, the choice of *ge* and *de* in these two constructions plays an important role in construing their meanings. Based on these facts, it is more reasonable to discuss [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] as a whole. Thus, Zhang (2003)'s argument could be revised as [V *ge* X] as a whole denotes an achievement with telic and bounded aspectual meaning while [V *de* SP], on contrast, describes an ongoing activity with atelic and unbounded aspectual meaning.

The different aspectual interpretation of [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] provides an explanation of the non-compatibility of perfective marker *-le* in [V *de* SP]. As illustrated in (2.1), the perfective marker *-le* cannot suffix to the verb in [V *de* SP] this is not only because of the structural association between V and *de* but the atelic and unbounded reading also prohibits *-le* in this construction. Unlike the insertion of pronouns, *-le* has to attach to verb and it cannot be relocated after *de* in [V *de* SP]. Li and Thompson (1981: 185-202) argued that the perfective suffix *-le* can only occur in VP denoting bounded and telic event. Even though a verb like *da* 'beat' denotes telic event, it still not able to be suffixed by *-le* since the aspectual meaning is not denoted by the verb alone but by the whole construction.

In addition, [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] do not have the same semantic constraints on X/SP. X in [V *ge* X] tends to denote a meaning of extreme degree, which is on the extreme end of a degree scale. As in (2.7), *tongkuai* '(extremely) happy' denotes a status of being happiest and cannot be happier. In (1.2), *zixi* 'attentive' is gradable but in [V *ge* X] it implies that this is the final status that the agent can achieve and the agent cannot do more than this. This extreme degree reading in [V *ge* X] is a semantic feature on the X slot, while [V *de* SP] does not have this reading.

Furthermore, [V *de* SP] and [V *ge* X] involve different event structure. Since V and SP in [V *de* SP] are both predicates, [V *de* SP] has two possible interpretations: one is the argument (either subject

of object of V) carries out an action designated by V and the other is the argument is in a status designated by SP while doing the action designated by V, as demonstrated in (1.1). In other words, [V *de* SP] is encoded with two sub-events. [V *ge* X], however, has only one interpretation, which is action designated by V will stop once the argument (either subject or object of V) achieves the status denoted by X.

2.3 The discourse meaning of [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP]

Guo (2013) mentioned that [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] also differ in subjectivity. According to him, [V *ge* X] expresses a relatively more subjective meaning and, on the other hand, [V *de* SP] describes a more objective situation. The following example from Zhang (2003) best illustrates this distinction.

(2.8) 宝玉恨得掷在地下，指着风筝道：‘若不是个美人，我一顿脚踩个稀烂，踩得稀烂。’(Zhang (2003) example (110))

Baoyu hende zhizai dixia, zhizhe fengzheng dao: ‘Ruo bushi ge meiren, wo yidunjiao duoge xilan, duode xilan’

Baoyu hate throw ground, point.progressive kite say: ‘if not a beauty, I stamp my foot stamp ge broken.into.pieces, stamp *de* broken.into.pieces’

Baoyu threw the kite on the ground angrily and pointed at it, saying: ‘if it is not a beauty (pattern), I will stamp it till it is broken into pieces and it will be broken completely.’

In (2.8), the underlined part is a contrastive structure of [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] patterns. [V *ge* X] denotes the speaker’s determination of destroying the kite and the following [V *de* SP] describes a resultant status of the kite if the speaker stamping on it. Thus, the successive use of these two patterns to designate the same action here is not a waste of ink but a way of emphasizing the anger emotion of the speaker. The speaker wants to destroy the kite so much that in fact the kite will end into pieces.

2.4 Problems with [V *de ge* X]

Before moving to the next section, there is another issue worth mentioning. *De* and *ge* in some instances are used together in post-verbal position, as in (2.9), cited from Zhang (2003).

(2.9)...若 不得 人情 时，这 一 百 棒 打 得 个 七 死 八 活。(水浒传，第七回)

...ruo bu de renqing shi, zhe yi bai bang da de ge qisibahuo.

...If not have mercy time, this one hundred stick beat *de ge* seven.die.eight.live

...If you don't have the luck, you could be injured severely or killed by being flogged one hundred times. (Outlaws of the Marsh, Chapter 7)

When *ge* and *de* are used together in the post-verbal position, *de* always precedes *ge* and this [V *dege* X] pattern is less often found in contemporary Mandarin (You 1983, Wang 1985, Zhang 2003, Su 2010). You (1983) commented that *de* and *ge* join together forming a compound as a complement marker, but *ge* still retains some features of classifiers. Zhang (2003) added that *de* historically is a verb that means 'to obtain' and it completed its grammaticalization as a marker of adverbial modifier as early as 7th century while *ge* is still in the initial stage of grammaticalization from a classifier to complement marker. As a result, *de* is placed closer to the verb than *ge*. However, after careful examination, their arguments seem to be problematic. In (2.9), an example given by Zhang (2003), although *de* and *ge* are used successively, they have separate functions. As indicated by the translation, *de* here has an 'achievable' meaning. Li and Thompson (1981) commented that *de* with achievable meaning is different from *de* in [V *de* SP]. On the other hand, *ge* in this case introduces an ending point of the flogging action and therefore adds an aspectual boundary to the event. In other words, in (2.9), *de* has a function of modality and *ge* adds an aspectual function.

This type of *de+ge* combination is more frequently used before 19th century but less found in modern Mandarin. (2.10) demonstrates an instance of *de* and *ge*'s combination in post-verbal position in modern Mandarin.

(2.10) 他们碰到了土匪，被抢得个精光。(from CCL corpus/modern/journals/)

Tamen pengdao-le tufei, bei qiang de ge jingguang.

They encounter- PERF bandits, PASS rob *de ge* completely.clean.

They encountered bandits and were robbed of all their belongings.

In (2.10), the meaning of *de* is different from that in (2.9) because it does not have the 'achievable' meaning. This instance shows more semantic features of [V *ge* X]. *Jingguang* in this instance denotes a meaning of 'completely done', which is on the extreme end of a degree scale and also indicates the result of the robbing event. Therefore, (2.10) designates a bounded and telic event and it is an instance of [V *ge* X] construction with the insertion of *de* between V and *ge*. Wang (1985) mentioned since 9th century, *de* functioned as a perfective marker to mark accomplishment of an event before the typical perfective marker *-le* came into existence. Su (2010) suggested that in the instances like (2.10), *de* functions the same as *-le* and *de* could be replaced by *-le* without changing the meaning. Wang (1985) also pointed that it is hard to draw a clear cut between *de* of perfective function and *de* as (resultative) adverbial modifier marker, but the former is more 'grammaticalized' than the latter. The other functions of *de*, however, is not the central topic of this paper, but this brief discussion at least arises some awareness that it is problematic to classify *ge* as a marker of adverbial modifier simply by the analogy with *de* in similar grammatical contexts.

Based on the above discussion, [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] are encoded with different meanings in terms of aspectual readings, semantic constraints on X and event structures. Combined with the analysis on their syntactic behaviours, it is clear that [V *de* SP] and [V *ge* X] are different constructions of distinct syntactic structure encoded with different meanings. The most significant differences between these constructions can be presented briefly as follows:

FORM □□ MEANING

[V *ge* X] ³□□ [telic and bounded event with an endpoint, subjective]

[[V *de*] SP] □□ [Atelic and unbounded activity in a manner denoted by SP, objective]

3. *GE* IN [V *GE* X] CONSTRUCTION

After demonstrating that [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] are different constructions, the function of *ge* becomes more mysterious. This section will explore the function of *ge* in [V *ge* X] construction.

3.1 *Ge* in [V *ge* X] construction

In section 2, [V *ge* X] and its [V *de* SP] counterpart has been compared in terms of their aspectual reading. The only difference in the superficial form of these two constructions is the choice of *ge/de*. That is to say, *ge* is the key element to activate or license the endpoint and this function is related to its classifier origin. When *ge* is used as a general classifier, its basic function is to individualize entities denoted by its following nouns and enable nouns to be countable (Chierchia, 1998). To be more specific, *ge* as a classifier individualizes instances of nominal concept and each instance is regarded as an existing entity which is referential and could be quantified. In this sense, *ge* as classifier is considered to form a bounded and concrete unit out of a mass nominal concept. Inherited from this basic semantic property, *ge* in [V *ge* X] pattern can be interpreted as individualizing events from unbounded activities. Activities and states are normally atelic and unbounded and they can be considered as a mass concept in temporal scope (Langacker 1987). For instance, *kande zixi* ‘look with attention’, the activity designated by this phrase does not have an endpoint either inherent or added, and the looking activity could last forever, i.e. unbounded in temporal scope. By analogy, mass noun like water in spatial scope is also considered as unbounded and does not exist in the individual units with physical boundary. According to Chierchia (1998), Chinese nouns are all considered as mass nouns and classifiers help to individualize and singularize discrete entities. Similarly, *ge* in [V *ge* X] individualizes and singularizes discrete and concrete events from unbounded activities. Instead of functioning in spatial scope, *ge* in [V *ge* X] individualizes events in temporal scope. When *ge* is a classifier, nouns co-occur with it denote types of nominal concepts which exist in discrete form in the world or could be construed as existing in discrete form, like *pingguo* ‘apple’ and *lixiang* ‘dream’. Thus, *ge* as a classifier does not create units for nominal concepts. Similarly in [V *ge* X] pattern, as

3 As mentioned above, *ge* in [V *ge* X] here is a separate word from the classifier *ge*, so it is not grouped together with the following X.

discussed above, *ge* also does not create endpoints to these activities, but foregrounds these events with inherent endpoints. Thus, these two types of *ge* (classifier and the one in [V *ge* X]) have the function of individualizing and foregrounding in spatial scope and temporal scope, respectively. (3.1) offers two instances for better understanding *ge* in [V *ge* X]:

(3.1) a. 大火在一两分钟就把舱内所有的氧气耗个精光.

da huo zai yi liang fenzhong jiu ba cangnei suoyou de yangqi hao **ge** jingguang.

Big fire in one two minute at.once TOP. cabin all NOM. oxygen consume **ge** completely.

The big fire consumed all oxygen in the cabin within one or two minutes.

b. 她要留着他，问个水落石出

ta yao liuzhe ta, wen **ge** shuoluoshichu.

she want keep him, ask **ge** water.fall.stone.appear.

She wants to keep him and ask him till she finds the truth.

In (3.1a), *ge*, in post-verbal position, is followed by an adjective *jingguang* ‘completely finished’ and this adjective indicates the resultant status of the consuming event designated by the preceding verb *hao*. The object of the verb *hao* ‘consume’ is *yangqi* ‘oxygen’, which has been placed in the front of the verb by using *Ba*-construction with the function of topicalization. As discussed in the previous section, the post-verbal *ge* tends to select adjectives that describe the extreme degree of a status. The adjective *jingguang* ‘completely finished’ indicates that the oxygen-consumption does not stop until all oxygen is completely finished. The verb *hao* ‘consuming’ alone designates an activity which is not telic or bounded. In (3.1a), *ge* individualizes a concrete oxygen consumption event with an endpoint of ‘finishing oxygen completely’. Thus, *jingguang* ‘completely finished’ is not only the resultant state of the consuming action but also indicates its endpoint. However, this endpoint is not added by *ge*, but inherited in the individualized event. *Ge* simply helps to instantiate such an event. Similarly, in (3.1b), *shuoluoshichu* ‘clearing up doubts by finding out the truth’ implies not simply the resultant state but also the endpoint of the asking activity. That suggests, unlike [V *de* SP] construction, X following *ge* in post-verbal position is not simply an adverbial modifier for the preceding V in the [V *ge* X] construction, it denotes part of the event designated by V. It denotes the endpoint which is inherited instead of being added separately. This argument can be better illustrated as in (3.2).

(3.2) a. 她干什么? 她要问个水落石出。

Ta gan shenme? Ta yao wen **ge** shuiluoshichu.

She does what? She want ask **ge** water.fall.stone.appear.

What she is going to do? She wants to ask (someone) till she found the truth.

b. 她干什么? 她要问他。

Ta gan shenme? Ta yao wen ta.

She does what? She want ask him.

What she is going to do? She wants to ask him.

c. ?? 她干什么? 她要问得水落石出。

Ta gan shenme? Ta yao wen **de** shuiluoshichu.

She does what? She want ask **de** water.fall.stone.appear.

In (3.2), the questions are designed to ask about the actions or events the subject is engaged with. The answer with [V *ge* X] as in (3.2a) is accepted since the construction together denotes a whole bounded event. The answer with the verb and its overt object in (3.2b) is also legitimated because the object is also inherited in the asking event; but the answer in (3.2c) is not acceptable for most native speakers, since it provides additional information which is more than required. It violates the Maxim of Relevance in Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975). This indicates that the status information denoted by SP in [V *de* SP] is not inherited in the activity designated by V. On the other hand, in (2.5), SP in [V *de* SP] can be questioned by using *ruhe* 'how' but X in [V *ge* X] cannot. That means [V *ge* X] construction is less compositional than [V *de* SP] construction.

3.2 The choice of *ge* in [V *ge* X]

Ge in [V *ge* X] construction is originally a classifier but cannot be replaced by other classifier in this construction. There are two reasons for explaining the exclusive choice of *ge*. First of all, since *ge* originates from a counting unit to distinguish singular from plural number concept (Wang 1994), the singular meaning is fundamental in its semantic property. This basic semantic property of *ge* overlaps with the semantic property of numeral *yi* 'one'. Furthermore, the other classifiers are specialized classifiers for certain type of nouns and they also denote features of the entities they collocate. For

example, the classifier *tiao* implies nouns it modifies denotes long, thin entities, and the classifier *zhang* is used for nouns referring entities with flat surface. These additional features to the entities denoted by specialized classifiers imply the existence of the entities and preventing these classifier from cooccurring with non-nominal expressions. *Ge*, however, does not add any other inherited features of entities denoted by the nouns it modifies, so *ge* is the best choice for the construction [V *ge* X].

3.3 Revisit some features of [V *ge* X]

The inherited telic and bounded aspectual meaning is the fundamental semantic property of [V *ge* X], which initiates the other constraints on [V *ge* X] construction. According to the analysis above, X tends to select expressions that locate at the extreme end on the scale of degree and therefore are not gradable. In (3.1a), if the oxygen in the cabin have been completely finished, there is no more left for further consuming and the consumption action has to stop. In (3.1b) when the truth is revealed and doubts are cleared and the ultimate goal of the asking action has achieved, there is no need to carry on the asking action. X following *ge* marks the ultimate degree that the action designated in this construction could achieve and and leave no possibility for the action progressing onwards. Thus, in order to guarantee the telic and bounded reading of [V *ge* X] construction, X has the restriction that it has to indicate a specific degree or situation which guarantees the action will cease once the degree or situation is reached.

The telic and bounded reading on [V *ge* X] also offers an explanation on the fact that X as an adjective, it cannot be negated. In the comparison of *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position, one difference is that the adjective can be negated when following *de* as in (3.3a) but cannot when following *ge* (3.3b).

(3.3) a. 衣服洗 得不 干净

yifu xi **de bu** ganjing.

Clothes wash **de not** clean.

Clothes are not clean after washing.

b.* 衣服洗 个不 干净

yifu xi **ge bu** ganjing.

Clothes wash **ge not** clean.

In (3.3a), *bu ganjing* ‘not clean’ negates the state of being clean of the clothes after washing. The sentence is encoded with two events: ‘the clothes are washed’ and ‘the clothes are not clean’. These

two events are not contradictory. In (3.3b), however, X following *ge* indicates the ultimate goal of the activity and *bu ganjing* ‘not clean’ cannot denote the endpoint of the washing-clothes action. In other word, the negation to X violates the endpoint and telicity of the event, which is not acceptable in [V *ge* X] construction.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the post-verbal *ge* and post-verbal *de* are distinguished by demonstrating that [V *ge* X] and [V *de* SP] are distinct constructions. These two constructions have different internal structures and are encoded with different meanings. In [V *de* SP], *de* as a marker of adverbial modifier, is associated with the preceding verb and can be presented as [[V *de*] SP]; while in [V *ge* X], *ge* is not attached to either V or X. As a result, V and *de* in [V *de* SP] does not allow insertion of any elements. As to the semantic properties of these two constructions, [V *de* SP] entails two events of atelic and unbounded reading: one is designated by V and the other is a status designated by the predicate SP. [V *ge* X] construction on the other hand designates a bounded and telic event as a whole. Since X in [V *ge* X] indicates the ultimate endpoint of the event designated in this construction, X cannot be modified by degree modifiers such as *hen* ‘very’. Furthermore, *ge* in [V *ge* X] is not simply a connector. It helps to individualize a concrete bounded event with inherited endpoint. [V *ge* X] construction is also less compositional than [V *de* SP] not only in terms of their meanings, but also in their syntactic behaviours. X in [V *ge* X] cannot be negated or questioned, unlike SP in [V *de* SP]

Construction Grammar provides a different perspective of studying language units by putting individual word in its collocational contexts. By doing this, it is possible to detect the function of the individual word over larger units. As in this research, *ge* and *de* are studied in constructions, which helps to reveal the fact that *ge* and *de* are not constructed with their collocations in the same way and helps further identify *ge* and *de* in post-verbal position.

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