This paper concerns the *suo V de* construction in Mandarin Chinese, arguing that although the *suo V de* construction shares some properties of free relative clauses (FRs), it is somehow not an FR.

1. **Background:** Alexiadou et al. (2000) define the properties of FRs. They claim (a) that FRs are non-headed relatives, (b) that FRs are DPs, (c) that FRs are definite, and (d) that overt wh-phrases are obligatory in FRs.

2. **Analyses:**

2.1 **Similarities:** Based on the notion of FRs given by Alexiadou et al. (2000), let’s compare the properties of FRs with those of the *suo V de* construction. Consider the *suo V de* construction in (1a) and the structure in (1b) where the structure of the *suo V de* construction follows the sense of Ting (2003). (I have made some modifications on her structure, NP → DP, and the insertion of vP.)

   (1) a. wo xihuan [DP Lisi suo xuan de]  
      “I like what Lisi chooses/chose.”


   The structure of the *suo V de* construction in the lower DP in (1b) is non-headed, and it occupies the argument position of the verb, showing that it is a DP assigned the accusative case by the verb *xihuan*.

   (2) [DP Lisi suo xuan de] wo *(dou) xihuan

      Lisi SUO choose DE I DOU like

      “I like what Lisi chooses/chose.”

Li (2003) mentions that in Mandarin Chinese, indefinite nominal phrases are prohibited in subject or topic position. Thus the grammaticality of the topicalization of the *suo V de* construction in (2) indicates that the construction is definite. However, the insertion of DOU into the matrix clause is needed to license the topicalization. Example (3) shows that only definite clauses can be the preceding noun expression of *dou*, supporting our claim in (2) that the *suo V de* construction is definite.

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(3) [zhexe/nage/*yige/*yixe haizi] wo dou xihuan
[these/that/*one/*some child] I DOU like
“I like these/that/one/some child/children.”

One more property of FRs that is not mentioned in Alexiadou et al. (2000) is that FRs can undergo topicalization. The *suo V de* construction can undergo topicalization, as illustrated in (2).

(4) [DP, Whatever Mary cooks], John likes t.

Based on these similarities between the two clauses, it seems that the *suo V de* construction is an FR; however, there are dissimilarities between them.

**2.2 Dissimilarities:** Besides the similarities the *suo V de* construction has with FRs, there are dissimilarities between them. The object after DE in the *suo V de* construction can be optionally omitted. This is also different from the obligatorily omitted object in FRs.

(5) a. wo xihuan [DP Lisi suo xuan de] (dongxi)
I like Lisi SUO choose DE things
“I like what Lisi chooses/chose.”
b. *I like what Lisi chooses/chose the things.

One thing to notice in (5a) is that the appearance of the object after DE indicates that the *suo V de* construction is headed.

Another dissimilarity is that FRs express only the definite reading while the *suo V de* construction expresses not only the definite reading but also the generic reading. The two readings can be observed in (2).

The last dissimilarity we will look at in the paper is that in FRs the overt wh-phrases are obligatory while, as we know that there is no wh-phrase in Mandarin Chinese, they are not obligatory in the *suo V de* construction.

**3. Conclusion:** Based on the notion of the properties of FRs, this paper provides evidence to show that the *suo V de* construction is not an FR.

References