On some mysteries, asymmetries and derivation of potential *de* construction in Chinese

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In this paper, some mysteries and asymmetries of the Chinese potential *de* construction are investigated. It is shown that a morphosyntactic approach is conducive to accounting for these puzzles. First we explore the possibility of taking *de* and its negative counterpart -*bude* as functional heads (cf. Tsai 2001; T. Wu 2004). It is proposed that *bude* could be a functional head with the negative potential meaning (i.e. impossible/impermissible). This could be evidenced by both empirical data and theoretical deduction. It is argued that *bu* in V–*bu*–R, which is distinct from the normal pre-verbal negative morpheme *bu*, is actually *bude*. This helps to explain why the negative potential meaning is involved in V–*bu*–R. Meanwhile, V–*de/bude* and V–*de/bu–R* are both assumed to be formed through Morphological Merger (cf. Marantz 1988; Embick & Noyer 2001, 2007, etc.). Meanwhile, we have discussed some asymmetries observed between V–*de/bude* and V–*de/bu–R* and some paradigmatic asymmetries between potential V–*de* construction and its negative potential V–*bude* construction. It is assumed that these syntactic asymmetries may be due to some morphological operations related to *de* and *bude*.

**Keywords:** *de, bude, syntax-morphology interface, morphological merger*