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## 0. Introduction

Mandarin Chinese has a syntactic focusing construction which appears on the surface to be functionally equivalent to the English it-cleft construction: the “*shi...de* construction.” The purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which the Mandarin construction and the English construction are indeed similar, both syntactically and discourse-pragmatically. For natural data, I rely on 111 examples of the Mandarin construction culled from a Mandarin novel (69) and from newspaper articles (42), and on the English data I collected from newspaper editorials, mystery novels, historical narratives, and conversations for my dissertation (Hedberg 1990). I also rely on constructed examples from the Mandarin literature. Because, the syntactic structure of the Mandarin construction is controversial in the literature, I first turn to a discussion of the syntactic structure of *shi...de* constructions, and then turn to an analysis of my data.

## 1. *Shi...de* as a biclausal construction

**1.1 My first naive structure.** When I first started looking at the Mandarin *shi...de* construction, I was tempted to view it as maximally similar to the English it-cleft construction. This approach seemed to me to be plausible with the type of example shown in (1):

- (1) Shi WO da po zhei ge beize de (Po-Ching & Rimmington, p. 133)  
SHI I hit break this CLASS cup DE  
'It was I who broke this cup.'

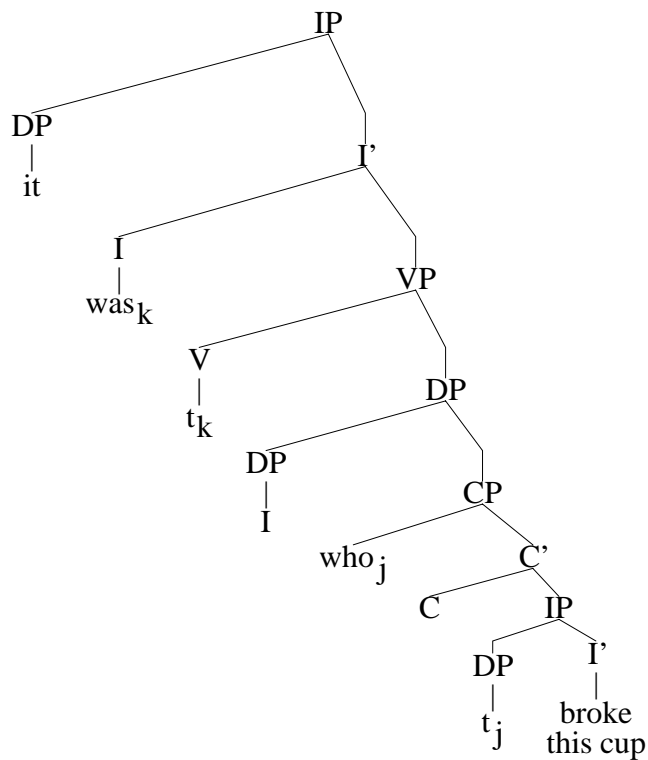
Here it appeared to me that there is a focus (WO) 'I' introduced by a copula (SHI), followed by a relative clause with a gap corresponding to the focus (*da po zhei ge beize de*), with an overtly marked relativizer (DE). I was tempted to view it as syntactically identical to the English it-cleft, except with a null expletive as subject.

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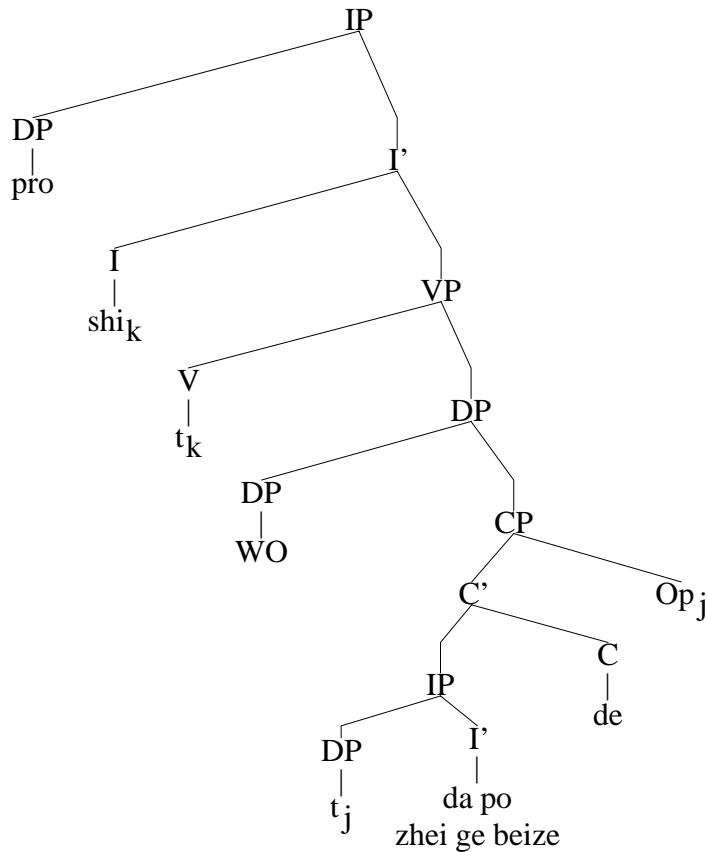
\* This research was supported by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant #410-94-1081. I wish to gratefully acknowledge the work of my research assistants, Zhong-ying Lu and his wife Yixin, in collecting the data and preparing it so that I could understand it.

Thus, just as (2) is the analysis I propose in Hedberg (2000) for a subject it-cleft, so (3) would have been the analysis of the Mandarin *shi...de* construction.

(2)



(3)



Here, I analyzed DE, like English THAT, as the head of CP, and treated ‘who’ in English as comparable to a null operator in Chinese. The only difference is that the head of CP, C, as well as the specifier, is CP-final in Chinese and CP-initial in English. In both cases the cleft clause is adjoined to the clefted constituent for reasons specified for English in Hedberg (2000).

**1.2. Bicausal approaches in the literature.** Upon reading the Mandarin linguistic literature, however, I soon found that nobody analyzes *shi...de* constructions as literally clefts. Nobody structurally distinguishes focus from presupposition. Some researchers such as Hashimoto 1969 and Li & Thompson 1981 treat them as bicausal, but they don’t treat them as cleft.

There are two Mandarin constructions containing SHI and DE which look like pseudoclefts, as in (4), and inverted pseudoclefts, as in (5) (e.g. Cheng 1983: 83):

pseudocleft

- (4) Ta yao de Ø/dongxi shi zidian.  
he want DE Ø/thing SHI dictionary  
What/the thing that he wants is a dictionary

topic-comment inverted pseudocleft

- (5) Zidian shi ta yao de Ø/dongxi  
dictionary SHI he want DE Ø/thing  
'a dictionary is what/the thing he wants'

Although Teng 1979 views sentences like (4) and (5) as synonymous, Cheng 1983 detects a subtle difference between them. He says that they differ in the distribution of focus and topic: “the predicate in (4) denotes identification, while that in (5) denotes subsumption under a class or categorization (i.e., A/the dictionary is what he wants, not what he does not want.” I take it, then, that (5) can only have the interpretation that I called in Hedberg (1988) a topic-comment inverted pseudocleft as opposed to a comment-topic inverted pseudocleft. Focus here seems to be on ‘what he wants’ since it is being contrasted with ‘what he doesn’t want’. It makes sense that Mandarin would have this constraint, as material preceding the main verb is generally considered to function as the topic of the utterance in this language. Presumably, a bare nominal can here function as a topic because it is generic. Topics, in general, cannot be indefinite (c.f. Gundel 1995).

The difference between comment-topic inverted pseudoclefts and topic-comment inverted pseudoclefts in English discourse can be seen in the sentences in (6) and (7). In (6), the fact that there is something miserable (terrible) about the bill is given information and is expressed in the cleft clause; in (7) the new information is expressed in the cleft clause.

comment-topic inverted pseudocleft

- (6) RN: Just a minute. Let me talk to you. It’s a protectionist bill.. There are terrible things in this bill.  
**The stuff that the administration has EMBRACED is what’s MISERABLE.** And if—I think what they’re going to do is there’s going to be a second bill passed without the plant closing provision. They are going then to have worries about plant closings, because...[The McLaughlin Group, 4/29/88]

topic-comment inverted pseudocleft

(7) JM: Number two, is it not true that Nancy Reagan is always right? ... This is not a bash Reagan session. I just want to know whether or not her instincts are invariably correct? I ask you.

MK No, they're not. I mean, **SHE was the one who wanted to keep Reagan from appearing anywhere in PUBLIC.** That was–

JM: But she also has the concern about the man's health. She—he lived through an assassination attempt, remember that. [McLaughlin Group 3/6/87]

I analyze pseudoclefts in English as always topic+comment constructions, as in example (8), where the given information is presented in the cleft clause and the new information in the clefted constituent:

(topic-comment) pseudocleft

(8) RN: I have never, on this program, ever said I was opposed to the INF treaty. **What I am OPPOSED to is DETENTE** and all this dancing around. And what Eleanor did is a little trick that's going on here, and you have some out-of-control zanies like Howard Phillips making intemperate remarks, and all the opposition that's going on to this terrible week is put in Howard Philips' hands...[McLaughlin Group, 12/12/87]

Just to complete the typology of my analysis of cleft constructions in English, so that I can refer back to it later, I'll say now that I distinguish three pragmatic types of it-clefts: topic-clause clefts as in (9), comment clause clefts with a topical clefted constituent, as in (10), and comment-clause clefts with a new or topical clefted constituent as in (11).

topic-clause cleft

(9) JM: I want to ask this question: Why is this agreement so bad? I ask you.

JG: Because our whole intention was to bring some form of democracy there; our intention was to make the Sandinistas cry uncle. **It is the CONTRAS who have cried uncle.** [McLaughlin Group, 3/25/88]

comment-clause cleft with a topical clefted constituent

- (10) It was the President, in a rare departure from the diplomacy of caution, who initiated the successful Panama invasion. **It was also BUSH who came up with the ideas of having an early, informal MALTA summit with GORBACHEV and a second round of troop cuts in EUROPE after the fall of the Berlin WALL.** [M. Dowd and T.L. Friedman, The fabulous Bush and Baker boys, The New York Times Magazine, 5/6/90, p. 64]

comment-clause cleft with a new topic constituent

- (11) [BEGINNING A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE]  
**It was 30 years ago that Richard Nixon melted under the glare of the hot lights and turned television debates into an integral part of North American election campaigns.**

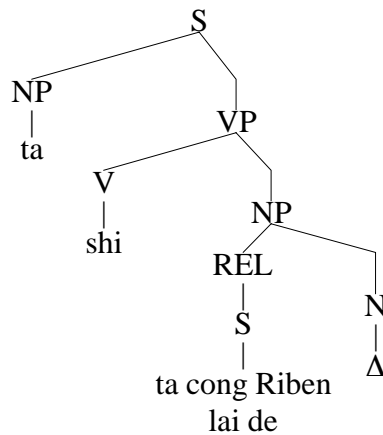
Ever since Nixon blew the presidency to John Kennedy on that sweltering summer night, underdogs have seen debates as a means of exposing the favorite and... [Mike Trickey, TV debate likely to turn election heat up in Ontario,' The Vancouver Sun, 8/18/90, B3]

Turning back to Chinese, Hashimoto 1969 points out that inverted pseudoclefts and *shi...de* constructions may arise from the same string of words. Thus, (12) may be interpreted as 'he is someone from Japan' (the inverted pseudocleft reading) or as 'it is from Japan that he came' (the cleft reading).

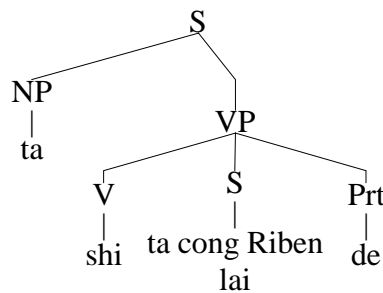
- (12) ta shi cong Riben lai de  
he SHI from Japan come DE  
'It is from Japan that he came'/  
'He is someone from Japan.'

She suggests two underlying structures, given in (13) and (14), (13) for the inverted pseudocleft reading and (14) for the cleft reading. Here the inverted pseudocleft just involves a headless relative clause, with the headless relative clause completed by the relativizer DE. In the cleft reading the DE is analyzed as a nonrelative particle of some unspecified kind.

(13)



(14)



Both trees are underlying structures and will require the subject “ta” ‘s/he’ to be deleted, possibly via equi-NP deletion; she doesn’t discuss it. About the *shi...de* construction, she says that “the whole construction brings into focus the elements enclosed by *shi* and *de*,” but she doesn’t talk about assigning focus to just some of those elements.

Chao 1968 discusses these two uses of *shi* and *de*, and concludes, according to Teng 1979, that there is a single copula but two different *de* particles involved: one a “specifying DE” (for the cleft interpretation), and the other a ‘restrictive DE’ (for the equation--inverted pseudocleft interpretation). Teng says that Chao considers both DE’s to be nominalizers.

Li and Thompson 1981 also don’t use a structure like I have provided in (3) to analyze the structure of *shi...de* constructions. They don’t treat the focus as part of the main clause. Instead they use a simple equative structure schematized in (15):

(15) subject shi nominalization

In this analysis, there is no separation into presupposition and focus. Furthermore they provide no discussion of the difference between cleft readings and inverted pseudocleft readings. They don't distinguish a nominalizer (relativizer) from a particle, like Hashimoto does. It is also interesting that they don't use English *it*-clefts at all to translate *shi...de* constructions. While they point out that textbooks typically say the material between *shi* and *de* is somehow being "emphasized", they propose to "refine" this idea of emphasis by claiming that the *shi...de* construction "serves to characterize or explain a situation by affirming or denying some supposition, as opposed to simply reporting an event." For example compare the sentences in (16):

(16) (a) ta shi zuotian lai de (Li & Thompson, p. 587)  
3sg be yesterday come NOM  
'The situation is that s/he came yesterday.'

(b) ta zuotian lai le (Li & Thompson, p. 590)  
3sg yesterday come PFV  
'S/he came yesterday.'

Here PFV stands for perfective aspect. Most other authors would take focus to fall on "zuotian" in (16a), so that it would be translated as "It was YESTERDAY that s/he came," and would be an appropriate answer to the question, "When did s/he come?".

Li and Thompson say that only (16a) is an appropriate answer to the question "Why couldn't s/he speak English?"; whereas only (16b) is an appropriate answer to the question "Has s/he come yet?". However, I wonder if it is the inverted pseudocleft reading of sentence (16a) that they have in mind here, rather than the cleft reading, so the translation they have in mind for (16a) would be "s/he is a person who came yesterday." The cleft reading, on the other hand, would answer the question "when did s/he come?" Li & Thompson (1981) only discuss examples which contain a subject before SHI, as their schema in (15) shows, so this would indicate the possibility of an inverted pseudocleft reading in all of their so-called "*shi...de* constructions."



If the material after SHI and included up to DE is analyzed as a nominalized clause, as Li & Thompson seem to do, then focus has to be specified as occurring somewhere within the nominalized clause, generally in the initial position. Li & Thompson don't discuss assignment of focus within the nominalized clause.

## 2. *Shi...de* as a monoclausal adverbial focus construction

The second approach to the structure of *shi...de* constructions is a monoclausal approach, which treats *shi* as an adverbial focus marker appended to the beginning of the focus phrase with the *de* occurring at the end of the sentence as a past tense marker or a completive aspect marker. This approach is advocated by Teng 1979, Huang 1982, and Zhu 1996, all of whom distinguish the *shi...de* construction from inverted pseudocleft equative structures. This approach seems plausible with the type of example shown in (17):

(17) Wo mingtian shi DAO NIU YUE qu (\*de).

I tomorrow be to New York go (\*DE).

'It is to New York that I go tomorrow.'

Here, because the event designated is not in the past time or is not completed, there can be no DE particle. DE elsewhere acts as an obligatory nominalizing particle, the absence of which in (17) thus argues against analyzing the material after the focus as a nominalized clause. In this example, to maintain my original bi-clausal analysis, the subject and adverbial would need to be analyzed as fronted through topicalization.

Treating DE as a tense/aspect particle as opposed to a nominalizer is supported by the fact that DE can appear as a verb-final particle as opposed to a sentence-final particle in *shi...de* constructions, as (18) shows, like the perfective particle LE in (19).

(18) Wo shi mai de feizao (Po-Ching & Rimmington, p. 134)

I SHI buy DE soap

'It was soap that I bought'

(19) Wo mai le feizao

I buy LE soap.

‘I bought soap’

DE can even occur as an infix, as Huang (1982) shows in (20), like the perfective particle LE in (21):

(20) Ta shi qunian jie-de-hun (Huang 1982: 313)

he be last-year mar-ASP-ry

‘It was last year that he got married.’

(21) Ta shi qunian jie-le-hun (Huang 1982: 313)

he be last-year mar-ASP-ry

‘It was last year that he got married.’

Also, as Shi (1994: 83) points out, DE as a nominalizer is obligatory in (22) but DE in a *shi...de* construction is in general optional and cannot occur in future-situation sentences like (17). DE as a nominalizer is also obligatory in pseudoclefts as Hedberg & Jhang 1994 point out. See for example (23).

(22) Ta baba shi zhong di \*(de)

he father be sow field DE

‘His father is a farmer’ (literally ‘His father is one who sows the field’)

(23) Wo zuotian kanguo \*(de) shi zhe-ben shu

I yesterday read SHI DE this-CLS book

‘What I read yesterday was this book.’

Finally, as Hedberg & Jhang (1994: 254) point out, in pseudoclefts and inverted pseudoclefts a lexical noun can be placed after DE, as (24a) and (b) show, but an attempt to do so in a clear *shi...de* construction results in severe ungrammaticality as (24c) shows.

(24) (a) Wo zuotian kanguo de shu shi zhe-ben shu

I yesterday read DE book SHI this-CLS-book

‘The book I read yesterday is this book.’

- (b) Zhe-ben shu shi wo zuotian kanguo de shu  
this-CLS book SHI I yesterday read DE book  
‘This book is the book I read yesterday.’

- (c) \*Shi zhe-ben shu wo zuotian kanguo de shu  
SHI this-CLS book I yesterday read DE book

Advocates of this second approach to the structure of clefts argue that SHI is a focus marker transformationally introduced (Teng 1979), or a focus adverb (Huang 1982) because it can appear before almost any phrase in the sentence with no change in word order in the sentence, so it looks like an adverbial SHI is just being appended before the focus. Observe, for example, the sentences in (25):

- (25) (a) Wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao nide gou  
I at park-in find your dog  
‘I found your dog in the park.’

- (b) Shi wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao nide gou de (Teng 1979, p. 102)  
SHI I at park-in find your dog DE  
‘It was I who found your dog in the park.’

- (c) Wo shi zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao nide gou de (Teng 1979, p. 103)  
I SHI at park-in find your dog DE  
‘It was in the park that I found your dog.’

- (d) Wo zai gongyuan-li shi zhao-dao nide gou de  
I at park-in SHI find your dog DE

'It was find your dog that I did in the park.'

Teng (1979) points out that the mystery with his approach is that SHI cannot be added before the direct object, as (26) shows, either in postverbal or in fronted position:

- (26) (a) \*Wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao shi nide gou de  
I at park-in find SHI your dog DE  
'It was your dog that I found in the park.'
- (b) \*Shi nide gou wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-daode (Teng 1979, p. 103)  
SHI your dog I at park-in find DE  
'It was your dog that I found in the park.'

The question here is why should a focus marker fail to be able to modify a verb's direct object?. To focus the direct object, other devices are needed. A pseudocleft can be used as in (27a), or *shi* can be placed before the verb phrase and phonological stress placed on the direct object as in (27b) (Shi 1994). Cheng 1983 points out that repetition of topicalized verb material in the post-SHI material serves to defocalize it, thus leaving the unrepeated material as focus, as in (27c). Furthermore, some researchers (Po-Ching & Rimmington, p. 134) say that placement of DE immediately after the verb serves to focus the direct object, as in (27d):

- (27) (a) Wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao de shi nide gou  
I at park-in find DE SHI your dog  
'What I found in the park was your dog.'
- (b) Wo zai gongyuan-li shi zhao-dao nide GOU de  
I at park-in SHI find your dog DE  
'It was your dog that I found in the park.'
- (c) Wo zai gongyuan-li zhao-dao shi zhao-dao nide gou.  
I at park-in find SHI find your dog.

‘It was your dog that I found in the park.’

- (d) Wo zai gongyuan-li shi zhao-dao de nide gou  
I at park-in SHI find DE your dog  
‘It was your dog that I found in the park.’

With respect to the mystery of why SHI doesn’t occur before the object of the verb, Shi 1994 (p. 85) points out that adverbs in Chinese do not in general occur in post-verbal position, so the analysis of Huang (1982), which treats SHI as a focus adverb, does cover the data pointed out by Teng (1979).

### 3. *Shi...de* as a mono-clausal modal construction

A third approach to *shi...de* sentences is that of Cheng 1983 and Shi 1994. Again they would both distinguish *shi...de* constructions from inverted pseudocleft equative constructions. They analyze SHI as a modal verb. Cheng 1983 analyzes SHI as denoting confirmation and analyzes DE as an aspectual-modal particle denoting emphatic assertion of an unchanged situation. That is, DE serves to assert that the situation denoted by the sentence is an unchanged fact. DE can occur with this meaning even in sentences without SHI. This analysis seems to me to support an argument of similarity between the *shi...de* construction and English clefts, since it indicates that the material in the scope of DE is presupposed. The reason for the non-occurrence of DE in future-situation sentences might be that future situations can’t be reported as unchanged facts. While Shi 1994 analyzes SHI as a modal verb, he analyzes DE as a perfective aspect marker.

Evidence for the SHI as a matrix verb analysis as opposed to an adverb is that SHI is negated like a matrix verb as in (28), and is questioned like a matrix verb as in (29):

- (28) bu shi WO da po zhei ge beize de.  
not SHI I hit break this CLASS cup DE  
‘It wasn’t I who broke this cup.’

- (29) Shi bu shi WO da po zhei ge beize de?  
SHI not SHI I hit break this CLASS cup DE?

‘Was it I who broke this cup?’

Shi (1994) points out that while the normal position for modal verbs is between the subject and main verb, some other modal verbs in Chinese can appear in sentence-initial position and can take the question V-not-V form, so that this is not a property solely of SHI as (30) shows:

- (30) (a) Yinggai Yaoqi qu (Shi 1994: 86)  
should Yaoqi go  
‘It should be the case the Yaoqi goes (there)’
- (b) Ying-bu-yinggai Yaoqi qu? (Shi 1994: 86)  
should not should Yaoqi go  
‘Should it or should it not be the case that Yaoqi goes?’

Cheng 1983 points out that some modal verbs cannot appear S-initially without the support of a following SHI, for example (31):

- (31) Hui shi/\*hui wo mingtian zai gongyua-li yao jian ta.  
will SHI/will I tomorrow at park want see him  
‘It will be I that will see him in at the park tomorrow.’

The first person in the English language Chinese literature that I’ve come across to try to specify where between *shi* and *de* focus occurs is Cheng (1983:76), who proposes the rules in (32) for identification of the focus in between *shi* and *de*:

- (32) 1. If there is one or more outer elements of a verb phrase (subject, time, or place adverbial) within the *shi*-predicate, the leftmost one is always the focus.
2. If there is no such element, then an optional element that appears at the leftmost or rightmost position is the focus.

3. If there are optional elements on both sides of the main verb, focus interpretation is often ambiguous.

It isn't clear what he means by 'optional elements.' As an example of his third rule in action, he cites the sentence in (33):

- (33) Ta shi guyi dapo le nide huapin  
he SHI on-purpose break ASP your vase  
'It was on purpose that he broke your vase.'  
'It was your vase that he broke on purpose.'

Here, both the direct object and the 'on purpose' adverbial are apparently "optional" elements; thus either of them can be focussed.

Shi 1994 says that when SHI appears before the subject, emphasis is on the subject; when it comes between the subject and the verb, emphasis is on the constituent immediately following. If SHI immediately precedes the verb, emphasis is placed on the verb, the object or on the whole VP.

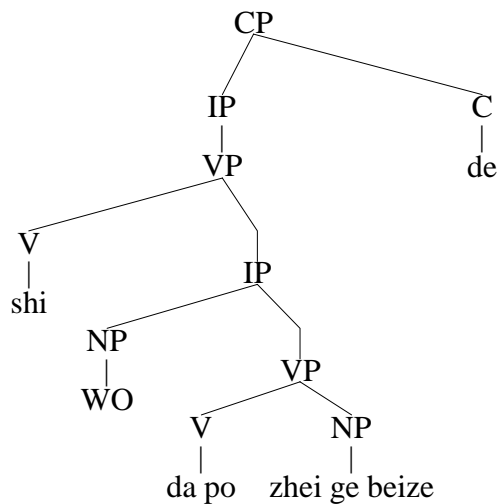
One piece of possible evidence for analyzing *shi* as a modal verb is a historical argument, put forth in Yen 1986. Traditionally, the copula and emphasis marker *shi* in Modern Chinese has been assumed to be historically derived from a proximal demonstrative particle in Classical Chinese. However Yen argues that it came into the language as a particle of affirmation, in complementary distribution with the negative particle *fei*. It seems to me that this account supports the view that *shi* is a modal verb denoting confirmation, at least in emphatic sentences like *shi...de* constructions.

#### 4. My current analysis

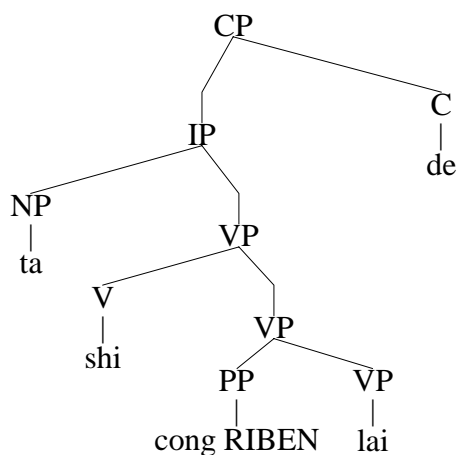
Of the preceding analyses, I will follow most closely that of Cheng 1983 and Shi 1994, especially that of Cheng 1983. I analyze SHI as a modal verb which is followed by (governs) an S or a VP constituent, and I analyze DE as a modal particle, as does Cheng. I refer to this material between SHI and DE (when it occurs) as the 'scope' of SHI. Phonological and semantic focus falls on some constituent in the scope of SHI (generally, the initial constituent); the remaining material is presupposed. I analyze adverbial PP focussed constituents as pre-

adjoined to VP and thus within the scope of a SHI which governs a VP. I analyze a subject focus as the initial phonologically-focussed constituent in an S-scope of SHI. An object cannot be the scope of SHI (Teng 1979); I explain this by allowing only VP or S scope, not NP. A fronted object is a topic, and thus would have to appear before SHI. My current syntactic analysis of sentence (1) is thus roughly as shown in (34), and my analysis of the *shi...de* interpretation of sentence (9) is shown in (35). I treat DE as a modal particle and thus place it in the complementizer position.

(34)



(35)



Perhaps DE should be viewed as an aspect particle and thus placed in a head of AspP position. Some apparent *shi...de* constructions translate as inverted pseudoclefts in English and contain DE even in non-past



contexts; I analyze these as inverted pseudoclefts, containing a nominalized clause. As mentioned before, Mandarin also has pseudoclefts, but these are easy to distinguish from *shi...de* constructions.

## 5. Data collection

For data I hired a native Mandarin research assistant, a PhD student, Zhong-ying Lu and sent him off to search for *shi...de* constructions in newspapers (the Hongkong Daily, the World Daily, the Ming News, and the Huaxia Digest) and in a novel called “Enclosure of the City”, which was first published in 1947 and was written by Qian Zhong-shu. Lu brought back 111 examples together with some of the context, generally the preceding context, which he and his wife then transcribed from characters into Pinyin romanization, glossed and translated for me. He indicated the scope of *shi* and where he thought focus would go. I should say that I have been trying to study Mandarin for years but am only of beginning fluency, which is why I needed glossing of all the examples. The translation is necessarily rough, partly because of Lu’s lack of complete command of English and partly due to the fact that Chinese and English are such different languages, and Lu is not a professional translator. I have left tone marks off all examples in this paper because for the most part I don’t know the tones; they were transcribed without tone marks.

## 6. Data analysis

Table 1 shows the distribution of inverted pseudoclefts and *shi...de* constructions in the data. 110 of the examples contained a VP or an S between *shi* and *de*. As I will demonstrate later, one example contains two sentences between *shi* and *de*. A few of the examples don’t contain *shi*, but Lu indicates that *shi* is possible in the position I count. The same goes for *de*: several examples don’t contain *de*, but could contain it in the marked position.

inverted pseudoclefts	36	(32%)
<i>shi...de</i> constructions:		
subject	25	(23%)
object	1	(1%)
prepositional phrase	18	(16%)
adverbial	10	(9%)
adverbial clause	2	(2%)
sentence	3	(3%)
verb	7	(6%)
verb phrase	9	(8%)
TOTAL	111	(100%)

**Table 1. Distribution of *shi...de* constructions and inverted pseudoclefts**

## **inverted pseudoclefts**

The first step in analyzing the data is to try to separate out the inverted pseudoclefts from the true *shi...de* constructions. I analyzed 36 of the 111 total examples as inverted pseudoclefts. My test for inverted pseudoclefts was to try to see if I could insert a head noun after the DE and arrive at an equative interpretation. For example the example in (36) is, in fact, almost translated with an inverted pseudocleft. The missing head noun could be *dongxi* ‘thing’.

- (36) WICN3. Liang ren chi-wan xiang zou,  
two person eat-finish want leave
- Aliu bu xian shoushi zuozhi-shang dongxi,  
Aliu not first clear-away table-on thing
- xiaoxixi kan-zhe tamen liang.  
smile look-ZHE they both
- Shen-chu shou lai,  
stretch-out hand come
- shouxin-li san-zhi nuren jia toufa de cha,  
palm-in threeCI woman clip hair of hairpin
- da guangdong guanhua  
use Cantonese Mandarin
- tuonedaishui de shuo:  
slovenly DE say
- "Fang xiansheng,  
Fang Mr.
- zhe **shi** [*wo gangcai pu ni de chuang jian-dao*](Complex S) **de**." p21  
this SHI I just make you of bed pick-up DE

When they (Mr. Fang and Miss Bao) were about to leave after breakfast, looking at them with smile, Aliu (waiter) stretched out his hand towards them without first clearing up the table. There were three woman's hairpins in his palm. He told to Mr. Fang slovenly in Mandarin with strong Cantonese accent: "They were what I picked up in your bed when I was making your bed." (The hairpins were left there by Miss Bao.)

In the examples, Lu indicates *shi* and *de* in bold face, indicates the scope of *shi* with italics and bold-faces what he considers the focus. He also indicates the syntactic category of the scope. I have underlined the sentence in the translation that corresponds to the *shi...de* construction.

Perhaps a clearer example of an inverted pseudocleft is that shown in (37). Here the missing head noun is *ren* 'person'. Again the inverted pseudocleft interpretation is specified in the translation.

- (37) WICN4. Hongjian.....shuo:  
H. say
- "Jidujiao shi jie li yi-tiao shi  
Christianity ten discipline in oneCl be
- 'bie sha ren',  
don't kill human-being
- keshi yisheng cu-diao zhiye-hua de sha ren yiwai,  
but doctor except-for professionized of kill human-being out
- hai gan shenme?"  
also do what
- Bao xiaojie hao wu youmo de shengqi dao:  
Bao Miss little no humorous DE angry say
- "Hushuo!  
nonsense
- yisheng **shi** [*jiu ren shengming*](VOO) **de**." p23  
doctor SHI save person life DE

Hongjian (Mr. Fang) ... said: "One of the ten disciplines in Christianity is 'Never kill human being', but what else does a doctor do except for killing people professionally?" Miss Bao (who is a doctor) was upset, argued with no humor: "Nonsense! A doctor is a person who saves people's life."

Both of these examples are topic-comment inverted pseudoclefts, as opposed to comment-topic inverted pseudoclefts. In fact, all 36 examples of inverted pseudoclefts are topic-comment pseudoclefts, with the possible exception of (38).

- (38) WICN56. Roujia dao: "Zhe shi nide fangzi,  
Roujia say this be your house
- ni jia de ren dangran keyi zhi chu zhi jin,  
you family of person of-cause can straight out straight in
- wo (**shi**) [*yidian zhuquan meiyou*] **de**.  
I SHI little right not DE
- Wo you bu shi ni jiali de ren,  
I just not be you family of person
- mei nianzou jiu suan yunqi le." p381  
not drive-out already count-as luck LE

Roujia said: "This is your house. People from your family certainly can get in and out without hesitation. I am the person who doesn't have any right. I don't belong to your family. I just feel lucky not to be driven out of here."

Not, however, that Lu didn't indicate focus as falling on the subject. This is one of two inverted pseudocleft examples with SHI missing in the original version. Perhaps this is significant.

### subject focus

The greatest number of *shi...de* constructions were subject focus examples: twenty-five. (39) shows a cleft interpretation with a subject focus. Interestingly, it is preceded by *zhe* 'this' as if it might be *athis*-cleft (Ball 1977, Hedberg 1999): "This is you who harm me". Otherwise *zhe* can be considered to be topicalized: "As for this, it is you who harm me."

- (39) WICN16. "Chi dongxi you sheme haokan?  
eat food have what interest
- Liao qiao-zhe ren,  
always look ZHE person
- hao yisi me?  
good meaning ME
- Wo bu yuanyi chi gei ni kan,  
I not want eat give you look
- suoyi bu chi,  
so not eat
- zhe **shi** [*ni hai wo*] (S) **de** -- haha,  
this SHI you harm me DE Ha Ha
- Fang xiansheng, bie diangzhen,  
Fang Mr. not take-serious
- wo bing mei zhidao  
I really not know
- ni zai kan pang ren chi. p71  
you at look other person eat

"Are you interested in looking at eating? Are you not ashamed to staring at me? I don't like to be looked at in this way, so I don't want to eat at all. It is you that affect me -- Ha ha, Mr. Fang, don't be serious; I really didn't know that you were looking at someone eating."

Here, the material in the scope after the focus is presupposed in the sense of being activated in the discourse context. Another good example of a subject focus is shown in (40).

- (40) WICN5. Aliu guihun side chuxian le,  
Aliu ghost like appear LE
- xiang Bao xiaojie yao jiuqian.  
from Bao Miss ask tip
- Bao xiaojie yan beng huoxing dao:  
Bao Miss eye spurt spark say
- "Cihou chi fan de shangqian,  
serve eat meal of tip
- zuotian zao gei le.  
yesterday early gave LE
- Ni hai yao sheme shang?  
you also want what reward
- Wo fangchang you bu **shi** [*ni guan*](S)**de**." p27  
I room also not Shi you care DE
- Aliu appeared like a ghost and asked Miss Bao for tip. Miss Bao said with extreme anger:  
"I already gave you yesterday for your serving our dinner. What else do you want? My room is not cared by you anyway."

This could be translated as an it-cleft: "As for my room, also it's not you who cares for it." The presupposition of the English cleft, "It's not you who cares for my room": "who cares for my room" is split between the topic phrase, "my room" and the material following the focus in between *shi* and *de*, "care for".

Another example, containing multiple examples of subject foci, is shown in (41):

- (41) WICN21. "Wo zhi hen zheyang hao shi  
I only hate such nice poetry
- pian **shi** [*Wang Erkai zuo*] (S) **de**,  
just SHI Wang Erkai do DE,
- tai bu gongping le!"  
too no fair LE
- "Wo gaoshu ni,  
I tell you
- zhe-shou shi  
thisCl poetry
- bing bu **shi** [*Wang Erkai zuo*](S) **de**."  
indeed not SHI Wang Erkai do DE

"Name, shui zuo de?"  
then who do DE

"**Shi** [*wo zuo-zhe wan-er*](S)**de**.                      p96  
SHI I do ZHE play DE

"I was just felling bad that such a wonderful poetry was written by Wang Erkai. It's really unfair!"

"I tell you now, That poetry was not written by Wang Erkai."

"Then, who wrote it?"

"I did for fun."

Here, three clauses can be translated as it-clefts: ‘As for such nice poetry, it was Wang Erkai who wrote it’: “As for the poetry, indeed it was not Wang Erkai who wrote it; and “It was I who wrote it, for fun”. Notice that the last of these clefts answers the explicit question, “who did it?” Thus the focus of the *shi...de* construction fills the variable of the question. Although the first one might an inverted pseudocleft: “such nice poetry is Wang Erkai made poetry”.

A good example of a subject focus *shi...de* construction preceded by a topic is shown in (42):

(42) WICN24.      Jintian de putao zhi, jiu, niunai  
today of grape juice wine milk

dou **shi** [*wo dai-lai*] (S) **de**,  
all SHI I bring-come DE

mei jiao guanzi-li yubei.                      p106  
not ask restaurant prepare

It's me who bring all the grape juice, wine and milk today, not prepared by restaurant.

Here Lu offers an it-cleft as the translation. A more precise translation would perhaps be: “As for today’s grape juice, wine and milk, it’s I who bring it all. It’s not prepared by a restaurant.” The fact that someone brought it is presumably activated in the extralinguistic discourse context.

Example (43) is a particularly interesting example because it appears at first glance to contain a “vice-versa cleft” of the type identified in Ball & Prince 1977.

(43) WICN36.      Xinger      zhe qiao  
fortunately this bridge

ye you zou-wan      de shihou,  
also have walk-finish of time

Sun xiaojie hui lian,  
Sun Miss turn face

shengli de weixiao,  
victory DE smile

Hongjian tiao-xia qiao tu,  
Hongjian jump-off bridge ramp

rang-dao: "Mei jin diyu,  
shout not enter hell

yijing fa zou Naihe qiao le!  
already punish walk Naihe bridge LE

qianmian hai you zhe zhong qiao meiyou?" ...  
in-front also have this kind bridge not?

Xinmei xiao shuo: "Sun xiaojie,  
Xinmei smile say Sun Miss

**shi** [*ni zai-qianmian ling-zhe ta?*]  
SHI you at-the-ahead lead-ZHE him

*haishi ta zai-houmian zhaogu ni*](Compound S)(**de**)?"  
or he at-the-back take-care you DE

Hongjian huangran mingbai,  
Hongjian suddenly understand

renjia weibi kan-chu  
other-people not-neccessarily see-out

ziji de quenuo wuyong,  
self of timid useless

gen zai Sun xiaojie houmian  
follow at Sun Miss behind

keyi you liang zhong jieshi,  
can have two kind explanation

mang qiangxian shuo:  
hurry first say

"**Shi** [*Sun xiaojie ling wo guo qiao*](S) **de**." pp174-175  
SHI Sun Miss lead me pass bridge DE

Fortunately, the bridge was over, so Miss Sun turned over with victorious smile on her face. Hongjian jumped down from the bridge ramp and shouted: "I have been punished to go over Naihe Bridge (a bridge between our world and hell in Chinese culture) without entering Hell! Is there such bridge in the front?" ... Xinmei said with smile: "Miss Sun, was it you who led him (to go over the bridge) or was it he who took care of you following you?" Hongjian suddenly understood, perhaps that they didn't realize his timidness, so running behind Miss Sun might have two explanations. He replied immediately: "It was Miss Sun who led me to go over the bridge."

“Was it YOU in the front leading HIM, or was it HIM in the back taking care of YOU?” As with the examples discussed by Ball and Prince—*It wasn't John who shot Mary; it was Mary who shot John*, in the first two examples here, the presupposition seems to be that someone led someone over the bridge, instead of the entire material following the focussed subject being presupposed. Lu only indicates focus on the subject in these examples. It would be very interesting to find out if phonological focus also falls on the object pronouns.

### object focus

I found only one example (44) that can arguably be analyzed as an object focus *shi...de* construction. Although Lu didn't use a cleft to translate it, I think it can be translated as “As for me, at first, it was your clothing I noticed.”

- (44) NEWS2.11. Ta hen qiande xiaolexiao:  
she very superficial smile
- "Wo yizhi jiu zuo zai nide duimian.  
I always just sit at your opposite
- Wo kaishi **shi** [*zhuyi-dao nide yishang*] (VO) (**de**),  
I first SHI notice your clothing
- wo shi [*zuo shizhuang shengyi*] (VO)de,  
I SHI do fashionable-dress business DE
- dui ren-men de fushi zongshi hen mingan".  
to people of dress always very sensitive
- 'She said with a very slight smile: "I have been sitting opposite to you. First, your dressing attracted me, because I am running a fashion business. I am always sensitive to people's dressing.'

Here, the fact that she noticed something about him can be taken to be presupposed (activated in the discourse context) because she finds it worthwhile to begin talking to him.

### PP-focus

(45) and (46) show two examples of the eighteen PP focus *shi...de* constructions. Lu used it-clefts to translate these, so they are relatively uncontroversially *shi...de* constructions.

- (45) WICN46. Han Xueyu yue Hongjian  
Han Xueyu invite Hongjian



shang ta jia qu chi wanfan,  
go he home to eat dinner

Hongjian xie-guo ta,  
Hongjian thank-GUO he

Han Xueyu you weizuo bu shuohua le,  
Han Xueyu again sit-up-properly not speak LE

Hongjian chihao zhao hua fuyan, bian wen:  
Hongjian only-can find word go-through just ask

"Tingshuo shao-furen **shi** [*zai MeiGuo qu*] (VP) **de**?" p243  
hear your-wife SHI at America marry DE

Han Xueyu invited Hongjian to have dinner in his house. After Hongjian thanked him, Han Xueyu just sit there without speaking. Hongjian had to search for some words to go through the situation, so he asked: "Was it in America where you married your wife?"

This example would seem to be an all-comment construction since no part of it is activated in the discourse context.

The presupposition is familiar instead of activated.

- (46) NEWS1.5 Delan xiunu  
Delan nun
- shi** [*zai shang zhouwu*]  
SHI at last friday
- xinzang bing fa er si*] (Complex S)(de),  
heart disease break-out and die DE
- xiangnian bashiqi sui.  
die-at-the-age-of 87 years

'It was last Friday that Nun Delan died with heart attack, when she was 87 years old.'

There isn't enough context given here to determine for sure, but this looks like it could begin a newspaper article, and thus be an informative-presupposition cleft in the terms of Prince 1978 or an all comment cleft in the terms of Hedberg 1990, or in the terms of Hedberg 1999, a cleft whose presupposition is uniquely-identifiable but not familiar.

### Adverbial focus

(47) shows one of the ten examples of adverbial focus. Lu translated it with an it-cleft.

- (47) WICN6. Ta zhidao Su xiaojie de xiaolao  
he know Su Miss of service

**shi** [*bu hao shuibian ling qing*](VP) **de**;  
SHI not can easily accept kindness DE

ta mei ding yi-ge niukou  
she every sew oneCl button

huo bu yi-ge dong,  
or repair oneCl stitch

ziji liangxin-shang  
self conscience-on

jiu zheng yi-fen  
just add one-Cl

xiang ta qiu hun de zeren. p32  
towards she beg marriage of responsibility

He knew it was not easily that one could accept any of Miss Su's services. Every time she sewed a button or stitch, he just felt that he should increase his responsibility to ask her for marriage with conscience.

Perhaps a more faithful translation would be: “He knew of Miss Su’s services that it is not easily that one could accept her kindness.” The translation into a cleft in English is not straightforward in this example since the scope of SHI is only a VP and not an S.

### adverbial clause focus

Example (48) shows one of the two ‘because’ clause foci in the data. Lu translates it with an it-cleft.

- (48) NEWS1.7 Guanfang Xinhua she  
government Xinhua news
- yinshu yi-ming nuxing qiufan biaoshi,  
quote one-Cl female prisoner indicate
- ta yuanben  
she original
- shi** [*yinwei weihai guojia anquan zuiming*  
SHI because harm national safe crime
- er bei pan ru yu si nian*] (Complex S)**de**,  
and Bei judge in jail four year DE
- dan xianzai ta gan-dao  
but now she feel
- shifen aohui.  
very regret

The government-supported Xinhua News quoted a statement of a female prisoner: It was for the crime of jeopardizing the national safety that she was sentenced to be in jail for four years, but she is feeling very regret now.'

Here, the material in the scope of SHI after the focus is presumably new to the reader and thus is not activated.

### sentential focus

Three examples appeared to have a full sentence focus. These do not translate well into it-clefts. (49) is one example. This is the only example where *shi* appears to have more than one sentence in its scope. Emphasis is being placed on the first sentence, but there doesn't appear to be a presupposition.

(49) WICN25

"Zhe-ge zi  
thisCI word

**shi** [*you ren zai sheme shu-shang*  
SHI have person at what book-on

*kanjian le gaoshu Bertie,*  
see LE tell Bertie

*Bertie gaoshu wo*] (Compound S)**de**." p109  
Bertie tell me DE

"It was the case that someone saw this word from some book and told Bertie, then Bertie told me."

### Verb focus

Seven examples contain emphasis on an initial verb, generally a modal verb. These don't translate into it-clefts.

One example is shown in (50):

(50) NEWS2.6

Beiliya dui Yeliqin de  
Belia to Yeliqin of

Yimei zhi ci zuo-chu huiying:  
praise of words do-out response

"Ruguo meiyou ta de geren meili ji poli,  
if no he of personal charm and daring-and-resolution

**shi** [*bu-keneng qude ruci juda de jinbu*] (VP)(**de**),  
SHI impossible gain such huge of improve DE

gaige ye bu-keneng tuixing.  
reform also impossible carry-out

'Belia (an official of USA) made a response to the compliment of Yeliqin (president of Russia): "It was impossible to make such a big progress and carry out the reform (in Russia) without his (Yeliqin's) personal charm and boldness.'

The material after the focus in the scope of SHI is presumably presupposed, however.

### verb phrase focus

Finally, nine examples contain focus on an entire VP. These don't translate into it-clefts either. One example is shown in (51). This example would be well-translated by Li & Thompson's "the situation is that" construction: "The situation is that I would like to move back tomorrow." The character then goes on to explain why.

- (51) WICN28      Fang Hongjian    xiufen      tou-shang,  
                          Fang Hongjian ashamed-and-resentful head-on
- jishi-ju hua tongshi    yong-dao    zui-bian,  
                          tensCl word same-time gush-arrive mouth-beside
- zhi    zhengzha chulai:  
                          only struggle come-out
- "Wo **shi** [*xiang mingtian ban huilai*](VP) (de),  
                          I    SHI think      tomorrow move back      DE
- wo zhangmu      zai fa shengjingbing,  
                          I mother-in-law ZAI in mental-disorder
- ta zui ai wu shi sheng feng,  
                          she most love no thing make wind
- zhen hunzhang -- "  
                          really terrible

p142

In extreme shame and anger, Fang Hongjian could only gush out one sentence out of tons of thoughts: "It is true that I would like to move back (to his mother's home), because my mother-in-law's mind is out of order now. She is really terrible. She most likes to make trouble from nothing."

Here the focus is identical with the scope of SHI, and there is no presupposition.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I'd like to say that I feel my syntactic analysis to be correct, and that it is imperative to distinguish between inverted pseudoclefts and *shi...de* constructions to arrive at this syntactic analysis. *Shi...de* constructions, for the most part, do seem indeed to be functionally equivalent to English it-clefts, except for

sentential, verb phrase and verbal focus subtypes, which remain mysterious in translation. More work needs to be done here to find out their precise translation. My data is confused here and I need more information from native speakers. Perhaps the most interesting fact about the *shi...de* constructions compared to English clefts is that the presupposition of English clefts needs to be split in Chinese between topic material that precedes *shi*, and presupposed material that follows the focus between *shi* and *de*. Thus a framework for the analysis of cleft sentences in general which distinguishes between topic and presupposition would be especially valuable for Chinese.

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