

***It*-Clefts in an English Text and *Shi...*(*de*) in Its Mandarin Translation**

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Abstract

Mandarin *shi...de* ‘be...particle’ and bare *shi* (without *de*) constructions have often been considered as clefts, a completive focus construction, which identifies a focus constituent that has been instantiated as a variable in a presupposition. However, Shyu (2011) has argued that *shi...de* sentences actually denote a topic-comment structure and the occurrence of *de* is conditioned by the aspect of the clause. On account of the syntax-pragmatic interfaces involved in *shi...(de)* sentences, this paper aims to examine the usage of English *it*-clefts in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and Mandarin *shi...(de)* sentences in its translated version *Mojie Xianshen*. The results of the study echo Gundel’s (2002, 2006) studies on the clefts in Norwegian text of *Sofies Verden* and its English translation, *Sofie’s World*, in the sense that there are more *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences used in Mandarin than *it*-clefts used in English. Although there are overlapping functions between *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences, narrow focus function is more prominent for the latter pattern. The main function of *shi...de* encodes topic-comment information, which is structurally represented and mapped onto pragmatic information. The direct mapping between syntax and pragmatics in Mandarin accounts for the difference in frequency and distribution exhibited in these two languages.

Keywords: cleft construction, topic-comment, information structure, copula, focus, sentence final particle, *shi...de*

摘要

漢語的是...的句子與是字句通常被認為等同於英文的分裂句型，表達焦點，而句中其餘部分則為預設訊息。然而徐(2011)提出是...的句子表達一主題—評論結構，而的詞出現的情況決定於子句中的時態。本篇文章則欲研究英文文本 *The Fellowship of the Ring* 中 *it*-分裂句型，與其中文翻譯本魔界現身中是...的與是字句的使用情形。研究結果呼應 Gundel (2002, 2006) 英文與挪威文的蘇菲的世界分裂句型使用情形的結果。英文分裂句出現的頻率皆較少。是...的與是字句出現頻率皆多於英文 *it*-分裂句。而是字句雖與是...的句式有重疊處，是字句用以傳達窄欲焦點(narrow focus)的功能較為明顯。如徐所言，是...的字句主要功能為表達主題—評論結構。本文所蒐集的例子支持語用訊息對應於句法結構的論點，並解釋漢語與英文使用上不對稱的現象。

關鍵字: 分裂句，主題—評論，訊息結構，系詞，焦點，句末小詞，是...的

1. INTRODUCTION

English *it*-cleft construction contains a pronoun *it*, a copula, a focused constituent followed by a clause introduced by *that*. It has been widely acknowledged that in “the stressed focus *it*-clefts” (Prince, 1978) as in (1), the cleft constituent, usually stressed, serves as the focus of the sentence, and *that*-clause expresses the presupposed information or known knowledge. For the ease of our discussion, the XP in (1) is termed as the cleft constituent, and the YP as *that*-clause.

(1) *it* + BE + XP + *that* YP

It-clefts do not differ in truth condition from its non-cleft counterpart. For example the italicized part in (2a) conveys the same meaning as that in (2b).

- (2) a. I heard the ill news. The tidings had gone far and wide that Gandalf was missing...
It was the Elven-folk of gildor that told me this; and later they told me that you had left your home. ◇¹ (p. 227)
b. The Elven-folk of gildor told me this.

However, the cleft subject focus *the Elven-folk of gildor* in (2a) is uttered to provide new information to the speaker’s prior knowledge: i.e., he was informed about the news by someone.

Although cleft constructions are cross-linguistically attested to signal focus information structure (e.g., Drubig, 2003), various studies have shown that the frequencies and uses of clefts in languages are not parallel. Eliciting English and Swedish cleft sentences from the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus, Johansson (2001) has demonstrated that even in closely related languages like English and Swedish, they differ in the frequency and distribution of different types of clefts. Swedish *it*-clefts greatly outnumbered English ones: 500 Swedish cases (44.6 *f* (per 100,000 words)) vs. 234 English (102.9 *f*) from original and translated fiction and nonfiction texts of 1,042,518 English words and 1,031,356 Swedish words. He further reported that original English *it*-clefts were translated as Swedish *it*-clefts (in 87%) more often than original Swedish *it*-clefts were translated as English *it*-clefts (in 35%). Gundel (2002, 2006) has also demonstrated that Norwegian clefts are used more frequently than English *it*-clefts, also attested in Faarlund (1992) and Faarlund *et al.* (1997). Based on the first 78 pages of Norwegian text *Sofies Verden* and its English translated novel *Sofie’s World*, there are 32 Norwegian clefts but only 11 English ones being found. She thus

¹ Sentences marked with (◇) are drawn from J.R.R. Tolkien’s (1999) edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

concludes that Norwegian has a strong tendency to map information structure directly only syntactic structure.

The above studies indicate that even in closely related languages that have parallel *it*-cleft structures, the use of them is not necessarily parallel. A question arises as to how English *it*-clefts are translated to Mandarin and whether English *it*-clefts are parallel with Mandarin clefts. English *it*-clefts are often treated as equivalent to Mandarin *shi...de* sentences as expressing a completive focus: identifying a focus constituent that has been instantiated as a variable in a presupposition. As schematized in (3) and (4), it is widely acknowledged that the first element after *shi* is the focus constituent and the rest of the clause as the presupposed proposition.

- (3) a. *Shi* Subject (adjuncts) VP (*de*).
b. Subject *shi* (adjuncts) VP (*de*).
- (4) (Topic) *shi* [[FOCUS XP] presupposition] *de*.

For example, sentence (2a) is translated as (5=3a) in Hseuh-heng Chu's (2001) translation version.²

- (5) Shi ge ...jinglin gao-su wo zhexie shiqing de. (p. 258)
SHI CL elf tell me these thing DE

Despite that, asymmetries between English and Mandarin have been noted in the syntax literature. Firstly, there is surface “cleaving” in English *it*-clefts, which contain a phrase “cleft” from its canonical sentence, e.g., any argument or prepositional phrase, and a *that*-clause. However, there is no such “cleaving” in Mandarin. *Shi*, which is treated either as a copular verb (Paris, 1979, etc.) or a focus particle (Huang, 1982; Paul and Whitman, 2008, etc.), may precede any preverbal element as shown in (3). In (5), *shi* immediately occurs before the subject, indicating a subject focus. In Mandarin (6a=3b), translated from (6b), *shi* immediately precedes the adjunct temporal phrase *after the sunset* to signal the prominent information of the temporal phrase.

- (6) a. Mowangye shi jiezhe womende yuxing lai jibai women de. (p. 524)
evil.king SHI by our stupid.conduct to defeat us DE
b. It was by our own folly that the Enemy will defeat us.◇ (p.524)

It is generally assumed that the immediate post-*shi* element serves as the focus of the sentence (Tang, 1983; Lee, 2005; Paul and Whitman, 2008, among many others). Thus,

² The Mandarin translation of *The Fellowship of the Ring* used in this paper is based on Hseuh-heng Chu's (2001) translated version *Mojie Xianshen*, published by Linking Publishing.

unlike English *it*-clefts, the information structure as in Mandarin (5) and (6b) is not maneuvered via cleaving.

Secondly, the cleft constituent in English *it*-clefts can be any argument of the clause (subject and object); however, *shi* cannot be placed in any post-verbal position, such as the ungrammatical sentence in (7a), marked by “*”, in contrast with its well-formed English corresponding translation. Instead of *shi...de*, object focus is expressed by *de shi* ‘complementizer +copular’ construction, a pseudo-cleft, as in (7b). This paper will focus on English *it*-clefts and Mandarin *shi...de* and bare *shi* (without *de*) sentences. Pseudo-clefts and Mandarin *de shi* will be left for future research.

- (7) a. *Tamen zai ri-luo zhihou jin-ru *shi* kuang-keng de.
 they at sunset after enter SHI mines DE
 ‘Intended meaning: It is the mines that they entered after the sunset.’
 b. Tamen zai ri-luo zhihou jin-ru de *shi* kuang-ken.
 they at sunset after enter Comp BE mines
 ‘What they entered after the sunset was the mines.’

Recent studies on Mandarin *shi...de* construction have characterized additional features in addition to the traditional view of treating it as a completive focus. Firstly, the property of *shi...de* is correlated with the topic-comment structure in Mandarin (e.g. Shyu, 2011; cf. Hole, 2011). Shyu (2011) has noted that the *shi...de* sentence in (8b) shares the parallel topic-comment structure with that in the non-*shi...de* (8a). *Good horse* is either the subject or the topic, on which the predicate comments. (8a) and (8b) do not differ in truth condition, but they differ in the attitude of the speaker. The latter expresses a speaker’s subjective attitude toward the proposition (Yap *et al.*, 2004; Yap and Matthews, 2008), or emphasizes the ‘state of affairs’ (Yuan, 2003), as discussed in Shyu (2011).

- (8) a. Hao-ma bu chi hui-tou cao
 good-horse not eat return-head grass
 b. Hao-ma *shi* bu chi hui-tou cao *de*
 good-horse SHI not eat turn-head grass DE
 ‘(It is the case that) an ambitious horse will never return to its old stable.’

Moreover, it has been observed that *shi...de* and bare *shi* (without *de*) sentences are not always parallel (Paris 1998; Paul 2002; Lee 2005; Paul and Whitman 2008; Shyu 2011). As noted by Paris (1998), Lee (2005) and Shyu (2011), they are interchangeable when *shi* focuses on an adjunct as in the well-formed (9a) and (9b). However, when *shi* focuses only on a bare dynamic verb phrase, the use of *shi...de* as in (10a) becomes unacceptable, in contrast with the acceptable *de*-less counterpart in (10b).

- (9) a. Zhangsan *shi* zuotian lai *de*. --*shi...de*

- Zhangsan SHI yesterday come DE
- b. Zhangsan *shi* zuotian lai ?(*le*). --bare *shi*
Zhangsan SHI yesterday come Asp.
- (10) a. *Zhangsan *shi* lai *de*. --*shi...de*
Zhangsan SHI come DE
- b. Zhangsan *shi* lai *le*. --bare *shi*
Zhangsan SHI come LE.

In addition to the syntactic asymmetries, Lee (2008) has reported that Mandarin *shi...de* sentences are used more often than English *it*-clefts by five times based on her preliminary survey of English *it*-clefts in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and Mandarin *shi...de* in Chu's translated version. Having seen the asymmetric properties between English *it*-clefts and Mandarin *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences, this paper aims to investigate the usage of *it*-clefts in English *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and bare *shi* and *shi...de* constructions in Mandarin translation *Mojie Xianshen*. By re-examining and re-categorizing the data based on Lee's (2008) collection, this paper shows that the differences in frequency between English *it*-clefts and Mandarin *shi...(de)* sentences are attributed to the syntactic encoding of the topic-comment pragmatic information in Mandarin *shi...(de)* constructions, whereas information packaging in English is utilized by stress and other means in canonical sentences. The paper is organized as follows: section 2 first presents the occurrences of *it*-clefts and their corresponding Mandarin translations. Section 3 discusses the focus types in English *it*-clefts, Mandarin *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences. Sections 4 and 5 then investigate the occurrences of Mandarin *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences respectively in the Chinese translation version, and their parallel English counterparts. Section 6 concludes the study.

2. ENGLISH *IT*-CLEFTS AND MANDARIN TRANSLATIONS

In this 535-page long novel, only 45 English *it*-clefts were found³. The main function of English *it*-clefts is to signal argument (subject (21, 47%) and object foci (5, 11%)), or adjunct (constituent) (19, 42%) foci. This is in line with the function of expressing a completive focus, as termed by Pinker as “the stressed focus *it*-clefts.” Moreover, *it*-clefts tend to be used to focus on subject and adjunct, which greatly outnumber the object focus.

The English *it*-clefts are further compared with their corresponding Mandarin translations, as summarized in Table 1. It is shown that less than half (40%) of the *it*-clefts are translated to bare *shi* (11, 24%) and *shi...de* (7, 16%) patterns. Nine cases (20%) are

³ Only nominal and prepositional phrases cleft phrases are included.

paired with Mandarin pseudo-cleft *de shi*, and other 18 cases (39%) with either regular sentences (12, 26%) or copular equational sentences containing a nominal predicate (6, 13%). Among the three cleft types, sentences expressing the subject focus (17 cases) outnumbered all other types of foci (7 adjunct focus and 3 object focus cases). As mentioned above, object focus is not syntactically expressed in *shi...de* but *de shi* pseudo-clefts.

Table 1: Mandarin sentences translated from English *it*-clefts

Mandarin	Bare <i>shi</i>	<i>shi...de</i>	<i>de shi</i>	canonical S.	COP+NP	Total
S-F*	7	4	6			
A-F	4	3	0			
O-F	0	0	3			
Sub-total	11	7	9	12	6	45
	24%	16%	20%	26%	13%	100%

*: S-F: subject focus; A-F: adjunct focus; O-F: object focus; VP-F: VP focus

The following presents examples of each type in Table 1. The subject focus type in English italicized *it*-clefts is illustrated in (11a) and (12a). The former is translated as a bare *shi* pattern as in (11b), and the latter as a *shi...de* pattern in (12b).

- (11) a. The pursuit would follow you and leave us in peace. It is *you, Frodo, and that which you bear* that brings us all in peril.' ◇ (p.278)
 b. Frodo, *shi ni, han ni shenshangsuo xidai de baowu*, rang women shenxian weiji.
 Frodo SHI you, and you body carry Comp treasure let us in.trouble
 (p. 312)
- (12) a. Rangers have been here lately. *It is they who left the firewood behind.* ◇ (p.249)
 b. *Shi tamen liu-xia zhexie caihuo de.* (p.281) --*shi...de*
 SHI they leave this firewood DE

Sentences rendering adjunct focus are given in (13a), its bare *shi* counterpart in (13b), and English (14a) and its *shi...de* counterpart in (14b).

- (13) a. It was *at any rate at that age* that adventure had suddenly befallen Bilbo. ◇ (p. 56)
 b. Bilbo jiu *shi zai zhege suishu turan jingli le xuduo qiwu.* (p. 71)
 Bilbo just SHI at this age suddenly experience Asp many adventure
- (14) a. It's *from Hobbiton* that this here black rider comes. ◇ (p. 100)
 b. ...Ta yiding *shi cong Habitun lai de.* (p. 118) --*shi...de*
 they definitely SHI from Hobbiton come DE

The object focus in the English *it*-cleft (15a) is translated as the Mandarin *de shi* pseudo-cleft, such as in (15b), but not as bare *shi* or *shi...de*. In this paper, *de shi* pattern will not be further discussed due to the space limit.

- (15) a. It is not of the Ring, nor of us others that I am thinking now, but of you, Gandalf.◇
(p.390)
b. Wodanxin de bu shi mojie,... er shi ni, Gandalf. (p. 437)
I worry Comp notCop ring butCop you

A subject focus may be translated as an object focus, depending on the argument structure of the verb in a language. For example, in English (16a) what is cleft is the subject (theme) of the verb *trouble*. The English verb is translated as Mandarin *danxin*, which selects an object as the theme, rendering a *de shi* object focus pseudo-cleft as in (16b).

- (16) a. I was going to walk in any case. *It is the food and stores that trouble me.* ◇ (p. 235)
b. Wo danxin ___i de shi shiwu han zhuangbei. (p.266)
I worry Comp SHI food and equipment

As mentioned above, all the 45 English *it*-clefts express constituent foci. However, 18 of them (39%) are rendered as Mandarin canonical or copular sentences. In the former, no *shi* is involved, e.g (17b) and (18b). Moreover, the adjunct focus of the *it*-cleft *then* in (18a) is topicalized in its Mandarin counterpart in (18b), i.e., *zhege shihou* ‘this time’.

- (17) a. *It was with a heavy heart that* Frodo saw Aragorn and Legolas climb the steep bank and vanish into the mists; ◇ (p.513)
b. Frodoxinqing chenzhongde kan-zhe Legolashe Aragorn pa-shanganbian,
Frodo heart heavily look-Dur Legolas and Aragorn climb-up bank
xiaoshi zai miwu zhi zhong. (p. 567)
disappear in fog middle
- (18) a. *It was then that* they discovered that Boromir, who at first had been sitting silent on the outside of the circle, was no longer there.◇ (p.530)
b. *Zhege shihou, tamen cai faxian* yi-kaishi chenmo zuo-zai waiyuan de
this-CL time they then discover beginning silent sit-at outside Comp
Boluomo yijing bujian le. (p.585)
Boromir already disappear Asp

In addition to topicalizing the adjunct, an *it*-cleft adjunct focus is rendered as a Mandarin regular sentence containing focus adverbs, such as *cai* ‘then’ in (18b), *jiu* ‘just’ in (19b), and *zhi* ‘only’ in (20b). The element to be associated with the focus adverbs is determined by

contexts: e.g., *nakuai shitou* ‘that stone’ associated with *jiu* in (19b), and *defang* ‘place’ with *zhi* in (20b).

- (19) a. See! Though all is now snow-clad, our path, as we came up, turned about that shoulder of rock down yonder. *It was there that the snow first began to burden us.* ◇ (p.383)
b. Zai daxue kaishi zhiqian wo *jiu* zhuyi-dao na-kuai shitou le. (p. 430)
at big.snowbegin before I then notice that-CL stone Asp
- (20) a. But it was *an old tradition* that away over there stood the Grey Havens.... ◇ (p. 59)
b. Tamen *zhi* zhidao zai nabien you ge jiao Hui-gangan de defang. (p. 74)
they onlyknow at there have CL called Grey Havens Comp place

Another pattern is the use of copular equational sentence, which contains a copula followed by a nominal phrase as in (21b). Three nominal predicate copular sentences may be modified either by *zhi* ‘only’ (22b), or *zheng* ‘just’ (23b).

- (21) a. It is *my dwarf-mail* that Thorin gave me. ◇ (p. 364)
b. Zhe shi [NP Suo-lin gei wo de ai-ren suo-zi-jia] (p. 410)
this BE Thorin give me Cop dwarf mail
‘This is the dwarf-mail that Thorin gave me.’
- (22) a. *It is but a trifle that Sauron fancies,* and an earnest of your good will. ◇ (p.316)
b. Xianjiao-yu Suo-darende shanyi, zhe shizai shi jian xiaoshi,
compare-with Sauron Poss good.will this indeed Cop CL small.matter
dui nimen laishuo ye *zhi* shi [NP *jushouzhilao*]. (p. 357)
to you speak also only Cop trifle
- (23) a. ‘*It is for the Dimrill Dale that we are making,*’ said Gandalf. ◇ (p.372)
b. Women-de mubiao *zheng* shi [NP *Dimrill hegu*] (p. 418)
our goal exactly Cop Dimrill valley

The above data clearly show the tendency of lacking exact one-to-one correspondence between English *it*-clefts and Mandarin clefts. While the main function of English *it*-clefts is to denote a constituent focus (the completive focus function), the constituent focus function is expressed by various syntactic patterns in addition to bare *shi* and *shi...de* sentences, such as by utilizing focus adverbs, topicalization, and copular equational sentences. These devices account for the asymmetry between English and Mandarin, as summarized in Table 1. In the following two sections, we further examine Mandarin *shi...de* and bare *shi* drawn from the Mandarin translation version and compare them with their English original text.

3. FOCUS TYPES

This section first outlines the focus types found among the three sentence patterns: English *it*-clefts, Mandarin bare *shi* and *shi...de* sentences, as summarized in Table 2. In addition to the subject focus (S-F), adjunct focus (A-F), and object focus (O-F) that have been shown above, Table 2 indicates that bare *shi* and *shi...de* serve as expressing VP focus (VP-F) and sentence focus (All new F).

Table 2: Focus types in three sentence patterns

	S-F*	A-F	O-F	VP-F	All new F	V-F	Constituent F	Total
English	21	19	5					45
<i>it</i> -cleft	47%	42%	11%					100%
Bare <i>shi</i>	11	15		15	5	3	17	66
	17%	23%		23%	8%	5%	26%	100%
<i>shi...de</i>	18	73		40	28			159
	11%	46%		25%	18%			100%

*: S-F: subject focus; A-F: adjunct focus; O-F: object focus; VP-F: VP focus

The sentence or all new focus refers to cases in which *shi* is placed before the subject, such as the bare *shi* in (24a) and *shi...de* in (25a). Although they may be interpreted as a subject focus, the contexts where they occur indicate that the part other than the subject is not known or presupposed in the hearer's mind; hence the whole sentence serves as providing new information. The English counterpart of the italicized bare *shi* of (24a) exhibits a conical sentence pattern *The Ring left him*, in which *him* is stressed in the original text. Thus, (24b) is uttered to disapprove previous assumption about the owner's control of the Ring. *The Ring* is not the new information in this sentence, rather the speaker aims to emphasize the whole proposition that the ring itself voluntarily left Bilbo. This piece of information is rendered as bare *shi* pattern, intending to assert the whole proposition; hence, this case is grouped under sentence focus.

- (24) a. Jueding yiqie de bushi Gollum, *shi* Mojiejueding likai ta. --bare *shi*
 Decide everything Comp not Gollum, SHI ring decide leave him (p.90)
- b. And even so he would never have just forsaken it, or cast it aside. It was not Gollum, Fordo, but the Ring itself that decided things. The Ring left *him*.⁴ ◇ (p.73)
- (25) a. Yiqie you-le hen-da de bianhua, Gandalf shizong le....
 everything have-Asp very big change, Gandalf disappear Asp

⁴ Stressed italicized words marked in the original text are marked as bold-faced words in this paper.

Shige jiao gildor de jingling gaosu wo zhexie shi de; --shi...de
 SHI CLcall gildor Comp wizardtell me these thing DE;
 shaohou tamen gaosu wo ni yijing likai laojia... (p. 258)
 then they tell me you already leave old-home

- b. ‘When I returned, ..I heard the ill news. The tidings had gone far and wide that Gandalf was missing and the horsemen had been seen. *It was the Elven-folk of gildor that told me this*; and later they told me that you had left your home. (p.227).

As for (25a), *shi* precedes the subject *Elven-folk of gildor*, yet the *shi...de* sentence is qualified for a sentence focus, because the speaker does not assume that the news that s/he has got is learned from someone and then aims to specify that person. Rather, it is uttered to assert how he learned the news. This explication function echoes the function of *shi...de* noted by Li *et al.* (1998). The English original sentence (25b) reflects a type of presentational cleft constructions discussed in Lambrecht (1988a, 1988b): *It was the Elven-folk of gildor that told me this*. The addresser does not presuppose that there existed a person who told the addressee the news; rather this sentence provides further information on how the speaker got to know the news.

Since *shi* occurs in a preverbal position, when it immediately occurs before the verb phrase, it may denote a VP focus, which is found in *shi...de* (e.g., (26a)) and bare *shi* as in (27a). Note that while VP focus may be expressed via *shi...de* or bare *shi*, it is not found in English *it*-clefts; hence regular sentences are exhibited as in (26b) and (27b).

- (26) a. Wo mei banfa kongzhi ziji. Wo sihu *shi* [*bei xijin guoqu*] *de*. (p. 259)
 I not method control self, I seem SHI Passive attract go DE
 b. I could hardly help myself. I seemed to be drawn somehow. ◇ (p.229)
- (27) a. Wo ganggang shuo le shenme? *Shi* [*zai zuomeng*] *ma*? (p. 215)
 I just say Asp what SHI at dream Q
 b. What am I saying? *I have been dreaming*. Where did you get to, Frodo? ◇ (p.189)

In (26a), *being attracted by the Ring* contrasts with being able to control oneself, hence, a VP focus in *shi...de*. The verb phrase *zai zuomeng* ‘dreaming’ following *shi* serves as the focal information in (27a).

Table 2 further shows that bare *shi* and *shi...de* differ from each other in signaling constituent focus or word-level focus (verb focus, V-F), which are only found in bare *shi* sentences. Consequently, it seems that bare *shi* tends to serve the completive focus function, whereas *shi...de* additionally expresses a predicate or sentence focus. It is because that more VP focus and all new focus cases are found in *shi...de* sentences (68, 43%) than those in bare *shi* sentences (20, 31%). By contrast, verb or constituent foci occur in bare *shi* (21, 33%) pattern, but not in *shi...de*.

One characteristic function of the bare *shi* pattern is to highlight a certain word or constituent, as evidenced by the (bold faced) adjunct focus in (28a), the possessor focus in (29a), the verb focus in (30a), and the nominal focus in (31a). Instead of utilizing a certain syntactic means, the above element foci in English are expressed via stress, as in (28b) and (29b), indicated by the italicized words in the original text.

- (28) a. Gandalf huida: ‘Woxiangxin qijinweizhi, jizhi, *shi dao muqian weizhi*,
reply I think until.now remember, SHI until now stop
ta dou hushi-le habiren de cunzai. (p. 81)
he all will-Asp
- b. To tell you the truth,’ replied gandalf, ‘*I believe that hitherto – hitherto, mark you* he has entirely overlooked the existence of hobbits. (p.65)
- (29) a. Wo jinggai shuo *shi “women” de shengri*,
I should say SHI our birthday
yinwei jintian ye shi wode jichengren Frodo-de shengri... (p. 52)
because today also be my heir Frodo’s birthday
- b. Secondly, to celebrate my birthday. Cheers again. *I should say: OUR birthday*. For it is, of course, also the birthday of my heir and nephew, Frodo. He comes of age and into his inheritance today. (p.39)

Even though the verbs in (30b) are not marked with bold face, they are easily understood as being contrasted and would be pronounced with a contrastive stress. The constituent focus *whole plan* in English (31b), though not marked with stress, is repeated for emphasis.

- (30) a. *Bilbo shi qu zhao baozang, zuihou lixianguilai; er wo shi qu diudiao baozang.*
Bilbo SHI go find treasure finally back but I SHI go throw treasure
(p.105)
- b. Bilbo went to find a treasure, there and back again; but I go to lose one, and not return, as far as I can see. (p.87)
- (31) a. zhao-zhe yuan ding de jihua jinxing. Jizhu, *shi yuan ding de jihua*. (p. 45)
follow-Dur original plan Comp plan progress mind SHI original make Comp plan
- b. ‘Very well. It is no good saying any more. *Stick to your plan- your whole plan*, mind – and I hope it will turn out for the best, for you, and for all of us.’ (p.33)

In short, we see both overlapping and asymmetric means of expressing emphasis in these two languages. In English, phrasal foci are expressed via *it*-clefts, and stress is also utilized to signal focused elements. As for Mandarin, *shi*, which has developed to a focus marker occurring in a preverbal position, may indicate a subject or adjunct focus. Moreover, it may be associated with any post-verbal element as the focus, e.g. V, VP and constituent foci, determined by contexts, unlike English stress mechanism. Bare *shi* sentences, instead of *shi...de*, are employed to convey word or constituent focus. Presumably, surface syntax and

morphology (*shi*) are availed of to represent the pragmatic information in Mandarin, whereas English, in addition to utilizing *it*-clefts, may make use of the device of stress, which is less obvious in the Mandarin translation.

4. MANDARIN *SHI...DE* SENTENCES

In the previous section, the focus functions of the three patterns have been summarized in Table 2. This section presents *shi...de* sentences found in the Mandarin translation text and compare them with their original English counterparts. As summarized in Table 3, there are almost three times of *shi...de* sentences (159 cases) more than the English *it*-clefts. However, only eight (5.1%) of *shi...de* sentences are equivalent to English *it*-clefts.

Table 3 Mandarin *shi...de* sentences and their English counterparts

<i>it</i> - clefts	<i>wh</i> - clefts	canonical S.	<i>wh</i> - phrase	passive	there-S	reason S	others	Total
8	1	75	32	24	9	3	7	159
5.1%	0.6%	47.2%	20%	15.1 %	5.7%	1.9%	4.4%	100%

In order to better understand the functions of *shi...de*, the sentences are further categorized according to their corresponding original English sentence patterns. Table 3 indicates that more than 90% of Mandarin cases are equivalent to English canonical sentence patterns (including passives, *wh*-interrogatives, *there* sentences, and others like stress). This contrast can be attributed to the widely acknowledged topic- vs. subject-prominence in Mandarin and English respectively (Li and Thompson 1981). It is thus suggested that the main function of Mandarin *shi...de* sentences is to express a basic and prevalent topic-comment information structure in Mandarin. Namely, the element before *shi* functions as the topic that the rest of the clause comments on; see Hole (2012) and Shyu (2011). Although it is generally agreed on that the constituent that immediately follows *shi* receives the focal attention, our data show that either the whole comment part may signal new information, or just the first immediately constituent after *shi* as the focus while the rest of the clause denotes presupposed information.

Shi...de sentences expressing the topic-comment structure are illustrated from (32a) through (34a). Note that their English counterparts are the canonical sentence pattern, accounting for 75 (47.2%) cases of Mandarin *shi...de*. Take (32a) for an example; the topic of the utterance is *the story*, which Gandalf is about to elaborate on by providing further information about. The Mandarin *cong heian niandai kaishi* ‘begin from the Dark Years’ serves to comment on the topic *gushi* ‘story.’

- (32) a. Gandalf shuo, ‘...*gushi shi cong heian niandai kaishi de*,
 say story SHI from Dark Year begin DE
 xianzai zhiyou ...lishi xuezhe jide zheduan lishi. (p. 84)

- now only historyscholar remember this.period history
- b. ‘Ah!’ said Gandalf. ‘That is a very long story. *The beginnings lie back in the Black Years*, which only the lore-masters now remember.’ ◇ (p.67)
- (33) a. *Woshi cong waidi lai de.* (p. 146)
I SHI from outside.area come DE
- b. *I come from yonder,*” he said, ◇ (p.124)
- (34) a. Ta ...tingjian ...shengyin...zhe yiqie dou shi cong toushangde zhiya zhong
he hear sound this all all SHI from above bough middle
chuan-lai de. (p. 178)
send-come DE
- b. Only a gentle noise on the edge of hearing, a soft fluttering as of a song half
whispered, *seemed to stir in the boughs above.* ◇ (p.154)
- In addition, *shi...de* sentences may co-occur with *you* ‘have’, equivalent to English *there* sentences in the (b) sentences below. The constituent after *you* functions as the topic, on which the *shi...de* part comments. In (35a), *you* introduces a specific entity ‘somewhere’ known by the speaker and *shi...de* clause elaborates on this place, meaning that place will not change because of any situation.
- (35) a. Dan zhidao you ge difang shi bu sui jushi gaibian de,
but know have CL place SHI not according situation change de
zongshi rang wo anxin. (p. 100)
always let me feel.released
- b. I shall know that *somewhere there is a firm foothold*, even if my feet cannot stand there again. ◇ (p.82)
- (36) a. Hai you gengduode dongxi shi liugei Frodo de. (p. 64)
still have more thing SHI leave Frodo DE
- b. *There was plenty of everything left for Frodo.* And, of course, all the chief treasures, as well as the books, pictures, and more than enough furniture, were left in his possession. ◇ (p.50)

The topic-comment pattern is also attested in the *shi...de* translated from English passive pattern. Although one might claim that (37a) denotes an adjunct focus *from Rivendell*, it actually elaborates on the purpose of Elf-lord’s coming: *to be sent to look for Frodo from Rivendell*.

- (37) a. Wo shi cong Rivendell bei pai-chulai xun-zhao nimen de. (p. 310)
I SHI from PASSIVE send-out look-for you DE

- b. ‘Hail, and well met at last!’ said the Elf-lord to Frodo. ‘*I was sent from Rivendell to look for you. We feared that you were in danger upon the road.*’ ◇ (p.276)

Similarly, in the context of (38a), it has been known that ‘stones began to fall from the mountain-side’ (p. 379). The narrator of (38a) continues the discourse topic *the stones* and further elaborates on that: *aiming at us*.

- (38) a. Er *shitou ye dou shi miao-zhun women dui-guolai de.* (p. 426)
and stone also all SHI aim we throw DE
b. ‘We cannot go further tonight,’ said Boromir. ‘Let those call it the wind who will; there are fell voices on the air; and *these stones are aimed at us.*’ ◇ (p.379)

There are two other *shi...de* functions that are not found in the English text: to express a reason and to co-occur with *wh*-phrases. The *shi...de* sentences (39a) and (40a), translated from canonical English sentence pattern, explicate a reason, a function of *shi...de* that has been noted by Li *et al.* (1998).

- (39) a. Yinweizhexie ma cong shen-xialai, jiu *shi weile fushi Mordor erxunyang de.*
because these horse from birth, then SHI for serve then breed DE
(p. 326)
b. ‘Then why do these black horses endure such riders?’ ... ‘*Because these horses are born and bred to the service of the Dark Lord in Mordor.*’ ◇ (p. 291)
- (40) a. Women *shi lai xiangnimen daobie de.* (p. 543)
we SHI come to you farewell DE
b. Aragorn stayed his boat as the Swan-ship drew alongside. The Lady ended her song and greeted them. ‘*We have come to bid our last farewell,*’ she said, ‘and to speed you with blessings from our land.’ ◇ (p.490)

As indicated in Table 3, 32 *shi...de* cases (20%) occur in sentences containing *wh*-phrases, including *wh*-arguments (41a), *wh*-adjuncts (42a) and indirect *wh*-question as in (43a).

- (41) a. *Shi shei bian-chu zhexie gushi de?* (p. 73)
SHI who invent these story DE
b. ‘No doubt you can,’ reported Sam, ‘and I daresay there's more truth in some of them than you reckon. *Who invented the stories anyway?* Take dragons now. (p.58)
- (42) a. Ruguo ni bu zhidao miyu, you *shi zenme jinqu de?* (p. 450)
If you not know password, then SHI how enter DE
‘...how did you enter?’
b. You told us that you had once passed through the Mines. *How could that be,* if you did now know how to enter?’ ◇ (p. 401)

- (43) a. meiren jide ta shi shenme shihou kaishi hanzhongren tongxing de.
nobody remember he SHI what time begin with others together.go DE
(p. 189)
- b. Go and ask Ferny where your handsome friend is!’ But it appeared that he was nobody’s friend, and nobody could recollect *when he had joined their party*. ◇
(p.237)

Although English exists *it*-cleft *wh*-interrogative, as shown below, they are used less frequently than regular *wh*-interrogatives in eliciting answers; there is no *it*-cleft *wh*-interrogative in our data. It seems that the use of English *it*-cleft *wh*-interrogative may denote a stronger presupposition of the proposition than that in non-*it*-cleft ones; also see Gundel (2006). However, this contrast is not obvious in Mandarin *shi...de* with *wh*-phrases, which are quite common in regular *wh*-interrogatives.

- (44) a. Who is it that makes pots of money from Apple and Facebook?⁵
b. What is it that you are searching for?⁶
c. How is it that the clouds still hang on you? (Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, Act I: 2)
d. Why is it that red political power can exist in China?⁷

Gundel (2006) has also demonstrated that 25 (31%) of those Norwegian clefts that do not translate clefts in English are *wh*-questions, e.g. (45). It seems that Mandarin patterns with Norwegian in this regard: the cleft *wh*-questions may be of strong or weak presupposition, and non-clefted questions are often judged unnatural.

- (45) a. *What’s his name again, Howard, isn’t it?* (p. 13)
b. [*Hva var det han het igjen*]?(p. 16) --Norwegian
what was it he is.called again
‘What is it he is called again?’
(Gundel 2006: 529)

It has been shown that the traditionally thought completive focus function is not primarily served in *shi...de* construction, rather whose main function is to express a common topic-comment articulation in Mandarin. The pre-*shi* element serves as the topic, and the post-*shi* part elaborates on the topic. The comment may provide new information about the topic, or part of it may be a piece of presupposed information while the element immediately following *shi* signals the most prominent information, rendering focus. This account thus naturally explains the preponderance of the English equivalent canonical sentence patterns

⁵ http://www.theregister.co.uk/2012/10/25/fusion_io_q1_fy2013/

⁶ <http://www.vulture.com/2011/11/gossip-girl-gossip-girl-recap-what-is-it-that-youre-searching-for.html>

⁷ http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_3.htm

over the small of number of corresponding English *it*-clefts found among the Mandarin *shi...de* instances.

5. MANDARIN BARE *SHI* SENTENCES

This section first presents Mandarin bare *shi* sentences, which are categorized according to the sentence patterns of their English equivalents, as tabulated in Table 4. Table 5 further compares the overlapping functions of *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences, whereas the non-overlapping ones are the grey shaded cells in Table 4.

Table 4: Mandarin bare *shi* sentences and English counterparts

<i>it</i> -clefts	<i>wh</i> -phrase	canonical S.	passive	stress	Adv mod	contrast	others	Total
11	9	26	2	6	7	2	3	66
17%	14%	39%	3%	9%	11%	3%	4%	100%

Table 5: A comparison of functions in *shi...de* and bare *shi* sentences

	<i>it</i> -clefts	<i>wh</i> -phrase	canonical S.	passive	others	Total
<i>shi...de</i>	8 5.1%	32 20%	75 47.2%	24 15.1%	20 12.6%	159 100%
Bare <i>shi</i>	11 17%	9 14%	26 39%	2 3%	18 27%	66 100%

Among the 66 bare *shi* sentences, English canonical sentence pattern accounts for the most number of bare *shi* cases (26, 39%), cf. with that in *shi...de* (75, 47.2%); also see that in Table 5. The occurrence of *shi* does not affect the truth condition, but emphasizes the element following *shi*, such as the verb phrase in (46a): *coming from the north that has not been polluted by devil*. By contrast, English canonical sentences do not utilize any syntactic device for emphasis. Presumably English sentence nuclear stress (Halle and Vergnaud 1988) reveals default sentence focus within the VP. The pair of bare *shi* (47a) and English (47b) illustrate the same point.

- (46) a. Piaojiguo de liangju dou *shi lai-ziyu weishou moying wuran beifang*. (p. 388)
 Riddermark's horse all SHI come-from not devil pollute north
 b. for the horses of the Riddermark *come from the fields of the North*, (p.344)

- (47) a. 'Neither do I,' answered the wizard. 'I have merely begun to wonder about the ring, especially since last night. ◇ (p.53)
 b. Wo ziji ye bu queding, wushi huida:
 I self also not sure wizard answer
 'Wo *shi zuoye cai kaishi dui zhe jiezhi qi-le yixin*. (p. 68) --bare *shi*

I SHI yesterday then start to this ring raise-Asp doubt

While bare *shi* can be employed to express the topic-comment information structure (overlapping in four categories with that of *shi...de* in Table 5), it has another function of signaling narrow focus: focusing some constituent in the domain of *shi*, or even fragmented elements. That is why there are fewer cases of passives, and no case of *there* or Mandarin *you* sentences in bare *shi*, but found in *shi...de*. Moreover, there are more cases of stressing on certain elements (6, 9%) than that in *shi...de*, only 2 cases. Take (48) for an example. *Shi* focuses on *yishuang* ‘a pair’, which is translated from *ProudFEET*, in which *feet* syllable is stressed, but no such stress device is indicated since the marking of *shi* has taken care of it.

- (48) a. Ta shuodao: ‘... Chuihaozhe-jiahan Aojiao jia.’ ‘*Shi yishuang Aojiaojiala!*’ (p. 50)
he say Brockhouses and Proudfoots SHI a.pair Proudfeet
b. *My dear Bagginses and Boffins*, he began again [shouting]; *and my dear ...Brockhouses and Proudfoots*. ‘**ProudFEET!**’ shouted an elderly hobbit... (p. 38)

Likewise, bare *shi* in (49), rather than *shi...de*, is used to inquire about the individual *shei* ‘who.’

- (49) a. Liaowangtai zhongjiande dongkou turan maochuyike tou... ‘*Shi shei?*’
watch.tower middle cleft suddenly appear one-CL head SHI who
(p. 505)
b. *What is it?* said Frodo. (p.452)

In addition, parallel constituents are contrasted in bare *shi* (e.g. *zhao* ‘find’ vs. *diudiao* ‘lose’ in (30a)).

- (30) a. *Bilbo shi qu zhao baozang, zuihou lixianguilai; er wo shi qu diudiao baozang.*
(p.105)
Bilbo SHI go find treasure finally back but I SHI go lose treasure
b. *Bilbo went to find a treasure, there and back again; but I go to lose one, and not return, as far as I can see.* (p.87)

Moreover, there are seven bare *shi* sentences that correspond to English sentences containing adverbs modifying or associating with the focused elements, e.g. *in fact* in (50b).

- (50) a. Tade jiazhu *shi lai-zi Xiaer-dongqu*, jingque-yidian,
his family SHI come-from Eastfarthing, specific-a.bit
shi Daqiaodi-de Yantpidukou.
SHI Bridgefields Budgeford

- b. Fond as he was of Frodo, Fatty Bolger had no desire to leave the Shire, nor to see what lay outside it. *His family came from the Eastfarthing, from Budgeford in Bridgefields in fact*, but he had never been over the Brandwine Bridge.

Shi may be modified by focus adverbs, such as *jiu* ‘just’ in (51a), or *jishi* ‘even’ in (52a).

- (51) a. Jiu wo kanlai, zhechang gongji *jiu shi wei-le zhengjiu ta er lai*. (p. 379)
as I view, this-CL attack just SHI for save he then come
b. It then seemed plain to us that *the attack had been made for his rescue*, and that he knew of it beforehand. How that was contrived we cannot guess.(p.335)
- (52) a. *Jishi shi Gollum yemeiyou wanquan shiqu benxing*,..(p. 89)
even SHI Gollum also not totally lose nature
b. ‘Only too true, I fear,’ said Grandalf. ‘But there was something else in it, I think, which you don't see yet. *Even Gollum was not wholly ruined*. ..(p.72)

It has been demonstrated in the previous section that the main function of *shi...de* (over 90%) is to express topic-comment articulations. Although this function also accounts for 58% of the instances of bare *shi* (canonical S 41% + *wh*-phrase 14% + passive 2%), bare *shi* serves other functions such as constituent focus (evidenced by 6 English stress cases (10%)), being modified by focus adverbs (7, 11%) and for contrasting parallel elements. Consequently, it is suggested that the focus domain of bare *shi* tends to be local, and its focused element being adjacent to *shi*, the focus particle.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Gundel (2006) has noted that even in closely related languages like Norwegian and English, both of which utilize the givenness/newness or the topic/focus partition in clefts that containing the cleft constituent and a relative clause, they display difference in frequency of the usages. She thus concludes that the asymmetry should not be attributed to grammatical factors, but due to a stronger preference for “mapping information structure directly onto surface syntactic structure in Norwegian” (p. 525), particularly, in “making the distinction between topic and focus structurally explicit and more isomorphic with grammatical subject and predicate” (p. 542). By contrast, the explicit encoding of information structure by syntactic structure in English clefts is primarily a “stylistic” option that may be employed for pragmatic effect, such as “contrast, emphasis, and exhaustiveness implicatures” (p. 542).

On the one hand, the current study lends further support for Gundel’s claims in the sense that Mandarin has a stronger preference for “mapping information structure directly onto surface syntactic structure”, cf. the isomorphism discussed by Huang (1982) for quantifier scope. On the other hand, the difference in distribution and frequency between English and

Chinese is also ascribed to their asymmetric syntactic structures. As mentioned above, *shi...de* syntactically represents and primarily encodes a topic-comment articulation (e.g., Shyu, 2011), which is often represented as subject-predicate grammatical function. *Shi...de* does not change the word order or the truth condition of this structure, yet it is employed to express the speaker's stronger subjective attitude toward the proposition. Moreover, bare *shi* sentences additionally serve a function of narrow focus. In short, the current study of parallel English and Mandarin texts (also see Tsai's paper in this volume) provides further insight of how the use of language can be better accounted for both structurally and contextually, instead of separately.

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