THE ROLE OF THE COPULA 是 *SI*[7] IN THE CONSTRUAL OF FOCUS STRUCTURE IN EARLY SOUTHERN MIN

Chinfa Lien

National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu

ABSTRACT

The paper explores the role of the copula 是 *si*[7] in the interpretation of the focus structure in early Southern Min playscripts. I examine the configuration of 是 *si*[7] with respect to a range of functional/lexical categories such as kinds of adverbs, types of modals, voice (featuring causativity and passitivity), aspect, and negation as well as verb and noun phrases. I also put forward tree structures showing how focus vis-à-vis topic in cleft and pseudo-cleft clauses with 是 *si*[7] as the pivot are derived. In a nutshell, the syntactic position of 是 *si*[7] is versatile and yet constrained. There is an asymmetry of the distribution of subject and object focusing with respect to the position of the copula 是 *si*[7]. I posit with Rizzi (2013) that the focus feature in the FocP triggers merging the focus constituent to the head Foc in FocP in CP. Apart from bearing the assertive force in the clause typing, the copula 是 *si*[7] plays a supporting role of scoping over the focus constituent. I capture the syntactic behavior of the copula 是 *si*[7] by construing it as an indispensable pivot in the derivation of focus structure.

Chinfa Lien (连金发) [cflien@mx.nthu.edu.tw]; Graduate Institute of Linguistics, 101, Sec. 2, Kuangfu Rd., Hsinchu 300, Taiwan.

KEYWORDS
Copula   **F**ocus   **A**ssertive   **S**outhern Min

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper explores the role of the copula 是 si^7 in the interpretation of focus structure in early Southern Min playscripts dating back to the sixteenth century at the earliest[1] (Wu 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d; QWQDXY 2010). The major function of the copula 是 si^7 is to turn a constituent into a predicate to be combined with the subject to form a sentence.[2] In particular, the copula 是 si^7 is indispensable to the predication of noun phrases. It is quite natural that there will be a focus constituent in sentences to carry the new information set against the given information. I propose that the articulation of focus in the designated position in FocP is based on the feature-driven Agree mechanism. The copula 是 si^7 fulfilling the important role of making assertion occupies a structural position scoping over the focus element. In Section 2 (theoretical background) before discussing the syntactic distribution of the copula 是 si^7 and the focus constituent falling under its scope, I will first pin down the structural position of the copula 是 si^7. Then I will touch on the approaches to functional categories. Third, I will then move to clefts and pseudo-clefts with the copula 是 si^7 as an indispensable pivot. Fourth, I will introduce the classification of copular clauses which bears on the distribution of focus structure. Fifth, I will dwell on the role of the copula 是 si^7. Last, I show types of foci. Section 3 investigates the syntactic position of functional/lexical categories with 是 si^7 as the pivot. Section 4 presents 是 si^7 in the hierarchy of functional categories. Section 5 explores the non-occurrence of 是 si^7 between verb and object. Section 6 furnishes the co-presence of topic and focus. Section 7 features the decopularization of 是 si^7 in the wh_strings. Section 8 gives the derivation of cleft-clauses and pseudo-cleft clauses with 是 si^7 as the copula. Section 9 presents conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I will first update our knowledge of theoretical assumptions about syntactic status of copulas and the views on 是 si^7-marked focus elements versus topic along the lines of the cartographic approach to

早期闽南语系词"是"在焦点结构的识解中所扮演的角色

连金发

台湾清华大学

摘要

本文探讨早期闽南戏文中系词"是"在焦点结构中所扮演的角色。从和各类状语、情态词、语式(表被动或致使)、体貌、否定和动词、名词组成的相对位置可以确定"是"的结构特性。文中呈现分裂句及准分裂句中焦点相对于话题的树形图,其中"是"为轴心,约言之,"是"的句法位置多元而有限制。以系词"是"的位置为参照,可以看出主语焦点和宾语焦点在结构分布上有不对称的现象。以 Rizzi (2013) 为依据本文假设焦点词组中的焦点征性触发焦点成分并入 CP 中的焦点中心语中,除了表示句式的论断语势外系词"是"还发挥辅助焦点成分的作用。总之,本文主张系词"是"是焦点结构中不可或缺的轴心,如此可以捕捉到"是"的句法行为。

关键词

系词　**焦**点　**论**断语气　**闽**南语