The evolution of a topic marker in Wu (Chinese) dialects

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Outline

- Shanghainese

- Major functions of *zi* (是) in modern Shanghainese

- Corpus-based study

- The evolution of *zi* in Shanghainese

Shanghainese

- 上海闲话 *zã²³hɛ³⁴hɛ²³ɦo²³*
  A dialect of the Northern Wu branch of the Sinitic language family

- Spoken in the city of Shanghai and surrounding regions.

- > 10 million native speakers

Sources of data for Shanghainese

- Written record can be traced back to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127)

- Historical data includes novels, tales, and dramas

- Contemporary data includes Shanghai Opera, songs, TV shows, interviews, corpus etc.

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Major functions of *zi* in contemporary Shanghainese

- Copula (COP)

- Focus marker (FOCUS)

- Topic marker (TOPIC)

zi as a copula

The Shangahinese copula 是 typically links two nominals, in an equivalence relationship, or member-class relationship (Liang 2012).

伊　　　　**是**　　　　班长

$ɦi^{35}$　　　zɿ　　　$pɛ^{35}zã^{35}$

he　　　COP　　class monitor

'He is the class monitor.'

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zi as a focus marker

As a focus marker, Shanghainese 是 emphasizes the importance of immediately following information (cf. Shi 2005, Huang et al. 2009: 25).

是 **戆** 呀！

zɿ kɑ̃³⁵ ɦia³⁴

FOCUS stupid SFP

'It's really really stupid!'

zi as a topic marker

是　is one of many topic markers in Shanghainese, most typically used with given information in the topic on the left and new information in the comment on its right.

当然，	阿拉	是，	也	支持	侬	个。
tã⁵³zø²³ ,	ɑʔ⁵⁵lɑ²³	zɿ²³ ,	ɦɑ²³	ʦɿ⁵³zɿ²³	noŋ²³	gə ʔ¹²
sure	we	TOP	also	support	you	SFP

'Of course, we support you!' (*SSC*)

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The Red Pear Blossom corpus

- *HongLiJi*　红梨记　Red Pear Blossom

- Novella (42,000 words) written by Xu Fuzuo 徐复祚　in AD1560-1630 (Later Ming Dynasty).

- Altogether 391 occurrences of 是
  - 66 copula
  - 186 focus marker
  - 65 topic marker
  - 74 other uses

柳色青山映，
梨花季鸟藏。
綠窗桃李下，
閑坐叹香芳。

红梨记

l Cognitive Linguistics Conference, University of Alberta

拘禁 紅梨記

（凡調）

明·徐復祚

（淨扮王黼上）喚素秋轉來。（外、末）是。老爺喚妳。（旦扮謝素秋上）是。老爺，有何吩咐。（淨）妳們去整治果盒，煖酒到書房來。（外、末）是。（下）（淨）素秋，歌得好，歌得妙，隨我來。（旦）老爺喚我轉來，還有何事。（淨）素秋，我愛妳體態輕盈，歌謠宛轉，莫若住在我府中，我老爺另眼看待。妳意下如何。（旦）念素秋，章臺陋質，永巷庸流，只堪賣酒當爐，難入瓊樓玉館。況且老爺府中，無數佳冶麗人，豈少賤妾之輩。（淨）不是這等講，妳方才不見麼。（旦）見什麼。（淨）哪。（唱）：

【香柳娘】這繁華絕倫·這繁華絕倫·三千黛粉·六宮顏色誰阿遜·妳若進我府中·把妳做掌上玉珍·掌上玉珍·（旦避介）（作摟旦）心坎兒裡溫·存·肺腑兒般幫襯·拚行樂及辰·拚行樂及辰·只恐燈月今宵·陰晴無準·（旦跪介）（淨扶起介）（旦接唱）：

【前腔】愧煙花戶門·愧煙花戶門·風塵陋品·豈堪與王孫貴·戚相廝溷·府中呵，況有無數絳裙·無數絳裙·薦蓆縱橫陳·東

訪素 紅梨記

（六調）

明·徐復祚

（小生扮趙汝州戴巾著帽上唱）：

【宜春令】風月性，雲雨腸·自生成花狂柳狂·新詞楚楚，俏名兒堪與秋娘抗·蘇小小才貌相當·呂雙雙風流不讓·拚醉·佳人錦瑟·翠屏珠幌·

（正坐介）（白）日昃鳴珂動，花連繡戶春·蟠龍玉臺鏡，惟待畫眉人·小生為有謝素秋之約，一夜睡不安穩，已到天明，梳洗已畢，除下舊巾幘，換套新衣裳·（擗手尋衣介）怎麼（生內慢應介）怎麼（對下急催介）吓，孟博兄·（小生頓足催介）起身否·（生笑答）起身了·博兄，還不出來·不免催他一聲·（小生心急苦整介）如此，快來·（小生曲內笑介）（生唱）：

【前腔】鄉心切·旅夢長·是何人催促恁忙·看你衣衫停當·匆匆挈伴將何往·

（生扮錢孟博長方巾綴襇三髾上·整冠顧衣介·上）來了·（作瀟灑文士介）（唱）（小生作立起叫介·生見介）兄，你好忘事吓·（生）忘了什麼·（小生）呵，何乃太早·（小生）早·（小生坐以敲腳介）（生）今日去訪素秋呀·（生笑介）（小生）（施禮對坐介）（小生坐立起·連唱）（各笑顏隊遇介）

Copula *zi* in the corpus

小人 　　　是 　　　本 　　　县 　　　差人

$\varsigma i\mathfrak{I}^{34}\mathfrak{n}in^{23}$ 　　zı 　　$p\mathfrak{a}n^{34}$ 　　$ɦy\emptyset^{23}$ 　　$ts^h\mathfrak{a}^{53}\mathfrak{n}in^{23}$

I 　　　　COP 　　this 　　county 　　public servant

'I am a public servant of this county.' 　（ Chapter 21 ）

Focus marking *zi* in corpus

正		是	伯畴	来	了
$tsən^{34}$		$zɿ$	$pɑ^{ʔ55}zɤ^{23}$	$lɛ^{23}$	$liɔ^{23}$
EMPHMRKR		FOC	Bochou	come	SFP

'It is Bochou that has come.' （ Chapter 19 ）

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Topic marking *zi* in the corpus

国　　　　是　　　　　賢　　妍　　　混

$go^{ʔ12}$　　　zɿ　　　　　$ɦi^{53}$　　$kɛ^{53}$　　$ɦuəŋ^{23}$

country　　TOPIC　　　saint　　sinner　mix

'As for this country, it is full of saints and sinners.' (Chapter 13)

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Statistical analysis

- We used Hierarchical Configural Frequency Analysis (HCFA, Gries 2004) to investigate the statistically significant combinations of parts of speech and functions of *zi*.

- We coded all examples of copula, focus marking, and topic marking *zi* for
  - Part of speech of constituent to the left of *zi* (POSLEFT)
  - Part of speech of constituent to the right of *zi* (POSRIGHT)
  - Function of *zi* (FUNCTION: equative, contrastive etc.)

Significant HCFA results

FUNCTION	POSLEFT	POSRIGHT	Freq	Exp	P.adj.Holm	Dec	Q
SUBORD	PRON	COMMON	15	1.7241	2.09E-07	***	0.042
EQUAT	PRON	COMMON	18	2.8212	4.95E-07	***	0.048
EQUAT	PRON	PROPER	10	0.8125	7.36E-06	***	0.029
EMPHRIGHT	EMPHMRKR	CLAUSE	69	35.6417	3.05E-05	***	0.119
SUBORD	PROPER	COMMON	7	0.3831	8.11E-05	***	0.021
COUNTER	ADV	PROPER	4	0.1236	0.004301176	**	0.012
INTRORIGHT	COMMON	CLAUSE	6	0.5364	0.009981963	**	0.017
CONTLEFT	ADJ	ADJ	2	0.0075	0.013894591	*	0.006

Significant HCFA results: copula uses

FUNCTION	POSLEFT	POSRIGHT	Freq	Exp	P.adj.Holm	Dec	Q
SUBORD	PRON	COMMON	15	1.7241	2.09E-07	***	0.042
EQUAT	PRON	COMMON	18	2.8212	4.95E-07	***	0.048
EQUAT	PRON	PROPER	10	0.8125	7.36E-06	***	0.029
EMPHRIGHT	EMPHMRKR	CLAUSE	69	35.6417	3.05E-05	***	0.119
SUBORD	PROPER	COMMON	7	0.3831	8.11E-05	***	0.021
COUNTER	ADV	PROPER	4	0.1236	0.004301176	**	0.012
INTRORIGHT	COMMON	CLAUSE	6	0.5364	0.009981963	**	0.017
CONTLEFT	ADJ	ADJ	2	0.0075	0.013894591	*	0.006

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Significant HCFA results: focus marking

FUNCTION	POSLEFT	POSRIGHT	Freq	Exp	P.adj.Holm	Dec	Q
SUBORD	PRON	COMMON	15	1.7241	2.09E-07	***	0.042
EQUAT	PRON	COMMON	18	2.8212	4.95E-07	***	0.048
EQUAT	PRON	PROPER	10	0.8125	7.36E-06	***	0.029
EMPHRIGHT	EMPHMRKR	CLAUSE	69	35.6417	3.05E-05	***	0.119
SUBORD	PROPER	COMMON	7	0.3831	8.11E-05	***	0.021
COUNTER	ADV	PROPER	4	0.1236	0.004301176	**	0.012
INTRORIGHT	COMMON	CLAUSE	6	0.5364	0.009981963	**	0.017
CONTLEFT	ADJ	ADJ	2	0.0075	0.013894591	*	0.006

Significant HCFA results: topic marking

FUNCTION	POSLEFT	POSRIGHT	Freq	Exp	P.adj.Holm	Dec	Q
SUBORD	PRON	COMMON	15	1.7241	2.09E-07	***	0.042
EQUAT	PRON	COMMON	18	2.8212	4.95E-07	***	0.048
EQUAT	PRON	PROPER	10	0.8125	7.36E-06	***	0.029
EMPHRIGHT	EMPHMRKR	CLAUSE	69	35.6417	3.05E-05	***	0.119
SUBORD	PROPER	COMMON	7	0.3831	8.11E-05	***	0.021
COUNTER	ADV	PROPER	4	0.1236	0.004301176	**	0.012
INTRORIGHT	COMMON	CLAUSE	6	0.5364	0.009981963	**	0.017
CONTLEFT	ADJ	ADJ	2	0.0075	0.013894591	*	0.006

Example sentences for the significant combinations:

EQUAT, PRON, PROPER

我	是	王	太傅
ŋu²³	zɿ	ɦuɑ̃³⁵	tʰɑ³⁴fu³⁴
I	COP	Wang	high rank official

'I'm Official Wang.' （ Chapter 18 ）

EMPHRIGHT, EMPHMRKR, CLAUSE

就　　　　　　　是　　　　别　　处　　泄漏

$\textstyle{z i \gamma^{34}}$　　　　　　zɿ　　　biɪ^{ʔ12}　tsʰɿ　　ɕiɪ^{ʔ55}lɣ^{34}

EMPHMRKR　　FOCUS　　other　place　leak

'It is a fact that [information] has been leaked somewhere else.' （ Chapter 22 ）

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COUNTER(expected), ADV, PROPER

元来	是	赵相公
ɦyø^{35}lɛ^{35}	zɿ	zɔ^{23}ɕiɑ̃^{23}koŋ^{53}
actually	TOPIC	Mr. Zhao

'Actually, it is Mr. Zhao.' (Chapter 24)

CONT(rastive)LEFT, ADJ, ADJ

惹祸的	是	花容月貌。
za²³ɦu²³tiɿˀ⁵⁵	zɿ	ho⁵³ɦioŋ³⁵ɦyɪˀ¹²mɔ³⁴
trouble	TOPIC	beauty in the flesh

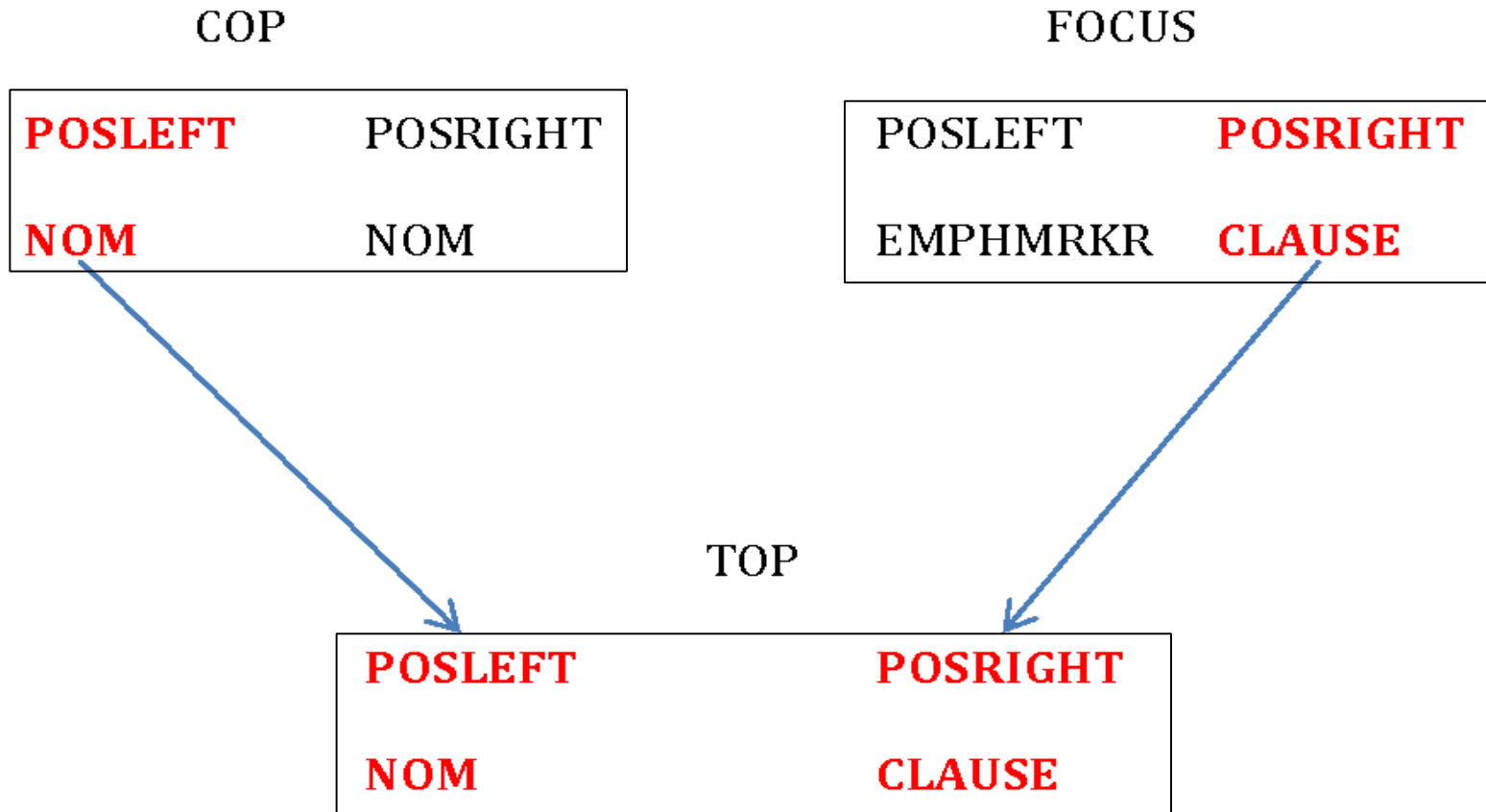| 赚人的	是	云魂雨梦。
Zɛ²³ɲiɲ³⁵tiɿˀ⁵⁵	zɿ	ɦyn³⁵ɦuəŋ³⁵ɦy²³mã̃³⁴
fascination	TOPIC	imaginary beauty

'Trouble? That's beauty in the flesh.

Fascination? That's imaginary beauty.' (Chapter 4)

Shanghainese blending

COP

POSLEFT	POSRIGHT
NOM	NOM

FOCUS

POSLEFT	**POSRIGHT**
EMPHMRKR	**CLAUSE**

TOP

POSLEFT	**POSRIGHT**
NOM	**CLAUSE**

German blending (Newman 1997)

Impersonal Construction

Es juckt mich

'I feel itchy'

Es V Pro$_{obj}$

2-place GIVE Construction

Berge geben Trauben

'Mountains produce grapes'

NP$_1$ **gibt NP$_2$**

Es gibt Beulen...

'There will be lumps [on the body]

Es gibt NP

Summary

- We draw upon **attested historical data** to understand earlier stages, rather than simply relying upon imagined intermediate stages as is often the case in grammaticalization studies.

- Even simple **statistical methods** can be very useful in identifying   significant factors at work in data.

- The emergent *zi* topic construction inherits properties from the historically ealier copula and focus constructions and can be understood as a kind of **constructional blending**.

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谢谢　　侬！

$\textz{ia}^{34}\textz{ia}^{34}$　noŋ^{53}

Thank　　you!

☺