All structures great and small: on copular sentences with shì in Mandarin
Cheng, H.

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Universiteit Leiden

Author: Cheng, H.
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Basic properties of *shì*

    Shì 是 is the copula in contemporary Mandarin. Its homophones also occur in various non-copular constructions. This chapter will first present a description of restrictions on the distribution of *shì* when it functions as the copula and then an overview of presumably non-copular use of *shì* in Mandarin.

2.1 The category of the postcopular constituent

In Mandarin, the use of *shì* is constrained for copular sentences. In principle, only nominal predicates admit the use of the copula *shì*. *Shì* is seldom used when the predicate is an AP, PP, or VP (for exceptions see the next two subsections).[1] The examples in (1) show the contrast between the use of the copula *shì* when the predicates are of different lexical categories.

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[1]I would like to point out again that the *shì* under discussion here should not bear extra stress or be pronounced in a weakened way. See Section 2.3.1 in this chapter for an inventory of various prosodic patterns associated with different uses of *shì* in Mandarin. In addition, note that, unlike its copular counterparts in some European languages, *shì* is not used as an auxiliary in passives, the perfective, the progressive,

(1)   a. 迈克 *（是）学生。   *NP*
          *Màike *(shì) xuéshēng.*
          Mike COP   student
          'Mike is a student.'

       b. 迈克（* 是）很帅。   *AP*
          *Màike (*shì) hěn shuài.*
          Mike COP   very handsome
          'Mike is handsome.'

       c. 迈克（* 是）在家。   *PP*
          *Màike (*shì) zài jiā.*
          Mike COP   at home
          'Mike is at home.'

       d. 迈克（* 是）见过小十一。   *VP*
          *Màike (*shì) jiàn guo xiǎoShíyī.*
          Mike COP   see EXP little.Eleven
          'Mike has met El.'

Section 2.1.1 will list all kinds of NPs that are allowed to occur in the postcopular position. Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 will introduce two special cases in which non-nominal elements are permissible in the postcopular position.

2.1.1   Nominals

With respect to categories of predicative nominal phrases, the postcopular position allows for nearly all types of nominal phrases. The sentences in (2) through (4) show the range of NPs. Specifically, first, the postcopular nominal can be a bare NP, an indefinite NP with a numeral and classifier, or a modified NP (modified by an adjective or relative clause).[2]

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or existential constructions.

[2]Postcopular bare NPs can only have the indefinite reading. The definite maximality reading is unavailable for predicate NPs (see Cheng, Heycock, and Zamparelli 2017 for an exemplary context and also examples in Cantonese).

(2) a. 迈克是学生。   *Bare NP*
       Màike shì   xuéshēng.
       Mike   COP student
       'Mike is a student.'

     b. 迈克是一个学生。   *Num-Cl-NP*
       Màike shì   yī-ge   xuéshēng.
       Mike   COP one-CLF student
       'Mike is a student.'

     c. 迈克是 (一个) 聪明的学生。   *Modified NP*
       Màike shì   (yī-ge)   cōngming de   xuéshēng.
       Mike   COP one-CLF smart   SUB student
       'Mike is a smart student.'

     d. 迈克是 (一个) 学过物理的学生。   *Modified NP*
       Màike shì   (yī-ge)   xué   guo wùlǐ   de   xuéshēng.
       Mike   COP one-CLF learn EXP physics SUB student
       'Mike is a student who has learned physics.'

A postcopular nominal can also be a definite noun phrase, as shown in (3). Proper names, pronouns, NPs with demonstratives, and nominals with possessives are all permissible in the postcopular position.

(3) a. 迈克最好的朋友是小十一。   *Proper name*
       Màike zuì   hǎo   de   péngyou shì   xiǎoShíyī.
       Mike   most good SUB friend   COP little.Eleven
       'Mike's best friend is El.'

     b. 迈克最好的朋友是她。   *Pronoun*
       Màike zuì   hǎo   de   péngyou shì   tā.
       Mike   most good SUB friend   COP 3SG
       'Mike's best friend is her.'

     c. 迈克最好的朋友是那个人。   *NP with demonstrative*
       Màike zuì   hǎo   de   péngyou shì   nà-ge   rén.
       Mike   most good SUB friend   COP DEM-CLF person
       'Mike's best friend is that person.'

     d. 迈克是小十一的男朋友。   *Possessives*
       Màike shì   xiǎoShíyī   de   nánpéngyou.
       Mike   COP little.Eleven SUB boyfriend
       'Mike is El's boyfriend.'

Lastly, quantifiers can be observed in the postcopular position, as shown in (4). Crucially, similar to English and other languages, they can only yield group readings, in the sense that groups of plural individuals are treated as entities (Partee 1986; Heycock & Kroch 1999). Note particularly that the universal quantifier *suǒyǒu* 'all' is allowed in the postcopular position. In contrast, *měi* 'every' can never occur in the same position.[3]

(4)   a. 这本书的作者是两个中学生。   *number-NP*

              Zhè-běn   *shū*   *de*   *zuòzhě*   *shì*   *liǎng-ge*

              DEM-CLF   book   SUB   author   COP   two-CLF

              zhōngxuéshēng.

              secondary.school.student

              'The authors of this book are two secondary school students.'

    b. 疫情的受害者是大部分人。   *most-NP*

              Yìqíng   *de* *shòuhàizhě* *shì*   *dàbùfen rén.*

              disease.outbreak SUB victim   COP most   people

              'The victims of the disease outbreak are most people.'

    c. 疫情的受害者是所有人。   *all-NP*

              Yìqíng   *de* *shòuhàizhě* *shì*   *suǒyǒu rén.*

              disease.outbreak SUB victim   COP all   people

              'The victims of the disease outbreak are all the people.'

    d. *疫情的受害者是每个人。   *every-NP*

              **Yìqíng*   *de* *shòuhàizhě* *shì* *měi-ge*   *rén.*

              disease.outbreak SUB victim   COP every-CLF people

              Intended: 'The victims of the disease outbreak are every person.'

2.1.2 Exception 1: Postcopular non-nominals

The first exception to the generalisation that *shì* only co-occurs with nominal predicates mainly concerns bare APs, bare VPs, and IPs, as shown in (5).

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[3]Similar phenomena in English have been noted in Heycock and Kroch (1999):

(i)   ?? What she bought was every book on linguistics.

                                      (Heycock & Kroch 1999: 384)

(5) a. 我的爱好是看电视。 (Zhan & Sun 2013: 756)
Wǒ de àihào shì kàn diànshì.
1SG SUB hobby COP watch TV
'My hobby is watching TV.'

b. 这个房子的特点是干净。 (Gao & Ji 1963: 54)
Zhè-ge fángzi de tèdiǎn shì gānjìng.
DEM-CLF house SUB characteristic COP clean
'The characteristic of this house is that it is clean.'

c. 她的遗憾是只跑了一圈。 (Zhan & Sun 2013: 763)
Tà de yíhàn shì zhǐ pǎo le yī-quān.
3SG SUB regret COP only run PFV one-circle
'Her regret is that she has only run one lap.'

In fact, these bare APs/VPs and IPs can also occur in the precopular position, as shown in (6), which presents sentences with the reversed word orders of those in (5).

(6) a. 看电视是我的爱好。
Kàn diànshì shì wǒ de àihào.
watch TV COP 1SG SUB hobby
'Watching TV is my hobby.'

b. 干净是这个房子的特点。
Gānjìng shì zhè-ge fángzi de tèdiǎn.
clean COP DEM-CLF house SUB characteristic
'That it is clean is the characteristic of this house.'

c. 只跑了一圈是她的遗憾。
Zhǐ pǎo le yī-quān shì tà de yíhàn.
only run PFV one-circle COP 3SG SUB regret
'That she has only ran one lap is her regret.'

It is unclear whether these are real exceptions, since these VPs, APs, and IPs can appear in positions that are normally occupied by nominal constituents. One approach to analysing this phenomenon is to assume that we are dealing with nominalisation. For Mandarin, another prototypical context for the discussion of nominalisation concerns the structure [N *de* V/A] (Xiang 1991; G. Cheng 1999; D. Wang 2002; Lu 2003; G. Zhou 2004; Si 2004; Deng 2006; R. Zhou 2012). (7) presents the most well-known examples in the literature.

(7)   a. 这本书的出版
           zhè-běn   shū   de   chūbǎn
           DEM-CLF book SUB publish
           'the publication of this book'

       b. 柠檬的酸
           níngméng de   suān
           lemon   SUB sour
           'the sourness of lemons'

This situation, namely, non-nominal constituents occurring in positions normally reserved for nominal elements, is also comparable to similar cases in other languages. For instance, in English, APs, PPs, and CPs can sometimes occur in the subject position of copular sentences, such as in the (a) sentences in (8) to (10). Such constituents are termed 'Honorary NPs' in Safir (1983) and 'elliptical NPs' in Blom and Daalder (1977) and Den Dikken (1987).

(8)   a. Under the bed is a good place to hide.
       b. A good place to hide is under the bed.
(9)   a. Bashful is a terrible thing to be.
       b. A terrible thing to be is bashful.
(10)   a. What they did was fight.
       b. Fight was what they did.

                                        (Den Dikken 2017: 3-4)

The current study will not engage in the debates on nominalisation and related theoretical issues. I will consider nominalisation to be an open possibility for analysing cases where bare APs/VPs and IPs occur in the postcopular position. Since this phenomenon could be attributed to other independent reasons such as nominalisation or semantic effects of referentiality, the existence of the above-mentioned examples will not undermine the claim that the Mandarin copula *shì* typically combines with nominal constituents.

2.1.3 Exception 2: Non-gradable adjectives

It is widely acknowledged that, in Mandarin, adjective predicates do not admit the use of *shì* (e.g. Pustet 2003). More precisely, the simple

combination of *shì* and an adjective predicate is rejected, as shown in (11).[4]

(11) a. * 张三是高。   *Gradable adjective with an open scale*
        **Zhāngsān shì gāo.*
        Zhangsan COP tall
        Intended: 'Zhangsan is tall.'

      b. * 这个杯子是满。   *Gradable adjective with a closed scale*
        **Zhè-ge   bēizi shì mǎn.*
        DEM-CLF cup COP full
        Intended: 'This cup is full.'

      c. * 这个答案是错。   *Non-gradable adjective*
        **Zhè-ge   dá'àn shì cuò.*
        DEM-CLF answer COP wrong
        Intended: 'This answer is wrong.'

However, as long as *de* appears in addition to *shì*, (11b) and (11c) will become grammatical, though (11a) remains ungrammatical, as shown in (12). Following Zhu (1961) (among others), *de* is analysed as a nominaliser. Alternatively, *de* is followed by an empty N. Whichever analysis is correct, the A-*de* structure is nominal, and thus no longer constitutes a counterexample to the claim that *shì* typically combines with nominals.

(12) a. * 张三是高的。   *Gradable adjective with an open scale*
        **Zhāngsān shì gāo de.*
        Zhangsan COP tall DE
        Intended: 'Zhangsan is tall.'

      b. 这个杯子是满的。   *Gradable adjective with a closed scale*
        Zhè-ge   bēizi shì mǎn de.
        DEM-CLF cup COP full DE
        'This cup is full.'

      c. 这个答案是错的。   *Non-gradable adjective*
        Zhè-ge   dá'àn shì cuò de.
        DEM-CLF answer COP wrong DE
        'This answer is wrong.'

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[4]The classification of adjectives follows Kennedy and McNally (2005).

It is well known that bare adjective predicate sentences in Mandarin will either yield only the comparative reading, as in (13a) and (13b), or lead to an "incomplete/ungrammatical" sentence, as in (13c), (Zhu 1982; Sybesma 1992, 1999; Grano 2012; Y. Wu & Zhu 2013; Fang 2017, 2018; Xiong & Yang 2020). To yield the positive reading of the adjectives, gradable adjectives with an open scale such as *gāo* 'tall' must co-occur with a degree adverb such as *hěn*, as shown in (14a). Non-gradable adjectives, in contrast, are by their nature incompatible with degree adverbs like *hěn*, as shown in (14b). In fact, being sandwiched between *shì* and *de* (i.e. (12c)) is the only possible predicative form for Mandarin non-gradable adjectives (Grano 2012; Fang 2017, 2018), a fact that has been long overlooked.

(13) a. 张三高。
          Zhāngsān gāo.
          Zhangsan tall
          'Zhangsan is taller (than someone else in the discourse).'

      b. 这个杯子满。
          Zhè-ge   bēizi mǎn.
          DEM-CLF cup   full
          'This cup has even more water (than some other cup in the discourse, though both are almost full).'

      c. *这个答案错。
          *Zhè-ge   dá'àn   cuò.
          DEM-CLF answer wrong
          Intended: 'This answer is wrong.'

(14) a. 张三很高。
          Zhāngsān hěn gāo.
          Zhangsan very tall
          'Zhangsan is tall.'

      b. *这个答案很错。
          *Zhè-ge   dá'àn   hěn cuò.
          DEM-CLF answer very wrong
          Intended: 'This answer is wrong.'

Gradable adjectives with a closed scale have two possible predicative forms. One consists of the adjective with *shì...de*, as shown in (15a). This yields the positive reading of the adjective predicate. The other

is composed of the adjective and a degree adverb such as *hěn*, which gives rise to an intensified reading of the adjective predicate, as shown in (15b).

(15) a. 这个杯子是满的。
         Zhè-ge   bēizi shì   mǎn de.
         DEM-CLF cup   COP full   DE
         'This cup is full.'
      b. 这个杯子很满。
         Zhè-ge   bēizi hěn   mǎn.
         DEM-CLF cup   very full
         'This cup is very full.'

In short, it is true that adjectives cannot co-occur with a single *shì* to form an adjective predicate sentence in Mandarin. However, when *de* occurs in addition to *shì*, two types of adjective predicates are permissible, namely, gradable adjectives with a closed scale and non-gradable adjectives.[5]

Before closing this section, I will make a short remark on *hěn*. I will not go so far as to claim that *hěn* is another copula in Mandarin that selects only gradable adjectives (e.g. B. Zhang 2011).[6] However, I will view such an analysis as an open possibility because the use of *hěn* indeed satisfies the definitions of copula that will be mentioned in Chapter 4 (e.g. Pustet 2003, Arche, Fábregas, & Marín 2019). It is semantically bleached, since it does not yield the intensified degree reading 'very'. Also, it plays a role in relation to predication and is in complementary distribution with *shì*. Cross-linguistically speaking, it is also a common phenomenon that languages adopt multiple copulas with varied selective properties (Pustet 2003; Moro 2017; Arche, Fábregas, & Marín 2019). As the current study focuses on the syntactic properties of *shì* and not on all possible copular elements in Mandarin, I will not delve into a discussion about the identity of *hěn* in adjective predicate sentences.

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[5]Analysis of the use of *shì* with adjectives is more likely to require resorting to semantic accounts, which would be a large, independent project. An elaborate description of the use of *shì* and *hěn* in relation to the predicative forms of Mandarin adjectives is included in Appendix A. An account for the distinction is left for future research.

[6]Although not proposing that *hěn* is a copula, He and Jiang (2011) and Grano

2.1.4 Interim summary

In sum, this section reviews the selectional property of postcopular constituents in Mandarin. In principle, the copula *shì* is only compatible with nominal predicates. Except for NPs with *every*-quantification, all types of noun phrases can appear in the postcopular position. Two apparent exceptions to this generalisation have also been discussed in this section. For one thing, bare APs, bare VPs, and IPs in a nominalised reading can also appear in the postcopular position. Furthermore, though gradable adjectives with an open scale do not co-occur with *shì*, gradable adjectives with a closed scale can co-occur with *shì* if an extra *de* also occurs. Furthermore, the only possible predicative form for nongradable adjectives involves *shì* as well as *de*. Since, as we have seen, these exceptions may very well be only apparent (the postcopular constituent may be nominalised) and to keep the discussion clear, this thesis will focus solely on the canonical cases in which the postcopular constituents are uncontroversially nominal (or, in other words, "double-NP" copular sentences, using Moro's 1997, 2017 term).

2.2 Obligatoriness of *shì*

Shì is obligatory in all the examples in section 2.1. In general, it tends to be obligatory in most contexts, whether matrix or embedded. Some languages allow for omission of the copula (or "copula dropping", to use Pustet's 2003 term) in matrix sentences. For instance, the Turkish copula suffix -*DIr* is optional in all contexts. In another group of languages, copula dropping is restricted to specific grammatical contexts. For instance, Hebrew and Arabic do not use a copula in the affirmative present tense. The Russian copula *byt'* is also obligatorily omitted in the present tense. The Hungarian copula *van* must be omitted in the third person present tense. Kenya Luo copula *ni* only co-occurs with nominal subjects but must be omitted when the subjects are pronominal or demonstrative.

(2012) argue, respectively, that *hěn* and *shì* have comparable functions. For He and Jiang (2011), both *hěn* and *shì* are analysed as type-shifters that can convert NPs into predicates. Specifically, *hěn* creates extrinsic properties, while *shì* creates intrinsic properties. For Grano (2012), the use of both *hěn* and *shì* is required by the T head, to fulfil "the T[+V] Constraint", to use his term. Reviews of other analyses of *hěn* are referred to in N. N. Zhang (2015) and L. Zhang (2020).

Unlike any of the above-mentioned languages, *shì* in Mandarin matrix copular sentences is only omissible in two contexts. Its omissibility is not influenced by the properties of the subject or the tense of the sentence.

The first context concerns multi-clausal pair-lists. Copular sentences allow gapping in a pair-list context. For instance, the copula *shì* in the second and third clauses in (16) can be absent, resulting in a gapping-like sentence. Crucially, in addition to the copula, additional elements can be omitted in the same contexts, as shown in (17).

(16) 张三是数学老师，李四（是）物理老师，赵六（是）化学老师。
      Zhāngsān shì shùxué lǎoshī, Lǐsì (shì) wùlǐ   lǎoshī, Zhàoliù
      Zhangsan COP maths teacher Lisi COP physics teacher Zhaoliu
      (*shì) huàxué   lǎoshī.*
      COP chemistry teacher
      'Zhangsan is a maths teacher, Lisi a physics teacher, Zhaoliu a chemistry teacher.'

(17) 张三是数学老师，李四物理，赵六化学。
      Zhāngsān shì shùxué lǎoshī, Lǐsì wùlǐ,   Zhàoliù huàxué.
      Zhangsan COP maths teacher Lisi physics Zhaoliu chemistry
      'Zhangsan is a maths teacher, Lisi a physics teacher, Zhaoliu a chemistry teacher.'

This phenomenon is interesting because it has been reported that Mandarin lacks canonical gapping (Paul 1999; S.-W. Tang 2001b; Wei 2011). However, the acceptability of (16) and (17) indicates that for some reason, gapping is possible with *shì*, even though it is unavailable with regular verbs. As shown in (18), when the verb *dāng* 'serve as' is used instead of the copula *shì*, the sentence (18) becomes ungrammatical or at least seriously degraded, even though the same interpretation is intended. The sentences in (19) are two prototypical examples showing that Mandarin lacks canonical gapping. (19a) is an example with an eventive main verb, while (19b) has a stative main verb.

(18) */?? 张三当了数学老师，李四物理老师，赵六化学老师。⁷
      */??*Zhāngsān dāng   le   shùxué lǎoshī, Lǐsì wùlǐ   lǎoshī,*
      Zhangsan serve.as PFV maths teacher Lisi physics teacher
      Zhàoliù huàxué   lǎoshī.
      Zhaoliu chemistry teacher
      Intended: 'Zhangsan is a maths teacher, Lisi a physics teacher,
      and Zhaoliu a chemistry teacher.'

(19) a.   * 张三吃了苹果，李四香蕉。
           **Zhāngsān chī le   píngguǒ, Lǐsì xiāngjiāo.*
           Zhangsan eat PFV apple   Lisi banana
           Intended: 'Zhangsan ate apples, and Lisi bananas.'

      b.   * 张三喜欢苹果，李四香蕉。
           **Zhāngsān xǐhuan píngguǒ, Lǐsì xiāngjiāo.*
           Zhangsan like   apple   Lisi banana
           Intended: 'Zhangsan likes apples, and Lisi bananas.'

   Note that gapping is not observed when the clauses are negative in
form.⁸

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⁷The use of the perfective marker *le* is crucial here. First, as will be discussed in
Chapter 4, *shì* is incompatible with the perfective marker *le*, as shown in (ia). For
the same intended reading of (ia), *shì* can be replaced with the verb *dāng* 'serve as'.
However, the perfective marker is then obligatory, as shown in (ib). In this sense, the
sentence with *le* in addition to the verb *dāng* 'serve as' constitutes a minimal pair
with the copula sentence in (16). In addition, (18) without *le* can be taken as an
instance of the pair-list bare clauses I discuss elsewhere (H. Cheng 2021), sentences
with a different structure from episodic sentences, which actually do permit gapping.

(i) a. 张三是（＊了）数学老师。
        *Zhāngsān shì (*le) shùxué lǎoshī.*
        Zhangsan COP PFV maths teacher
        'Zhangsan is a maths teacher.'

     b. 张三当＊（了）数学老师。
        *Zhāngsān dāng   *(le) shùxué lǎoshī.*
        Zhangsan serve.as PFV maths teacher
        'Zhangsan is a maths teacher.'

⁸Note that it is also impossible to only drop *shì* because the negator *bù* in
Mandarin cannot negate nominal phrases.

(20) a. 张三不是数学老师，李四 * (不是) 物理老师，赵六 * (不是)
          化学老师。   cf. (16)
          *Zhāngsān bù   shì   shùxué lǎoshī, Lǐsì *(bù shì) wùlǐ*
          Zhangsan NEG COP maths   teacher Lisi NEG COP physics
          *lǎoshī, Zhàoliù *(bù shì) huàxué   lǎoshī.*
          teacher Zhaoliu NEG COP chemistry teacher
          'Zhangsan is not a maths teacher, Lisi a physics teacher,
          Zhaoliu a chemistry teacher.'

      b. * 张三不是数学老师，李四物理，赵六化学。   cf. (17)
          **Zhāngsān bù   shì   shùxué lǎoshī, Lǐsì wùlǐ,   Zhàoliù*
          Zhangsan NEG COP maths   teacher Lisi physics Zhaoliu
          huàxué.
          chemistry
          Intended: 'Zhangsan is not a maths teacher, Lisi a physics
          teacher, Zhaoliu a chemistry teacher.'

The second context of *shì* omission in a matrix clause has received
much attention in previous studies, a context that can be referred to as
"nominal predicate constructions" (Chao 1968; Zhu 1982; S.-W. Tang
2001a; Wei 2007; Q. Zhang 2010). Nominal predicate constructions are
generally defined as clauses in which subjects are directly predicated by
nominal elements without the appearance of the copula *shì* or verbal
elements such as *yǒu*, as shown in (21).

(21) a. 孔子鲁人。   (Chao 1968: 113)
          Kǒngzǐ   Lǔ rén.
          Confucius Lu people
          'Confucius is from Lu State.'

      b. 这孩子大眼睛。   (Zhu 1982: 103)
          Zhè háizi dàyǎnjing.
          DEM kid   big.eye
          'This kid has big eyes.'

      c. 今天星期日。
          Jīntiān xīngqīrì.
          today   Sunday
          'Today is Sunday.'

    d. 土豆两欧元。
       Tǔdòu liǎng-ōuyuán.
       potato two-euro
      'These potatoes cost two euros.'

    e. 迈克十五岁。
       Màike shíwǔ suì.
       Mike   fifteen age
      'Mike is fifteen.'

Although analyses vary in whether or not these sentences are generated by omission of *shì* (or other relevant verbs such as *yǒu* 'have'), the current study views it an open possibility that the so-called nominal predicate constructions involves *shì*-omission. First, nominal predicate sentences are highly constrained in Mandarin (Zhu 1982; S.-W. Tang 2001a; Q. Zhang 2010), unlike copulaless sentences in Hebrew, Arabic, and Polish, in which the copula is consistently dropped in the present tense. For instance, such *shì*-omission in Mandarin is only found in predicational sentences and never in specificational or equative sentences. In fact, only a small group of predicational sentences allows for omission of the copula. The predicates in these sentences normally denote nationality, appearance, or temporal/locative properties; and the nominals are preferably modified by an adjective or a numeral–classifier combination. Second, *shì* can be added to all the nominal predicate constructions reported in the literature. Crucially, the insertion of *shì* will only give rise to pragmatic nuances for some speakers. And lastly, when forming negation, question–answer pairs, or A-not-A questions, or when combining with adverbs and modality, *shì* (and sometimes *yǒu* 'have' or other verbs) is always obligatory.

In contexts where embedded small clauses without a copula are allowed in many well-studied languages, either the copula *shì* or a verb must occur. For instance, in English, the copula is optional in the embedded clauses in both (22a) and (22b). In fact, *to be* tends to be absent. However, their Mandarin equivalents require the presence of an extra element in between the subject and the predicate of the embedded clauses, as shown in (23). This extra element can be the copula *shì*, as in (23a). It may also be a verb, as in (23b), depending on the semantics of the matrix verb.

(22)   a. We consider John (to be) the best candidate.

        b. We elected John (to be) the president.

(23)   a. 我们当张三 *（是）最佳候选人。
         Wǒmen dāng   Zhāngsān *(shì) zuìjiā hòuxuǎnrén.
         1PL   consider Zhangsan COP best candidate
         'We consider Zhangsan the best candidate.'

        b. 我们选张三 *(做) 总统。
         Wǒmen xuǎn Zhāngsān *(zuò)   zǒngtǒng.
         1PL   elect Zhangsan serve.as president
         'We elected Zhangsan the president.'

I am not denying the existence of small clauses in Mandarin, but it is worth noting that Mandarin seems to have a very small inventory of verbs that can take a small clause (without *shì*) as their complement (S.-W. Tang 1998). For instance, both sentences in (24) can take a small clause as the complement of the matrix verb, indicated by the possibility of *shì* omission (cf. (23b)). In addition, Mandarin small clauses with no *shì* are observed mainly in non-assertive sentences, such as rhetorical questions (e.g. (24a)) or imperatives (e.g. (24b)). In a neutral context, an assertion like (25) becomes seriously degraded as compared to its non-assertive counterparts in (24).

(24)   a. 你当张三（是）傻子吗？
         Nǐ dāng   Zhāngsān (shì) shǎzi ma?
         2SG consider Zhangsan COP idiot Q
         'Do you consider Zhangsan an idiot?'

        b. 你就当张三（是）傻子!
         Nǐ jiù dāng   Zhāngsān (shì) shǎzi!
         2SG just consider Zhangsan COP idiot
         'You can just consider Zhangsan an idiot.'

(25)   ?? 李四当张三傻子。
     ??Lǐsì dāng   Zhāngsān shǎzi.
      Lisi consider Zhangsan idiot
      Intended: 'Lisi considers Zhangsan an idiot.'

To summarise, this section lists three contexts where *shì* can be conditionally omitted. In matrix clauses, *shì* can be omitted in multi-clausal sentences, giving rise to gapping-like sentences. In addition, with

a certain group of predicate nominals, *shì* can also be omitted, resulting in what has been referred to as "nominal predicate constructions". In embedded clauses, *shì* can also be omitted under a number of verbs. The embedded clauses without *shì* can be taken as small clauses.

2.3   An overview of non-copular uses of *shì*

The copula *shì* is homonymous with a couple of elements that fulfil particular meanings or functions, especially those associated closely with focus structures and elliptical structures. This section is a collection of various types of what I consider to be "non-copular" structures containing *shì*. Note crucially that there may be good reasons to argue that some of the structures mentioned in this section should be analysed as copular sentences even though they may display seemingly divergent properties from standard copular sentences. These possibilities will be briefly pointed out during the course of my discussion. Though essential, the current study will not delve into issues like whether these homonyms should be categorised separately or whether a unified analysis of *shì* should be pursued.[9]

2.3.1   *Shì* with different prosodic properties

Mandarin *shì* presents different prosodic properties in different types of sentences. Although I have not conducted an acoustic analysis, the intuitive judgements are clear-cut and consistent among native speakers. There are three types of *shì*s from the prosodic perspective. I take the standard copular sentences such as (1) as the neutral context and the pronunciation of *shì* in a standard copular sentence as the standard. In some contexts, *shì* bears extra stress, which I will simply term "stressed *shì*". In some other contexts, in contrast, *shì* is pronounced in a weakened way. It is almost toneless and its consonant or/and vowel are not fully articulated. Interestingly, the grammatical categories of the post-*shì* constituents in sentences with stressed *shì* or weakened *shì* are different from standard copular sentences. In addition to nominal constituents, stressed *shì* can also precede APs, VPs, PPs, and IPs. The weaker *shì*

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[9]*Shì* in this section is glossed as SHI instead of COP.

can co-occur with APs, VPs, PPs, and IPs, but not with NPs/DPs.[10]

2.3.1.1 Stressed *shì*

Shì can carry extra stress to express affirmation or emphasis (Chao 1968; Zhu 1982; Lü 1999; Long & Kuang 2017; Ye 2020). For instance, the first *shì* in B1 indicates the affirmation of A1's assertion that 'Zhangsan is not a teacher'. B2 corrects A2 by emphasising that Zhangsan IS a teacher. *Shì* in both cases is pronounced with stronger intensity than that of *shì* in a standard copular sentence. The boldface type indicates the extra stress.

(26)   a.   A1: 张三不是老师，对不对?
           Zhāngsān bù   shì   lǎoshī,   duì-bù-duì?
           Zhangsan NEG COP teacher correct-NEG-correct
           'Zhangsan is not a teacher, right?'

       B1: 对，张三**是**不是老师。
           Duì,   Zhāngsān **shì** *bù   shì   lǎoshī.*
           correct Zhangsan SHI NEG COP teacher
           'Yes, it is true that Zhangsan is not a teacher.'

    b.   A2: 张三不是老师吧?
           Zhāngsān bù   shì   lǎoshī   ba?
           Zhangsan NEG COP teacher SFP
           'Is Zhangsan not a teacher?'

       B2: 不，张三**是**老师。
           Bù,   Zhāngsān **shì** *lǎoshī.*
           NEG Zhangsan COP teacher
           'No, Zhangs IS a teacher.'

Note that when functioning as an emphatic marker, the post-*shì* constituent is not restricted to be nominal. The sentences in (27) are examples containing different types of post-*shì* constituents.

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[10]Note that weakened *shì* cannot occur in nominal predicate constructions like those in (21). I mentioned in the previous section that *shì* can be added to all the nominal predicate sentences one can find in the literature. When added, *shì* is pronounced in the same way as in standard copular sentences.

(27)　　a.　张三**是**老师。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*NP*
　　　　　　Zhāngsān **shì** *lǎoshī.*
　　　　　　Zhangsn　SHI teacher
　　　　　　'Zhangsan IS a teacher.'

　　　　b.　迈克**是**很聪明。　　　　　　　　　　　　　*AP*
　　　　　　Màike **shì** *hěn   cōngming.*
　　　　　　Mike　SHI very smart
　　　　　　'Mike IS very smart.'

　　　　c.　小十一**是**喜欢吃华夫饼。　　　　　　　　　*VP*
　　　　　　XiǎoShíyī　　**shì** *xǐhuan chī huáfūbǐng.*
　　　　　　little.Eleven SHI like　　eat waffle
　　　　　　'El DOES like eating waffles.'

　　　　d.　迈克**是**在家。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*PP*
　　　　　　Màike **shì** *zài jiā.*
　　　　　　Mike　SHI at　home
　　　　　　'Mike IS at home.'

　　　　e.　迈克**是**去过实验室。　　　　　　　　　　　*IP*
　　　　　　Màike **shì** *qù guo shíyànshì.*
　　　　　　Mike　SHI go EXP lab
　　　　　　'Mike DID go to the lab once.'

Shì can be pronounced with even stronger intensity and obvious longer duration when a concessive reading is implied in addition to the emphatic meaning. A special melody or contour over *shì* can also be observed.[11] If *shì* in (27) is pronounced in such a way, the discourse must be associated with a concessive implication in addition to simple affirmation. The concessive reading can be explicitly presented by adding an extra clause, as shown in (28). For instance, the first clause in (28a) confirms and emphasises the statement that Zhangsan is a teacher. However, the second clause denies the fact that he teaches chemistry, which might be more crucial to the discourse.

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[11]It may be the case that the stress on *shì* is linked to the emphatic or affirmative reading and that the special melody is associated with the concessive implication. The stronger intensity and longer duration of *shì* here result from the combination of two prosodic mechanisms.

(28)   a. 张三**是**老师，但是不教化学。
          Zhāngsān **shì** *lǎoshī, dànshì bù   jiāo   huàxué.*
          Zhangsn SHI teacher but   NEG teach chemistry
          'Zhangsan IS a teacher, but he does not teach chemistry.'

       b. 迈克**是**很聪明, 但是不会做这道题。
          Màike **shì** *hěn   cōngming, dànshì bù   huì   zuò*
          Mike   SHI very   smart   but   NEG be.able.to do
          zhè-dào   tí.
          DEM-CLF puzzle
          'Mike IS very smart, but he cannot solve this puzzle.'

       c. 小十一**是**喜欢吃华夫饼，但是现在买不到。
          XiǎoShíyī   shì xǐhuan chī huáfūbǐng, dànshì xiànzài mǎi
          little.Eleven SHI like   eat waffle   but   now   buy
          bù   dào.
          NEG arrive
          'El DOES like eating waffles, but she cannot buy them any-where.'

       d. 迈克**是**在家，但是他在睡觉。
          Màike **shì** *zài jiā,   dànshì tā   zài   shuìjiào.*
          Mike   SHI at home but   3SG PROG sleep
          'Mike IS at home, but he is sleeping.'

       e. 迈克**是**去过实验室，但是没有做实验。
          Màike **shì** *qù guo shíyànshì, dànshì méiyǒu zuò shíyàn.*
          Mike   SHI go EXP lab   but   NEG   do experiment
          'Mike DID go to the lab once, but he did not conduct / participate in the experiment.'

Stressed *shì* should not be simply viewed as a copular *shì* plus an extra stress for at least two reasons. First, stressed *shì* cannot be negated (Long & Kuang 2017). For instance, the addition of a negator as shown in (29) gives rise to unparsable sentences.

(29)   a. * 张三不**是**老师。   cf. (27a)
          Zhāngsān* bù   **shì *lǎoshī.*
          Zhangsn NEG SHI teacher

       b. * 迈克不**是**很聪明。   cf. (27b)
          Màike bù   **shì *hěn   cōngming.*
          Mike   NEG SHI very smart

Second, stressed *shì* can co-occur with the copula *shì* as long as they are separated by other elements. For instance, as shown in (30), stressed *shì* co-occurs with the copula *shì* when the copula is negated or combined with modality.

(30)　　a.　张三**是**不是老师。
　　　　　　Zhāngsān **shì** *bù　　shì　lǎoshī.*
　　　　　　Zhangsan SHI NEG COP teacher
　　　　　　'Zhangsan ISn't a teacher.'

　　　　　b.　张三**是**可能是骗子。
　　　　　　Zhāngsān **shì** *kěnéng　shì　piànzi.*
　　　　　　Zhangsan SHI be.likely COP liar
　　　　　　'Zhangsan IS possibly a liar.'

2.3.1.2　Weakened *shì*

The co-occurrence of the "weakened" *shì* and verbal predicates or adjectival predicates has also been noticed in the literature, such as by Zhu (1982) and Lü (1999). This *shì* is pronounced in a "weakened" way in the sense that it is almost toneless and the consonant and/or the vowel is not fully articulated. The most frequently attested contexts for the use of weakened *shì* involve juxtaposed contrastive clauses. (31a) exemplifies sentences with VP predicates and (31b) exemplifies sentences with AP predicates. Monoclausal sentences also allow for this use of *shì*, as shown in (32).

(31)　　a.　他是去接人，不是去送人。　　　　　　　　(Zhu 1982: 105)
　　　　　　Tā　shì　qù jiērén,　　　　bù　shì　qù sòngrén.
　　　　　　3SG COP go pick.up.people NEG COP go see.off.people
　　　　　　'He is going to pick someone up, not to see someone off.'

　　　　　b.　张三是聪明，李四是帅。
　　　　　　Zhāngsān shì　cōngming, Lǐsì shì　shuài.
　　　　　　Zhangsan COP smart　　　Lisi COP handsome
　　　　　　'Zhangsan is smart while Lisi is handsome.'

(32)　　a.　他是没钱。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Pustet 2003: 60)
　　　　　　Tā　shì　méi　qián.
　　　　　　3SG COP NEG money
　　　　　　'(It is the case that) he does not have money.'

b. 谁也是送他一本书? (Soh 2007: 186)
   Shuí yě   shì   sòng tā   yī-běn   shū?
   who also COP give 3SG one-CLF book
   'Who also gave him a book?'

c. 你是在担心他吗?
   Nǐ   shì   zài   dānxīn tā   ma?
   2SG COP PROG worry 3SG Q
   '(Is it true) that you are worrying about him?'

Weakened *shì* is frequently associated with (contrastive) focus but it behaves differently from stressed *shì* and *shì* in clefts, which are also linked to focus. First, they have different prosodic properties. I share the judgements in Zhu's (1982) description that the *shì* in these cases tends to be pronounced in a weakened way as compared to that of a standard copular sentence with a nominal predicate or that of a copular sentence with a bare AP/VP or IP predicate. In contrast, stressed *shì* always bears extra stress, and *shì* in cleft sentences is always pronounced in the same way as the one in standard copular sentences. Second, unlike the stressed *shì* discussed in the previous subsection, this weakened *shì* can be negated, such as the second *shì* in (31a). It is worth noting, however, that sentences containing weakened *shì* (especially monoclausal sentences) do not necessarily imply contrastiveness. For instance, *shì* in (32c) simply conveys a sense of affirmation, which is possibly associated to the positive polarity. More investigation of the nature of this weakened *shì* is needed in regards to its acoustic features, contexts of use, and structural properties. Considering the fact that this weakened *shì* never co-occurs with a post-*shì* nominal and that the post-*shì* elements are always VPs/APs/PPs, it seems that this *shì* is in complementary distribution with the copula *shì*.

2.3.2 Cleft

The most crucial non-copular use of *shì* discussed in the literature is *shì* in cleft constructions. *Shì* is widely used in Mandarin cleft sentences, in many cases co-occurring with *de* (postverbal or sentence-final). It is pronounced in the same way as the copula *shì* in standard copular sentences. *Shì* can float in the sentence, above VP, and appear adjacent to the left of the focused constituent (L. L.-S. Cheng 2008). As shown

in (33), the temporal phrase *qùnián* 'last year', the locative phrase *zài shíyànshì* 'in the lab', and the subject Mike are the focused constituents in each sentence in (33), respectively. *Shì* is immediately attached to the left of these focused constituents in each case.

(33) a. 迈克是去年在实验室遇到小十一的。
          Màike shì qùnián   zài shíyànshì yùdào xiǎoShíyī   de.
          Mike SHI last.year at laboratory meet little.Eleven DE
          'It is last year that Mike met El in the lab.'

      b. 迈克去年是在实验室遇到小十一的。
          Màike qùnián   shì zài shíyànshì yùdào xiǎoShíyī   de.
          Mike last.year SHI at laboratory meet little.Eleven DE
          'It is in the lab that Mike met El last year.'

      c. 是迈克去年在实验室遇到小十一的。
          Shì Màike qùnián   zài shíyànshì yùdào xiǎoShíyī   de.
          SHI Mike last.year at laboratory meet little.Eleven DE
          'It is Mike who met El last year.'

The identity of this *shì* and the analysis of Mandarin cleft structures have long been under debate. Many current studies analyse this *shì* as a copula (L. L.-S. Cheng 2008; Paul & Whitman 2008; Zhan & Sun 2013; W. Li 2016; J. Chen 2017). However, it has also been viewed as some other head in the literature. For instance, *shì* in cleft constructions has been analysed as an inflectional element (C.-T. J. Huang 1988), a modal verb (D. Shi 1994), or the head of a FocP on top of IP (Ye 2020). Although it is intriguing to explore whether or not the *shì* in clefts is the copula and what the function of the *de* is, this thesis will not touch upon on these issues but rather focus solely on standard copular sentences in Mandarin. One crucial reason is that the post-*shì* constituent in a cleft construction is not nominal except when the subject is the focus, as in (33c). When the subject is the focus, however, the pre-*shì* position is empty. In other words, Mandarin cleft constructions do not show an obvious NP-*shì*-NP structure.

2.3.3 Ellipsis

Shì appears in elliptical constructions in Mandarin. For instance, *shì* obligatorily accompanies a stripping remnant. It is also obligatory in

sluicing when arguments are elided. *Shì* in these two structures is pronounced in the same way as the copula *shì* in standard copular sentences.

2.3.3.1   Stripping

Shì is obligatory in the elided clause in a stripping-like structure, co-occurring with the additive morpheme *yě* 'too, also'. The combination of the additive morpheme *yě* and *shì* is used regardless of whether the antecedent is affirmative or negative in form, as shown in (34), as opposed to the English stripping structure exemplified in (35).

(34)   a. 小十一吃了一盒华夫饼，迈克也是。
       XiǎoShíyī   chī le   yī-hé   huáfūbǐng, Màike yě   shì.
       little.Eleven eat PFV one-box waffle   Mike   too SHI
       'El ate a box of waffles, and Mike, too.'

     b. 小十一没吃华夫饼，迈克也是。
       XiǎoShíyī   méi chī huáfūbǐng, Màike yě   shì.
       little.Eleven NEG eat waffle   Mike   too SHI
       'El did not eat waffles, and Mike, neither.'

(35)   a. John read the book, and Bill, too.

     b. John did not read the book, and Bill, neither.

Mandarin stripping (or PolP Ellipsis, to use Soh's 2007 term; see below) differs from canonical VP-ellipsis (VPE) in Mandarin in two respects. First, in canonical VPE, the change of polarity in the antecedent clause will lead to the change in form in the elided clause. In other words, as shown in (36b), when the antecedent is negative in form, the remnant must contain a negator.

(36)   a. 小十一会唱那首歌，迈克也会。
       XiǎoShíyī   huì   chàng nà-shǒu   gē,   Màike yě
       little.Eleven be.able.to sing   DEM-CLF song, Mike   too
       huì.
       be.able.to
       'El can sing that song, and Mike also can.'

b. 小十一不会唱那首歌，迈克也不会。
XiǎoShíyī   bù   huì   chàng nà-shǒu gē,   Màike yě
little.Eleven NEG be.able.to sing   DEM-CLF song, Mike too
bù   huì.
NEG be.able.to
'El cannot sing that song, and Mike cannot, either.'

Second, canonical VPE in Mandarin allows for the combination of an affirmative clause and a negative clause when *què* 'but' is used instead of *yě* 'also, too'. For instance, (37) shows that a negative clause can serve as the antecedent to an affirmative clause and vice versa. However, as shown in (38), such combinations are unavailable in stripping even though *què* 'but' is used.

(37)   a. 小十一会唱那首歌，迈克却不会。
XiǎoShíyī   huì   chàng nà-shǒu gē,   Màike què bù
little.Eleven be.able.to sing   DEM-CLF song, Mike but NEG
huì.
be.able.to
'El can sing that song, but Mike cannot.'

b. 小十一不会唱那首歌，迈克却会。
XiǎoShíyī   bù   huì   chàng nà-shǒu gē,   Màike què
little.Eleven NEG be.able.to sing   DEM-CLF song, Mike but
huì.
be.able.to
'El cannot sing that song, but Mike can.'

(38)   a. * 小十一吃了一盒华夫饼，迈克却不是。
*XiǎoShíyī   chī le   yī-hé   huáfūbǐng, Màike què bù
little.Eleven eat PFV one-box waffle   Mike   but NEG
shì.
SHI

b. * 小十一没吃华夫饼，迈克却是。
*XiǎoShíyī   méi chī huáfūbǐng, Màike què shì.
little.Eleven NEG eat waffle   Mike   but SHI

On the basis of above-mentioned core properties of this *shì*, Soh (2007, 2018) analyses it as the Polarity head, which differs from the canonical copula use of *shì*. Specifically, this polarity head is supposed

to occupy a higher position than that of negation. Hence, in the case of negation, the elided structure contains negation, with the consequence that the negator never surfaces with stripping. As this *shì* is never followed by a nominal constituent (actually, it is never followed by anything), the structural analysis of it will not be addressed in the current study.

2.3.3.2 (Pseudo-)sluicing

Mandarin sluicing is argued to be a pseudo-sluicing construction involving a base-generated [*pro*-COP-*wh*] structure (Y.-H. A. Li & Wei 2014, 2017). One crucial property of this construction in Mandarin is the obligatory appearance of *shì* when the *wh*-element is an argument, as shown in (39). When the *wh*-element is an adjunct, *shì* is optional, as shown in (40). Considering the obligatoriness of the use of *shì* in these two conditions and its pronunciation property, *shì* in the Mandarin pseudo-sluicing construction is very much like the canonical copula use of *shì*. However, as a pseudo-sluicing construction does not contain a nominal precopular constituent, the analysis of *shì* in pseudo-sluicing constructions will not be addressed in this thesis, either.

(39)   a.   迈克买了一包东西，但我不知道 *(是) 什么。
           *Màike mǎi le   yī-bāo   dōngxi, dàn wǒ bù   zhīdào *(shì)*
           Mike   buy PFV one-bag thing   but 1SG NEG know   SHI
           shenme.
           what
           'Mike bought a bag of things, but I do not know what.'

   b.   有个人喜欢迈克，但我不知道 *(是) 谁。
           *Yǒu ge   rén   xǐhuan Màike, dàn wǒ bù   zhīdào *(shì)*
           have CLF people like   Mike   but 1SG NEG know   SHI
           shéi.
           who
           'Someone likes Mike, but I do not know who.'

(40)   a. 迈克去了一个地方，但我不知道 (是) 在哪里。
           Màike qù le   yī-ge   dìfang, dàn wǒ bù   zhīdào (shì) zài
           Mike go PFV one-CLF place   but 1SG NEG know   SHI at
           nǎlǐ.
           where
           'Mike went somewhere, but I do not know where.'

       b. 迈克去了一个地方，但我不知道 (是) 什么时候。
           Màike qù le   yī-ge   dìfang, dàn wǒ bù   zhīdào (shì)
           Mike go PFV one-CLF place   but 1SG NEG know   SHI
           shénme shíhou.
           what   time
           'Mike went somewhere, but I do not know when.'

       c. 迈克去了一个地方，但我不知道 (是) 为什么。
           Màike qù le   yī-ge   dìfang, dàn wǒ bù   zhīdào (shì)
           Mike go PFV one-CLF place   but 1SG NEG know   SHI
           wèishénme.
           why
           'Mike went somewhere, but I do not know why.'

2.3.4   Interim summary

This section briefly reviewed five non-copular uses of *shì* in Mandarin. First, in different structures, *shì* can be pronounced in distinguishable ways. In addition to the standard pronunciation in copular sentences, *shì* can either bear an extra stress or be pronounced in a weakened way. Among the above-mentioned five uses, one is relevant to stressed *shì*, one is relevant to weakened *shì*, and the rest should be pronounced in the same way as in standard copular sentences. Second, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, the current section is a collection of various apparent "non-copular" structures containing *shì*. Among all these uses of *shì*, stressed *shì* with an emphatic function and the so-called 'dummy' *shì* (Soh 2007) in stripping should be distinguished from standard copula *shì*. *Shì* in the other three uses, namely, weakened *shì*, the *shì* in cleft constructions, and the *shì* in (pseudo-)sluicing, can all be argued to be the copula or have been argued to be the copula in the literature. However, as these three types of *shì* do not typically occur in the NP-*shì*-NP environment that is the primary focus of this thesis, they will not be discussed in the current study.