

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系

碩士論文

Master Thesis

Graduate Institute of English

National Taiwan Normal University

台灣學生英文分裂句之第二語言習得

Second Language Acquisition of English *It*-Clefts

by Taiwanese Students

指導教授：陳純音博士

Advisor: Dr. Chun-yin Doris Chen

研究生：廖于涵

Student: Yu-han Carol Liao

中華民國一百零三年六月

June, 2014

摘要

本研究旨在探討以中文為母語的英語學習者對英文分裂句之第二語言習得情形，主要研究的議題包括第一語言轉移現象、對不同類型的分裂句之難易次序、分裂句之習得是否受對比效應之影響及英語程度是否影響分裂句之習得。本研究採用接受度判斷測驗。受試者分為實驗組及控制組。前者為六十位以中文為母語的大一學生，並按其英文程度分為初、中、高級三組。後者則為二十位英語母語人士。

首先，研究發現，受試者對英文分裂句的理解受到第一語言轉移的影響。在七種不同詞性的分裂句中，受試者最能接受的是名詞、無詞組、介系詞，其次是非限定性子句及副詞，再者是限定性子句，最後是形容詞。此外，針對不同的語法功能，受試者最能接受的是具修飾性的語法功能，其中又以具修飾性的名詞詞組接受度最高。在對比效應方面，受試者較能接受在對比情況下的分裂句，顯示對比效應對英語分裂句的難度有所影響。最後，在語言程度效應方面，受試者之英語程度越高對英文分裂句的接受度也越高，顯示學習者對英文分裂句的接受度會隨著其英語能力的提升而有所增進。

關鍵詞：分裂句、焦點結構、第一語言轉移、難度次序、語法功能效應、
對比效應、語言程度效應、第二語言習得

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to conduct an empirical study to explore Taiwanese students' second language acquisition of English *it*-clefts. The issues the study probed into include L1 transfer, the difficulty order of English *it*-clefts with different types of clefted elements, grammatical function effects, contrast effects, and proficiency effects. Besides, an Acceptability Judgment Task was designed to examine the subjects' preference. Sixty college freshmen were recruited and further divided into three experimental groups, i.e., low, intermediate, and high, based on their English proficiency levels. In addition, twenty English native speakers participated in the study as our control group.

The overall results indicated that L1 transfer had an influence on the acquisition of English *it*-clefts. As for the seven types of English *it*-clefts with different syntactic categories, our subjects accepted the types of NP, Zero, and PP, followed by N-F CL and ADV P better, and their acceptance rates for FIN CL, and ADJ P were the worst of all. Besides, it was found that different grammatical functions exhibited different degrees of learning difficulties for our subjects. English *it*-clefts with Adjunct clefted elements were found to obtain the highest acceptance, the NP Adjunct in particular. With regard to contrast effects, English *it*-clefts with contrast were found to be better accepted than those without contrast. Finally, our L2 learners' acceptance rates were found to be influenced by their L2 proficiency. The better the subjects' L2 abilities were, the better their acceptance of English *it*-clefts was.

Keywords: cleft sentence, focus construction, L1 transfer, difficulty order, grammatical function effects, contrast effects, proficiency effects, second language acquisition

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could scarcely imagine that I finally come to the finish of my thesis. It is never easy for an older person like me, who went back to school after several years of working, to focus on nothing but writing, not to mention that I had other matters to take care of during the process, the teaching internship and teachers' qualifying and recruitment examinations, for instance. Thus, if it were not for many people's support, I would not be able to survive this great challenge under intense pressure. With my fervent acknowledgments, I would like to thank them all.

First of all, I feel highly honored to have Dr. Chun-yin Doris Chen as my advisor. I am a student who is far too easily distracted and always have fancy pie-in-the-sky ideas. Hence, Dr. Chen not only had to provide academic guidance for me and supervise the progression of my thesis, but also had to remind me to return from frequent digressions. She has done a lot for me: she unbelievably bought one desk just to enable me to study in her office and help me get adapted to concentrating on doing research; one time when I was about to abandon the attempt to work on the thesis, she called me promptly at night to give me a blow and a shout. Whenever I was confronted with weakness, despair, and fear, she always patiently strengthened my resolve to keep moving on. When I could not help but shed my tears of frustration, she was the one who gave me comfort and peace. It is she that I owe a great deal to. Without her insightful suggestions on my research and her continuous care and concern for my mental state, this thesis could not have been possible.

I am very much obliged to my kind committee members, Dr. Angela Yi-ping Hsu and Dr. Miao-Hsia Chang. My great appreciation belongs to Dr. Hsu for her coming all the way from Hsinchu for the proposal and oral defense of my thesis. In addition, I cannot but admire her carefulness and insightfulness in doing research, and would like

to appreciate all the constructive comments she offered me. I would also like to thank Dr. Chang very sweetly, for her inspirational comments for my thesis, in the perspective of her specialty. Besides, I am also grateful to her for her prompt help with everything as my mentor at graduate program.

I extremely appreciate the kindness of the teachers of the Freshman English classes at NTNU, Dr. Chiou-Mei Janet Chen, Dr. Hsi-chin Jane Chu, Dr. Yu-Shien Bess Tzean, and Ting-Hui Irene Lu, for their kind help with the data collection of the study. Moreover, the participation of the Taiwanese subjects and English native subjects is most appreciated. Special thanks go to one of my friends from Canada, Anastasia Avvakumova, for inviting her friends to take part in my experiment. Furthermore, I would like to show heartfelt appreciation to my school sisters, Pris Ho and Amber Weng, for their help in recruiting English native speakers, and Gina Yang, for her patient and timely reply whenever I have technical questions. Most significantly, I am deeply grateful to Tiffany Jhang, for her great and prompt help when I was in the depths of setbacks and problems of running statistics, even when her own thesis was in full swing. But for her detailed explanation, I would have spent twice or more time completing the thesis.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the teachers of the Department of English whose classes I have benefitted from during my graduate study at NTNU: Dr. Gerardo Fernández-Salgueiro, Dr. Hsiao-hung Iris Wu, Dr. Jen-I Li, Dr. Jen Ting, Dr. Jing-Lan Joy Wu, Dr. Kwock-Ping John Tse, Dr. Maio-Ling Hsieh, Dr. Shiao-hui Chan, by alphabetical order. I am also pleased to know a great number of wonderful classmates at graduate school with whom I had many fond memories of my last schooldays. I thank Andres Chi, Becky Hsieh, Felix Tu, Irene Liao, Jeccie Tang, Jocelyn Tsai, Joy Hsieh, Julia Wu, for injecting fun into my school life. Special thanks are extended to Matt Ku, the Statistics King in our class, for all the assistance he

rendered me. I am particularly thankful to Debbie Hsu, for listening to my stories of daily life, enjoying leisure with me, and giving her hand to me whenever I need it.

I am fortunate to have my dear friends, Han-en Annette Wu, Li-fang Shirley Wang, Shih-chi Julia Ku, and Wei-fen Rose Chang, to keep encouraging me while I was pursuing my master's degree. Extra-special thanks go to my good friend, Meng-ju Mandy Cheng, who is far away working in the U.S. now but keeps close touch with me. Despite the time difference, she always leaves a voice message for me to share with me the blessings from God during the production of this thesis. No matter how terrible my mental health is, it is she who heals my pain. I am so lucky to have her to partake in my joys and sorrows. If she had not constantly nourished me with positive energy from the other side of the planet, I could have been overwhelmed by the difficulties and pressures.

Last and most of all, I am greatly indebted to my family for all their love and support, and would like to dedicate this thesis to them. I deeply thank my grandmother, Hsiu-ying Liao-Chung, for praying the best for me every day; my father, Kuo-yang Liao, for offering me a shelter from the wind and rain; my mother, Pi-fen Wu, for her unconditional support for my decisions since my youth; my brother, Jih-sung Robin Liao, for cheering me up when I was down; my sister, Yu-hsuan Maki Liao, for her financial and emotional support; and an important family member of ours, Gucci Liao, for keeping me company all the time. In addition, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my godfather, Yi-duan Morace Lin, for always showing confidence in me, and my aunt, Liana Chen, and my cousin, Hsin-yen Cindy Liao, for welcoming me at their home whenever I hope for a relaxed time. All my family members keep having faith in my ability to succeed, in spite of the fact that it took me so long to finish my master degree. Had it not for my dear family, this academic journey could not be ending so pleasantly and perfectly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHINESE ABSTRACT.....	i
ENGLISH ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Motivation	1
1.2 Theoretical Framework	3
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Significance of the Study	6
1.5 Organization of the Thesis	7
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Theoretical Studies of <i>It</i> -Clefts in English.....	9
2.1.1 Collins (1991).....	9
2.1.2 Reeve (2011)	13
2.1.3 Velleman et al. (2013)	17
2.1.4 Summary.....	20
2.2 Previous Empirical Studies of <i>It</i> -Clefts in English	20
2.2.1 Carrell (1977)	21
2.2.2 Callies & Keller (2008)	23
2.2.3 Callies (2009)	26
2.2.4 Summary.....	29
2.3 A New Classification of <i>It</i> -Clefts in English	31
2.3.1 Type 1: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved NP + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.....	32
2.3.2 Type 2: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved PP + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.	35
2.3.3 Type 3: <i>It</i> + be + Zero + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.....	36
2.3.4 Type 4: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved Finite Clause + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.....	37
2.3.5 Type 5: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved Non-finite Clause + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.	38
2.3.6 Type 6: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved ADV P + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.	40
2.3.7 Type 7: <i>It</i> + be + cleaved ADJ P + <i>that</i> + cleft clause.	40

2.3.8 Summary.....	41
2.4 Summary of Chapter Two	42
CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN.....	45
3.1 Subjects	45
3.2 Methods and Materials	46
3.3 Procedures	49
3.3.1 Pilot Study	50
3.3.2 Present Study	53
3.3.3 Scoring and Statistical Analysis	54
3.4 Summary of Chapter Three	55
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	57
4.1 Transfer Effects	57
4.1.1 Overall Results	57
4.1.2 General Discussion	62
4.2 Difficulty Hierarchy of the Types of English <i>It</i> -clefts	64
4.2.1 Overall Results	64
4.2.2 General Discussion	69
4.3 Grammatical Function Effects	72
4.3.1 Overall Results: A First Look at Three Functions.....	73
4.3.2 Overall Results: A Second Look at Three Functions	76
4.3.3 General Discussion	80
4.4 Contrast Effects	82
4.4.1 Overall Results	83
4.4.2 General Discussion	85
4.5 Proficiency Effects	87
4.6 Summary of Chapter Four.....	89
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION	91
5.1 Summary of the Major Findings	91
5.2 Pedagogical Implications	92
5.3 Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Future Research	94
Bibliography	95
Appendix A The Acceptability Judgment Task of the Formal Study.....	101
Appendix B The Grammaticality Judgment Task of the Pilot Study	105
Appendix C The Discourse Completion Task of the Pilot Study	106
Appendix D Results of the Pilot Study.....	108

Appendix E	The Consent Form	110
Appendix F	A Distribution of Participants' Ratings on the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category in the Acceptability Judgment Task	111

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 The Distribution of the Class and the Function of Highlighted Elements in LL and LOB	13
Table 2-2 Relative Frequencies of the Major Grammatical Functions of Highlighted Elements in LL and LOB	13
Table 2-3 Major Findings and Limitations of the Empirical Studies	29
Table 2-4 A Comparison between English and Chinese Clefts	41
Table 3-1 A Summary of the Subjects	46
Table 3-2 Test Items for the Acceptability Judgment Task.....	48
Table 3-3 A Test Sample of the Acceptability Judgment Task	49
Table 3-4 A Classification of Scoring	51
Table 4-1 The Overall Results for the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category	59
Table 4-2 A Comparison between the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category within Each Group.....	60
Table 4-3 A Comparison among Groups within the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category	61
Table 4-4 The Overall Results for the Seven Types of English <i>It</i> -clefts	65
Table 4-5 A Comparison among the Seven Types of English <i>It</i> -clefts within Each Group.....	65
Table 4-6 A Comparison among Groups within Each Type.....	68
Table 4-7 The Overall Results for the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function	73
Table 4-8 A Comparison between the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function	74
Table 4-9 A Comparison among Groups within the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function	76
Table 4-10 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Subject Function.....	77

Table 4-11 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Object Function	78
Table 4-12 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Adjunct Function.....	79
Table 4-13 The Overall Results for the Contrast category and the Non-contrast Category	83
Table 4-14 A Comparison between the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category within Each Group.....	83
Table 4-15 A Comparison among Groups within the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category	84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3-1 Flowchart of the Present Study	54
Figure 4-1 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category	60
Figure 4-2 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Seven Types of English <i>It</i> -clefts	67
Figure 4-3 Overall Preference of Each Group on the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function	75
Figure 4-4 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category	84
Figure 4-5 The Developmental Stages of English <i>It</i> -clefts.....	87

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADJ P	adjective phrase
Adv	adverb
ADV P	adverb phrase
Asp	aspect marker
Cls	classifier
DCT	discourse completion task
FIN CL	finite clause
GJ task	grammaticality judgment task
H group	high group
I group	intermediate group
L group	low group
N-F CL	non-finite clause
NP	noun phrase
NS	native speaker
O	object
Pl	plural marker
Poss	possessive marker
PP	prepositional phrase
S	subject
V	verb

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation

‘Focus’ has been the main concern to many researchers for a long time (e.g. Halliday 1967, Bolinger 1972, Chafe 1976, Prince 1978, Lambrecht 1994, etc.). To Halliday (1967), focus is the new information marked by pitch prominence. However, Chafe (1976) thinks of focus as one packaging phenomenon instead of the content of the message. Lambrecht (1994) refers to focus as the information that is the most important or salient in the given setting, and views focus as the asserted portion of a proposition, which the listener cannot take for granted at the time of speech. Besides, what is contrasted with the asserted information is the presupposed information, which the speaker assumes the listener has already known or taken for granted.

Every language offers speakers various devices to ‘focus’ (Dijk 2011). Take English for instance, extra stress is one of the devices, as in (1).

(1) I’m not mad at YOU. (Dijk 2011, p. 53)

In (1), by laying extra stress on ‘you,’ the speaker conveys both the presupposition and the asserted focus to the listener. The presupposition is that the speaker is mad at somebody, and the focus is that the anger is not toward the addressee. Nevertheless, there are other devices to give forth the same information, for instance, the pseudo-cleft and cleft constructions as the following examples show, respectively.

(2) What I’m mad at is not you.

(3) It is not you that I’m mad at.

In (2) and (3), the speaker uses different sentence structures to inform the listener of the same information conveyed in (1). Looking at the three devices introduced above,

we may find that (3) differs most from the corresponding device in Chinese. Therefore, it is selected as the subject of the present study, illustrated as follows.

As an identifying construction, the structure of cleft exists in most of the languages in the world (Zhang 2012), showing the relationship of identity between the highlighted element and the relative clause (Collins 1991). In Chinese, the cleft construction is the ‘*shi...de*’ construction (Li 1980). Literature has also discussed the similarity and differences in the cleft construction of English and Chinese (Li 1980, Zhang 2012). Take the following two sentences for instance.

(4) It was yesterday that John broke the vase.

(5) Zhangsan shi zuotian dapu huaping de.

Zhangsan be yesterday break vase DE (Li 1980, p.101)

Sentences (4) and (5) both take the copula as the matrix verb. However, they are different in certain aspects. First, while an expletive *it* is required in the beginning of the English cleft construction, it is not in Chinese. Besides, the focused and assumed elements are explicitly cleaved by the complementizer *that* in English, but in Chinese only the focused part is revealed by its following the copula *shi*. Owing to these differences, it is thus wondered whether the differences would affect Chinese EFL learners’ acquisition of the English *it*-cleft construction.

Despite some studies probing into the L2 acquisition of *it*-clefts in English, they examine the subjects’ awareness of the function of the construction (Callies & Keller 2008), or of the information the structure conveys (Carrell 1977); few of them look into the acquisition of the construction from the perspective of its syntactic structure. In addition, regarding the L2 learners previous studies have laid emphasis on, some investigated German subjects (Callies & Keller 2008, Callies 2009), and some examined the subjects from different countries around the world (Carrell 1977). However, little study has been found to explore how Chinese EFL learners acquire the

English *it*-cleft construction. Thus, the present study aims to fill the niche and hence provide possible pedagogical implication.

Given the above difficulties and problems Chinese learners of English may face with, as well as the gap in the study of the L2 acquisition of English *it*-clefts, the present study endeavors to reveal how the construction of *it*-cleft is acquired. Based on relevant previous studies, the structure of *it*-clefts in English is classified according to the part of speech that is cleaved in Collins (1991). Besides, with the aid of two different types of tasks, i.e. a comprehension task and a production one, various variables that might influence the performance of the learners are examined, task effects, L1 transfer, and L2 proficiency, etc.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

According to Collins (1991), “clefts represent communicative variants of structurally simpler sentences, differing from them in terms of theme-selection, the presentation of given and new information”(p.5). The element following the copula within the superordinate clause is the ‘focus,’ and the rest part of the sentence after the complementizer *that* is the ‘presupposition.’ While there are several types of clefts, such as *it*-clefts, *there*-clefts, and *have*-clefts (Davidse 2000), the present study is aimed at the construction of *it*-clefts, and its basic structure is shown in (6).

(6) *It is* + cleaved XP +*that*+ cleft clause.

In (6), the cleaved XP refers to the phrase split by the construction so as to be the focus of the sentence. In Collins’ (1991) study on the corpus of *it*-clefts, there are seven classes of highlighted elements accessible to the structure, i.e. noun phrases, prepositional phrases, finite clauses, non-finite clauses, adverb phrases, and adjective phrases. The cleft clause in (6) indicates the rest part of the sentence, which is the presupposition of the speaker.

Another theory that is to be implemented in the present study is the notion of ‘markedness.’ According to Eckman (1977), “a phenomenon A in some language is more marked than B if the presence of A in a language implies the presence of B; but the presence of B does not imply the presence of A.” Besides, a marked structure or element is predicted to be harder or acquired later than an unmarked one in terms of both first language acquisition and second language acquisition (White 1986). The construction at issue, i.e., *it*-clefts in English, is thus predicted to be more marked and more difficult to be acquired than a non-cleft sentence for second language learners of English. Moreover, Eckman (1985) states that Markedness Differential Hypothesis states refers to the idea that the element of the target language that is different from the native language will be more difficult for the learners. Accordingly, it is predicted that English *it*-clefts will be more difficult for Chinese EFL learners to acquire since they are different from the counterparts in Chinese.

It has been reported that L1 has influence on the acquisition of L2 (Fries 1945, Weinreich 1953, Lado 1957). Transfer, according to Odlin (1989), is the effect that comes from the likeness and unlikeness between the acquired language and the target language. However, how the transfer will occur cannot be expected straightforward. A hierarchy of five levels of difficulty in L2 acquisition regarding the structural and semantic correspondence is proposed by Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965), including split, new, absent, coalesced, and correspondence¹. Based on the hierarchy, the present study will investigate the influence of L1. In addition to L1 transfer, task effects are another factor we lay emphasis on, since some researchers have pointed

¹ In the study of Stockwell, Brown and Martin (1965), the least difficult category in the hierarchy of difficulty in L2 acquisition is correspondence, which means that one item in L1 corresponds to one item in L2. What follows is the coalesced category, meaning that several items in L1 conjoin in L2. The next more difficult category is absent, referring to the fact that an item in L1 does not exist in L2. The next one is the new category, which takes the opposite meaning to the previous one, meaning an item in L2 does not exist in L1. The most difficult one is the split category, which suggests that one item in L1 splits to two or more items in L2.

out the importance of it in L2 acquisition (Larsen-Freeman 1976, Tarone 1985, Rothman 2007). Others have also suggested that it is important to explore how relevant different tasks are and how differently they affect the subjects' performance (Munnish, Flynn & Martohardjono 1994, Sugaya & Shirai 2007). Also, the relationship between a comprehension task and a production task is worth investigating as well (Tarone & Parrish 1988, Tasseva-Kurktchieva 2007, Hendriks & Koster 2010). As for L2 proficiency, many researchers have found it one of the factors influencing the performance of learners (Sasaki & Hirose 1996, Ho 2008, Gabriele 2009, Liu 2011, Sawetayaram 2012). One of the hypotheses related to L2 proficiency is the U-shaped hypothesis proposed by Kellerman (1983), in which the accuracy rate is high for the low-leveled and high-leveled learners, and low for the intermediate learners. The present study will thus examine whether the results conform to the U-shaped hypothesis.

1.3 Research Questions

The present study aims to address the following five research questions, motivated by the previous literature and the theoretical background displayed in the previous subsection.

- 1) Does L1 transfer exist in the Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of the English *it*-cleft construction?
- 2) Is there a difficulty hierarchy in different types of *it*-clefts? If yes, what is the order?
- 3) Do grammatical functions influence the acquisition of English *it*-clefts? If yes, what is the acquisition order?
- 4) Do Chinese EFL learners perform differently when the factor of contrast is involved in English *it*-clefts? If yes, is contrast an aid or a disturbance?

5) Does L2 proficiency play a role in the acquisition of English *it*-clefts regarding Chinese EFL learners?

The first research question investigates how L1 may affect the acquisition of L2. The second research question concerns whether different types of English *it*-clefts show a different degree of difficulty to Chinese EFL learners. The third research question examines the influence of the grammatical function of the cleaved element in an English *it*-cleft. The fourth research question explores how contrast information may affect Chinese EFL learners when they acquire the construction. Finally, the last research question addresses the role of L2 proficiency in the acquisition of English *it*-clefts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Although several studies are found to have investigated the L2 acquisition of the English *it*-clefts, there are factors that they did not explore. Thus, the present study aims to bridge the gap left by the previous studies. Firstly, the subjects that are going to be examined are Chinese EFL learners, who little literature has investigated before. Besides, we will classify the construction of *it*-clefts in English from the perspective of the part of speech that is cleaved by the construction. We will further examine the difficulty hierarchy of the different types of English *it*-clefts. In addition, despite some research that has looked into the factor of L2 proficiency in the learners' performance on the comprehension task (Carrell 1977), no research has measured its influence in both the comprehension task and the production task at the same time, which the present study also includes as one of the research questions to be solved.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis is displayed as follows. In Chapter Two, three previous studies are selected to discuss the theoretical background of the English *it*-cleft structure. Furthermore, three studies are reviewed to investigate relevant empirical studies that have been done previously. Lastly, based on the theoretical and empirical studies that are reviewed, a new classification of *it*-clefts in English is offered. In Chapter Three, the research design of the present study is provided, including the background of the subjects, the methods and materials, the procedures of the study, and the expected findings. Chapter Four presents the overall results and provides a general discussion of the present study. Finally, Chapter Five reports the conclusion of the study and discusses some possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes four sections. Section 2.1 reviews theoretical studies on *it*-clefts in English. In Section 2.2, the empirical studies of the English *it*-cleft construction are introduced. In Section 2.3, based on the previous research, the construction of *it*-clefts in English is classified, from the perspective of the syntactic composition of the cleaved part in the structure. In addition, corresponding examples in Chinese for each category of clefts are illustrated in this section, so as to make a comparison and a contrast of the structure between the two languages. Accordingly, a discussion is made about the transfer effect Chinese EFL learners may undergo in the acquisition of the English *it*-clefts. Finally, a summary of the chapter is given in Section 2.4.

2.1 Theoretical Studies of *It*-Clefts in English

In this section, three theoretical studies on *it*-clefts in English are reviewed, each with a distinct perspective. While Collins (1991) investigates the construction with a functional approach, Velleman et al. (2013) provide a semantic account for the construction. As for Reeve (2011), a combination of syntactic and semantic analyses is implemented in the study.

2.1.1 Collins (1991)

With a functional approach, Collins (1991) displays a detailed description of the characteristics of both cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions in English, from the perspectives of semantics and syntax. In addition, a corpus-based analysis of the

English clefts is offered.

The cleft construction in English is regarded as an identifying construction. Without changing the content meanings of the sentences, this construction is used to show the focus of the speaker. The sentences are divided into two parts by the clefts. The one following the copula is the ‘highlighted element,’ the focus of the speaker. The other one in the relative clause is the ‘presupposition,’ which is known by both the speaker and the addressee. Revised from Prince (1978), (1) is adopted as the formula of the cleft construction in English (Collins 1991, p. 36):

$$(1) \quad \left. \begin{array}{l} \\ \\ \\ It \text{ (Modal) (NEG)(Adv)(have)[be(NEG)(Adv)(C}_i\text{)]} \\ \\ \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{(Prep) } \mathit{which} \\ \text{(Prep) } \mathit{whom} \\ \mathit{who} \\ \mathit{that} \quad \text{S-C}_i \\ \mathit{when} \\ \mathit{where} \end{array}$$

‘S-C_i’ refers to ‘Sentence minus Constituent-i’.

Before the characteristic relevant to the identifying function of the clefts in English is discussed, a comparison of identifying constructions and attributive constructions is made as in (2a) and (2b) (Collins 1991, p. 37).

(2) a. The youths on bikes are a vicious gang.

b. A vicious gang are the youths on bikes.

Both (2a) and (2b) are attributive constructions. In (2a), preceding the copula is the subject entity, and following the copula is an attribute for the subject. The difference between (2a) and (2b) merely lies in the thematic ordering. Although *a vicious gang* precedes the copula in (2b), it serves as the complement of the sentence, and thus the copula remains to be *are*. In (3), however, both of the sentences are identifying constructions (Collins 1991, p. 37).

(3) a. The youths on bikes are the local gang.

b. The local gang is the youths on bikes.

According to Halliday (1967a, 1985), *the youths on bikes* is the ‘identified,’ the one to be identified; *the local gang* is the ‘identifier,’ the one to identify the other. In the case of (3), besides the ordering, (3a) and (3b) are different in the grammatical functions of the two entities. The change of the form of the copula is evidence. *The local gang* is no longer a complement but a subject in (3b), thus resulting in the change of the copula from *are* to *is*. From (2) and (3), one major grammatical distinction between the attributive construction and the identifying construction is found, i.e. the reversibility. While the latter permits reversibility, the former does not, in terms of voice. Thus, the copula remains the same as in (2a) and (2b); however, it does not as in (3).

The clefts in English are an identifying construction. A simple sentence like (4a) can be cleaved to (4b) (Collins 1991, p. 1).

(4) a. Tom offered Sue a Sherry.

b. It was a sherry that Tom offered Sue.

As the cleft is an identifying construction, it is supposed to be reversible. However, (4b) cannot be reversed, which shows the characteristic of the cleft construction in English, i.e. the exception of reversibility in an identifying construction.

There are constructions that have similar forms with the cleft construction on the surface, but they are not clefts. A sentence like (5b) is the response to (5a), and it is considered an attributive construction in spite of the fact that it looks the same as the sentence (4b) (Collins 1991, p. 2).

(5) a. What caused that stain on the carpet?

b. It was a sherry that Tom offered Sue.

There is evidence to prove that (4b) and (5b) are of the distinct constructions. For instance, *it* in (4b) is non-referential, but *it* in (5b) is anaphoric. In addition, the relative clause in (5b) is dependent, but that in (4b) is not. Furthermore, the nuclear stress is laid within the relative clause in (5b), but on the head of the noun phrase in (4b).

Besides constructions like (5b), there are others that may be mistaken as the cleft construction, as shown in (6):

(6) It is a poor heart that never rejoices. (Collins 1991, p. 40)

Sentence (6) is of a proverbial type, according to Jespersen (1937, p. 89). The element following the copula is not the real highlighted by the speaker. Instead, it is the attribute of the element that makes the sentence a generic statement. Take Sentence (6) for example. It is not the paraphrase of the sentence ‘A poor heart never rejoices,’ but it should mean ‘A heart that never rejoices is poor.’ Other evidence is provided by Declerck (1983) to show that a sentence like (6) is not a cleft construction, but merely homophonous with the cleft sentence. The evidence is that the relative clause gives a conditional interpretation, like restrictive relative clauses with non-specific noun phrase antecedents. Besides, *it* in (6) is seen as a determinative pronoun.

English *it*-clefts are classified according to the categorical class and the grammatical function of the cleaved element. The categorical class include noun phrase (NP), preposition prepositional phrase (PP), Zero, finite clause (FIN CL), non-finite clause (N-F CL), adverbial phrase (ADV P), and adjective phrase (ADJ P). The grammatical functions the cleaved element may carry are subject, adjunct, and object. For the function of object, it includes direct object, indirect object, adjunct, and complement of preposition. From two corpuses, i.e., the written Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus (LOB) and the spoken London-Lund Corpus (LL), the distribution of different types of clefts is investigated, as Tables 2-1 and 2-2 show.

Table 2-1 The Distribution of the Class and the Function of Highlighted Elements in LL and LOB (Collins 1991, p. 56)

Function Class	Subject	Direct object	Indirect object	Adjunct	Zero	Comp. prep	Total
NP	280	49		26		24	379 (50.4%)
PP			3	159			162 (21.5%)
Zero					109		109 (14.5%)
FIN CL	6	2		43			51 (6.8%)
N-F CL	2			4			6 (0.8%)
ADV P				44			44 (5.9%)
ADJ P	1						1 (0.1%)
Total	289 (38.4%)	51 (6.8%)	3 (0.4%)	276 (36.7%)	109 (14.5%)	(3.2%)	752 (100%) (100%)

Table 2-2 Relative Frequencies of the Major Grammatical Functions of Highlighted Elements in LL and LOB (Collins 1991, p. 65)

Syntactic function	Subject	Adjunct	Object
Percentage	38.3%	36.7%	6.8%

2.1.2 Reeve (2011)

Reeve proposes that the cleft construction of English have a mismatch in syntax and semantics. While the cleft clause, referring to the relative clause at the end of the sentence, modifies the initial pronoun *it* semantically, it modifies the cleaved XP syntactically, following Hedberg (2000). Not only does Reeve offer evidence for the claims, but he also points out properties of the clefts in English.

By offering evidence from European languages, Reeve agrees with the specificational analysis of clefts by treating cleft pronouns as a non-expletive. In

addition, interpretative evidence is provided to show the parallels between clefts and specificational sentences. For instance, both types of sentences hold two effects of ‘presuppositions.’ One is called ‘existential presupposition,’ meaning that the speaker presumes that certain property in the cleft clause is true of certain individual (e.g., Bolinger 1972, Jackendoff 1972, Halvorsen 1978). For instances, (7a) and (7b), a cleft sentence and a specificational sentence respectively, both consist of the presupposition that there is someone that Mary hit (Reeve 2011, p. 149).

(7) a. It was John that Mary hit.

b. The one that Mary hit was John.

In addition, such presupposition is obligatory. One of the restrictions is that neither clefts nor specificational sentences can have a bare negative quantifier to be the focus. Thus, sentence (8), which includes a bare negative quantifier of *nothing*, is ungrammatical.

(8) It was nothing that he drank. (Reeve 2011, p. 149)

The other presuppositional type is called ‘exhaustivity,’ which means that the speaker presumes that the individual in the cleaved XP is the only (or maximal) contextually relevant individual of which the property denoted by the cleft clause holds (e.g., Halvorsen 1978, Atlas & Levinson 1981, Horn 1981, Kiss 2005). Take (7a) and (7b) for instances, they both presuppose that John is the only contextually relevant person that Mary hit. However like the existential presupposition, exhaustivity is also obligatory. For example, clefts and specificational sentences are not compatible with particles such as *also* and *even*, as shown in sentence (9).

(9) The thing that John drank was *also/*even the Sherry. (Reeve 2011, p. 150)

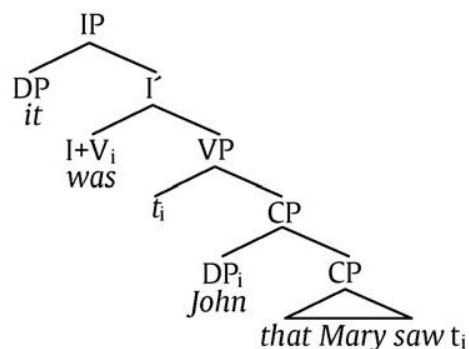
In addition, a bare universal quantifier cannot be the focus in clefts nor in specificational sentences, as shown in (10a) and (10b), respectively (Reeve 2011, p. 150).

(10) a. * It was everything that John drank.

b. * The thing that John drank was everything.

However, Reeve proposes an expletive analysis for the cleft clause, which is considered to modify the cleaved XP syntactically, with the syntactic structure revised as shown in (11) (Reeve 2011, p. 152).

(11)



Reeve takes the cleft clause as a restrictive relative clause and shows the equivalent properties. For instance, both a cleft clause and a restrictive relative clause accept an alternation between an overt relative operator, *which* for example, an overt complementizer *that*, and a null complementizer, as Sentence (12) shows.

(12) It was the vodka which/that/0 Boris drank. (Reeve 2011, p. 152)

As the claim that the cleaved XP is the antecedent of the cleft clause is proved, Reeve investigates other properties of the cleft construction from this perspective. First of all, there are restrictions on the type of *wh*-operators that can be used to introduce the cleft clause. As shown in (13), it is *who*, instead of *which*, that can be used as the *wh*-operator.

(13) It is THE TEACHERS who/*which are/*is tired. (Reeve 2011, p. 158)

Besides, ‘reduced’ cleft clauses exist, just as a restrictive relative clause can be reduced. As Sentence (14) shows, *who was* can be omitted in the sentence.

(14) It was John (who was) sitting outside. (Reeve 2011, p. 159)

Furthermore, ‘connectivity effects,’ which means that moved constituents are often interpreted as if they have not moved with respect to certain phenomena, dwell in the cleft construction as well. Take Sentence (15) for example (Reeve 2011, p. 161).

(15) It is proud of himself_i/**him_i*/**John_i* that he_i seems to be.

In (15), while *himself* can be used in the adjective phrase following the copula to refer to the subject in the cleft clause, neither *him* nor *John* can be the substitutes. Moreover, the cleaved XP c-commands into the cleft clause and permits the wide scope reading, as (16a) and (16b) show (Reeve 2011, p. 162).

(16) a. It was a chicken that every dog ate.

b. It was every dog that ate a chicken.

Both (16a) and (16b) mean that every dog ate a chicken, i.e. there were more than one chicken, one for each dog. Still, the PP-clefts in which *in* or *on* is the preposition can better accept the matrix sentential negation, compared with other PP-clefts with different prepositions. Take (17) and (18) for instances. It is not well accepted to raise *with* from where it is in (17a) to (17b) (Reeve 2011, p. 166). However, no matter the preposition is left in the original position, as in (18a), or raised to the place as in (18b), the sentences are grammatical (Reeve 2011, p. 167).

(17) All I know is. . .

a. It wasn't PAUL that she went with.

#b. It wasn't WITH PAUL that she went.

(18) Mary stayed somewhere with John, but I don't know where. All I know is...

a. It wasn't Paris that she stayed in.

b. It wasn't in Paris that she stayed.

Besides, AP-clefts do not take matrix sentential negation, as in (19a), nor do they accept subextraction, as in (19b) (Reeve 2011, p. 167):

(19) a. Bill said that John was something, but I couldn't hear what. All I know is...

It wasn't drunk on vodka that he was.

b. * What was it drunk on that John was?

Furthermore, AP-clefts can only be used in contrastive contexts, as in (20a). On the other hand, the addressee's reply in (20b) is not accepted because it lacks a contrastive context (Reeve 2011, p. 168).

(20) a. A: Her eyes are green.

B: No, it's blue that her eyes are, not green.

b. A: What colour are her eyes?

B: # It's green that her eyes are.

To sum up, with the various pieces of evidence Reeve provides, it is argued that the cleft clause has two antecedents in essence. One is the expletive *it*, which has a semantic reference with the cleft clause. The other one is the cleaved XP, which the cleft clause modifies syntactically. In such perspective, the cleft structure in English shows a semantic/syntactic mismatch.

2.1.3 Velleman et al. (2013)

Velleman et al. (2013) investigate *it*-cleft construction in English from the perspective of the *exhaustive* meaning the construction launches with the approach of semantics. He looks into two relationships relevant to *it*-clefts, one with focus, and the other one with exclusive particles. With the arguments under the two relationships, it is claimed that *it*-clefts are included in the family of 'inquiry terminating constructions' or "IT-constructions," which have the pragmatic function of marking an answer to the current question under discussion as a maximal answer.

It is firstly argued that CLEFTs, a semantic operator responsible for the exhaustive component of the clefts' meaning, should be *conventionally* focus-sensitive, based on Beaver & Clark (2003, 2008). The previous approaches of taking exhaustivity as an entailment, a pragmatic implicature, and a presupposition, are considered inadequate owing that there are examples they cannot explain. According to Beaver & Clark (2003), conventionally focus-sensitive operators should have a focus within their scope with which they can associate. Thus, here comes the diagnostic, i.e. conventionally focus-sensitive operators such as the exclusives *only*, *mere(ly)*, *sole(ly)* and so on, as (21a) shows, and the additives *also* and *too*, as in (21b), and the scalar additive *even*, cannot associate with prosodically reduced words, clitic pronouns for instance. However, non-conventionally focus-sensitive operators can do so, as (21c) with *not* and (21d) with *always* show (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 8).

(21) You can see John, but can you see Mary?

- a. Actually, I can ONLY see MARY / see HER / # see 'er.
- b. Yes — I can ALSO see MARY / see HER / # see 'er.
- c. No — I CAN'T see MARY / see HER / see 'er.
- d. Yes — I can ALWAYS see MARY / see HER / see 'er.

As the corresponding case of the *it*-cleft construction is examined, as in (22), it is thus argued that the logical form of an *it*-cleft is conventionally focus-sensitive, owing to the same pattern shown in (21a) and (21b) (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 8).

(22) Actually, it's MARY / it's HER / # it's 'er who I CAN see.

On the contrary, Velleman et al. (2013) follow Coppock & Beaver's (2011) explanation for exclusive particles on that they have two focus-sensitive operators, i.e. $MINs(p)$ and $MAXs(p)$. To briefly introduce $MINs(p)$ and $MAXs(p)$, $MINs(p)$ ensures that there is a true answer to the Current Question (abbreviated as CQ) and that it is at least as strong as the prejacent p . $MAXs(p)$ ensures that no true answer is

strictly stronger than *p*. Velleman et al. also argue that the English *it*-clefts have a parallel semantic function with one of the exclusive particles, *only*. What differs lies in the at-issueness. In unembedded contexts, while clefts make MIN component at-issue, *only* makes it presupposition, and vice versa. Such asymmetry in informativeness is illustrated in (23) and (24) (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 12).

(23) I know Mary ate a pizza. . .

a. #but I've just heard it was a pizza she ate.

b. #but it wasn't a pizza she ate.

(24) I know Mary ate a pizza. . .

a. but I've just heard she only ate a pizza.

b. but she didn't only eat a pizza.

Furthermore, to explore the cases where clefts are in embedding contexts, the at-issueness still plays a role. The at-issue component is aimed by negation and other scope-taking operators, and the presupposed one projects, as in (25) and (26) (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 14 & p. 15).

(25) It wasn't Alice who laughed, it was Bob and Carol.

(26) ??It wasn't Alice who laughed, it was Alice and Bob.

“It wasn't Alice who laughed” presupposes that no larger group including Alice laughed, and it also asserts that Alice herself didn't laugh, thus, resulting in the felicity of (25) and infelicity of (26). *Bob and Carol* in (25) do not include Alice, but Sentence (26) does. On the other hand, both the predictions of (25) and (26) have a lot to do with the type of the predicate *laugh*, i.e. a distributive one. If the predicate is replaced with a non-distributive one, the prediction would differ, as (27) shows.

(27) It wasn't ALICE who moved the sofa, it was Alice AND the OTHER
movers. (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 15)

To further examine another example, the oddity of (28) is caused by the CQ.

(28) #It wasn't Alice who laughed: nobody laughed. (Velleman et al. 2013, p. 15)

The first sentence has a CQ of “who laughed?” and the second sentence just rejects it. Thus, Velleman et al. claim that what the clefts indicates should be the CQ, instead of the existential presupposition, as argued by previous researchers.

In conclusion, Velleman et al. argue that *it*-clefts in English serve a discourse function, regarded as a class of IT-constructions. In addition, unlike other pragmatic terminations, which are cancellable owing to the prosody and context, IT-constructions are conventionally marked and uncancellable.

2.1.4 Summary

Regarding the investigation of the English cleft construction, researchers have distinct points of penetration. Collins (1991) proposes a functional approach and a corpus-based analysis in the research, with the statistics of different subtypes of the highlighted elements in the clefts gathered. Reeve (2011) looks into the cleft construction from the perspective of syntax and semantics, arguing that there exists a mismatch between. As for Velleman et al. (2013), more emphasis is placed on the pragmatic properties of the target construction.

2.2 Previous Empirical Studies of *It*-Clefts in English

This section reviews previous empirical studies relevant to the construction of *it*-clefts, and each research has its own focus of the structure. Carrell (1977) compares the processing of asserted and presupposed information in the cleft construction. Callies & Keller (2008) look into to L2 learners' awareness of the focus construction. Callies (2009) examines how well the advanced learners understand and use the devices for information highlighting.

2.2.1 Carrell (1977)

In addition to the literal meanings, sentences hold meanings that are conveyed indirectly by means of the sentence structures. Carrell focuses on the constructions of cleft and pseudo-cleft in English. By implementing a grammatical judgment task, he compares the differences between the asserted information and presupposed information dwelling in the two constructions. In addition, both first language acquisition and second language acquisition are examined.

According to Strawson (1952), *presupposition* is the relation between two statements, A and B, when the truth of B is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of A. On the contrary, Carrell follows Austin (1962) in the definition for the term ‘imply’: “‘A implies B’ means only that asserting A commits the speaker to B; asserting \sim B need not commit the speaker to \sim A.” In such perspective, (29) and (30) differ only in their assertions and presuppositions as shown in (31) and (32) respectively (Akamajian 1969, Muraki 1970, Carrell 1977).

(29) It is a bird that is eating the worm.

(30) It is a worm that the bird is eating.

(31) a. Presupposition: Something is eating the worm.

b. Assertion: That something is a bird.

(32) a. Presupposition: The bird is eating something.

b. Assertion: That something is a worm.

The corresponding pseudo-cleft counterparts of (29) and (30) are shown in (33) and (34) respectively with the same presupposition and assertion in (31) and (32) (Muraki 1970, Carrell 1977).

(33) What is eating the worm is a bird.

(34) What the bird is eating is a worm.

Carrell assumes that the linguistic distinction in theory between assertion and

presupposition in clefts and pseudo-clefts exists psychologically that it can be measured by empirical investigation.

The method of the study is outlined as follows. For the L2 group, fifty-two intermediate and advanced adult students from around the world were enrolled in the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL) at SIU-C. For the L1 part, twenty four- and five-year old children were included in the experiment, half of whom were female, half male. All the subjects were exposed to a succession of cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences that were recorded in advance. Right after the sentences, the subjects were presented with a slide picture, in which lay merely an agent, an object, and a simple relationship between the agent and object. The subjects were asked to judge the correctness of the sentence and the corresponding picture. The sole difference in the procedure between L1 children and L2 adults was the way they gave the responses, verbally for the former, in writing for the latter. Regarding the test items, half of them included a misrepresentation in the picture of the asserted information in the related sentence, and the other half that in the picture of the presupposed information. In addition, control items were designed in the task to unscramble the test items, however, not scored.

The findings of Carrell's experiment are as follows. Firstly, both the subjects of L1 and L2 were found to be able to discover directly conveyed assertions as well as indirectly conveyed presuppositions. Secondly, the statistics showed that the processing of asserted information and the processing of presupposed information were correlated to a certain degree. Thirdly, both L1 and L2 subjects conducted the experiment better in assertions than in presuppositions. Carrell further explained the findings, following Hutchinson's (1971) concept of pragmatic presupposition and the "inference schema", as shown in (35).

(35) *x says "A" to y as an assertion*

x believes that B and x believes that y believes that B and x believes that A
and x believes that Y is ignorant of A. (Hutchinson 1971, p. 136)

The constructions of clefts and pseudo-clefts are used to signal the difference between asserted and presupposed information, when the speaker assumes that the presupposed information is known by the listener. To decide the correctness of such constructions, the listener would thus take the presupposed segment as given information, and mainly focus on the new information, which lies in the asserted part of the constructions. It is the neglect of the presupposed part of the sentence that leads to the better performance of the subjects in the assertions.

In Carrell's research, discrepancies exist, and other issues are also in need of future discussion. For instance, it is not certain how much related the processing of asserted information and presupposed information are. Furthermore, what is the reason for making the same generalization for the L1 group and the L2 group? Also, according to Carrell, 'to what extent is the distinction between assertion and presupposition a linguistic universal which can be expected to show up in the competence/performance of any group of speakers of any language?' Lastly, 'to what extent is the distinction language specific?'

2.2.2 Callies & Keller (2008)

Callies & Keller (2008) conducted an experiment on a group of advanced German L2 learners of English to examine their awareness of the focus constructions that are pragmatically motivated in English. Furthermore, their study explains the findings from a pedagogical perspective and argues for teaching focus constructions with a discourse grammar approach, so as to raise the awareness of the students for the information structures.

First of all, the properties of clefts are as follows¹. The cleft construction splits a sentence into two clauses to focus some sentence constituent in the cleaved structure. The two main types are *it*- and *wh*-clefts, which differ in focus assignment. As *it*-clefts are the main concern of the present study, the characteristics are as follows. The element to be highlighted can be subject noun phrases, object noun phrases, and prepositional phrases, exclusive of verb phrases. As a way of foregrounding, *it*-clefts can be used to activate discourse entities. Frequently seen in all registers, *it*-clefts are most common in academic prose.

Regarding the previous research on focusing constructions in SLA research, some studies have shown that discourse structure and the pragmatic principles of information organization in L1 may influence L2 acquisition in terms of transfer/overproduction (Schachter & Rutherford 1979, Rutherford 1983), or avoidance (Plag 1994, Callies 2006), and the near-native speakers are no exception (Carroll et al., 2000). Besides, the non-native speakers are detected to have overused lexical intensification, in place of the focusing constructions (Lorenz 1999, Hinkel 2002). Nevertheless, there are also studies showing that the advanced learners overuse subject-prominent structures, such as *it*-clefts, existentials/presentationals and extraposition (Callies 2006).

According to the previous findings that advanced L2 learners are not so aware of the focus constructions in the target language, Callies & Keller argue that noticing is important in the teaching and learning of focus devices. Unlike (meta)linguistic awareness, such approach to language awareness is raised by applied linguistics and pedagogy, and it is taken as ‘the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language’ (Carter

¹ Three major focus constructions in English are introduced, i.e. inversion, preposing, and clefting. As the present study concentrates on the cleft construction in English, the other two will not be viewed here.

2003).

In Callies & Keller's study, German university students of English who were not linguistics majors were recruited in the experiment, which consisted of three tasks. In the first task, the subjects were asked to read a poem of John Donne, in which there are lots of preposing structures. After reading the poem, they were shown with two questions: 'What strikes you most about the language of the poem?' and 'How does the author highlight information throughout the poem?' In the second task, the participants were divided into two groups. Both groups were asked to rewrite the poem as a prose, but only one group was directly instructed to pay attention to how the information was highlighted. In the last task, the subjects were asked to 'write a prose text on the topic of friendship in the style of John Donne (one page maximum), paying special attention to information highlighting'.

The results of the three tasks are as follows. The responses to the first question in the first task showed that most subjects observed the formal properties, orthography and vocabulary for instance. However, only three of them noticed the word order of the text. Such was the case in the responses to the second question of the first task. Most participants noted the formal aspects of the text, but only two of them were aware of the grammatical structures. As for the second task, most of the students imitated Donne's lexical style. Only two participants implemented syntactic structures to highlight information; one used *it*-cleft sentences, and the other cleft-like ones. What's more, the two were asked to pay attention to the information structure. In the last task, it was still the lexical devices that were used in the composition rather than the syntactic devices. To sum up, the results were compatible with the previous findings that non-native speakers were less aware of the syntactic structures, compared with formal and lexical properties.

In the aspect of pedagogy, Callies & Keller imply that awareness-raising, instead of mere consciousness-raising, is necessary in terms of syntactic information structures. Moreover, they present a unit for teaching information highlighting (Callies & Keller 2008, p. 262):

(36) Session 1

Step 1: Noticing, identification and naming

Step 2: Reproduction/imitation and free composition

(the latter as homework assignment)

Session 2

Step 3: Discussion of assignment

Step 4: Comparison with literary prose texts

Session 3

Step 5: Transition from literary text types to formal and informal prose

Step 6: Productive exercises (in-class and/or homework)

Although the experiment lacks English native subjects for comparison, they believe that the L2 participants themselves can well prove that a function-to-form-oriented approach would benefit teaching advanced learners the discourse-pragmatically driven focusing devices.

2.2.3 Callies (2009)

Callies (2009) investigated the interlanguage of advanced German L2 learners of English from the perspective of information highlighting². In the study were three tasks, including a written production task, a written metapragmatic assessment task,

² Although Callies discussed various ways to highlight information in English, e.g., topicalization, preposing, inversion, and lexico-grammatical means, this review will merely focus on the clefts, owing to the relevance with and limited space of the present study. Additionally, despite the fact that there are two research instruments in the book, i.e. an experimental study and a learner-corpora study, only the former one will be discussed for the sake of the present study.

and a verbal introspection task. Furthermore, in all the tasks the valid subjects were 25 German university students of English, 24 years of age on average, having 8.4 years of learning English at secondary school level. Additionally, a control group of 20 native speakers of American English from a US-American university was included, with an average age of 25 years old.

In the production experiment, a discourse completion task (DCT) which comprised two sections introduced by different situations was conducted. The participants were asked to read a modified text of a story written by an American native speaker of English. In the first section, after they read the modified text, they further read a passage of intensified situation, and they were asked to offer an utterance to highlight the information in the intensified situation. In the second section, the subjects read a passage of a contrast situation obviously involving misunderstanding between two interlocutors, and they had to respond to the dialogue. There were nine items for an intensified context in the first section, 6 for a contrast context in the second section.

After completing the production experiment, the subjects carried out a metapragmatic assessment experiment of pragmalinguistic judgments, “judgments about the appropriateness of linguistic strategies and phrases in given contexts” (Kasper 1998). In this task, the subjects also firstly read passages of different contexts exactly the same as those in the DCT. The difference was that what followed the texts was a set of possible responses, and the subjects had to rate them from 1-5, 5 for a very suitable response, 1 for a bad one. The subjects could also offer their own response if they thought what offered was not suitable.

To get extra reasoning for the previous two experiments, Callies further included an introspection task of retrospective interviews, viewed useful to directly look into L2 learners’ grammatical and pragmatic knowledge (Ellis 2004). The interviews were

not done by all of the subjects; only some learners and native speakers were selected to go through the verbal reports. Questions related to both tasks were launched and the informants' responses were recorded in this task.

What is also worth mentioning is that after several days the experiments were done, the German learners continued to conduct a German version of the first two experiments. As a whole, the research integrated various techniques to collect data, so as to investigate the research questions from different aspects (Kasper 1998).

With regard to the scoring, there were two parameters concerned in the analysis for the production experiment, one is the use of focusing devices in terms of the lexico-grammatical and syntactical means, and the other one is the location of the information that is highlighted in the responses. After the analysis and the processing of SPSS, the variables of 'native language' and 'device used' are cross-tabulated, and the *chi*-square test of independence was conducted to observe their relationship. As for the rating experiment, nonparametric statistical comparisons of the learners and the native speakers are made. In addition, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to measure the differences. Lastly, the retrospective interviews were analyzed by transcribing the recordings. The emphasis was put on the related information with the study.

The results relevant to clefts are as follows. Both groups of subjects used clefts mostly in the contrast section, and the learner group significantly overrepresented the construction, especially *it*-clefts, in the L2 rather than the L1 experiments. Besides, the clefts the learner group used were often combined with lexical devices, showing a parallel pattern in German. In the assessment task, both groups gave *it*-clefts a high acceptability score. In the retrospective interviews, most of the subjects did not have the explicit knowledge of the syntactic patterns to focus information. Additionally, even though some had preferences for certain structural alternatives, only a few could

explain the reason(s) behind.

The inadequacies and implications of Callies' study can be summarized as follows. First of all, the lexical material to stimulate the subjects in the first task might result in their performance of mere paraphrasing, which is not desired in the experiment. Furthermore, in order not to influence the subjects' ratings, it was hard to strike a balance on the use of lexical changes in the options of the assessing task. Regarding pedagogy, the findings prove that a functional approach might be adopted to teach the advanced learners.

2.2.4 Summary

The major findings and limitations of the empirical studies reviewed in this section are summarized in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3 Major Findings and Limitations of the Empirical Studies

	Major findings	Limitations
Carrell (1977)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Both L1 children and L2 adults could discover directly conveyed assertions and indirectly conveyed presuppositions. 2. Processing of asserted information was correlated with presupposed information. 3. Both L1 children and L2 adults showed better results in assertions than in presuppositions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subjects: no control group 2. Task design: no production task 3. Test focus: pragmatic aspect; asserted information and presupposed information of clefts and pseudo-clefts in English

<p>Callies & Keller (2008)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-native speakers were less aware of the syntactic structures of focus constructions. 2. Awareness-raising was necessary in terms of pedagogy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subjects: exact number of German L2 group not informed; no control group 2. Task design: no perception task 3. Test focus: pedagogical perspective; awareness of focus constructions, including inversion, preposing, and clefting
<p>Callies (2009)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Both groups used clefts mostly in the contrast section, rather than in the intensified situations. 2. German L2 group of English overrepresented <i>it</i>-clefts. 3. German L2 group of English used clefts with lexical devices: L1 transfer. 4. Most subjects gave <i>it</i>-clefts a high acceptability score. 5. Few subjects had explicit knowledge of the syntactic patterns to focus information. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subjects: no specific proficiency levels to distinguish advanced learners 2. Test focus: awareness of focus constructions

It was found that every research has inadequacies in the aspect of the subject recruiting. For instance, in the studies of Callies & Keller (2008) and Carrell (1977), there was no control group enrolled in the experiment. Besides, the exact number of the subjects was not informed in the study of Callies & Keller (2008). Furthermore, the proficiency levels of the subjects were not well identified, e.g., by the length of learning years in Callies' study (2009). As for the task design, only Callies' (2009) research included both a perception task and a production task. For the others, Carrell (1977) lacked a perception task, and Callies & Keller (2008) a production one. Moreover, regarding the test focus of the empirical studies, some concentrated on the information structure of the clefts and pseudo-clefts in English (Carrell 1977), some on the subjects' awareness of the construction (Callies & Keller 2008, Callies 2009). None of them placed emphasis upon the syntactic structure within the cleft construction. What is also worth mentioning is that most of the studies examined the performance of German L2 learners of English (Callies & Keller 2008, Callies 2009), despite Carrell's (1977) inclusion of the subjects all over the world.

2.3 A New Classification of *It*-Clefts in English

According to the theoretical literatures reviewed in the previous sections along with other reviews, English clefts are classified in terms of the syntactic properties as well as the grammatical functions the cleaved parts perform in the sentences. There are seven major types of clefts and fourteen subtypes in total as displayed in the following sections. Besides, the comparison and contrast between the clefts in English and Chinese will be integrated below as well. For both the classification and the contrast of the clefts, the part to focus and compare is the cleaved XP in the structure, as the sentence pattern of English shows in (37), revised from Collins (1991, p. 36).

(37) S + V + cleaved XP + *that*³ + cleft clause

Generally speaking, it is shown in (39) that to form a cleft sentence in English, an expletive *it* is required in the beginning of the sentence, followed by a be-verb/copula. Then the part that is cleaved follows the be-verb, with a complementizer *that* following it. Finally, the rest of the sentence, the cleft clause, is placed at the end of the sentence. As for Chinese clefts, there is a null subject, and *shi*, which has similar function with the be-verb in English, is put in the beginning, followed by the cleaved part, and the cleft clause is placed at the end of the cleft sentence, with an optional *de*⁴ following, as (38) shows.

(38) Null subject + *shi* + cleaved XP + cleft clause + (*de*)

In the following sections, the properties and the comparison of the clefts in English and in Chinese⁵ are thoroughly investigated.

2.3.1 Type 1: *It* + be + cleaved NP + *that* + cleft clause.

When the cleaved XP is a noun phrase, the cleft structure can be further categorized according to its grammatical functions in the cleft clause, i.e. a subject, a direct object, or an adjunct, explored respectively as follows.

Type 1-1: *It* + be + Subject NP + *that* + cleft clause.

While the cleaved NP is a subject NP, a corresponding example can always be found in Chinese, no matter the subject is definite, indefinite, or generic. The cleaved NP can be a definite subject in an English cleft as in sentence (39) and in a Chinese

³ In addition to *that*, the complementizer in English *it*-clefts can be *which*, *whom*, *who*, *when*, and *where*. However, the present study uses *that* to represent all for the sake of convenience.

⁴ Whether *de* can or should occur depends on the type of cleaved XP in the Chinese cleft sentence.

⁵ All the different types of corresponding Chinese cleft sentences in this chapter are included in an acceptability judgment questionnaire, examined by 20 Chinese native speakers to check their grammaticality.

cleft as in sentence (40).

(39) It was Tom that caused all the trouble.

(40) Shi Zhangsan yinqi le suoyou de fenzheng.

be Zhangsan cause Asp all *DE* trouble

The cleaved NP can also be indefinite in English as in (41) and in Chinese as in (42).

(41) It is a boy that broke the window.

(42) Shi yi ge nanhai dapo chuangu de.

be one Cls boy break window *DE* (Zhang 2012, p. 144)

The cleaved NP can be generic in English and in Chinese, as examples shown in (43) and (44), respectively.

(43) It is money that made him yield.

(44) Shi qian shi ta qufu de.

be money make him yield *DE*

From the examples shown above, it is concluded that no matter the cleaved NP is definite, indefinite, or generic, examples can be found in both Chinese and English.

Type 1-2: *It* + *be* + Direct Object NP + *that* + cleft clause.

When it comes to the case when the cleaved NP is a direct object in the cleft clause in English as in (45), the corresponding sentence in Chinese seems to be ungrammatical, as in (46).

(45) It was the vodka that Boris drank. (Reeve 2011, p. 152)

(46) ?Shi na ping futejia Zhangsan he le.

be that Cls vodka Zhangsan drink Asp

However, the Chinese sentence turns out to be grammatical when a contrast is added, as shown in (47).

(47) Shi na ping futejia Zhangsan he le, bu shi na ping pijiu.
 be that Cls vodka Zhangsan drink Asp not be that Cls beer

That is to say, while English allows a direct object to be cleaved, Chinese does not. Only with the contrast information can the sentence become grammatical.

Type 1-3: *It* + be + Adjunct NP + that + cleft clause.

When the cleaved NP is an adjunct as in (48), the corresponding Chinese cleft would not be grammatical, as in (49).

(48) It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan.

(49) ?Shi shangge libai nage mingxing lai le taiwan.
 be last week that superstar come Asp Taiwan

However, the ungrammatical cleft sentence (49) would become grammatical when a contrast is added to the sentence, as in (50).

(50) Shi shangge libai nage mingxing lai le taiwan, bu shi zhege libai.
 be last week that superstar come Asp Taiwan not be this week

In sum, while adjunct NP has access to the cleaved part of English clefts, it does not with regard to Chinese, unless a contrast shows up in the Chinese clefts.

Type 1-4: *It* + be + Complement of Preposition NP + that + cleft clause.

The last subtype of NP type clefts is complement of preposition NP. The English example is shown in (51).

(51) It is you that I'm interested in.

However, despite the grammaticality in the type of complement of preposition NP in English, Chinese clefts do not permit such type of cleaved element, as (52) shows, neither do they when contrast information is added as in (53).

(52) *Shi ni wo dui gan xingqu.

be you I to feel interest

(53) *Shi ni wo dui gan xingqu, bu shi ta.

be you I to feel interest not be he

To sum up, Chinese accepts merely subject NP type in its clefts. When the cleaved part is a direct object NP or an adjunct NP, only when a contrast is shown in the sentence will there be a grammatical corresponding Chinese cleft. As for the type of complement of preposition NP, Chinese does not adopt such type in the cleaved part at all.

2.3.2 Type: *It + be + cleaved PP + that + cleft clause.*

When the cleaved part of English clefts is PP, there are two subtypes, i.e., indirect object PP and adjunct PP.

Type 2-1: *It + be + Indirect Object PP + that + cleft clause.*

When indirect object PP is the cleaved part in English clefts, such examples as (54) can be found.

(54) It is for my high school teacher that I bought this card.

Nevertheless, Chinese does not admit such type of indirect object PP to appear in the cleaved part, as (55) shows. Even if a contrast joins as (56) does, it remains ungrammatical.

(55) *Shi gei wo de gaozhong laoshi de wo mai zhe ge liwu.

be for I Poss high.school teacher *DE* I buy this Cls gift

(56) *Shi gei wo de gaozhong laoshi de wo mai zhe ge liwu,
 be for I Poss high.school teacher *DE* I buy this Cls gift
 bu shi gei wo de gaozhong tongxue.
 not be for I Poss high.school classmate

Type 2-2: *It* + be + Adjunct PP + that + cleft clause.

When the cleaved prepositional phrase is an adjunct, both English and Chinese clefts are grammatical, as (57) and (58) show.

(57) It's during the holidays that they met. (Davidse 2000, p. 1115)

(58) Shi zai jiaqi de qijian tamen yudao de.
 be at holiday Poss period they met *DE*

In sum, when the cleaved PP is an indirect object, Chinese would rule the sentence out. Only when the cleaved PP is an adjunct can the Chinese cleft be acceptable.

2.3.3 Type 3: *It* + be + Zero + that + cleft clause.

When it comes to the Zero type of English clefts, examples like (59) can be found.

(59) It may be that the girl will be sent away.

In such type, the expletive *it* is still necessary in the beginning of the sentence. However, what follows the expletive *it* is a modal, preceding the be-verb. In such case, the position left for the cleaved part is empty, so it is categorized as Zero type. As for Chinese, no clefts of such type exist, as (60) shows. Neither can it be grammatical when a contrast is added, as (61) shows.

(60) *Shi keneng de na ge nuhai bei song zou le.
 be possible *DE* that Cls girl Pass send away Asp

(61) *Shi keneng de na ge nuhai bei song zou le, bu shi
 be possible *DE* that Cls girl Pass send away Asp not be
 bu keneng.
 not possible

2.3.4 Type 4: *It + be + cleaved Finite Clause + that + cleft clause.*

When Finite Clause is the cleaved part in English clefts, three subtypes exist, i.e., subject Finite Clause, direct object finite clause, and adjunct Finite Clause.

Type 4-1: *It + be + Subject Finite Clause + that + cleft clause.*

When the cleaved part of the English cleft is a subject Finite Clause, an example like (62) can be found.

(62) It is that she already has a date with others that is her answer.

With regard to Chinese, no such type is grammatical, as (63) shows, neither is it when a contrast joins as (64) shows.

(63) *Shi ta yijing gen bieren you yue le shi ta de daan.
 be she already with others have date Asp be she Poss answer

(64) *Shi ta yijing gen bieren you yue le shi ta de daan,
 be she already with others have date Asp be she Poss answer
 bing bu shi ta bu xiang gen ni chuqu.
BING not be she not want with you go.out

Type 4-2: *It + be + Direct Object Finite Clause + that + cleft clause.*

As the cleaved Finite Clause in the English cleft is a direct object, a sentence like (65) can be found.

(65) It is that Taiwan will get better and better that we all believe.

However, when it comes to Chinese, the cleft sentence is ungrammatical whether contrast information is added or not, as (66) and (67) show.

(66) *Shi taiwan hui genghao women dou xiangxin.

be Taiwan will better we *DOU* believe

(67) *Shi taiwan hui genghao women dou xiangxin, er bu shi

be Taiwan will better we *DOU* believe but not be

beiguan di renwei taiwan hui yue lai yue cha.

pessimistic Adv think Taiwan will *YUE* come *YUE* bad

Type 4-3: *It* + be + Adjunct Finite Clause + that + cleft clause.

When the cleaved Finite Clause is an adjunct, both English and Chinese clefts are grammatical, as (68) and (69) show.

(68) It is because we find such happiness in our religion that we want to share it with others.

(69) Shi yinwei women zai zongjiao li zhaodao kuaile suoyi

be because we at religion in find happiness so

women cai xiang gen qita ren fenxiang.

we *CAI* want with other people share

In summary, while Chinese allows the cleaved Finite Clause to be an adjunct, it does not permit the cleaved Finite Clause to be a subject or a direct object, no matter contrast information joins or not.

2.3.5 Type 5: *It* + be + cleaved Non-finite Clause + that + cleft clause.

In English clefts when the cleaved part of the cleft construction is Non-finite Clause, there are two subtypes, i.e., subject Non-finite Clause and adjunct Non-finite Clause.

Type 5-1: *It + be + Subject Non-finite Clause + that + cleft clause.*

When the cleaved part is a subject non-finite clause in an English cleft sentence, an example like (70) can be found.

(70) It is to ask him to sweep that is never easy.

However, Chinese does not accept a subject non-finite clause to be placed in the cleaved part of the cleft construction, as (71) shows. Even contrast information is added would not make any difference, as (72) shows.

(71) *Shi yao ta qu saodi hen nan.

be want he go sweep very hard

(72) *Shi yao ta qu saodi hen nan, zuofan de hua dao shi

be want he go sweep very hard cook *DE* word *DAO* be

hai hao.

HAI good

Type 5-2: *It + be + Adjunct Non-finite Clause + that + cleft clause.*

When the cleaved non-finite clause is an adjunct, both English and Chinese clefts are grammatical, as (73) and (74) show.

(73) It is in order to improve the quality of life for their children that they work so hard every day.

(74) Shi weile yao tigao haizi men de shenghuo pinzhi

be in.order.to want increase child Pl Poss life quality

tamen cai meitian nuli gongzuo de.

they *CAI* every.day make.efforts work *DE*

To sum up, only when the cleaved non-finite clause is an adjunct can the Chinese cleft be grammatical. When the cleaved non-finite clause is a subject in the cleft construction, no sentence would be found grammatical in Chinese, whether contrast

information is added or not.

2.3.6 Type 6: *It + be + cleaved Adjunct ADV P + that + cleft clause.*

When it comes to the case when the cleaved part is an adverbial phrase in the English clefts, the adverbial phrase is always an adjunct; (75) is an example of such case.

(75) It's then that they met. (Davidse 2000, p. 1115)

However, a corresponding sentence in Chinese would not be grammatical, as in (76).

(76) ?Shi nashihou tamen jianmian le de.
be then that meet Asp DE

Nevertheless, the Chinese sentence could become grammatical when contrast information is added, as shown in (77).

(77) Shi nashihou tamen jianmian le de, bu shi zhe dangxia.
be then they meet Asp DE not be this current

In other words, while English permits an adverbial phrase to be cleaved, only when contrast information joins the cleft construction can the Chinese cleft be grammatical.

2.3.7 Type 7: *It + be + cleaved Subject ADJ P + that + cleft clause.*

When the cleaved XP is an adjective phrase in the English clefts, the adjective phrase is always a subject, and (78) is an example of such case.

(78) It is big that this house is.

As for Chinese, such type of cleft would be ungrammatical, as (79) shows.

(79) ?Shi hen da de zhe suo fangzi.
be very big DE this Cls house

In Chinese, contrast information should always appear, as (80) shows, so as to support its grammaticality.

(80) Shi hen da de zhe suo fangzi, bu shi ni xiangxiang
 be very big DE this Cls house not be you imagine
 zhong name xiao.
 in that small

2.3.8 Summary

Table 2-4 shows the comparison and contrast between the clefts in English and Chinese, according to the classification discussed in the previous sections.

Table 2-4 A Comparison between English and Chinese Clefts

Class	Function	English	Chinese
1. S + V + NP + that ...	1-1 Subject	V	V
	1-2 Direct object	V	X (in contrast)
	1-3 Adjunct	V	X (in contrast)
	1-4 Complement of preposition	V	X
2. S + V + PP + that ...	2-1 Indirect object	V	X
	2-2 Adjunct	V	V
3. S + V + Zero + that ...	Zero	V	X
4. S + V + FIN CL + that ... (finite clause)	4-1 Subject	V	X
	4-2 Direct object	V	X
	4-3 Adjunct	V	V
5. S + V + N-F CL + that ...	5-1 Subject	V	X
	5-2 Adjunct	V	V
6. S + V + ADV P +	Adjunct	V	X (in contrast)
7. S + V + ADJ P + that ...	Subject	V	X (in contrast)

With regard to the cleft construction in Chinese, the subject should be a null subject, and *shi* is the be-verb, with the cleaved XP following it. Then the rest of the sentence, the cleft clause, is located right after the cleaved XP. Finally, the necessity of *de* in the end of the sentence is optional, depending on the type of XP occurring in the cleft sentence. Accordingly, no positive transfer exists because the cleft construction in Chinese is not completely parallel to the construction of English *it*-cleft. However, different degrees of negative transfers can be observed according to how the clefts in English and those in Chinese differ. For some types, Chinese learners of English may have little or less difficulty in the progress of acquisition, i.e., the types of Subject NP, Adjunct PP, Adjunct Finite Clause, and Adjunct Non-finite Clause, which can also be cleaved in Chinese cleft construction. The other ten types, i.e., Direct Object NP, Adjunct NP, Complement of Preposition NP, Indirect Object PP, Zero, Subject Finite Clause, Direct Object Finite Clause, Subject Non-finite Clause, Adjunct ADV P, and Subject ADJ P, may be more difficult for the Chinese EFL learners, because Chinese does not exhibit such types of clefts.

2.4 Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter, we have explored the topic at issue by reviewing three theoretical studies which are relevant to the construction of *it*-cleft in English in Section 2.1 (i.e. Collins 1991, Reeve 2011, Velleman et al. 2013). Three other empirical studies on the structure have also been reviewed in Section 2.2 (i.e. Carrell 1977, Callies & Keller 2008, Callies 2009). In Section 2.3, the construction of *it*-clefts in English is classified according to the syntactic category and the grammatical function that the cleaved XP belongs to. There are totally seven major types of English *it*-clefts discussed in this section, including the types of NP, PP, Zero, FIN-CL, N-F CL, ADV P, and ADJ P. Moreover, the seven types can be further divided into fourteen subtypes on the basis

of the grammatical function that the cleaved element carries. The subtypes are Subject NP, Direct object NP, Adjunct NP, Complement of preposition NP, Indirect object PP, Adjunct PP, Zero, Subject FIN CL, Direct object FIN CL, Adjunct FIN CL, Subject N-F CL, Adjunct N-F CL, Adjunct ADV P, and Subject ADJ P. In addition, with both English examples and Chinese examples offered in the discussion of each type of *it*-clefts, a comparison and contrast between two languages has been made. Accordingly, the possible transfer effects are predicted. Based on the classification of English *it*-clefts in Section 2.3, the present study aims to conduct an empirical study of the L2 acquisition of *it*-clefts in English by Taiwanese students. The research design and expected findings of the present study will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, the research design of the experiment is illustrated in detail. In Section 3.1, information about the subjects participating in the study is offered, including how the subjects are recruited and the background of them. In Section 3.2, the methods and the materials implemented in the research are displayed. In Section 3.3, how the experiment is conducted is described, the pilot study and the formal study included. Finally, the summary of this chapter is presented in Section 3.4.

3.1 Subjects

The present study aims to examine Chinese learners' acquisition of the English *it*-cleft construction. As discussed in the previous section, the L2 proficiency of the learners is predicted to influence how the construction is acquired, subjects at different proficiency levels were recruited. Because students in university have a wider range of English proficiency, the subjects were collected from a university, instead of a high school. According to National Taiwan Normal University, all the freshmen, except those of the English department, have to take a placement exam in the beginning of the first semester they enter the university. Designed by the university, the placement exam includes both a reading section and a listening one, the scores of which are the basis for which level of class the students are grouped into. In the experiment, a total of 60 people were enrolled, with 20 of them from the low (L) level, 20 from the intermediate (I) level, and 20 from the high (H) level. All the non-native subjects were the freshmen from various departments in National Taiwan Normal University, excluding the English department. They all had their English

classes two hours per week, focusing mainly on their reading and listening ability. Although not all the previous studies include a control group in the experiment (Carrell 1977, Callies & Keller 2008), the present study does so in order to offer a complete examination of the task, following Callies (2009). Twenty English native speakers (NS) were thus enrolled in the study. All of them were adults studying Chinese in National Taiwan Normal University, some at the Mandarin Training Center and others at the Department of Applied Chinese Language and Culture. Besides, the native speakers came from different countries: 1 from Saint Vincent, 1 from Australia, 4 from Canada, 4 from the UK, and 10 from the USA. A summary of the subjects is shown in Table 3-1 as follows.

Table 3-1 A Summary of the Subjects

Group	English Proficiency	Number
L	Low level	20
I	Intermediate level	20
H	High level	20
NS	Native speaker	20
Total		80

3.2 Methods and Materials

Among the empirical studies on second language acquisition, the methodology mostly used is either quantitative or qualitative. Herein we used a quantitative approach to make an extensive investigation of Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English *it*-clefts. In addition, while most studies conduct empirical design to examine the English construction of *it*-clefts from a pragmatic perspective (e.g. Carrell 1977), the present study was designed to look into the syntactic process of its formation.

In the previous studies, some researchers ask the subjects to rewrite an essay by using the focus devices, with or without the extra instruction (Callies & Keller 2008). Others use a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to investigate subjects' performance on *it*-clefts (Callies 2009). However, the present study excludes a production task because few people, if any, would use the construction due to the markedness of English *it*-clefts.

Regarding the comprehension task conducted in the previous empirical studies that are relevant to English *it*-clefts, some researchers directly ask the subjects whether or not they can detect the structure from the essay just read (Callies & Keller 2008). Others ask the subjects to rate the possible responses in a conversation by implementing a written metapragmatic assessment task (Callies 2009). The present study followed Callies (2009) and designed an Acceptability Judgment Task to examine the Chinese learners' comprehension of *it*-cleft structure in English. Most of the test items were modified from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), so as to increase the authenticity of the marked structure of English *it*-clefts.

The subjects were asked to judge how acceptable the sentences were, in terms of their meaning and syntactic construction. As for the test items of the Acceptability Judgment Task, there were totally 70 questions. Each of the fourteen subtypes of clefts classified in the previous section consisted of four questions, two with contrast information, and the other two without. In addition, there were fourteen fillers randomly arranged in the task, as Table 3-2 shows (see Appendix A for the complete instruction, test items, and fillers of the task).

Table 3-2 Test Items for the Acceptability Judgment Task

Class	Function	Contrast	Question Number	
1. S + V + NP + that ...	1-1 Subject	+	2	Qs 21, 46
		-	2	Qs 01, 06
	1-2 Direct object	+	2	Qs 31, 63
		-	2	Qs 12, 26
	1-3 Adjunct	+	2	Qs 56, 58
		-	2	Qs 36, 51
	1-4 Complement of preposition	+	2	Qs 61, 67
		-	2	Qs 16, 42
2. S + V + PP + that ...	2-1 Indirect object	+	2	Qs 37, 52
		-	2	Qs 03, 22
	2-2 Adjunct	+	2	Qs 07, 19
		-	2	Qs 24, 44
3. S + V + Zero + that ...	Zero	+	2	Qs 02, 17
		-	2	Qs 08, 34
4. S + V + FIN CL + that ... (finite clause)	4-1 Subject	+	2	Qs 29, 69
		-	2	Qs 14, 32
	4-2 Direct object	+	2	Qs 39, 43
		-	2	Qs 47, 53
	4-3 Adjunct	+	2	Qs 04, 09
		-	2	Qs 57, 62
5. S + V + N-F CL + that ... (non-finite clause)	5-1 Subject	+	2	Qs 27, 48
		-	2	Qs 38, 64
	5-2 Adjunct	+	2	Qs 13, 54
		-	2	Qs 59, 66
6. S + V + ADV P + that ...	Adjunct	+	2	Qs 33, 41
		-	2	Qs 49, 68
7. S + V + ADJ P + that ...	Subject	+	2	Qs 11, 23
		-	2	Qs 18, 28
Fillers (14 Qs)		Qs 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, Qs 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70		
Total		70		

The subjects were required to judge how acceptable the test items were, according to the instructions shown at the beginning of the test sheet. Table 3-3 is a test sample of the Acceptability Judgment Task.

Table 3-3 A Test Sample of the Acceptability Judgment Task

Question	Score	Note
It is Christ who lives in me.	1	completely unacceptable
	2	unacceptable
	3	a little acceptable
	4	acceptable
	5	completely acceptable

For this test item, the clefted element ‘Christ’ is a subject NP, which accounts for 37.5% in the corpuses of LOB and LL according to Collins’ (1991) study. Such high frequency rate of the type of *it*-clefts demonstrates its high acceptance of the language users. Thus, a score of 4 or 5, which represents being acceptable and completely acceptable respectively, should be given to the sentence, according to the instruction shown at the beginning of the test sheet.

3.3 Procedures

In this section, the procedures of the present study are illustrated, including the procedures in the pilot study as in Section 3.3.1, and those of the present study are in Section 3.3.2. For the scoring and the statistical analysis of the tasks, detailed descriptions are given in Section 3.3.3.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

In the pilot study, only five subtypes of English *it*-clefts, i.e., the types of subject NP, object NP, PP, ADV P, and ADJ P, were designed in the tasks, which differs from the formal study that classifies English *it*-clefts into fourteen subtypes. The subjects were fifteen students in total at one of the top male high schools in Taipei, and all of them were second graders in the gifted class of the social studies¹. The experiment was conducted in a self-study session, during which the students had 50 minutes to complete the tasks.

Due to the fact that most of the previous empirical studies put emphasis on either the perception ability (Carrell 1977) or the production ability (Callies & Keller 2008) of the subjects, the pilot study combined both of them in order to have an integrated exploration on the acquisition of the structure. A Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJ task) was designed as the perception task, and a Discourse Completion task was the production task. Among the fifteen students, seven of them did the GJ task, where they had to judge whether or not the sentences were correct. As for the test items, there were totally 24 questions involved². Each of the five subtypes of clefts consisted of four questions, along with four fillers (the complete instruction, test items, and fillers of the task are in Appendix C). On the other hand, the other eight students did the Discourse Completion Task, in which three turn takings of conversation were designed for each question. Regarding the test items of the DCT, there were four items for each subtype of cleft construction, as well as four fillers randomly laid among the test questions. In total, there were 24 questions in this task. Besides, two of the four questions of the same type showed contrast in the sentences, the other two not

¹ All the students in the gifted class of the social studies were selected by a screening test designed by the school. There is only one gifted class of the social studies in one grade, with around 30 students in the class.

² Most of the test items are modified from the examples sentences in Collins (1991).

(the complete instruction, test items, and fillers of the task are in Appendix D).

As for the scoring of the Grammaticality Judgment Task, one point was given when the answer was correct, and zero point for wrong answers. As for the Discourse Completion Task, there were four parts to focus on for each test sentence, as the segments between the slashes shown in (1).

(1) It is / cleaved XP / that/ cleft clause

Each segment was given 0.5 point, so there were totally 2 points for one test sentence.

A scoring classification of the possible answers based on the criteria shown in (1) is listed in Table 3-4 as follows.

Table 3-4 A Classification of Scoring

Answer	Score	Note
Ex. It is my father that does the laundry.	2	expected answer
Ex. It is my father who does the laundry.		
Ex. It is my father does the laundry.	1.5	The complementizer <i>that</i> is missing.
Ex. It is my father.	1	Two target segments are missing.
Ex. My father does the laundry.		
Ex. My father.	0.5	Only one segment is correct.
Ex. The laundry is not done by my mom.	0	No target segment is found.

The results of the pilot study are shown herein (see Appendix E for the mean scores of each question). For the Grammaticality Judgment Task, a difficulty hierarchy of comprehending *it*-cleft was found as in (2). The type at the very left was the easiest for the subjects, and the one at the right was more difficult than the left, and so on.

(2) NP-Subject > PP > ADV P > NP-Object > ADJ P

As shown above, while the NP-Subject type was the easiest one to comprehend, the ADJ P type was the most difficult. As for the Discourse Completion task, another difficulty hierarchy was observed, as in (3).

(3) ADV P > NP-Object > NP-Subject > PP > ADJ P

The easiest type for the subjects to produce was ADV P, which was different from the comprehension task. However, the most difficult type was the same as the GJ task, i.e. ADJ P. The reason why the hardest one in both tasks was ADJ P might be that the adjective phrase is not allowed to be cleaved in Chinese, or the frequency rate in the corpora is low (i.e., 0.1%, Collins 1991).

There were some inadequacies in the pilot study. Firstly, our subjects performed much worse on certain questions of the Grammaticality Judgment Task, and thus a detailed investigation of the questions is required to see whether the modification of the questions is necessary. Secondly, the scores of the Discourse Completion Task were generally low for each type. This might be due to the fact that the tone expressed by the English *it*-cleft was not strong enough in the turn takings of the conversations to make the subjects use the construction, or, the English *it*-cleft itself was such a marked structure that only a few data could be elicited. Thirdly, not every type of English *it*-cleft had test items with contrast information, for instance, the incorrect test items in both the GJ task and the Discourse Completion task. Thus, the test items with contrast information should be designed as many as those without contrast information, so as to make a systematic investigation of the significance of contrast information in Chinese learners' acquisition of English *it*-clefts. Fourth, the subject pool in the pilot study was not big enough to show a generalization. Therefore, more subjects must be recruited in the formal study instead. Lastly, we did not look into the subjects' English proficiency in the pilot study, thus how L2 proficiency influences

the subjects' performance could not be discussed.

3.3.2 Present Study

To avoid the same problems occurred in the pilot study, the present study implemented an Acceptability Judgment Task, rather than a Grammaticality Judgment Task or a Discourse Completion Task. To recruit more subjects, college freshmen at National Taiwan Normal University from various departments were invited to participate in the experiment. Firstly, we asked the teachers at three different proficiency levels of classes to permit us to go to their classes and explain briefly how our experiment would be conducted. Those who were willing to participate in the research were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix F), which explained that the experiment was only for academic purpose and that the information gathered in the study would be kept confidential.

All the experiments were conducted at National Taiwan Normal University: while the experimental groups completed the task in the classrooms they had their English class, the control group did at the classrooms of the Mandarin Training Center or of the Department of Applied Chinese Language and Culture at NTNU. In addition, the experimental groups of the same proficiency level completed the Acceptability Judgment Task together during the 50-minute class. As for the native control subjects, 20 to 30 minutes was the average time they needed to complete the task. Besides, before the subjects started to answer the test sheet, the researcher explained to them in detail how to do the task.

3.3.3 Scoring and Statistical Analysis

In the Acceptability Judgment Task, the subjects were asked to rate English *it*-clefts on a five-point scale. If they thought that the sentence was completely unacceptable, they should give it “1” point. If they considered it unacceptable, “2” point should be given to the sentence. If they thought that the sentence was a little acceptable, “3” point should be given. Also, “4” point should be given for an acceptable sentence, and “5” point for a completely acceptable one. All the scores were based on the subjects’ own judgment to the sentences, regarding the correctness of the grammar and the meaning of the sentences.

After the scoring was done, the software of SPSS was implemented to run the statistics. The overall mean scores and standard deviation were calculated from the descriptive statistics. Besides, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the LSD post hoc were employed to explore the differences of acceptance among the subject groups and the types of English *it*-clefts. How the present study was conducted is shown in the following flowchart.

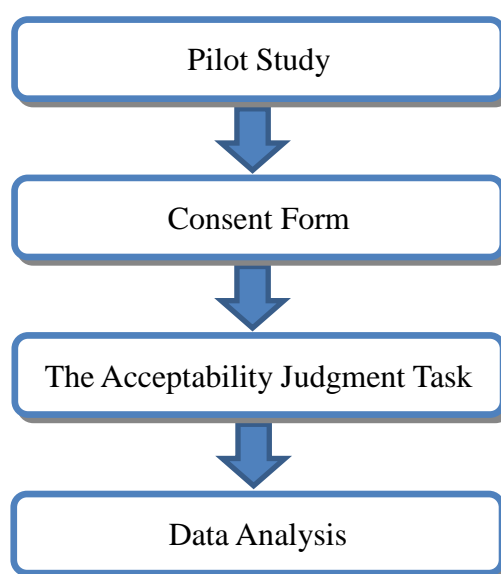


Figure 3-1 Flowchart of the Present Study

3.4 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter introduced the details of the subjects, the methods and materials, the experimental procedures, and the scoring for data analysis. A comprehension task (the Acceptability Judgment Task) was designed in the written form to evaluate Taiwanese subjects' acceptance of English *it*-clefts. In the present study, 60 college freshmen in Taiwan with three different levels of English proficiency were recruited as the experimental group, and 20 native speakers were recruited as the control group. In the following chapter, the overall results will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the overall results of the experiment and a general discussion are presented. First of all, Section 4.1 explores the influence of L1 transfer effects, and Section 4.2 investigates the difficulty hierarchy of the types of English *it*-clefts. Furthermore, Section 4.3 discusses the effects of various grammatical functions of the clefted element in English *it*-clefts. Section 4.4 reports how contrast effects work in English *it*-clefts, and Section 4.5 examines the effects of L2 proficiency on the acquisition of English *it*-clefts. Finally, Section 4.6 summarizes the main points of this chapter.

4.1 Transfer Effects

According to Gass (1988), L1 influence has been the focus of the research on L2 acquisition. When learners' knowledge of L2 is not yet accessible to the target language, transfer can be a helpful strategy (Faerch & Kasper 1987). The first research question of the present study thus investigates the influence of L1 transfer. The results and relevant discussion are presented as follows.

4.1.1 Overall Findings

In our Acceptability Judgment Task, no positive transfer was found, owing that Chinese does not have totally parallel cleft construction with English. However, two different degrees of negative transfer effects (Negative 1 and Negative 2) can be examined. In the present study, the Negative 1 Category refers to the clefts that merely exhibit structural differences between Chinese and English clefts. Such

structural differences include the null subject in the beginning and the lack of the complementizer *that* between the clefted element and the cleft clause in Chinese. That is to say, the Negative 1 Category refers to those types which can be clefted in Chinese, as (1) and (2) show¹.

(1) It is during the holidays that they met.

(4) Shi zai jiaqi de qijian tamen yudao de.

be at holiday Poss period they met *DE*

The Negative 1 Category thus includes Subject NP Type, Adjunct PP Type, Adjunct FIN CL Type, and Adjunct N-F CL Type. As for the Negative 2 Category, in addition to the structural dissimilarities mentioned above, there is categorical difference. That is to say, those grouped into the Negative 2 Category are the types that cannot be clefted in Chinese, as shown in (3) and (4)².

(3) It is you that I'm interested in.

(4) *Shi ni wo dui gan xingqu.

be you I to feel interest

Therefore, the Negative 2 Category is comprised of Direct Object NP Type, Adjunct NP Type, Complement of Preposition NP Type, Indirect Object PP Type, Zero Type, Subject FIN CL Type, Direct Object FIN CL Type, Subject N-F CL Type, Adjunct ADV P Type, and Subject ADJ P Type.

The overall results for the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category are shown in Table 4-1:

¹ Sentences (1) and (2) are repeated from sentences (57) and (58) in Chapter Two.

² Sentences (3) and (4) are repeated from sentences (51) and (52) in Chapter Two.

Table 4-1 The Overall Results for the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category

Category	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
Negative 1	3.63	0.60	2.477	.118
Negative 2	3.46	0.63		

As can be seen above, the total scores on the Negative 1 Category (3.63) were higher than those on the Negative 2 Category (3.46), however, there were no significant differences ($F(1, 118) = 2.477, p > .05$) between the two categories. A better acceptance rate for the Negative 1 Category was found than that for the Negative 2 Category. On the one hand, the Negative 1 Category got a greater percentage of acceptable scores than the Negative 2 Category (very acceptable: Negative 1 Category: 25.7% vs. Negative 2 Category: 23.8%; acceptable: Negative 1 Category: 32% vs. Negative 2 Category: 27.8%; a little acceptable: Negative 1 Category: 25.1% vs. Negative 2 Category: 21.8%). The Negative 2 Category obtained a higher ratio of unacceptance scores than Negative 1 Category (very unacceptable: Negative 2 Category: 5.3% vs. Negative 1 Category: 3%; unacceptable: Negative 2 Category: 20.1% vs. Negative 1 Category: 14.2). (Please refer to Table (i) in Appendix F for the distribution of ratings.) Thus, despite the lack of a significant difference, it still can be stated that all our subjects tended to accept the Negative 1 Category more than the Negative 2 Category.

As for the within-group differences between the two categories, a further investigation is made, as shown in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2 A Comparison between the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category within Each Group

	L	I	H
F	.019	.631	3.335
<i>p</i> -value	.891	.432	.076

Owing that none of the three proficiency groups showed a significant difference for the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category of English *it*-clefts, we can see that transfer effects did not bring much difference, not only to the overall results, but also to each proficiency group. However, to see if there was a similar tendency with the overall results for each proficiency group, the mean scores of each group were analyzed for the Negative 1 Category as well as for the Negative 2 Category. The results are shown in Figure 4-1.



Figure 4-1 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category

In Figure 4-1, the Negative 1 Category got higher scores than the Negative 2 Category, for all the proficiency groups (the L group: Negative 1 Category: 3.46 vs. Negative 2 Category: 3.43; the I group: Negative 1 Category: 3.49 vs. Negative 2 Category: 3.37; the H group: Negative 1 Category: 3.95 vs. Negative 2 Category: 3.57). In addition, the differences in the degrees of acceptability between the Negative 1 Category and

the Negative 2 Category became obvious from the L group to the H group (the L group: 0.03; the I group: 0.12; the H group: 0.38). The overall results showed there was no significant difference between the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category for all the three groups of subjects.

As for the L2 proficiency effect, a between-group comparison is shown in Table 4-3. While there was a significant difference in the Negative 1 Category among the three proficiency groups, the scores the three groups gave for the Negative 2 Category were not significantly different.

Table 4-3 A Comparison among Groups within the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category

	Negative 1	Negative 2
F	4.618	.544
<i>p</i> -value	.014	.583

In addition, the LSD post hoc analysis showed that the scores the H group gave to the Negative 1 Category were significantly higher than those of the L group and those of the I group, while the scores of the L group and the I group were similar. As for the trend of the ratings for the Negative 2 Category, the acceptability ratings were originally low in the L group, and then decreased in the I group, and finally rose in the H group.

In sum, although transfer effects did not bring significant differences to the subjects, the degrees of acceptability for the Negative 1 Category were generally higher than those for the Negative 2 Category. Besides, the L2 proficiency did play a role in the performances of the subjects. While the H group performed significantly better than the L group and the I group on the Negative 1 Category, on the Negative 2 Category the I group performed worse than the L group, but the H group performed

better than the L group.

4.1.2 General Discussion

According to Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991), L1 has positive transfer to L2 when the elements in the two languages are similar, and negative transfer takes place when they are different. However, there are other researchers who have different opinions. Tarallo & Myhill (1983), for instance, argue that most of the errors L2 learners make are similar with those Lp.561 learners make, and thus the errors are taken as developmental errors instead of the result of negative transfer. Despite this, Lado (1957) stated that contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 can predict the difficulties learners may face in the acquisition of the target language. While the similarities between the two languages can make L2 easier for L2 learners to acquire, the differences may result in difficulties. Whether the results of our experiment accord with the previous literature is elaborated below.

In our study, no significant difference was found between the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category, in terms of the overall results as well as the results found within each proficiency group. However, both the overall mean scores and the mean scores of each proficiency group were higher for the Negative 1 Category than those for the Negative 2 Category. For the Negative 1 Category, including Subject NP Type, Adjunct PP Type, Adjunct FIN CL Type, and Adjunct N-F CL Type, the four types of clefts exist in both Chinese clefts and English *it*-clefts, so what our subjects had to overcome was merely the differences in the structure, i.e., the necessity of the expletive *it* and the complementizer *that* in English *it*-clefts. Since the four types of clefts originally exist in Chinese, this makes the subjects accept the corresponding four types of English *it*-clefts better. As for the Negative 2 Category, including Direct Object NP Type, Adjunct NP Type, Complement of Preposition NP

Type, Indirect Object PP Type, Zero Type, Subject FIN CL Type, Direct Object FIN CL Type, Subject N-F CL Type, Adjunct ADV P Type, and Subject ADJ P Type, our subjects' mean scores were lower than those on the Negative 1 Category, despite the lack of a significant difference. The Negative 2 Category was comparatively more difficult for the subjects to acquire because in addition to structural differences, the subjects had to further conquer the difficulties resulted from the unacceptability of the corresponding categories in Chinese clefts. The results of the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category accorded with the previous study in that information organization in L1 affects L2 acquisition in terms of transfer (Schachter & Rutherford 1979, Rutherford 1983), and in that difference between L1 and L2 may hinder the acquisition of the target structure (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). However, since the construction of English *it*-clefts is considered marked (Eckman 1977, 1985), even with the ease brought by the same syntactic categories in Chinese, our subjects might still feel uncomfortable with the Negative 1 Category.

As far as the L2 proficiency effect is concerned, while the three proficiency groups did not give significantly different ratings for the Negative 2 Category, they did for the Negative 1 Category. The H group gave significantly higher scores than the L group and the I group, and such results were consistent with the previous finding on that near-native speakers also underwent transfer effects in acquiring information construction (Carroll et al. 2000). Furthermore, it has also been proved that the more the distance between L1 and L2 is, the more difficulty may be brought to the learners. Thus, although the H group performed significantly better than the L group and the I group for the Negative 1 Category, the H group failed to give significantly higher scores than the lower groups did for the Negative 2 Category. In addition, there was a similar pattern for both categories that the mean scores kept rising from the L group to the H group, except a drop in the I group for the Negative 2 Category. That is to say,

the more advanced our subjects were, the less they got negative transfer effects. In addition, the drop of the I group in the Negative 2 Category can be referred to as a U-shaped development (Kellerman 1983), in which the low-level and high-level learners perform better than the intermediate learners, meaning the L2 knowledge the intermediate learners have somewhat interfered their performance in the target language. To sum up, L2 proficiency did play a role in terms of transfer effects on the acquisition of English *it*-clefts.

4.2 Difficulty Hierarchy of the Types of English *It*-clefts

The second research question of the present study examines the difficulty hierarchy of the types of English *it*-clefts, i.e., NP, PP, Zero, FIN CL, N-F CL, ADV P, and ADJ P, as (5) to (11) show respectively³.

(5) It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan. (NP)

(6) It is for my high school teacher that I bought this card. (PP)

(7) It may be that the girl will be sent away. (Zero)

(8) It is that she already has a date with others that is her answer. (FIN CL)

(9) It is to ask him to sweep that is never easy. (N-F CL)

(10) It is then that they met. (ADV P)

(11) It is big that this house is. (ADJ P)

The results are presented and discussed in the following subsections.

4.2.1 Overall Findings

As Table 4-4 shows, both the descriptive statistics and the results of one-way ANOVA for all the subjects on the types of English *it*-clefts can be seen below.

³ Sentences (5) to (11) are repeated from sentences (48), (54), (59), (62), (70), (75), and (78) in Chapter Two respectively.

Table 4-4 The Overall Results for the Seven Types of English *It*-clefts

Type	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
1. NP	3.79	0.62	23.402	.000
2. PP	3.65	0.71		
3. Zero	3.69	0.71		
4. FIN CL	3.10	0.71		
5. N-F CL	3.44	0.66		
6. ADV P	3.33	0.73		
7. ADJ P	2.62	1.05		

There was a significant difference among the seven types of English *it*-clefts ($F(6, 553) = 23.402, p < .05$). Besides, the LSD post hoc analysis showed that our subjects gave significantly higher scores on NP and Zero than on FIN CL, N-F CL, ADV P, and ADJ P. Still, they significantly scored higher on PP than on FIN CL, ADV P, and ADJ P. Also, they scored significantly higher on N-F CL than on FIN CL and ADJ P, and the scores on FIN CL and ADV P were significantly higher than those on ADJ P. Accordingly, a difficulty hierarchy for the seven types of English *it*-clefts was found:

$$(12) \text{ NP (3.79) / Zero (3.69) / PP (3.65) } > \text{ N-F CL (3.44) / ADV P (3.33) } > \text{ FIN CL (3.10) } > \text{ ADJ P (2.62)}$$

Table 4-5 presents the within-group differences among the seven types of English *it*-clefts.

Table 4-5 A Comparison among the Seven Types of English *It*-clefts within Each Group

	L	I	H	NS
F	.711	1.859	5.503	70.130
<i>p</i> -value	.641	.093	.000	.000

As Table 4-5 shows, while there was a significant difference among the seven types of English *it*-clefts in the H group ($F(6, 133) = 5.503, p < .05$) and the NS group ($F(6, 133) = 70.130, p < .05$), no significant difference was found in the L group ($F(6, 133) = .711, p > .05$) nor the I group ($F(6, 133) = 1.859, p > .05$), according to the results of one-way ANOVA. Besides, the LSD post hoc analysis showed that the H group significantly scored higher on NP than on FIN CL, N-F CL, and ADV P, and significantly scored lower on ADJ P than on PP, Zero, N-F CL, and ADV P, and significantly scored higher on Zero than on FIN CL. Thus, a difficulty hierarchy for the H group can be seen as follows:

(13) NP (4.15) / Zero (3.79) / PP (3.72) > ADV P (3.65) / N-F CL (3.63) >
 FIN CL (3.28) > ADJ P (2.91)

As for the NS group, they gave significantly higher scores on NP, PP, and Zero than for FIN CL, N-F CL, and ADV P, and they significantly scored lower on FIN CL than on N-F CL and ADV P, and significantly scored lower on ADJ P than on all the other types. Likewise, a difficulty hierarchy for the NS group's preference is as follows:

(14) Zero (4.11) / PP (3.96) / NP (3.83) > N-F CL (3.25) / ADV P (3.14) >
 FIN CL (2.56) > ADJ P (1.33)

Figure 4-2 shows the overall scores on the seven types of English *it*-clefts for each proficiency group.

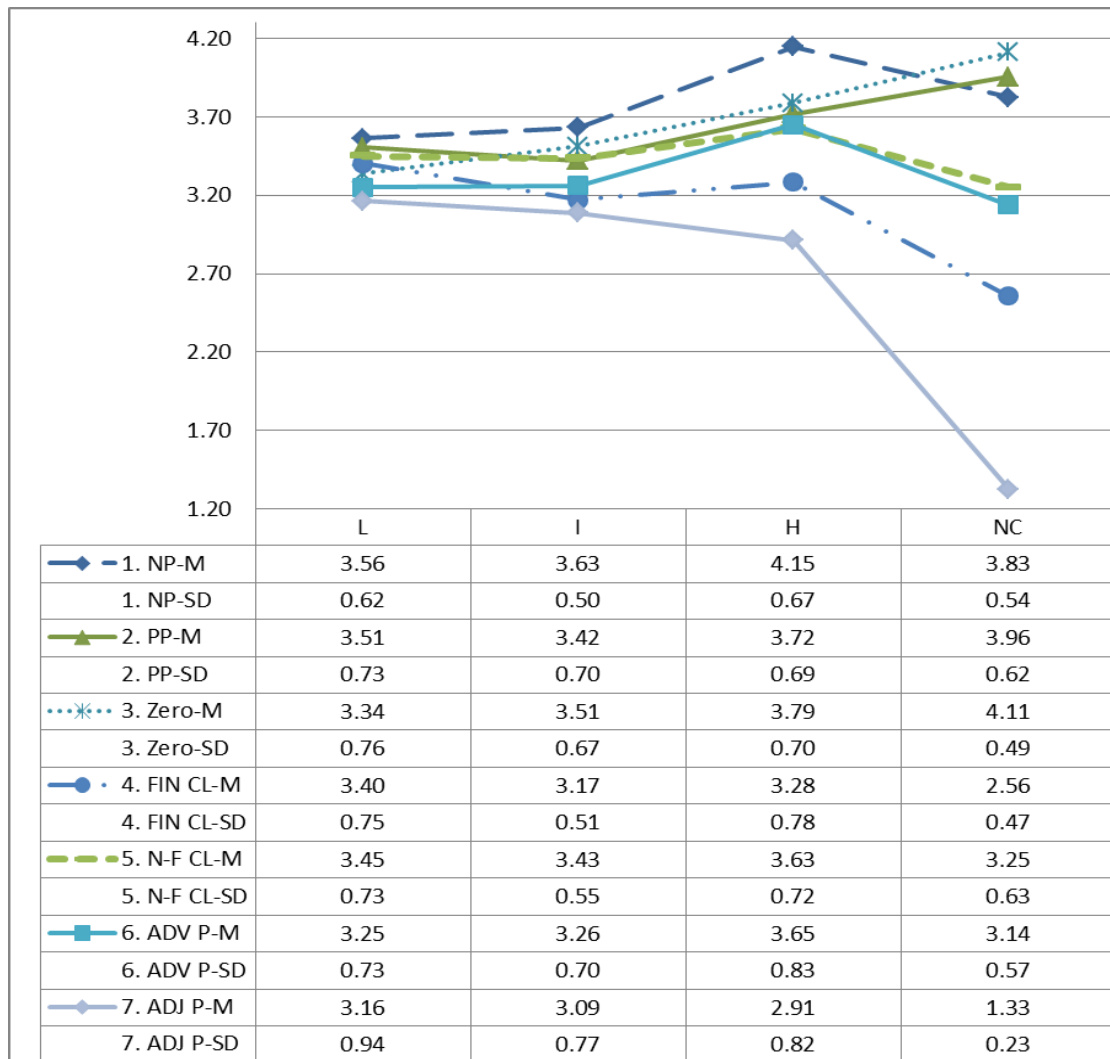


Figure 4-2 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Seven Types of English *It*-clefts

As shown in Figure 4-2, the L group scored above average on FIN CL type (M: 3.40 > 3.10), N-F CL type (M: 3.45 > 3.44) and ADJ P type (M: 3.16 > 2.62) of English *it*-clefts, and their overall performance (i.e., L: NP (3.56) > PP (3.51) > N-F CL (3.45) > FIN CL (3.40) > Zero (3.34) > ADV P (3.25) > ADJ P (3.16)) further showed that NP was the most acceptable type, while ADJ P was the most unacceptable type for them, although the scores on the seven types were quite close. Besides, the I group scored above average on FIN CL type (M: 3.17 > 3.10) and ADJ P type (M: 3.09 > 2.62) of English *it*-clefts, and most of its mean scores were higher than those of the L group, except for FIN CL type, N-F type, and ADJ P type. As for the overall

performance of the I group (i.e., I: NP (3.63) > Zero (3.51) > N-F CL (3.43) > PP (3.42) > ADV P (3.26) > FIN CL (3.17) > ADJ P (3.09)), it indicated similar results with the L group, i.e., there was no big difference among the seven types, NP was the most acceptable type, and ADJ P was the least acceptable for them. The performances of the H group on the seven types of English *it*-clefts were all above average, and almost all of their scores were higher than those of the lower groups, except the types of FIN CL and ADJ P. Besides, the overall performances of the H group as in (13) showed that NP was the most acceptable type and ADJ P was the most unacceptable for them, which was similar with the L and I groups. Last, our native controls only gave scores above average to the types of NP, PP and Zero. In addition, their overall performances as in (14) indicated that the most acceptable type for them was Zero type, rather than NP type. They also considered ADJ P type the most unacceptable type as all the other proficiency groups.

Table 4-6 is a comparison among groups within each type of English *it*-clefts. Except for PP, N-F CL, and ADV P, there were significant differences in the other four types of English *it*-clefts.

Table 4-6 A Comparison among Groups within Each Type

	NP	PP	Zero	FIN CL	N-F CL	ADV P	ADJ P
F	3.984	2.426	5.209	6.809	1.074	1.970	27.456
<i>p</i> -value	.011	.072	.003	.000	.365	.126	.000

What follows are the detailed results of the LSD post hoc analysis. For NP type, it was found that the H group gave significantly higher scores compared with the L group and the I group. As for Zero type, the scores the H group gave were significantly higher than those the L group gave, while those given by the NS groups were significantly higher than those given by almost all of the groups, except for

those given by the H group. Regarding FIN CL type as well as ADJ P type, the scores given by the NS group were significantly lower than those given by all the other groups.

4.2.2 General Discussion

In this section, the findings reported in Section 4.2.1 are discussed. First of all, a significant difference in statistics was found in the seven types of English *it*-clefts, including NP, PP, Zero, FIN CL, N-F CL, ADV P, and ADJ P, showing that our subjects' acceptance of the English *it*-clefts did vary with types. The difficulty hierarchy shown in the previous section is repeated below:

(15) NP (3.79) / Zero (3.69) / PP (3.65) > N-F CL (3.44) / ADV P (3.33) >
FIN CL (3.10) > ADJ P (2.62)

In Collins' study on the spoken Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus and the written London-Lund Corpus (Collins 1991, p.56), the percentage of each type of English *it*-clefts is as follows:

(16) NP (50.4%) > PP (21.5%) > Zero (14.5%) > FIN CL (6.8%) >
ADV P (5.9%) > N-F CL (0.8%) > ADJ P (0.1%)

The most acceptable English *it*-clefts in our study were the types of NP, PP, and Zero, and they were also the types with the highest percentage in Collins' study (NP: 50.4%, PP: 21.5%, Zero: 14.5%). In addition, N-F CL and ADV P were found the next acceptable, followed by FIN CL. This, however, did not completely agree with Collins' study, where FIN CL (6.8%) had the most percentage compared with the other two, i.e., N-F CL (0.8%) and ADV P (5.9%). In our study, on the other hand, there was a drop in FIN CL, and a rise in N-F CL. Last, the least acceptable type in our study was the type of ADJ P, and this conforms to the result of Collins as well (ADJ P: 0.1%). In a nutshell, the results obtained in the present study in general had a

similar pattern with Collins' investigation on the two corpuses, indicating that how much our subjects accepted the type of English *it*-clefts was somewhat corresponding to how much they existed in the corpuses.

To further discuss the difficulty hierarchy we obtained, we may have a closer look at the features of each type. It was found that the types of NP, PP, and Zero got higher scores than the types of FIN CL and N-F CL, implying that the categorical types, i.e., the former three types, had a better acceptance rate than the clausal types. This might be because the clausal types of clefts are often lengthy, compared with the categorical types, and thus they are difficult for the L2 learners to process, as compared in the following⁴.

(17) Categorical Type: It is Christ who lives in me.

(18) Clausal Type: It is in order to improve the quality of life for their children
that they work so hard every day.

In (17), the clefted element "Christ" is a noun phrase. In (18), however, the clefted clause "in order to improve the quality of life for their children", which is much larger in number than the clefted syntactic category in (17). Thus, it is likely that the dissimilarity of acceptance between the categorical type and clausal type of clefts results from the length of cleft sentences in English. Nevertheless, for ADV P and ADJ P, which also carry categorical feature, they did not get higher scores than the clausal types. This might be due to the fact that their frequency rates in everyday conversations are so low that their acceptability decreased. In addition, for the clausal types of FIN CL and N-F CL, there was a higher acceptance rate for N-F CL than for FIN CL. One possible reason might be the dual *that* in the type of FIN CL most of the

⁴ The sentences in (17) and (18) are excerpted from questions (1) and (66) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

time, as shown in the following⁵.

- (19) It is **that** everyone should promote the protection of the environment **that** is the main claim of the professor.

Such a cleft sentence causes a garden-path effect, which leads to the ambiguity of the sentence and thus lowers acceptance rate for the subjects (Pritchett 1988).

Moreover, the statistics showed that while the acquisition of English *it*-clefts varied with the types for the H group and the NS group, it did not for the L group or the I group. For the L group and the LI group, the indifference in the seven types of English *it*-clefts might be due to the degree of markedness of the structure (Eckman 1977, 1985). The structure of English *it*-clefts is so marked to the L and I groups that they could not distinguish the differences of the seven types of English *it*-clefts. However, both groups still gave high scores to NP and low scores to ADJ P, which accorded with the H group and the NS group. As for the H group and the NS group, their difficulty orders are repeated as follows:

- (20) H group: NP (4.15) / Zero (3.79) / PP (3.72) > ADV P(3.65) / N-F CL (3.63)
> FIN CL (3.28) > ADJ P (2.91)

- (21) NS group: Zero (4.11) / PP (3.96) / NP (3.83) > N-F CL (3.25) /
ADV P (3.14) > FIN CL (2.56) > ADJ P (1.33)

It was found that our H group had already had a similar preference with the NS group, i.e., the scores on NP, Zero, and PP were higher than those on ADV P and N-F CL; those on ADV P and N-F CL were higher than those on FIN CL; those on FIN CL were higher than those on ADJ P.

With regard to the performances of the groups in each type of English *it*-clefts, while the learners' groups had similar perception with the NS group on the types of

⁵ Sentence (19) is excerpted from question (14) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

NP, PP, N-F CL, and ADV P, they failed to perform native-like on the types of Zero, FIN CL, and ADJ P. For Zero type, the L2 groups seemed to have difficulty accepting it. This might be due to negative transfer effects, i.e., such type of clefts cannot occur in Chinese. On the other hand, the L2 groups accepted the types of FIN CL and ADJ P better, but the NS group did not accept these types. This implied that the L2 groups had not yet taken lengthy sentences as a disturbance as the natives had, nor did their acceptability conform to the frequency rate in the corpus. Besides, looking at the distribution of the mean scores of each proficiency group, the I group in general gave higher scores on each type of English *it*-clefts than the L group did, except for the less acceptable types of FIN CL, N-F, and ADJ P. Besides, the H group gave higher scores than the L group and the I group, except for the types of FIN CL and ADJ P, the less acceptable types as well. That is to say, while the Chinese EFL learners' English proficiency improved, the better they could accept the structure of English *it*-clefts.

4.3 Grammatical Function Effects

The third research question of the present study explores whether grammatical functions will influence Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English *it*-clefts. According to Collins (1991), all the functions that the clefted element of English *it*-clefts takes include subject, direct object, indirect object, adjunct, and complement of preposition. Nevertheless, we regrouped the grammatical functions to three main types, that is, subject, object, and adjunct, as (22), (23), and (24) show respectively⁶.

(22) It was Tom that caused all the trouble. (subject)

(23) It was the vodka that Boris drank. (object)

(24) It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan. (adjunct)

⁶ Sentences (22) to (23) are repeated from sentences (39), (45), and (48) in Chapter Two respectively.

The grammatical function of object includes the objects of verbs and the objects of prepositions. In other words, in addition to the verbal ones, i.e., direct object and indirect object, complement of preposition was classified into this category as well. In addition, we investigated whether the grammatical functions of subject, object, and adjunct made any difference to our subjects, and examined whether there was a preference for certain syntactic category. The results and discussions are presented as follows.

4.3.1 Overall Results: A First Look at Three Functions

In Table 4-7, the descriptive statistics and the results of one-way ANOVA for all the subjects on Subject, Object, and Adjunct English *it*-clefts are shown.

Table 4-7 The Overall Results for the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function

Type	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
Subject	3.12	0.73	14.917	.000
Object	3.44	0.63		
Adjunct	3.68	0.58		

As shown above, there was a significant difference among Subject, Object, and Adjunct English *it*-clefts ($F(2, 237) = 14.917, p < .05$). The LSD post hoc analysis also showed that the scores on the adjunct function of English *it*-clefts ($M = 3.68$) were significantly higher than those on the object function of English *it*-clefts ($M = 3.44$), and the scores on the object function of English *it*-clefts were significantly higher than those on the subject function of English *it*-clefts ($M = 3.12$).

Table 4-8 further shows the within-group differences among Subject, Object, and Adjunct English *it*-clefts.

Table 4-8 A Comparison between the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function

	L	I	H	NS
F	.297	.706	2.447	46.738
<i>p</i> -value	.744	.498	.096	.000

As Table 4-8 shows, according to the results of one-way ANOVA, a significant difference was found only in the NS group ($F(2, 57) = 46.738, p < .05$), but not in the L group ($F(2, 57) = .297, p > .05$), the I group ($F(2, 57) = .706, p > .05$), or the H group ($F(2, 57) = 2.447, p > .05$). Furthermore, the LSD post hoc analysis showed that the NS group scored significantly higher on Adjunct English *it*-clefts than on Object English *it*-clefts, and scored significantly higher on Object English *it*-clefts than on Subject English *it*-clefts. That is to say, none of the proficiency groups could differentiate the three grammatical functions as the natives did.

Figure 4-3 shows the overall scores for Subject, Object, and Adjunct English *it*-clefts of each proficiency group.

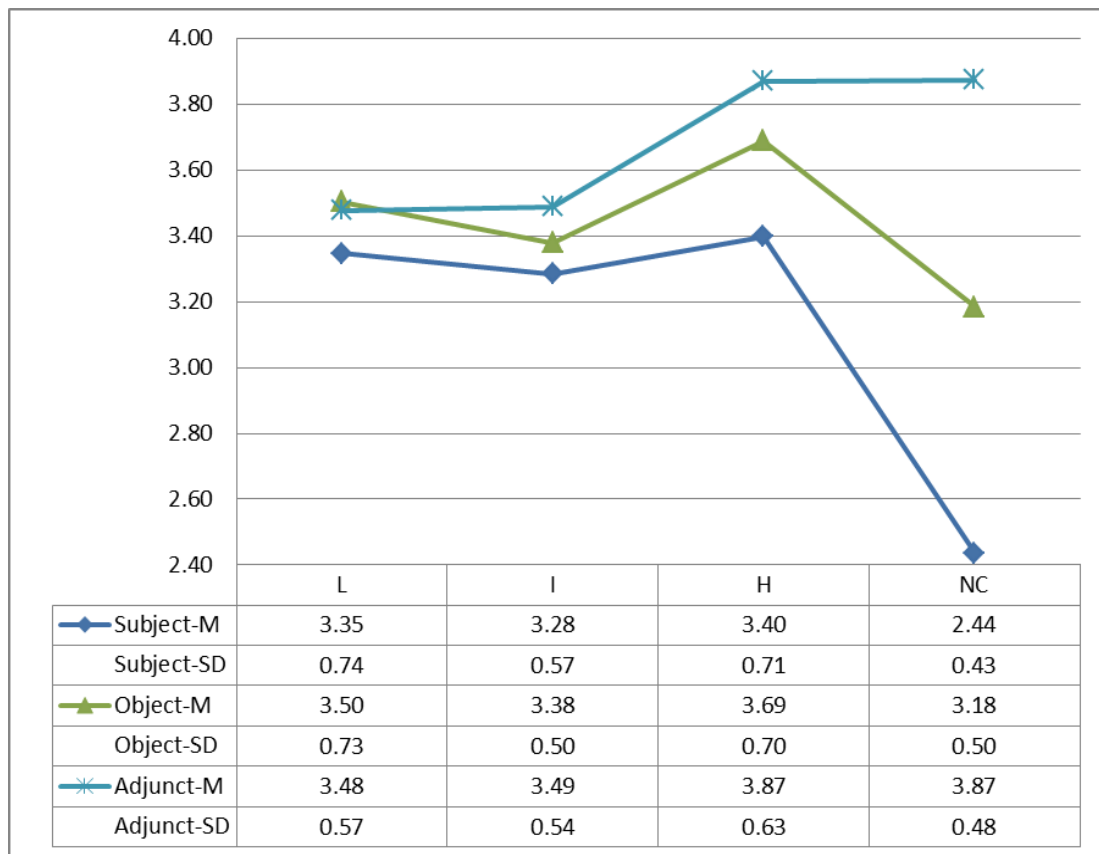


Figure 4-3 Overall Preference of Each Group on the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function

As shown above, all the groups scored the highest on Adjunct English *it*-clefts, and the least on Subject English *it*-clefts (I: $M = 3.49 > 3.38 > 3.28$, H: $M = 3.87 > 3.69 > 3.40$, NS: $M = 3.87 > 3.18 > 2.44$), except for the L group, which scored the highest on Object English *it*-clefts instead (I: $M = 3.50 > 3.48 > 3.35$). That is to say, the L group did not have a similar trend of acceptance for the three functions with the NS group, but the I group and the H group did. The scores on each grammatical function got higher gradually with the proficiency of the subjects, except a slight drop for Subject and Object in the I group. In sum, while generally the proficiency of the subjects had positive effects on the grammatical functions of the clefted elements in English *it*-clefts, there was a drop in the I group for the functions of Subject and Object.

Table 4-9 A Comparison among Groups within the Subject Function, the Object Function, and the Adjunct Function

	Subject	Object	Adjunct
F	10.658	2.368	3.240
<i>p</i> -value	.000	.077	.027

In Table 4-9, a comparison among groups within Subject, Object, and Adjunct English *it*-clefts is presented. While there was a significant difference among groups in Subject and Adjunct English *it*-clefts, there was not in the Object Type. Accordingly, the performances on Object English *it*-clefts of all the groups were quite similar. For Subject English *it*-clefts, the LSD post hoc showed that the NS group significantly scored lower than all the other groups did, indicating that no proficiency group performed similarly with the NS group on Subject English *it*-clefts. Besides, regarding the Adjunct English *it*-clefts, the scores given by the H group and the NS group were significantly higher than those given by the L group and the I group, showing only the H group had similar performance with the NS group for Adjunct English *it*-clefts.

4.3.2 Overall Results: A Second Look at Three Functions

In this section, we will take a second look at the subtypes with the functions of Subject, Object, and Adjunct. Firstly, the subtypes of Subject English *it*-clefts include NP Subject, FIN CL Subject, N-F CL Subject, and ADJ P Subject, as shown in (25) to (28) respectively⁷.

(25) It was Tom that caused all the trouble. (NP Subject)

(26) It is that she already has a date with others that is her answer. (FIN CL Subject)

⁷ Sentences (25) to (28) are repeated from sentences (39), (62), (70), and (78) in Chapter Two respectively.

(27) It is to ask him to sweep that is never easy. (N-F CL Subject)

(28) It is big that this house is. (ADJ P Subject)

The descriptive statistics and the results of one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 4-10.

Table 4-10 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Subject Function

Subtype	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
1-1 NP	3.81	0.75	24.122	.000
4-1 FIN CL	2.88	0.99		
5-1 N-F CL	3.16	0.90		
7-1 ADJ P	2.62	1.05		

In Table 4-10, there was a significant difference among NP Subject, FIN CL Subject, N-F CL Subject, and ADJ P Subject English *it*-clefts ($F(3, 316) = 24.122, p < .05$). According to the LSD post hoc analysis, the subjects' scores on NP Subject English *it*-clefts were significantly higher than those on all the other three subtypes of Subject English *it*-clefts (NP Subject: $M = 3.81 >$ ADJ P Subject: $M = 2.62$ / FIN CL Subject: $M = 2.88$ / N-F CL Subject: $M = 3.16$). In addition, they scored significantly higher on N-F CL Subject English *it*-clefts ($M = 3.16$) than on ADJ P Subject English *it*-clefts ($M = 2.62$). To sum up, a hierarchy of acceptance for these four subtypes of Subject English *it*-clefts is shown as follows:

(29) NP Subject > FIN CL Subject / N-F CL Subject > ADJ P Subject

As for Object English *it*-clefts, there are four subtypes, including NP Direct Object, NP Complement of Preposition, PP Indirect Object, and FIN CL Direct Object, as shown in (30) to (33) respectively⁸.

(30) It was the vodka that Boris drank. (NP Direct Object)

(31) It is you that I'm interested in. (NP Complement of Preposition)

(32) It is for my high school teacher that I bought this card. (PP Indirect Object)

(33) It is that Taiwan will get better and better that we all believe.

(FIN CL Direct Object)

The overall results are shown in Table 4-11.

Table 4-11 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Object Function

Subtype	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
1-2 NP-Direct Object	3.41	0.78	25.585	.000
1-4 NP-Complement of Preposition	3.95	0.70		
2-1 PP-Indirect Object	3.56	0.81		
4-2 FIN CL-Direct Object	2.83	0.96		

As shown in Table 4-11, there was a significant difference among the four subtypes of Object English *it*-clefts ($F(3, 316) = 25.585, p < .05$). Furthermore, the LSD post hoc analysis indicated that NP-Complement of Preposition English *it*-clefts were scored significantly higher than all the other three subtypes of Object English *it*-clefts (NP-Complement of Preposition: $M = 3.95 >$ FIN CL-Direct Object: $M = 2.83$ / NP-Direct Object: $M = 3.41$ / PP-Indirect Object: $M = 3.56$) by our subjects. Besides, the scores for PP-Indirect Object English *it*-clefts ($M = 3.56$) were significantly higher than those for FIN CL-Direct Object English *it*-clefts ($M = 2.83$). In sum, the four

⁸ Sentences (30) to (33) are repeated from sentences (45), (51), (54), and (65) in Chapter Two respectively.

subtypes of Object English *it*-clefts has a hierarchy of acceptance as follows:

- (34) NP-Complement of Preposition > NP-Direct Object / PP-Indirect Object > FIN CL-Direct Object.

With regard to Adjunct English *it*-clefts, there are five subtypes, i.e., NP Adjunct, PP Adjunct, FIN CL Adjunct, N-F CL Adjunct, and ADV P Adjunct, as shown in (35) to (39) respectively⁹.

(35) It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan. (NP Adjunct)

(36) It is during the holidays that they met. (PP Adjunct)

(37) It is because we find such happiness in our religion that we want to share it with others. (FIN CL Adjunct)

(38) It is in order to improve the quality of life for their children that they work so hard every day. (N-F CL Adjunct)

(39) It's then that they met. (ADV P Adjunct)

The overall results are shown in Table 4-12.

Table 4-12 The Overall Results for the Subtypes with the Adjunct Function

Subtype	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
1-3 NP	3.99	0.70	9.257	.000
2-2 PP	3.74	0.79		
4-3 FIN CL	3.60	0.68		
5-2 N-F CL	3.72	0.66		
6-1 ADV P	3.33	0.73		

A significant difference among the five subtypes of Adjunct English *it*-clefts can be found ($F(4, 395) = 9.257, p < .05$) in Table 4-12. Moreover, NP Adjunct English

⁹ Sentences (35) to (39) are repeated from sentences (48), (57), (68), (73), and (75) in Chapter Two respectively.

it-clefts were found to have significantly higher scores than all the other four subtypes of Adjunct English *it*-clefts (NP Adjunct: M= 3.99 > ADV P Adjunct: M= 3.33 / FIN CL Adjunct: M= 3.60 / N-F CL Adjunct: M= 3.72 / PP Adjunct: M= 3.74), according to the LSD post hoc analysis. Besides, ADV P Adjunct English *it*-clefts (M= 3.33) were also found to be scored significantly lower than FIN CL (M= 3.60), N-F CL (M= 3.72), and PP (M= 3.74) Adjunct English *it*-clefts. In a nutshell, a hierarchy of general acceptance for the five subtypes of Adjunct English *it*-clefts is as follows:

(40) NP Adjunct > PP Adjunct / FIN CL Adjunct / N-F CL Adjunct >
 ADV Adjunct

4.3.3 General Discussion

This section investigates whether the grammatical functions of Subject, Object, and Adjunct of the clefted element affect our subjects' acceptability of English *it*-clefts. First of all, the results of the statistics indicated that the test items with Adjunct clefted elements got significantly higher scores than those with Subject and Object ones, and the test items with the Object function got significantly higher scores than those with the Subject function. That is to say, there was a general tendency of acceptance as follows:

(41) Adjunct > Object > Subject

As for why Adjunct English *it*-clefts got were scored the highest, the so-called argument/adjunct asymmetry might be one of the possible reasons. As known, arguments tend to be obligatorily presented, and adjuncts are optional (Radford 1988). That is to say, adjuncts are more peripheral syntactically and semantically. The construction of clefts is often used to bring emphasis to the clefted part of the structure. Thus, while the Adjunct function originally takes less emphasis, the structure can play an even stronger role in bringing focus to the clefted element.

However, in Collins' (1991) study on the relative frequencies of the functions of Subject, Object, and Adjunct of highlighted elements in the corpuses of LL and LOB, the Subject function accounted for 38.8%, the Object function accounted for 6.8%, and the Adjunct function accounted for 36.7%. Our results accorded with Collins' findings in that the Adjunct function obtained a high acceptance and that the Object function gained a low acceptance from our subjects. However, what did not conform to Collins' results in our study was the lower scores on the Subject function. To find a possible cause for this disagreement, we investigated the subtypes of the Subject function. The types that take the function of Subject include NP, FIN CL, N-F CL, and ADJ P, and two of them had mean scores lower than the average. Thus, a type effect could be one of the causes.

To take a closer look at the grammatical functions, we found that when comparing categories with clauses, categorical subtypes were better accepted, as the hierarchies of the subtypes of the three grammatical functions shown below.

(42) Subject: NP > FIN CL / N-F CL > ADJ P

(43) Object: NP-Complement of Preposition > NP-Direct Object / PP > FIN CL

(44) Adjunct: NP > PP / FIN CL / N-F CL > ADV P

The syntactic category of NP was more acceptable than the clausal level of FIN CL and N-F CL in all the three grammatical functions. The reason behind might be because of Heavy-NP shift, stating that a long or "heavy" noun phrase is placed at the end of a sentence by speakers (Stallings et al., 1998). Nevertheless, while the categorical type is ADV P or ADJ P, which had fewer frequency rates in the corpus (Collins 1991: ADV P: 5.9%; ADJ P: 0.1%), the acceptability dropped, as shown in the hierarchies of Subject and Adjunct. To account for this, we further investigated the subtypes of NP and ADV P with the function of Adjunct. While the clefted NP Adjunct takes the feature of being generic or definite, e.g., *yesterday* and *last month*,

the clefted ADV P Adjunct is more indefinite, *sometimes* and *again*, for instances. Since the topic in Chinese need to be either generic or definite (Li & Thompson 1981, Shi 2000), it is likely that the focus construction, English *it*-clefts, also has such preference, which makes NP Adjunct more acceptable than ADV Adjunct.

Regarding the performance of each proficiency group, all the groups showed a similar preference for Object English *it*-clefts. As for Subject English *it*-clefts, no L2 group had a similar preference with the NS group. Furthermore, with regard to Adjunct English *it*-clefts, the H group performed not only better than the L group and the I group, but it had a similar preference with the NS group. Nevertheless, when it comes to the tendency of acceptance for the three functions of clefts, all the groups gave the least acceptance for the function of Subject. Besides, while the L group had better acceptance for the Object function than for the Adjunct function, the other two proficiency groups had a preference for the Adjunct function rather than the Object function, as the natives did.

4.4 Contrast Effects

The fourth research question of the present study addresses whether contrast information will affect Chinese EFL's acquisition of English *it*-clefts. The part after the comma in (45) is an example of the contrast information¹⁰.

(45) It was in July that we began school, not in September as Taiwan.

The results and discussions are shown in the following.

¹⁰ Sentence (45) is excerpted from question (7) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

4.4.1 Overall Findings

The descriptive statistics and the results of one-way ANOVA for all the subjects on contrast and non-contrast English *it*-clefts are shown in Table 4-13.

Table 4-13 The Overall Results for the Contrast category and the Non-contrast Category

Contrast	M	SD	F	<i>p</i> -value
Contrast	3.45	0.60	.008	.928
Non-contrast	3.45	0.56		

As can be seen in Table 4-13, contrast and non-contrast English *it*-clefts did not show a significant difference ($F(1, 158) = .008, p > .05$). That is to say, no matter the English *it*-clefts takes a contrast feature or not does not make difference to our subjects.

Table 4-14 A Comparison between the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category within Each Group

	L	I	H	NS
F	.335	.336	.099	3.183
<i>p</i> -value	.566	.566	.755	.082

As indicated in Table 4-14, no significant difference between contrast and non-contrast English *it*-clefts was found in the three groups, including the L group ($F(1, 38) = .355, p > .05$), the I group ($F(1, 38) = .336, p > .05$), the H group ($F(1, 38) = .099, p > .05$), and the NS group ($F(1, 38) = 3.183, p > .05$), according to the results of one-way ANOVA.

The overall scores on the Contrast and the Non-contrast English *it*-clefts for each proficiency group are shown in Figure 4-4. As indicated, all the groups except for the NS group scored higher on the Non-contrast English *it*-clefts than on the Contrast

English *it*-clefts (L: M= 3.50 > 3.38, I: M= 3.45 > 3.35, H: M= 3.71 > 3.64, NS: M= 3.16 < 3.41).

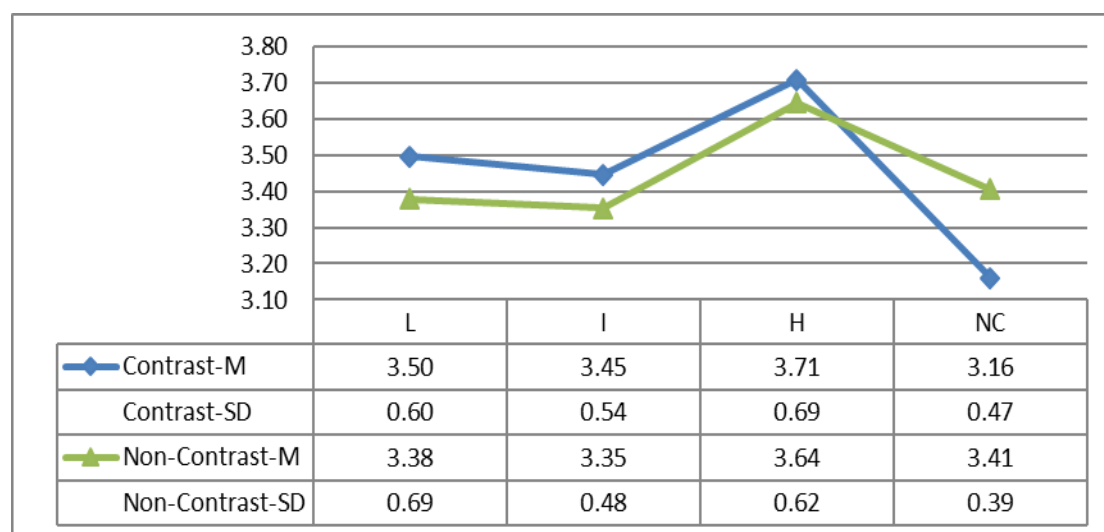


Figure 4-4 Overall Performances of Each Group on the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category

Table 4-15 further displays within-group differences between the Contrast and the Non-contrast English *it*-clefts.

Table 4-15 A Comparison among Groups within the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category

	Contrast	Non-contrast
F	3.031	1.157
<i>p</i> -value	.034	.332

Table 4-15 shows that only in the Contrast Category could we find a significant difference among the three proficiency groups, but not in the Non-contrast Category. Furthermore, it was analyzed by the LSD post hoc that the scores given by the H group were significantly higher than those given by the NS group.

4.4.2 General Discussion

On the whole, there was no significant difference between the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category. Nevertheless, all our Chinese EFL learners did score higher, although not significantly higher, on the Contrast Category than on the Non-contrast Category. This implied that all the L2 groups depended on contrast information, and such an explicit cue made the target construction more salient for them, bringing about better acceptance (Schmidt 1992). According to Callies' (2009) investigation of information highlighting, the German L2 learners of English as well as the native controls from the U.S used clefts mostly in the contrast section of the Discourse Completion Task. In addition, it was found that the German subjects significantly overrepresented the construction of *it*-clefts. Compared with Callies' study, our learners did score higher on the clefts with contrast, and they also scored higher on the Contrast Category than the NS group, which accorded with Callies' results. However, we failed to find a significant difference for the factor of contrast information in our study. There are two possible reasons for this result. The first reason might be because the contrast information we provided for our subjects in the task was on a sentence level, but it was on a discourse level in Callies' study. In other words, it is likely that contrast information on a discourse level helps facilitate the acquisition of the English *it*-clefts better than that on a sentence level does. The other reason may be more user-based. It might be that the construction of *it*-clefts itself has such a low frequency rate, which makes it so marked (Eckman 1977, 1985), that even with the aid of contrast, our subjects still could not give significantly higher scores.

Taking a closer look at the scores of each category of English *it*-clefts, we found that there was a significant difference on the Contrast Category; the H group significantly scored higher than the NS group. To analyze possible reasons behind, we looked into the test items of the Contrast Category that got lower scores than those of

the Non-contrast Category. The following is the Contrast Category of clefts that were scored extremely low¹¹.

(46) I didn't care if you bring any gift for my family; it was that you didn't come on time that annoyed me.

It was found that 17 out of 20 natives could not accept the cleft sentence with contrast information above. According to some of our native subjects, the cleft sentence with contrast information, which seemed to be too wordy, was considered redundant.

As for the performance of each proficiency group, the mean scores given by the H group were higher than those given by the I group and the L group, and those given by the L group were higher than those given by the I group, for both the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category. However, in spite of the fact that the Contrast Category was scored higher than the Non-contrast Category, no significant difference was found among the three proficiency groups. This might be because that the cleft sentence with contrast information increased complexity, and it consequently decreased the subjects' comprehension (Quirk et al. 1985). Besides, we also found that the difference between the Contrast Category and the Non-contrast Category became less and less with the L2 proficiency getting higher (L: 0.12; I: 0.10; H: 0.07). That is to say, in the acquisition of English *it*-clefts, while all the learners' groups were dependent on contrast information, they became less dependent on it with their L2 proficiency improved.

¹¹ Sentence (46) is excerpted from question (69) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

4.5 Proficiency Effects

In this section, the subjects' L2 proficiency is investigated in terms of Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English *it*-clefts. From the results and discussions presented in the previous sections, the developmental stages of English *it*-clefts can be inferred as follows.

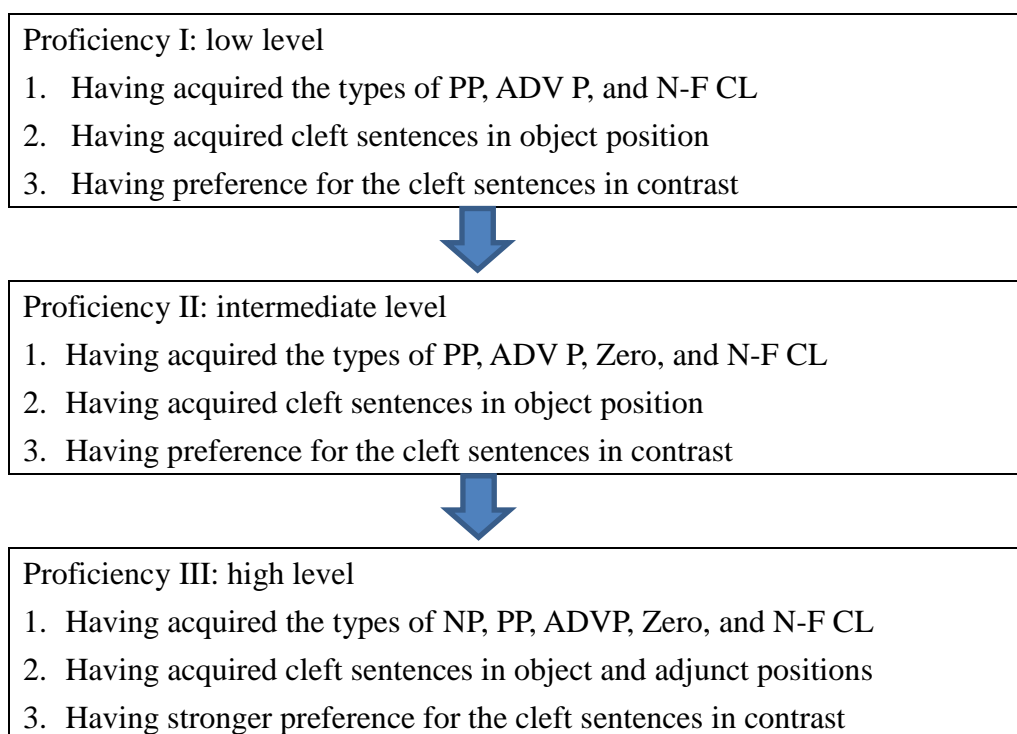


Figure 4-5 The Developmental Stages of English *It*-clefts

At the first stage when our Chinese EFL learners' English proficiency was low, the acquisition of English *it*-clefts was worse, compared with those with better English proficiency. In terms of the seven types of English *it*-clefts, the subjects at this stage acquired only three types of them, i.e., PP, ADV P, and N-F CL. According to the four-scaled difficulty hierarchy in general, i.e., NP / Zero / PP > N-F CL / ADV P > FIN CL > ADJ P, only PP was among the easiest ones. For ADV P and N-F CL, both were just more difficult than the easiest ones. That is to say, for the two types that were scaled the most difficult, the subjects at this stage could acquire neither. As

for the three grammatical functions, the subjects could only acquire the cleft sentences in object position. Lastly, when it comes to the influence of contrast information, low-level subjects did benefit from contrast information, showing a preference for the cleft sentences in contrast.

At the second stage, the subjects, who had intermediate proficiency of English, performed similarly with the subjects at Stage I. They also acquired the types of PP, ADV P, and N-F CL, as well as the cleft sentences in object position. Still, the cleft sentences in contrast were easier for them. Only one more type was further acquired by them, i.e., Zero type of English *it*-clefts, one of the easiest types at the difficulty hierarchy. Although the intermediate-level subjects' acceptance rates had slightly improved when compared with the low group, they still performed worse than the high-level group.

At the third stage, the subjects had high proficiency of English and their acquisition of English *it*-clefts was the best among the three proficiency groups. In addition to what was acquired by the L and I groups, i.e., PP, ADV P, Zero, N-F CL, and Object English *it*-clefts, the high-level learners improved a lot. They went steps further to NP and Adjunct English *it*-clefts. In other words, not only all the types scaled on the easiest of the difficulty hierarchy were acquired by them, but the function of Adjunct, the most acceptable function for the natives, was acquired as well. Moreover, the effects contrast information brought to them were obvious, in comparison with the other two groups. In sum, the subjects at this stage still did not have a native-like preference for the two most difficult types of English *it*-clefts, i.e., FIN CL and ADJ P. Still, neither could they acquire Subject English *it*-clefts. However, their preference for various types of English *it*-clefts was generally most similar with the natives!

It has been claimed in the previous literature that L2 proficiency is a possible factor affecting second language acquisition (Ellis 1985, Sawetayaram 2012). With an eye to the findings of the present study, the Chinese EFL learners with higher proficiency of English did perform better, considering type effects, grammatical function effects, as well as contrast effects in the acquisition of English *it*-clefts. Thus, it is concluded that the present study accorded with the previous studies on the influence of L2 proficiency in L2 acquisition.

4.6 Summary of Chapter Four

In this chapter, the overall findings and discussion have been presented to answer the research questions of the present study. The results indicated that transfer effects, type effects, grammatical functions, and contrast effects did influence how our subjects accepted English *it*-clefts. In the following chapter, in addition to the major findings of the study, we will provide pedagogical implications, as well as limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the conclusion of the present study is provided. Firstly, the major findings of the study are summarized in Section 5.1, followed by some pedagogical implications presented in Section 5.2. Finally, Section 5.3 discusses the limitations of the present study and provides some suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

The present study explored the acquisition of English *it*-clefts by Mandarin-speaking learners in Taiwan at three levels of proficiency. A comprehension task, i.e., Acceptability Judgment Task, was implemented to compare our subjects' acceptance of the clefts with native controls'. The issues discussed in the present study included transfer effects, difficulty orders of the major types of English *it*-clefts, grammatical function effects, contrast effects, and L2 proficiency effects.

First of all, negative transfer effects were found in our subjects' acquisition of English *it*-clefts. The Negative 1 Category, including Subject NP Type, Adjunct PP Type, Adjunct FIN CL Type, and Adjunct N-F CL Type, got higher scores than the Negative 2 Category, i.e., Direct Object NP Type, Adjunct NP Type, Complement of Preposition NP Type, Indirect Object PP Type, Zero Type, Subject FIN CL Type, Direct Object FIN CL Type, Subject N-F CL Type, Adjunct ADV P Type, and Subject ADJ P Type, despite the lack of a significant difference.

Second, the overall results showed that the seven major types of English *it*-clefts exhibited significantly different degrees of difficulty. While NP, Zero, and PP were the easiest, followed by N-F CL and ADV P, FIN CL and ADJ P were so difficult to the

learners that even our high-level subjects had not acquired yet.

Third, with respect to grammatical function effects, Adjunct was reported to be the easiest to acquire, compared with Subject and Object. Furthermore, among the subtypes of Adjunct English *it*-clefts, NP Adjunct was found to be the most acceptable one.

Fourth, the overall results demonstrated contrast effects in the acquisition of English *it*-clefts. Although the clefts with contrast were not accepted significantly better than those without contrast, the mean scores for the former were higher than those for the latter, no matter at which stage our subjects were.

Last, the performance of our subjects was found to vary with their L2 proficiency. They gradually acquired more types of English *it*-clefts as they became more proficient in L2.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

In this section, some pedagogical implications are suggested on the basis of the developmental stages of the English *it*-clefts presented in the previous chapter. First of all, in terms of the pedagogical sequence, it would be better to introduce the categorical types earlier than the clausal types, as demonstrated in the following examples¹.

(1) It is knowledge that improves the human condition.

(2) It is that she already has a date with others that is her answer.

Compared with the underlined categorical English *it*-cleft as in (1), the underlined clausal type as in (2) is not only lengthy but also ambiguous. Therefore, it should be taught at later stages, since it is more challenging for L2 learners.

¹ Sentences (1) and (2) are excerpted from questions (6) and (32) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

Furthermore, with respect to the grammatical function of the clefted element in the English *it*-cleft construction, Adjunct should be taught at the first place, rather than Subject or Object, as the following example shows².

(3) It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan.

Because in the non-cleft counterpart Adjunct originally appears in a peripheral position, syntactically and semantically, it enables the cleft construction to maximize the effect of focus or contrast.

As for the pedagogical strategy, it was found that contrast could help the L2 learners better accept the construction of English *it*-cleft, as (4) shows³.

(4) Maybe it is tomorrow that they're leaving for America, not yesterday.

In the present study, it was found that our learners could accept the sentence with ease when contrast was added to the cleft, as shown in the double underlined part above. In addition to the sentence-level contrast mentioned above, the discourse-level contrast can be given to strengthen L2 learners' understanding, as shown in (5)⁴:

(5) A: Hey, I heard that you went to a concert last Saturday night.

B: Well, actually it's not last Saturday night. It's Sunday night that I went to a concert.

A: Wow, you went to a concert at Sunday night! Then you must be very tired the next day when you went to work!

Although the discourse-level contrast was not investigated in our study, it is believed with the context more completely offered, L2 learners can better understand when and how to use the English *it*-cleft construction.

² Sentence (3) is excerpted from question (36) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

³ Sentence (4) is excerpted from question (56) in the Acceptability Judgment Task as shown in Appendix A.

⁴ Example (5) is excerpted from question (1) in the Discourse Completion Task of the Pilot Study as shown in Appendix C.

Last but not the least, since the English *it*-cleft is a marked construction, teachers should not overemphasize its importance, so as not to mislead students to overuse the construction. From the results of the present study we found that no matter which proficiency level our subjects were at, they scored pretty high on the types to which the native speakers gave low scores. That is to say, the L2 groups seemed to over-accept every type of English *it*-clefts. Such phenomenon may result from the instruction effect brought about by the teachers and the textbooks, especially in senior high school. Therefore, in addition to explaining clearly how to use the construction of English *it*-clefts, teachers should remind its markedness and provide real contexts to help students better understand when to use the construction.

5.3 Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Regarding the present study, some limitations could be found and suggestions for future research could be offered accordingly. First, although we recruited three proficiency groups with 20 people in each as our subjects, more subjects can be recruited to participate in the future research to obtain more significant results. Besides, we found a discrepancy in our advanced learners and the native controls. Thus, it is suggested more advanced subjects can be recruited in the future. Moreover, owing that only one comprehension task was employed in the present study, task effects could not be examined in the study. Thus, future researchers may take into consideration both a comprehension task and a production task. Lastly, the classification of the English *it*-clefts in the present study entirely followed Collins' (1991), which was constructed from a corpus-based investigation more than twenty years ago. Hence, another examination of the current corpus can be implemented so as to systematically construct an updated classification.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akmajian, A. 1970. On deriving cleft sentences from pseudo-cleft sentences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 1.2:149-168.
- Atlas, J. D., and Levinson, S. C. 1981. *It*-clefts, informativeness, and logical form. *Radical Pragmatics* 1-61.
- Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. 1987. Markedness and Salience in Second-Language Acquisition*. *Language Learning* 37.3:385-407.
- Beaver, D., and Clark, B. 2003. Always and only: Why not all focus-sensitive operators are alike. *Natural Language Semantics* 11.4:323-362.
- Beaver, D., and Clark, B., 2008. *Sense and Sensitivity: How Focus Determines Meaning*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bolinger, D. 1972. A look at equations and cleft sentences. *Studies for Einar Haugen* 96-114.
- Callies, M. 2006. *Information Highlighting and the Use of Focusing Devices in Advanced German Learner English. A Study in the Syntax-Pragmatics Interface in Second Language Acquisition*. Ph.D Dissertation, Philipps-Universität Marburg.
- Callies, M. 2009. *Information Highlighting in Advanced Learner English: The Syntax Pragmatics Interface in Second Language Acquisition*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Callies, M., and Keller, W. R. 2008. The teaching and acquisition of focus constructions: An integrated approach to language awareness across the curriculum. *Language Awareness* 17.3:249-266.
- Carrell, P. L. 1977. Empirical investigations of indirectly conveyed meaning: assertion versus presupposition in first and second language acquisition. *Language Learning* 27.2:353-366.
- Carroll, M., Murcia-Serra, J., Watorek, M., and Bendiscioli, A. 2000. The relevance of information organization to second language acquisition studies. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 22.3:441-466.
- Carter, R. 2003. Language awareness. *ELT Journal* 57.1:64-65.
- Chafe, W. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view. *Subject and Topic* 25-56.
- Collins, P. C. 1991. *Cleft and Pseudo-Cleft Constructions in English*. London: Routledge.
- Coppock, E., and Beaver, D. 2011. Sole sisters. *Proceedings of SALT* 21:197-217.
- Davidse, K. 2000. A constructional approach to clefts. *Linguistics* 38:1101-1132.

- Declerck, R. 1983. Predicational clefts. *Lingua* 61:9-45.
- Dijk, T. A. 2011. *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Sage Publications.
- Eckman, F. R. 1977. Markedness and the contrastive analysis hypothesis. *Language Learning* 27.2:315-330.
- Eckman, F. R. 1985. Some theoretical and pedagogical implications of the markedness differential hypothesis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 7.3:289-307.
- Ellis, R. 2004. The definition and measurement of L2 explicit knowledge. *Language Learning* 54.2:227-275.
- Faerch, C., and Kasper, G. 1987. Perspectives on language transfer. *Applied Linguistics* 8.2:111-36.
- Fries, C. C. 1945. *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gabriele, A. 2009. Transfer and transition in the SLA of aspect: a bidirectional study of learners of English and Japanese. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 31:371-402.
- Gass, S. M. 1988. Second language acquisition and linguistic theory: The role of language transfer. *Linguistic Theory in Second Language Acquisition* 384-403.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1967. Notes on transitivity and theme in English, Part 2. *Journal of Linguistics* 3:199-244.
- Halvorse, P. K. 1978. *The Syntax and Semantics of Cleft Sentences*. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.
- Hasselgård, H. 2004. Adverbials in IT-cleft constructions. *Language and Computers* 49.1:195-211.
- Hedberg, N. 2000. On the referential status of clefts. *Language* 76:891-920.
- Hendriks, P., and Koster, C. 2010. Production/comprehension asymmetries in language acquisition. *Lingua* 120.8:1887-1897.
- Hinkel, E. 2002. *Second Language Writers' Text: Linguistic and Rhetorical Features*. London: Routledge.
- Ho, Harvey Hsin-chang. 2008. *Second Language Acquisition of English Telicity-Related Constructions*. MA Thesis: National Taiwan Normal University.
- Horn, L. 1981. Exhaustiveness and the semantics of clefts. *Proceedings of NELS* 11:125-142.
- Hutchinson, L. G. 1971. Presupposition and belief-inferences. *Seventh Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society* 134-141.
- Jackendoff, R. 1972. *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Jespersen, O. 1937. *Analytic Syntax*. Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard.
- Kasper, G. 1998. Interlanguage pragmatics. *Learning Foreign and Second Languages* 183-208.
- Kellerman, E. 1983. Now you see it, now you don't. *Language Transfer in Language Learning* 54.12:112-134.
- Kiss, T. 2005. Semantic constraints on relative clause extraposition. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 23.2:281-334.
- Lado, R. 1957. *Linguistics across Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lambrecht, K. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. E. 1976. An explanation for the morpheme acquisition order of second language learners. *Language Learning* 26.1:125-134.
- Li, C. N., and Thompson, S. A. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*. University of California Press.
- Li, Cherry. 1980. *A Contrastive Study of English and Chinese Cleft and Pseudo-cleft Construction*. MA Thesis: National Taiwan Normal University.
- Liu, Stella Hsi-hui. 2011. *Second Language Acquisition of If-Conditionals in English*. MA Thesis: National Taiwan Normal University.
- Lorenz, G. R. 1999. *Adjective Intensification: Learners Versus Native Speakers: A Corpus Study of Argumentative Writing*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Munnich, E., Flynn, S., and Martohardjono, G. 1994. Elicited imitation and grammaticality judgment tasks: What they measure and how they relate to each other. *Research Methodology in Second Language Acquisition* 227-243.
- Muraki, M. 1970. Presupposition and pseudo-clefting. *Sixth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society* 390-399.
- Odlin, T. 1989. *Language Transfer: Cross-Linguistic Influence in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plag, I. 1994. Avoidance in oral L2 production. The encoding of new referents in English interlanguage narratives. *The Dynamics of Language Processing. Essays in Honor of Hans W. Dechert* 33-44.
- Prince, E. F. 1978. A comparison of WH-clefts and it-clefts in discourse. *Language* 54:883-906.
- Pritchett, B. 1988. Garden path phenomena and the grammatical basis of language Processing. *Language* 64:539-576.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., and Svartvik, J. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London; New York: Longman.

- Radford, A. 1988. *Transformational Grammar: A First Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reeve, M. 2011. The syntactic structure of English clefts. *Lingua* 121:142-171.
- Rothman, J. 2007. Sometimes they use it, sometimes they don't: an epistemological discussion of L2 morphological production and its use as a competence measurement. *Applied Linguistics* 25:609-614.
- Rutherford, W. 1983. Language typology and language transfer. *Language Transfer in Language Learning* 358-370.
- Sasaki, M., and Hirose, K. 1996. Explanatory variables for EFL students' expository writing. *Language Learning* 46:137-174.
- Sawetayaram, T. 2012. Effects of verb categories, language proficiency level, and textbook roles on the acquisition of Japanese imperfective aspect marker *-te i ru*. *Japanese Studies Journal* 29:102-109.
- Schachter, J., and Rutherford, W. 1979. Discourse function and language transfer. *Working Papers in Bilingualism* 19:1-12.
- Schmidt, R. 1992. Awareness and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13:206-226.
- Shi, D. 2000. Topic and topic-comment constructions in Mandarin Chinese. *Language* 383-408.
- Stallings, L. M., MacDonald, M. C., and O'Seaghdha, P. G. 1998. Phrasal ordering constraints in sentence production: Phrase length and verb disposition in heavy-NP shift. *Journal of Memory and Language* 39.3:392-417.
- Stockwell, R. P., Bowen, J., and John, W. 1965. *The Grammatical Structure of English and Spanish*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strawson, P. F. 1952. *Introduction to Logical Theory*. New York : Wiley and Sons.
- Sugaya, N., and Shirai, Y. 2007. The acquisition of progressive and resultative meanings of the imperfective aspect markers by L2 learners of Japanese. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 29:1-38.
- Tarallo, F., and Myhill, J. 1983. Interference and natural language in second language acquisition. *Language Learning* 33:55-76.
- Tarone, E. 1985. Variability in interlanguage use: a study of style-shifting in morphology and syntax. *Language Learning* 35:373-403.
- Tarone, E., and Parrish B. 1988. Task-related variation in interlanguage: the case of articles. *Language Learning* 38:21-44.
- Tasseva-Kurkchieva, M. 2007. What about grammar? Comprehension and production in the initial stages of L2 acquisition. *Proceedings of the 9th Generative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition Conference* 242-250.

- Velleman, D., Beaver, D., Destruel, E., Bumford, D., Onea, E., and Coppock, L. 2013. It-clefts are IT (inquiry terminating) constructions. *Proceedings of SALT 22*:441-460.
- Weinreich, U. 1953. *Languages in Contacts*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.
- White, L. 1986. Markedness and parameter setting: some implications for a theory of adult second language acquisition. *Markedness* 309-327.
- Zhang, Heyou. 2012. “是”字結構的句法語義研究：漢語語義性特點的一個視角. Peking: Peking University Press.

Appendix A

The Acceptability Judgment Task of the Formal Study

請依下列句子的結構及意思判斷其可接受度；1為最低，依序增高至5為最高。

例如：1. When the sun shines through a light rain, it makes a rainbow. 1 2 3 4 ⑤

 2. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously. ① 2 3 4 5

-----請開始作答-----

題目	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5	非 常 可 接 受
1. It is Christ who lives in me.		1	2	3	4	5	
2. It may be that male students are more willing to tease one another during class, but it may not always be the case of course.		1	2	3	4	5	
3. It was to her husband that she lent the money.		1	2	3	4	5	
4. I knew nothing about the reality before; it was when I went to ask for a job that I realized how difficult it was to find a satisfactory one.		1	2	3	4	5	
5. It is now obvious that you're totally wrong.		1	2	3	4	5	
6. It is knowledge that improves the human condition.		1	2	3	4	5	
7. It was in July that we began school, not in September as in Taiwan.		1	2	3	4	5	
8. It may be that the girl will be sent away.		1	2	3	4	5	
9. It is because we have been there for 10 years that we see beauty of it no more, but in fact it is really a place worth visiting.		1	2	3	4	5	
10. It is a really complicated shoe.		1	2	3	4	5	
11. It is blue that the water will be with the chemical, not red.		1	2	3	4	5	
12. It was you who I hate.		1	2	3	4	5	
13. It was in order to satisfy him that some change had been accomplished; we, ourselves didn't want to change actually.		1	2	3	4	5	
14. It is that everyone should promote the protection of the environment that is the main claim of the professor.		1	2	3	4	5	
15. It is also a problem that can never be solved.		1	2	3	4	5	

題目	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
16. It is their son that they're very proud of.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
17. It might be that we're going to record six or seven more songs, but I'm not quite sure yet.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
18. It is rich you'd soon be.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
19. Although competition is always cruel, it is through competition that we innovate.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
20. It is pretty hard to grow a lot of crops because the weather is getting better and better.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
21. It was Williams who nursed her back to health, not her boyfriend as she thought.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
22. It is for my high school teacher that I bought this card.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
23. It is always wet and cold that the weather during Chinese New Year is, but it is sunny and hot this year.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
24. It was through my brother that we became friends.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
25. It is not a good idea to have the artist compose a drawing within such a short time.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
26. It was nothing that I wanted.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
27. It is to get up early that is hard for most people, not to sleep early.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
28. It was busy eating that she was.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
29. Although I'm just your teacher, it is whatever you do that has something to do with me, not just your grades!	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
30. It is a different world where you can't find me, no more the same.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
31. It was just money that you didn't have at that time; you still had your talent and lots of people who admired you!	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
32. It is that she already has a date with others that is her answer.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
33. We will never be apart, because it is forever that our love will last.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
34. It may be that they have created something that they can't control.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5
35. It was found that the more religious a person was, the more restrictive their attitudes were.	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	4	5

題目	非 常 無 法 接 受	一 點 無 法 接 受	可 接 受	非 常 可 接 受
36. It was last week that the superstar came to Taiwan.	1	2	3	5
37. It is in the basket that you should put your socks, not on the floor.	1	2	3	5
38. It is to play games in class that interests the students.	1	2	3	5
39. It was that he was sick that he said, not he was safe.	1	2	3	5
40. It s about time I give it back.	1	2	3	5
41. She never listens to others' opinions, so it was again that she made the same mistake.	1	2	3	5
42. It is something that I'd been looking for.	1	2	3	5
43. It is that you go to a doctor right now that I suggest, not that you just lie in bed worrying!	1	2	3	5
44. It was in Chicago that Lincoln received his first nomination for president.	1	2	3	5
45. It is recommended that the results of this study be replicated in teaching other participants.	1	2	3	5
46. It is Sam who made it possible for him to work, not himself at all!	1	2	3	5
47. It was whether she knew the truth that he wondered.	1	2	3	5
48. It is to see that is to believe, not just to hear from others.	1	2	3	5
49. It is sometimes when this doesn't happen.	1	2	3	5
50. It is right that you go to hell, not wrong.	1	2	3	5
51. It is today that we remember and honor the great man, Qu Yuan.	1	2	3	5
52. It was to Japan that I sent the package, not to Korea.	1	2	3	5
53. It is that she is honest that we all know.	1	2	3	5
54. It was in order to save herself that she had picked up the knife, not to hurt anyone else.	1	2	3	5
55. It is estimated that more than 15 percent of the people have symptoms of depression.	1	2	3	5

題目	非 常 無 法 接 受	1	2	3	一 點 可 接 受	4	非 常 可 接 受	5
56. Maybe it is tomorrow that they're leaving for America, not yesterday.	1	2	3	4	5			
57. It is because we find such happiness in our religion that we want to share it with others.	1	2	3	4	5			
58. For so long I didn't know that I had a sister; it was last year that I first met her.	1	2	3	4	5			
59. It was in order to fulfill their desires that they spent so much money in the department store.	1	2	3	4	5			
60. It is relatively easy to see you, not hard at all.	1	2	3	4	5			
61. It is you that I'm interested in, not your sister.	1	2	3	4	5			
62. It was after I'd had a lot of speech therapy that things really got better.	1	2	3	4	5			
63. It is water that the professor prefers to drink in class, not juice, I think.	1	2	3	4	5			
64. It is to find a good teacher that is never easy.	1	2	3	4	5			
65. It was apparent from her face that she was really upset.	1	2	3	4	5			
66. It is in order to improve the quality of life for their children that they work so hard every day.	1	2	3	4	5			
67. Actually we don't care where to travel at all; it is the time we get together that we're excited about.	1	2	3	4	5			
68. It was then that I met James.	1	2	3	4	5			
69. I didn't care if you bring any gift for my family; it was that you didn't come one time that annoyed me.	1	2	3	4	5			
70. It is difficult to incorrectly interpret ongoing activities in the movie.	1	2	3	4	5			

-----您已作答完畢，再次感謝您的協助與配合!-----

Appendix B

The Grammaticality Judgment Task of the Pilot Study

請依據句子的結構及句子的意思判斷其正確與否，正確請打O，錯誤請打X。

例如：() 1. It was the tall man that I spoke to yesterday. (O)為正確選項

() 2. He was yesterday that went to Japan. (X)為正確選項

- () 1. It is now that we have to start our meeting, ladies and gentlemen.
- () 2. Is unbelievable that his records are.
- () 3. It was Tom that caused all the trouble.
- () 4. Students need three A levels to get onto this university course.
- () 5. It was accidentally that my father bumped into my teacher in the coffee shop. They didn't expect to see each other.
- () 6. It is black tea that I like to drink, not green tea.
- () 7. A truck driver using his cell phone to call for help on the highway.
- () 8. It is cute that the waitress is, not pretty.
- () 9. Is my mom that is calling me now.
- () 10. It is under the table the cat is playing with a ball.
- () 11. Was then that the police officer walked toward me.
- () 12. It was the president that he married the daughter of.
- () 13. Is right in front of the main gate that the parents are waiting for their children, not across the street.
- () 14. It is hot that Taiwan is in summer.
- () 15. This candy is so hard that nobody can chew it.
- () 16. It was a boy broke the window, not a girl.
- () 17. Was a birthday card that my good friend gave me.
- () 18. It is during the holidays that my family would dine together. We never do so during the weekdays.
- () 19. It is heavy his bag is, not light at all.
- () 20. It is the arm my brother has hurt, not the leg.
- () 21. Fly in an airplane was a new experience for the little girl.
- () 22. It was the day before yesterday that we saw the supermodel on the street, not yesterday.
- () 23. It is under the tree that the old man is reading a novel.
- () 24. It is the nurse that is checking the patient, not the doctor.

Appendix C

The Discourse Completion Task of the Pilot Study

請依上下文的文意及畫底線的提示完成下列對話。

例如：

A: The college entrance exam is approaching, but I haven't prepared any subject to the best yet. What should I do...?

B: Don't give up!

A: You're right. Only by working hard till the last minute can I have no regret after the exam.

這題的答案可以是：

You should work hard till the last minute.

或

It is till the last minute that you should work hard.

等等。

1. A: Hey, I heard that you went to a concert last Saturday night.

B: Well, actually it's not last Saturday night.

A: Wow, you went to a concert **at Sunday night!** Then you must be very tired the next day when you went to work!

2. A: When will the superstar leave Taiwan?

B: _____

A: **Tomorrow?** So he only stays for two days. That's too short!

3. A: You should try to keep your clothes clean. It's a hard work for your mom to do the laundry for your family.

B: _____

A: Well, then you should also be grateful to **your father.**

4. A: Where did you go yesterday?

B: _____

A: I know the weather was quite hot. But it's a waste of time to **stay home all day long** on weekends!

5. A: The train tickets to Hualian are hard to get. Who did it?

B: _____

A: Cool. How did **your uncle** make it?

6. A: How did you like the Japanese food last night?
B: _____
A: Really? You changed your mind for **Korean food**? So you liked it?
7. A: All these cameras are yours? How much money after all did you spend on them?
B: _____
A: **Two hundred thousand dollars**?! That's almost six months of your salary!
8. A: Did you see John on Bob's wedding? I haven't met him since we graduated from high school.
B: _____
A: Really! So **John also got married**? I didn't know that!
9. A: Why didn't you go to a dental clinic but the emergency room for your toothache yesterday? It's that serious?
B: Not really that serious, but

A: I see. Whatever ache occurs **at midnight** would go to the hospital emergency room for help.
10. A: You went hiking with your family last weekend? Then you must have got up so early.
B: My family doesn't go hiking in the morning as most people would do.

A: But wouldn't it be too hot hiking **in the afternoon**?
11. A: I like so much the blue eyes of the singer singing on the television show.
B: _____
A: Let me get a closer look of them. You're right! They're **green**.
12. A: What impresses foreigner most when they visit Taiwan?
B: They always think that

A: Yup, compared with people in other countries, people in Taiwan are **really friendly and nice** to foreigners.

Appendix D

Results of the Pilot Study

Table (i) Results of the Grammaticality Judgment Task

Type	Question	Mean	Total
NP-Subject	Q3	0.71	0.73
	Q9	1.0	
	Q16	0.51	
	Q24	0.71	
NP-Object	Q6	0.51	0.60
	Q12	0.51	
	Q17	0.88	
	Q20	0.49	
AdjP	Q2	0.71	0.46
	Q8	0.49	
	Q14	0.14	
	Q19	0.51	
AdvP	Q1	0.71	0.61
	Q5	0	
	Q11	0.71	
	Q22	1.0	
PP	Q10	0.29	0.63
	Q13	0.51	
	Q18	1.0	
	Q23	0.71	

Table (ii) Results of the Discourse Completion Task

Type	Contrast	Question	Mean Score	Average Score
NP-Subject	+	Q3	1.19	1.10
	-	Q5	1.0	
NP-Object	+	Q6	1.25	1.19
	-	Q7	1.13	
AdjP	+	Q11	0.75	0.82
	-	Q12	0.88	
AdvP	+	Q1	1.25	1.22
	-	Q2	1.19	
PP	+	Q10	0.88	0.94
	-	Q9	1.0	

Appendix E

The Consent Form

參與研究同意書

說明

本研究旨在探討台灣英語學習者的學習狀況。在參與研究前請受試者先參閱以下敘述：

1. 本問卷僅供學術研究之用，所有收集到的問卷將只有研究者能夠觀看。
2. 本研究不會公開受試者相關資料，您的身分和作答將會受到嚴密保護，所有答案都會以匿名處理，請放心作答。
3. 本次測驗結果不會影響您的課堂成績。
4. 如果有關於此研究的問題，研究者非常樂意回答。

步驟

參與本研究的受試者須完成 70 題句子接受度判斷題。

我已閱讀完上述敘述，且同意接受施測，並將施測結果提供此研究使用。

姓名：_____（簽名） 日期：2014 年 2 月 ____ 日

Email：_____（僅供聯繫使用）

手機：_____（僅供聯繫使用）

非常感謝您的參與！

國立臺灣師範大學英語所語言學組

研究生：廖于涵

指導教授：陳純音教授

日期：中華民國 103 年 2 月

Appendix F

A Distribution of Participants' Ratings on the Negative 1 Category and the Negative 2 Category in the Acceptability Judgment Task

Rating	1		2		3		4		5	
	very unacceptable		unacceptable		a little acceptable		acceptable		very acceptable	
Category	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Negative 1	29	3.0	136	14.2	241	25.1	307	32.0	247	25.7
Negative 2	129	5.3	487	20.1	529	21.8	676	27.8	579	23.8