

In favor of the analysis of *you* biclausal constructions as “presentational clefts”

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In traditional accounts, clefts by definition include a relative clause (RC) which is non-restrictive, since it does not restrict the reference of its nominal head (as discussed in Lambrecht 2001). The ‘prototypical’ cleft is considered to be the *it*-cleft, and its equivalents across languages, which express a focus-background articulation. In Chinese, the *shì...de* construction is generally qualified as “cleft” even if it does not include a RC (Hole 2011). Chinese presentational constructions involving the existential verb *yǒu* 有 ‘have’ (1), on the other hand, are not classified as “clefts” since, they are not seen as including a RC (they lack RC marker *de* 的), and do not show either the ‘prototypical’ information-structure articulation of clefts, i.e. a focus-background articulation. Elaborating on Lambrecht (2001), in the recent literature (cf. Karssen et al. 2018), the traditional notion of “cleft” has however been extended to presentational clefts, that is, constructions that endorse the pragmatic function of introducing a new referent into the discourse by means of a biclausal syntactic structure.

- (1) 有人给你打电话。(From Li and Thompson 1981: 131, also reported in Lambrecht 2000)
yǒu rén gěi nǐ dǎ diànhuà. (From Li and Thompson 1981: 131, also reported in Lambrecht 2000)
HAVE person to 2SG make phone_call
‘Someone (lit. There’s someone who) telephoned you.’

Sentences such as (1) have been given various characterizations in the Chinese literature, e.g. *jiānyǔ* 兼语 ‘pivot (construction)’ (Zhu 1982); *liánwèi* 连谓 ‘serial verb (construction)’ (Lu 1999), etc. In a recent study, Zhou & Shen (2016) propose to use the term “post-nominal RC” previously adopted by Fang (2004) to characterize the post-pivot proposition (e.g. *gěi nǐ dǎ diànhuà* ‘[who] telephoned you’ in (1)), in order to recognize its subordinative property. According to Zhou & Shen (2016), the distinction between “pre-nominal” and “post-nominal” RCs lies in their discursive functions.

- (2) a. 路边有一个卖柿子的老头。 (characterizing property)
lùbiān yǒu yí ge [mài shìzi] de lǎotóu. (characterizing property)
road_side HAVE one CLF sell persimmon NMLZ old_man
‘There is an old man who sells persimmons on the road.’
b. 路边有一个老头卖柿子。 (accidental/episodic event property)
lùbiān yǒu yí ge lǎotóu [mài shìzi]. (accidental/episodic event property)
road_side HAVE one CLF old_man sell persimmon
‘On the road, there is an old man who is selling persimmons.’

In (2a), the RC marked by *de* 的, like a prototypical RC would be, is embedded in a matrix clause containing the existential verb *yǒu* 有 ‘have’. The RC is employed here to identify the referent of the nominal head. On the other hand, (2b) introduces a new entity into discourse (i.e. *yí ge lǎotóu* ‘an old man’) and presents additional information about this entity via the post-pivot proposition. Such observations, however, have not been corroborated by corpus data and are therefore in need of empirical verification.

In this study, we investigate the formal and functional properties of [(NP_{LOC}) + *yǒu* + NP_{INDEF} + VP] constructions (e.g. (1), (2b)) on the basis of actual sentences extracted from the CCL corpus. On the one hand, we argue that the post-pivot proposition has the properties of a non-restrictive (i.e. descriptive) relative clause: (i) it is subordinated in the matrix clause; (ii) the pivot NP is simultaneously the core argument of the existential verb and the verb of the post-pivot proposition; (iii) a syntactic gap is always found, given that the pivot NP can be considered as extracted from the post-pivot proposition; (iv) the post-pivot proposition provides additional information about the pivot NP. On the other hand, by contrasting the two forms [(NP_{LOC}) +

yǒu + VP + de + NP_{INDEF}] (e.g. (1a)) and [(NP_{LOC}) + *yǒu* + NP_{INDEF} + VP] (as in (1b)) we shed light on the specialized information-structure articulations they each convey. Finally, the identification of post-nominal RCs (without marker) in Chinese goes against the established characterization of Chinese as a language which lacks head-initial RCs, and has theoretical relevance for a general theory of RCs.

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