The Syntax of Existential Coda Constructions in Chinese

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The issue
Existential Coda Construction

a. 街上來了一個小孩沒穿鞋
b. 老王教過一個學生很頑皮

Pre-Coda Nominal  Coda
(PCN)

Three research issues

1. What is the syntactic relation between a coda and the rest of an ECC?
2. Why may a pre-coda nominal not have any definiteness marker, such as a demonstrative?
3. Why may a pre-coda nominal not be a bare noun?

Previous Studies


The constituency of ECCs

[DP [CP topic comment]]

The exact category of each major constituent of ECCs

The constituency of ECCs

街上来了一个小孩没穿鞋

PCN  Coda
 Constituency tests for grouping codas with PCNs

街上來了 [一個小孩 沒穿鞋]  
PCN  Coda

- A coordination test
- A binding test
- A ye shi ‘also be’ test
- The topic-comment relation between a PCN and a Coda

A coordination test

- He has a sister very fond of watching movies, and a brother very fond of playing basketball. (McCawley 1989)
- I know a Frenchman very good at playing the flute, and a German very good at playing the erhu.
- Baoyu hired a maid very lazy, and a gardener very hardworking.


A binding test

- Baoyu knows a person, and always criticizes himself (*j/k).
- Baoyu and his wife have two friends, and worry about their children (*j/k).

A ye shi ‘also be’ test  
(the background: Chinese)

- b. Baoyu sometimes reads ancient novels, and Daiyu also does (thus).

Intended: ‘Baoyu sometimes reads ancient novels and Daiyu sometimes read foreign novels.’
A ye shi ‘also be’ test (I)

a. 寶玉買了一件襯衫很大, 黛玉也是。

b. 寶玉買了一件襯衫很大, 黛玉也是很小。

Intended: ‘Baoyu bought a shirt, which was very big, and Daiyu bought a shirt, which is very small.’

A ye shi ‘also be’ test (II)

a. 寶玉吃了一個橘子沒有籽, 黛玉也是。

b. 寶玉吃了一個橘子沒有籽, 黛玉也是很甜。

Intended: ‘Baoyu ate an orange, which had no seeds, and Daiyu ate an orange, which was very sweet.’

The topic-comment relation between a PCN and a Coda

My claim that a PCN and a coda form a constituent is also supported by the fact that the two elements encode a topic-comment relation and thus must be adjacent to each other to form a clause.

• Codas must be predicative
• Codas must be adjacent to their topics

Codas must be predicative

a. 我看見了一位過去的朋友。
b. *我看見了一位朋友過去。

a. 系裡來了一個學生很用功。
b. *系裡來了一個學生用功。

Codas must be adjacent to their topics (I)

寶玉教過一個學生,很頑皮。

Roughly: ‘Baoyu taught a student, who was very naughty.’
Not: ‘Baoyu taught a student and Baoyu is very naughty.’

Codas must be adjacent to their topics (II)

他送給一個女孩兩條裙子很漂亮。

Roughly: ‘He gave a girl two skirts, which are very beautiful.’
Not: ‘He gave a girl two skirts and the girl is very beautiful.’
Our Answer to the 1st part of <i>: The constituency of ECCs

街上来了一個小孩[沒穿鞋]

PCN Coda

The category of each major constituent of an ECC

- The matrix verbs of ECCs c-select a nominal rather than a clause
  - 我認識一個小說家。 DP
  - *我認識寶玉野心勃勃。 CP
- *我認識一個小說家。 DP
- 我認為寶玉野心勃勃。 CP
- 我認識一個小說家野心勃勃。 DP
- *我認為一個小說家野心勃勃。 CP

The s-selection of the matrix verbs of ECCs seems to be satisfied by PCNs

a. 老張娶了一個女人很會做菜。

b. *老張娶了一個男人很會做菜。

Our Answer to <i>: the syntactic relation between a coda and the rest of an ECC

<ii> Why must a PCN be indefinite?

- 寶玉教過一個學生很頑皮。
- *寶玉教過那個學生很頑皮。
- 寶玉教過一個很頑皮的學生。
- 寶玉教過那個很頑皮的學生。
IHRC Quechua (Cole 1987)

a. Externally Headed Relative Clause (EHRCC)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{man buy-prf-3 horse(nom) good horse-evid be-past-3} \\
\text{The horse that the man bought was a good horse.}
\end{array}
\]

b. Internally Headed Relative Clause (IHRC)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{man horse-acc buy-prf-3 good horse-evid be-past-3} \\
\text{The horse that the man bought was a good horse.}
\end{array}
\]


Claim: The Basic Structure of ECCs

\[
[\text{DP} \text{IHRC}] \quad [\text{topic comment}]
\]

The properties shared by ECCs and IHRC constructions

- The absence of definiteness markers
- The scope of codas
- Codas are not non-restrictive adnominals

The absence of definiteness markers in IHRCs


Diegueño (Basilico 1996)

a. *wily-pu xat(-0) nyi-m ?tu-pu-c nyiLycis.
   rock-dem dog-obj that-comit I.hit-dem-sbj black.indeed

b. *wily xat(-0) nyi-m ?u-pu-c nyiLycis.
   rock dog-obj that-comit I.hit-dem-sbj black.indeed

The scope of codas

- 沙灘上躺著三個沒穿衣服的小孩 (EHRC)
- 沙灘上躺著三個小孩沒穿衣服 (ECC)

a. Jinho-nun [\text{three-nom thief cl} run.away-imprf-rel thief-acc three myeng capassta.]
   Cl caught (EHRC)
   ‘Jinho caught three (out of possibly many more) thieves who were running away.

b. Jinho-nun [[totwuk, i sey myeng tomangka-n]-un]
   Jinho-top three-nom thief cl run.away-imprf-rel capassta.
   caught (IHRC)

‘(Exactly) three thieves were running away and Jinho caught all of them.’
Codas are not non-restrictive adnominals

Semantically,
- 在人群中有一個人拿著照相機。
- 那本書有一頁是空白。

Pragmatically,
- 我吃過一種食物很苦。
- 寶玉認識一個人會說上海話。

IHRCs are also systematically different from non-restrictive RCs

Kim (2004: 13):
"while the content of a non-restrictive RC is more or less independent of the content of the matrix clause, ... the content of an IHRC bears a 'tighter' relation to the content of the matrix clause, to put in Yuki Kuroda's terms.'


Our answer to <ii>:
Why must a PCN be indefinite?

ECCs → IHRC constructions

街上了 [一個小孩][沒穿鞋] PCN Coda
Head of the IHRC

Our proposed structure of ECCs Hoshi's (1995) structure of IHRCs

(A) The issue of non-bare indefinites

A non-bare indefinite never moves:
- A PCN is not raised from a coda;
- A non-bare indefinite does not move in other contexts

(A) If the Head of a RC is an indefinite and not bare, it cannot move out of the RC;
(B) If the Head of a RC is a bare N, it must move out of the RC.
A PCN is not raised from a coda

- No reconstruction effect of Binding
  我拍了一張寶玉的照片他很喜歡。

- No reconstruction effect of idiom reading
  *我聽見了幾個牛寶玉很喜歡在學生面前吹。

- No island effect
  我教過一個學生因為我批評了系主任總找我的麻煩。

Non-bare indefinites do not move

*一本小說，我很喜歡。
*一本小說，我很喜歡。
*一些小說，我很喜歡。

A correlation

- *[一本小說，我很喜歡。]
- *[一本小說，我很喜歡。]
- *[一些小說，我很喜歡。]

Either of the following two:

- They remain inside of the RC (ECCs)
- They are base-generated out of the RC

(Aoun & Li 2003)

Conclusion for issue (A):
If the Head of a RC is a non-bare indefinite, it cannot move out of the RC.
The issue of bare nouns

Like other null elements, null Ds in Chinese need to be licensed.

Licensing of a null D in Chinese:
- by Agree with a classifier;
- by a N-to-D movement

Licensing of the external null D in RC Constructions

Conclusions

What is the syntactic relation between a coda and the rest of an ECC?
街上來了一個小孩沒有穿鞋]

Why may a pre-coda nominal not have any definiteness marker, such as a demonstrative?
*老王教過那個學生很頑皮
It is the Head of an IHRC.

Why may a pre-coda nominal not be a bare noun?
*老王教過學生很頑皮
The external null D is not licensed.