

THE DYNAMICS OF PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIPS IN SPOKEN CHINESE DISCOURSE

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Abstract. This research focuses on the introduction of anchored indefinite pivots in biclausal presentational constructions (e.g., *Qián xiē rìzì yǒu yī-ge kǎoshàng xuéxiào*. ‘A few days ago there was one [of us] who got admitted to a school.’). Building upon semi-spontaneous spoken Chinese corpus data, the study examines linguistic strategies for anchoring indefinite pivots, their distributional frequency, and correlations with the predicate types (individual-level vs. stage-level), focusing on the functional motivations underpinning these connections. In particular, it is argued that the prevalent pairing of individual-level predicates with anchored pivots arises from the necessity to create meaningful propositions, while also ensuring the sustained presence of the newly introduced entity in discourse. In contrast, constructions including stage-level predicates can accommodate unanchored pivots, since they express meaningful propositions independently. Findings also suggest that utterances featuring unanchored pivots and stage-level predicates are not indiscriminately thetic, and that defining the precise boundaries of theticity in biclausal constructions is problematic beyond prototypical cases. Rather than making arbitrary assessments on the informational partition allowed in biclausal constructions, this study adopts a function-driven perspective and analyzes the correlations between pivot (un)anchoring and predicate preference in the light of the discourse-pragmatic functions that the biclausal construction can convey: Topic-promoting, Quantifying, Contrastive.

Keywords: anchoring strategies, biclausal construction, individual-level coda, partitivity, predicate restriction, theticity.

1. INTRODUCTION

This contribution explores the discourse-functional properties of biclausal presentational constructions including the verb *yǒu* ‘have, there be’ in a semi-spontaneous spoken corpus of the Beijing variety of Mandarin Chinese (hereafter referred to as “Chinese” for the sake of simplicity). In the syntactical pattern targeted by this study, illustrated in (1), the noun phrase (NP) introduced by *yǒu* – i.e. the PIVOT – simultaneously acts as the subject of the predicate in the so-called CODA domain (see, e.g., McNally 2011, Bentley *et al.* 2013, 2015, Sarda and Lena 2023, on these terms). Importantly, this study considers biclausal constructions encompassing both uses of *yǒu*, existential and possessive (cf. Zhou and Shen 2016). Accordingly, *yǒu* is labeled EXISTENTIAL/POSSESSIVE PREDICATOR (EPP), following

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Chappell and Creissels (2019). As an illustration, (2a) and (2b) feature the same bare noun *rén* ‘person(s)’ in the pivotal position, with existential-*you* and possessive-*you* respectively.

- (1) [(NP) *yǒu* NP_{PIVOT} VP_{CODA}]
 (2) a. *Yǒu rén lái kàn nǐ.*
 EPP person come see 2SG
 ‘There is someone to see you.’ (from Chao 1968: 729)
 b. *Wǒ nàr yǒu rén děng.*
 1SG there EPP person wait
 (Speaker asks the bus driver to stop in a specific location) ‘I have someone waiting for me there.’ (BJKY corpus)

Mirroring the structure of existential-presentational sentences across languages, biclausal presentational constructions in Chinese exhibit the Definiteness Effect, understood as the tendency to avoid ‘strong’ NPs (in Milsark’s 1974 terms) in the pivotal position (Leonetti 2008, 2016, McNally 2011, Bentley 2013, Bentley *et al.* 2013, 2015, see Sarda and Lena 2023 for a recent review). However, in parallel with exceptions to this restriction observed in existential sentences across languages, prior research has noted that Chinese existential-presentational constructions can accommodate strong pivots, such as pronouns, proper names and nouns modified by a demonstrative determiner (Huang 1987, Li 1996, Cai 2000; Hu and Pan 2007; Xia 2009; Lena 2022).

Additionally, at least since Li’s (1996) work, the Definiteness Effect has been correlated with the so-called predicate restriction in Chinese. A semantic property generally associated with English existential sentences is that the coda can only express Stage-level (S-level) predicates but not Individual-level (I-level) predicates (Milsark 1979: 210–11)². By contrast, it has been noted (Li 1996: 177–78, Liu 2011) that Chinese biclausal *you*-constructions can include I-level predicates in the coda. However, only certain kinds of these constructions admit I-level predicates. Li (1996) considered that constructions including definite pivots must co-occur with S-level predicates, in which the pivot NP is VP-internal. These sentences denote an event instead of putting forward a new entity. By contrast, in constructions displaying the Definiteness Effect, no predicate restriction is observed, as the NP is VP-external. Recently, Kuo (2022) extended this line of inquiry and proposed that, while the unmarked *you*-construction isthetic and can be uttered out-of-the-blue (e.g. (3)), “contextualized” biclausal *you*-constructions are categorical in essence (e.g. (4)). As a consequence, they can include not only definite pivots but also specific-indefinite pivots, and both S-level and I-level predicates in the coda, accordingly to their Topic-Comment structure. By contrast,thetic constructions show a more restricted behavior, it is argued, as they can only include nonspecific-indefinite pivots and S-level predicates in the coda.

- (3) “Thetic” construction
Yǒu yí-ge xuésheng lái-le.
 EPP one-CL student come-PFV
 ‘There is a student coming.’

² As per the distinction introduced by Carlson (1977), I-level predicates convey enduring qualities (such as *be Chinese, love music*), whereas S-level predicates express temporary properties (*arrive, be overwhelmed*).

- (4) “Categorical” construction
 Yǒu yí-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng.
 EPP one-CL student very smart
 ‘There is one student who is smart.’

The main aim of this study is to verify the alleged correlation between pivot types and predicate types based on corpus data, and to discuss its rationale. The distinction between the two types of indefinite pivots (Shyu 2012, Kuo 2022) is addressed in terms of (UN)ANCHORED pivots (from Prince 1981).

The remaining of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents prior scholarship on Chinese biclausal presentational constructions, with a focus on the Definiteness Effect and the predicate restriction. Following this, Section 3 offers an overview of the corpus utilized in this study, alongside an explanation of the data extraction methodology. In Section 4, the data is presented, illustrating the distribution of existential vs. possessive-*you*, the types of nominals in the pivotal position, the predicate types in the coda, and the strategies for anchoring the pivot. The correlations between (un)anchored pivots and predicate types are examined. Section 5 analyzes findings within the framework of thetic/categorical opposition and openly discusses challenges in defining the boundaries of theticity within biclausal constructions. In Section 6, a comprehensive interpretation of the correlations identified is proposed in light of the discourse-pragmatic functions expressed by the biclausal construction. Section 6 concludes the paper and summarizes its main contributions.

2. DEFINITENESS EFFECT AND PREDICATE RESTRICTION IN CHINESE BICLAUSAL PRESENTATIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

At least since Lü’s ([1942] 1985: 101) formulation in terms of “presentational function” (*jièshào zuòyòng* in Chinese), it is acknowledged that the pattern in (1) serves to introduce new discourse entities, which in turn strongly tend to be encoded by indefinite NPs (Li and Thompson 1981: 612; LaPolla 1995; Hu and Pan 2007; Zhang 2009: 243, Zhou and Shen 2016, *inter alia*), that in Chinese mainly take the form of bare nouns (e.g. (2a–b)) or quantified nouns (e.g. (3–5)).

- (5) Yǒu yí-wei jǐngchá zǒu<le>guo-lai.
 EPP one-CL police.officer walk<PFV>pass-come
 Lit. ‘There was a policeman who came by (on foot).’ (adapted from Zhou and Shen 2016: 109)

Previous studies also pointed out that in some contexts biclausal constructions can include definite pivots (Huang 1987, Li 1996, Cai 2000, Hu and Pan 2007, Xia 2009, Lena 2022, 2023a). As noted earlier, a line of analysis started with Li (1996) that considered the interaction between the definiteness of the pivot and the type of predicates admitted in the coda position (the so-called “predicate restriction”). Li (1996) argued that two types of *you*-constructions should be identified, one introducing a new event (6a) and the other asserting the existence of an entity (6b). In turn, the former type does not show the Definiteness Effect,

but shows predicate restriction, because “the subject of an individual-level predicate should occur outside a VP and the subject of a S-level predicate occur inside a VP” (Li 1996: 182).

- (6) Li’s (1996) account
- a. [*you* [_{VP} NP_{DEF} VP_{SL/*IL}]] = New event
 - b. [*you* NP_{INDF}] [_{VP} SL/IL] = New entity

Considering their ability to include both S-level and I-level predicates, Liu (2011) came to the conclusion that Chinese biclausal constructions are categorical – and notthetic as their English counterparts. Expanding upon Ladusaw’s (1994) characterization of specific-indefinites as categorical, Shuyu (2012) broadened the analysis of the Definiteness Effect in Chinese biclausal constructions to encompass specific-indefinite pivots, in addition to definite ones. This yields two “noncategorical” *you*-construction categories alongside categorical ones:thetic and quantificational, with the latter including specific-indefinite pivots. Rejecting Liu’s (2011) analysis of biclausal constructions as indiscriminately categorical, Kuo (2022) recently revisited the interplay between pivot and VP properties, leading to the identification of two types of biclausal construction:thetic and categorical, the latter including specific indefinites and definites (de facto merging Shuyu’s 2012 quantificationals and categoricals). In turn, it is added, onlythetic constructions show predicate restriction in that I-level predicates are not admitted. A corollary is that I-level predicates select specific-indefinite pivots but not nonspecific-indefinite ones.

- (7) Kuo’s (2022) account
- a. [*you* [NP_{DEF / INDF_SPEC}] [VP_{SL/IL}]] = Categorical
 - b. [*you* [NP_{INDF_NONSPEC} VP_{SL/*IL}]] = Thetic

Additionally, Kuo (2022) equates possessive-*you* (including an existential coda) with existential-*you*. That is, whether introduced by a null element (8a), a human possessor (8b), or a locative NP (8c), constructions including specific indefinites are analyzed as “categorical” and thus can accommodate I-level predicates, such as *hěn cōngmíng* ‘be smart’.

- (8) a. Yǒu yí-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng.
EPP one-CL student very smart
‘There is a student who is smart.’ (=4)
- b. Wǒ yǒu yí-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng.
1SG EPP one-CL student very smart
‘I have a student who is smart.’
- c. Zhè-ge bān=shang yǒu yí-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng.
this-CL class=on EPP one-CL student very smart
‘There is a student who is smart in this class.’ (adapted from Kuo 2022)

In light of the above discussions, the following research questions can be formulated:

- Does corpus evidence confirm a correlation between pivot types (partitive indefinites vs. nonpartitive indefinites) and predicate types (S-level vs. I-level)?

- Do these correlations, if they exist, allow to distinguish betweenthetic and categorical constructions?
- In discourse-pragmatic terms, why do speakers use biclausal constructions to introduce partitive pivots in discourse?
- Do possessive *you*-constructions and existential *you*-constructions including partitive pivots serve a similar function in discourse?

Let us begin by describing the corpus used before moving on to the presentation of the data.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY: CORPUS AND METHOD

We draw upon the *Běijīng kǒuyǔ yǔliàokù* (BJKY) ‘Spoken Beijjngese corpus’, published by the Beijing Language and Culture University, as our data source. This corpus includes more than 1.7 million characters and originates from interviews with nearly 380 individuals residing in Beijing during the 1980s. These interviews, spanning an average of an hour each, were transcribed by linguist experts, capturing the nuances of spontaneous language use, including hesitations, repetitions, and false starts. We initiated a character search for 有 (*yǒu*), filtering out the unwanted sequences in (9a–e), aiming at reducing the number of results. Next, the raw data underwent automatic segmentation and grammatical categorization, enabling us to refine then our focus by filtering the results according to word classes. The constraint of allowing a maximum of four items between *yǒu* and the coda predicate entailed data limitations, excluding longer sequences. Manual scrutiny allowed the identification of instances that aligned with the chosen semantic criterion – i.e. the pivot acting as the subject of the coda predicate. The resultant corpus encompassed 265 relevant instances of biclausal *you*-constructions, offering a comprehensive view of their use in the semi-spontaneous spoken register. Nonetheless, this study is qualitative in essence, aiming at shedding light on the introduction of anchored referential entities in Chinese discourse, acknowledging the inherent scope and data limitations.

- (9) Sequences not considered:
- a. Negated variant *méi yǒu* [NEG EPP] ‘there be not, have not’³
 - b. The two forms *yǒude* and *yǒuxiē*, translating as ‘some’ (Cai 2004)
 - c. Comma between [*yǒu* NP_{pivot}] and [VP]_{coda}
 - d. Pronoun between [*yǒu* NP_{pivot}] and [VP]_{coda}
 - e. The sequence *zài/hái yǒu yí-ge (jiù) shì...* [again/also EPP one-CL then be] lit. ‘there’s also one that is...’ used as a connecting clause without an actual referring expression provided.

The data were coded according to the type of EPP (i.e. possessive-*you* vs. existential-*you*), the type of predicate (I-level vs. S-level), and the form of the pivot (e.g., bare nouns, quantified nouns, etc.) as well as its anchoring strategies. Throughout, only operationalizable concepts were employed to ensure objectivity. Notably, the partitive anchoring of the pivot was determined by the explicit mention of a discourse-old Set. Consequently, the informal

³ See Lena (2024c) for a recent discussion.

characterization of specific (i.e. partitive) indefinites as pertaining to situations in which “the speaker has the referent in mind” (critically discussed by von Heusinger 2002), adopted in Shuyu’s (2012) and Kuo’s (2022) analysis of Chinese biclausal constructions, is not retained in this work. Moreover, we did not obtain any biclausal construction with definite pivots such as proper names or nouns modified by the demonstrative determiner – although we did obtain constructions introducing definite NPs indirectly as indefinite pivots followed by an identificational sequence (e.g., (11) below). As a result, this study’s primary focus revolves around the analysis of indefinite pivots and their anchoring strategies, in relation to the predicate restriction and the overall communicative functions of the construction.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The EPP: Possessive *yǒu* vs. existential *yǒu* ‘have, there be’

To begin with, an asymmetry is observed as in the great majority of the cases (85.2%) of biclausal *you*-construction as defined in the present study (see the previous section for details), the EPP *yǒu* ‘have, there be’ has an existential use (Table 1). In such use, *yǒu* can be optionally preceded by a locative or time expression, often analyzed as its subject in the literature (see Chappell and Creissels 2019 for a critical account), but it cannot be governed by a possessor, that is, a personal pronoun or a NP denoting a human entity. Only in 12.4% of the cases, *yǒu* has a possessor subject. The label “undetermined” in Table 1 reflect the few cases (2.2%) where the status of *yǒu* cannot be assigned unambiguously. The prevalence of existential-*you* can be partly attributed to the high frequency of the sequence *yǒu rén* [EPP person]. In fact, *yǒu rén* constructions only marginally include possessive-*you*, as in (2b).

Table 1

The distribution of existential and possessive uses of the EPP yǒu in the corpus

EPP type	Count	%
Existential- <i>you</i>	226	85.2
Possessive- <i>you</i>	33	12.4
Undetermined	6	2.2
Total	265	100

Let us now consider the other elements appearing in the construction, i.e. the pivot and the coda predicate.

4.2. The pivot

As shown in Table 2, the pivot is most often a bare noun (row 1; 52.1%). Additionally, different kinds of quantified nominals are found, with a preference for the [*yí-ge* ‘one-CL’+N] sequence (row 2; 13.2%), and secondly [*jǐ-ge* ‘several-CL’+N] (row 4; 5.3%) over sequences including other kinds of numerals (e.g., *liǎng* ‘two’, *sān* ‘three’ etc.), marked as [Num-CL+N] in Table 1 (row 7; 2.6%). Importantly, in these contexts the classifier can be incorporated by

the numeral in the Beijing dialect (see Chirkova 2004, Liu 2004). The sequence *yí-ge* [one-CL] leading to *yí* at the second tone, where the incorporation of the classifier becomes apparent through tone sandhi (the forms labeled as [one.CL] and [one.CL+N] in the Table are concerned). This operation of classifier incorporation is particularly visible in the case of numerals other than ‘one’ such as *liǎ* [two.CL] (cf. with the analytic form *liǎng-ge* [two-CL]) and *sān* [three.CL] (cf. with *sān-ge* [three-CL]) that are also written with the distinct characters 俩 and 仨 respectively. Finally, and of particular concern for our analysis, in some cases the nominal head is omitted in the pivotal position, leaving only the numeral-classifier sequence (rows 3, 5, 8, 15), or the quantifier alone (rows 9, 11). The interpretation of these pivots has to be solved by accessing contextual information from outside the construction.

Table 2
The types of nominals occurring in the pivotal position

#	Pivot types	Example from the corpus	Count	%
1	BN (bare noun)	<i>rén</i> ‘person, people’; <i>péngyou</i> ‘friend’	138	52.1
2	one-CL+N	<i>yí-ge tóngxué</i> ‘a/one student’	35	13.2
3	one-CL	<i>yí-ge</i> ‘one [of them/us/...]’	15	5.7
4	several-CL+N	<i>jǐ-ge péngyou</i> ‘several friends’	14	5.3
5	several-CL	<i>jǐ-ge</i> ‘several [of them/us/...]’	13	4.9
6	one.CL+N	<i>yí gūniáng</i> ‘a girl’	12	4.5
7	Num-CL+N	<i>sì-ge háizi</i> ‘four kids’	7	2.6
8	Num.CL	<i>liǎ</i> ‘two [of them/us/...]’	4	1.5
9	many	<i>hěnduō</i> ‘many [of them/us/...]’	3	1.1
10	many+N	<i>hěnduō lǎoshī</i> ‘many professors’	3	1.1
11	so many	<i>hǎoduō</i> ‘so many [of them/us/...]’	3	1.1
12	N-men	<i>māma-men</i> ‘the mums’	2	0.75
13	CL+N	<i>ge rén</i> ‘a person’	2	0.75
15	Num-CL	<i>liǎng-ge</i> ‘two [of them/us/...]’	2	0.75
16	Q-CL+N	<i>hǎoxiē ge huáqiáo</i> ‘quite a few overseas Chinese’	2	0.75
17	other (n =1)		10	3.8
18	Total		265	100

Two types of headless pivots are observable in the corpus: those with anaphoric reference and those with cataphoric reference (Table 3). Anaphoric resolutions account for 14% of the total instances. In these cases, the numeral-classifier sequence (e.g., *yí-ge* [one-CL] or *yí* [one.CL], etc.) or the quantifier (e.g., *hěnduō* ‘many’) serves a pronominal function, requiring retrieval from a discourse-old antecedent, as in (10). The scenario differs in examples like (11), where no antecedent is available to determine the pivot’s reference. These constructions include the verb *jiào* (‘be called’) in the coda and the pivot *yí-ge* [one-CL]. The advantage of using these forms

lies in their ability to introduce definite NPs, typically proper names, indirectly as indefinite pivots (as discussed by Zhang 2006; also see Lena 2022).

- (10) Quantified headless pivot: anaphoric resolution
 Qián xiǎo rìzǐ yǒu yí-ge kǎoshàng xuéxiào (...).
 before few day EPP one-CL pass.the.entrance.test school
 ‘A few days ago there was one [of us] who got admitted to a school.’ (BJKY)
- (11) Quantified headless pivot: cataphoric resolution
 Wǒmen fùjìn yǒu yí-ge jiào Yǒngdìng jīxièchǎng (...).
 1PL nearby EPP one-CL be.called Yongding mechanical.factory
 ‘In our vicinity there is one [place] called Yongding Mechanical Factory.’ (BJKY)

Furthermore, Table 4 highlights an asymmetry among the group of pivotal bare nominals, as the bare noun *rén* alone appears in 102 instances, accounting for 38.5% of the total occurrences and a substantial 72.9% of all bare nouns. In comparison, the second most frequently occurring bare nouns, *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’ and *chē* ‘car’, are only found in four occurrences each.

Table 3

The types of nominals occurring in the pivotal position: Macro-categories

Pivot type	Count	%
BN	138	52.1
Quantified NP	125	47.2
Quantified headless NP (anaphoric)	37	14
Quantified headless NP (cataphoric)	6	2.3
Total	265	100

Table 4

The lexical nature of the pivotal bare nouns (n>1)

Pivot type	Count	% Subtotal BNs (n = 140)	% Grand total (N = 265)
<i>rén</i> ‘person, people’	102	72.9	38.5
<i>lǎoshī</i> ‘teacher’	4	2.9	1.5
<i>chē</i> ‘car’	4	2.9	1.5
<i>tóngxué</i> ‘classmate’	3	2.14	1.1
<i>kèrén</i> ‘guest’	3	2.14	1.1
<i>língdǎo</i> ‘boss’	2	1.43	0.75
other bare nouns (n=1)	27	19.3	10.2
Total	140	100	52.83

The current findings indicate that, with the exception of the *yǒu rén* [EPP person] sequence, quantified pivots are prevalent in the biclausal presentational constructions extracted from the corpus. Moreover, part of these quantified pivots serves a pronominal function. Prenominal pivots resolved anaphorically (14%) can be seen as the most visible instances of a Set-member relationship that links the pivot to a discourse-given referential group. A comprehensive search for the instantiation of such relationship throughout the dataset was conducted, as prior research has identified the specific (partitive) interpretation of the pivot as a sign of categorical construals.

4.3. Anchoring strategies

The explicit inclusion of the pivot's referent in a discourse-old Set is not a marginal phenomenon, as it occurs in 87 instances accounting for 32.7% of the total occurrences of biclausal *you*-constructions extracted from the corpus. When specifically considering quantified pivots, this frequency increases to 52%. Subsequently, the correlation between the two uses of *yǒu* (see Table 1) and the presence of partitive pivots was examined. Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of partitive pivots are found in constructions without a human possessor, i.e., with existential-*you*.

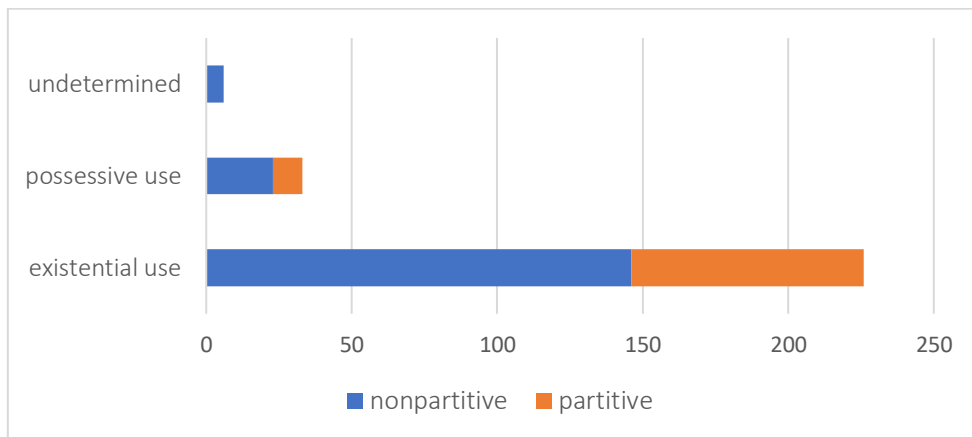


Figure 1.

Correlation between existential vs. possessive you and the inclusion of partitive pivots

The partitive anchoring of the pivot, nonetheless, can occur with both existential, as in (12), and possessive-*you*, as in (13). In the following extracts, the Sets to which the pivot's referents belong are marked in square brackets.

- (12) Partitive pivot (Existential-*you*)
 Lù=shang jiù kànjiàn, jiù [liǎng-ge qìchē]_{SET}, nàr dǐng<zhe>niúr.
 road=on so see so two-CL car there lock<DUR>horns
 Qíshí, yǒu yí-ge shāowēi tuìhòu yìdiǎnr, jiù néng cuòguo-qu.
 actually EPP one-CL slightly reverse a.little so can pass-go

Dànshì, jiù nàme dǐng-zhe.
 but so that.way lock-DUR
 ‘On the street, I saw that there were two cars, locked in a standoff over there, facing each other and fighting for the right of way. In fact, if there had been one of them backing up just a little, they could have passed each other. But they were just standing there, locked in position (refusing to give way).’ (BJKY)

- (13) Partitive pivot (Possessive-*you*)
 [Nǚ‘ér]_{SET1} wa, āi, yǒu liǎ jiéhūn de,
 daughter EMPH INT EPP two.CL marry SUB
 [érzi]_{SET2} ne, yě yǒu liǎ jiéhūn de,
 son EMPH also EPP two.CL marry SUB
 chúle wǒmen zhè-ge Kuíyì hái méi jiéhūn ne (...).
 except 1PL this-CL Kuiyi still NEG.EPP marry PAU
 ‘[As for my] daughters, ah, I have two [of them] who have married. [As for my] sons, I also have two [of them] who have married, except for our Kuiyi here, who hasn’t married yet (...).’ (BJKY)

The emerging pattern suggests that biclausal presentational constructions often introduce anchored discourse entities, that is, not brand-new (in Prince’s 1981 terms). The anchoring of the new referent is achieved through different, potentially overlapping, means. On the one hand, possessive-*you* establishes a general connection between two entities, often manifesting as a relationship of kinship or friendship. These pivots will be called hereafter “relational”. On the other hand, the instantiation of the Set-member relation represents a more specific case of inclusion. These pivots, as mentioned earlier, are called “partitive”.

The instantiation of such a Set-member relation is reflected in syntax, as it exhibits a number of formal specificities. Notably, it allows for the expression of headless nominals in the pivotal domain (such as *yí-ge* ‘one [of them]’), as mentioned earlier. Additionally, it also allows the occurrence of NPs denoting the Set in the pre-*you* position (as in (14–15)) – in contrast to (12–13), where the Set was retrieved from the cotext. It is essential to distinguish such a Set NP from both a Possessor and a Ground. Consider the following example. The pre-*you* NP *liǎng-ge chē* ‘two cars’ do not denote the location where the pivot is (the Ground role), nor can it be seen as a Possessor in any logical sense. The same applies to the pre-*you* NP *liǎng-ge nánhái* ‘two boys’ in (15).

- (14) [Liǎng-ge chē]_{SET} yǒu yí-ge chē zài zhōngdāngjiàn,
 two-CL car EPP one-CL car be.at middle
 yǒu yí chē zài qiánbianr, shì a.
 EPP one.CL car be.at front be EMPH
 ‘Two cars, there’s one car that is in the middle, there’s one car that is in the front, indeed.’ (BJKY)
- (15) Qíngkuàng hái suàn kěyǐ, [liǎng-ge nánhái]_{SET} yǒu yí-ge yǒu
 situation still consider OK two-CL boy EPP one-CL EPP
 péngyǒu le, hái méi gōngkāi.
 friend CRS still NEG.PFV make.public
 Yǒu yí-ge hái méi, méi yǒu péngyǒu.
 EPP one-CL still NEG.PFV NEG.PFV EPP friend

‘The situation is okay. Of the two boys, one of them has a girlfriend but hasn’t made it public yet. The other one doesn’t have a girlfriend. (Lit.: two boys, I have one [of them] who has a girlfriend, ... I have one [of them] who hasn’t a girlfriend yet.)’ (BJKY)

From a functional perspective, the examples above also illustrate that the expression of partitive pivots enables the articulation of Contrastive Focus (see Sect. 6.4).

4.5. The predicate: Individual-level vs. Stage-level

Let us now examine the predicate types in the coda, as proposed in prior research to distinguish *you*-constructions. Specifically, Kuo’s (2022) analysis distinguished categorical constructions with specific-indefinite pivots and both predicate types fromthetic constructions with nonspecific-indefinite pivots and S-level predicates exclusively. To empirically assess these claims using corpus data, we explored correlations between pivot anchoring, encompassing partitive and relational pivots, and predicate type (I-level/S-level). The results are shown in Figure 2.

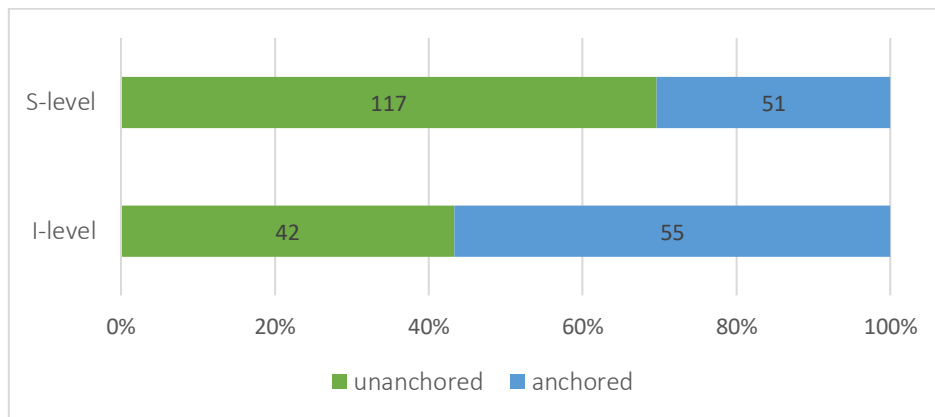


Figure 2.

Correlation between predicate and pivots types (anchored = relational + partitive)

Anchored pivots are relatively more frequent in co-occurrence with I-level predicates, but occur with both predicate types. Conversely, pivots in the case of I-level predicates can be (relationally and partitively) unanchored, potentially challenging Kuo’s (2022) proposal that I-level predicates only select anchored indefinites (‘specific’). Consequently, sentences with this unexpected mapping were examined closely. As a matter of fact, in most cases these pivots have a generic reference. Specifically, the pivotal position activates the generic-partitive type, pointing to a part of a generic whole (Lena 2023b, 2024a, 2024b, Lena and Liu, accepted). In essence, they still instantiate a Set-Member relation, albeit in a generic context.

Apart from generic-partitive pivots, in a few other instances ($n = 8$) of unanchored pivots co-occurring with I-level predicates, the EPP *yǒu* has a full locative meaning. In (16), the indefinite pivot *yì-tiáo dào* ‘a path’ is unanchored, i.e. neither relational nor partitive, and the coda predicate can only be interpreted as I-level (i.e., it cannot be coerced to the S-level interpretation “being temporarily one-meter-wide”).

- (16) Unanchored pivot + I-level predicate (locative)
 Tǐng zhǎi de, shàng-dào bàn shān-yāo de shíhòu ba,
 quite narrow SUB, go.up-arrive half mountain-waist SUB time EMPH
 yǒu yì-tiáo dào jiù yì mǐ duō kuān.
 EPP one-CL road just one meter more wide.
 ‘It was very narrow. When I was about halfway up the mountainside, right, there was a path that was a little over a meter wide.’ (BJKY)

Based on these findings, the notion of “anchoring” was extended to include generic-partitive and locative statements, and reevaluated the correlations with the predicate types. Accordingly, Figure 3 illustrates the different characterization of the pivot as:

- (i) **Partitive**, i.e. member of a discourse-given Set;
- (ii) **Relational**, linked to familiar entities by possessive-*you*;
- (iii) **Space located**, i.e. as a Figure spatially related to a Ground;
- (iv) **Generic-partitive**, i.e. member of a generic set of entities;
- (v) **Unanchored**, not falling into the other categories.

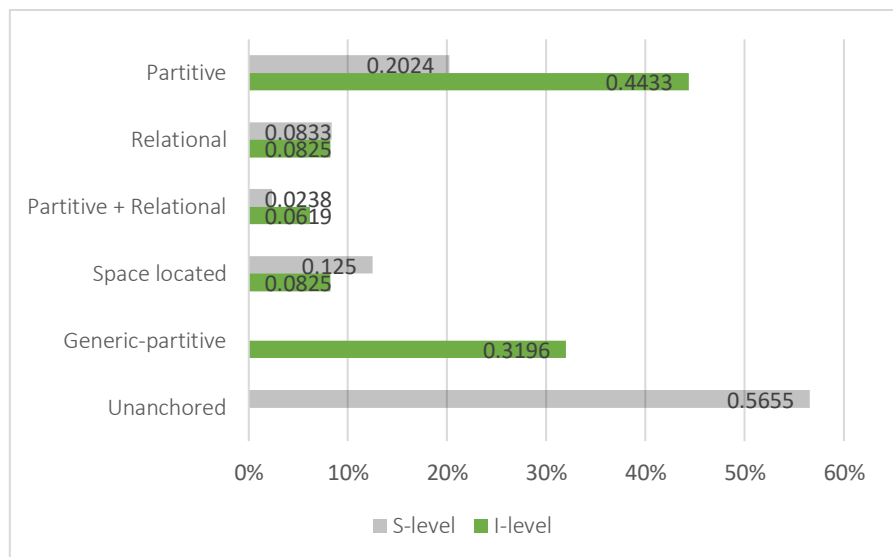


Figure 3.

Semantic characterization of the pivot in correlation with the types of coda predicates⁴

A discernible pattern emerges. The inclusion of partitive pivots is found in both constructions with I-level and S-level predicates, but it is noticeably prevalent in the case of I-level predicates. Relational pivots co-occur with both types of predicates in similar proportions. Spatially-located pivots appear mostly with S-level predicates, although, as

⁴ The data in Figure 3 is represented as a ratio of the number of occurrences to the total count for each group of constructions (I-level vs. S-level).

previously observed and somewhat unexpectedly, they can also occur with I-level predicates. This suggests that spatial grounding can also act as an anchor for I-level predication. Conversely, unanchored pivots are introduced as pivots-subjects of S-level predicates. Overall, these findings substantiate the notion that only S-level predicates possess the ability to independently locate the eventuality in space-time, resulting in meaningful propositions even without reliance on partitive, possessive, generic-partitive, and to a lesser extent, locative grounding. In contrast, constructions with I-level predicates need the help of these grounding strategies to be felicitous. Constructions featuring unanchored pivots and S-level predicates represent the prototypical presentational constructions wherein the meaning of the EPP is weakened to express pure discourse presence. Nevertheless, it is argued that such utterances are not indiscriminately thetic.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Evaluating the correlation between pivot anchoring and predicate restriction

Prior research has grouped constructions featuring possessive-*you* and existential coda together with categorical constructions featuring existential-*you* (Kuo 2022). The use of possessive-*you* offers a means to introduce a new entity by linking it to activated or inferable entities such as the speaker – i.e. elements belonging to what Erteschik-Shir (2007: 18) calls “permanently available topics”. However, the data analysis indicates that possessive-*you* is not the most frequent anchoring strategy – often limited to the expression of kinship or friendship relations – while other systematic means are prevalent, such as the inclusion of the pivot in a discourse-old Set. From both a structural and functional viewpoint, the two strategies are different although potentially co-occurring. The instantiation of the Set-member relation – hence observed with both possessive and existential-*you* – is reflected in syntax, allowing the expression of pronominal pivots and pre-*you* NPs denoting the Set to which the pivots belong. It will be shown later that, from a functional viewpoint, the expression of partitive pivots naturally enables the articulation of Quantifying and Contrastive Focus, while also facilitating Topic-promoting operations.

As for the issue of the predicate restriction, I-level predicates strongly tend to be associated with anchored pivots, because they cannot form meaningful propositions independently. Besides their co-occurrence with relational or partitive pivots, the generic-partitive and the locative anchoring were identified within the dataset. The data further confirms the notion that S-level predicates, by contrast, form meaningful propositions independently.

While the anticipated correlation between pivot types and predicate types has been fundamentally substantiated, the question remains whether these correlations can accurately distinguish between categorical and thetic constructions, as posited by earlier research (see Sect. 2). This question is further explored in the subsequent subsection.

5.2. The problematic boundaries of theticity

Thetic constructions are often described as presenting “some state of affairs as a nonpredicative unanalyzed whole” (Belligh and Crocco 2022) and characterized by an informational integration (Kuroda 1972; Rosengren 1997; Sasse 1987; see Belligh and

Crocco 2022 and Schultze-Berndt 2022 for recent discussions). Constructions with anchored pivots and I-level predicates (e.g. *Yǒu yī-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng* ‘there is one [of our] student who is smart’) are intuitively unfitted in these descriptions, as a predication base is clearly separate by the predication (Sasse 1987; Belligh and Crocco 2002: 5). Yet, categorizing these constructions as categorical (i.e., topic-comment) (cf. Liu 2011, Kuo 2022) might be misleading, given that preferred topics are (definite or generic) preverbal subjects in pronominal or null form (Lambrecht 2000: 614). Indefinite NPs in the object position, including the pivotal position, are rather foci (Beaver *et al.* 2006, Bentley 2013, Bentley *et al.* 2015).

For these reasons, we follow Zhou and Shen (2016) in treating all biclausal *you*-constructions as vehicles for introducing a focal element (i.e. the pivot) – although we deviate from their analysis in not considering all of them as topics-to-be. As focal constituents in Chinese strongly tend to be also unidentifiable, the pivot takes the anticipated form of an indefinite NP (Table 2). Assuming, at the very least, that the initial string of the biclausal construction isthetic (all-focus), the central concern then revolves around discerning the presence or absence of informational partition within this structure. This is where the anchoring of the pivot and the type and complexity of the predicate come into play. But this inquiry also demands to reevaluate the broader validity of analyzing biclausal constructions as possiblythetic in nature.

The inclusion of biclausal constructions in the inventory of strategies available across languages to expressthetic propositions goes back at least to Sasse’s (1987) category of “split structures”. Lambrecht’s (1986, 1987, 1994, 2000, 2001) extensive analysis of presentational cleft constructions in spoken French considered them as devices used to signal sentence-focus (orthetic) construals. While insisting (Lambrecht 2002: 195) that the overall meaning of the construction takes over that of individual predicates (with, e.g., I-level predicates denoting states being interpreted in context as denoting a change of state), Lambrecht (2000: 623) acknowledged that some predicates are more apt than others to appear in presentational constructions, due to a number of factors including their lexical meaning, monoargumentality, and nonagentivity of their subject. Wehr (2000) considered French biclausal constructions including transitive verbs with their objects as bipartite constructions that introduce a focused element simultaneously acting as the topic within the same clause⁵. Similarly, Schultze-Berndt (2022) recently excluded these constructions from her treatment ofthetic structures.

Returning to Chinese, constructed examples from prior studies opposed unaccusative verbs such as *lái* ‘come’ to adjectival predicates (e.g., *hěn cōngmíng* ‘be smart’) in the coda, to illustrate thethetic/categorical distinction in biclausal constructions (cf. (3–4)). While I-level predicates can reasonably be seen as triggering informational partition, a significant point of consideration lies in the diverse nature of S-level predicates, encompassing a heterogeneous group of VPs: unaccusative and unergative, dynamic and stative, monoargumental and pluriargumental verbs, etc. Although all S-level predicates ground the eventuality in the space-time, this characteristic alone cannot suffice to categorize a construction asthetic.

⁵ French is a language known to be particularly “liberal” (Creissels 2019) as the focushood of a constituent – independently from its activation state and related (in)definite marking – suffices in allowing its pivotal encoding in presentational constructions.

6. THE PROPOSAL: TOWARDS A FUNCTION-DRIVEN ACCOUNT

So far, our investigation has revealed that biclausal presentational constructions can include both anchored and unanchored pivots, and that pivots can be anchored in different ways. One strategy that is frequently used to this end involves explicitly linking it to a discourse-given Set, yielding a partitive interpretation. Furthermore, it has been shown that constructions featuring I-level predicates necessitate a sort of compensation to achieve meaningfulness. This compensation mainly takes the form of partitive pivots (linked to discourse-old sets) or generic-partitive pivots (linked to generic sets). By contrast, constructions including S-level predicates can accommodate unanchored pivots, since they are not dependent on the pivot to express meaningful propositions. Moreover, observations suggest that constructions featuring unanchored pivots and S-level predicates are not indiscriminately thetic, and that defining the precise boundaries of a thetic biclausal construction, beyond prototypical cases, is problematic. The pursuit of a discrete value resulting in the informational partition allowed may be overlooking the essence of the matter. Instead, the upcoming sections adopt a function-driven perspective to examine the correlations between the (un)anchoring of the pivot and the predicate preference (rather than restriction) in the light of the discourse-pragmatic functions that biclausal constructions can convey.

6.1. Event-reporting

The distinction between two subtypes of thetic construction dates back to Sasse (1987). The label “event-reporting” (Lambrecht 1988) originates from Sasse’s (1987) “event-central” thetic sentences, which differ from entity-central thetic sentences in that they assert the existence of an event without providing a prominent entity (Sasse 1987: 526). The distinction between entity-central and event-reporting constructions has been abandoned with regards to French biclausal constructions, primarily due to the absence of operationalizable criteria (Karssenberg 2018: 6). In contrast, this distinction remains applicable when examining Chinese data, relying on pivot quantification (LaPolla 1995, Lena 2020b). This is supported by previous research, which has consistently shown that Chinese bare nouns predominantly denote low-thematic entities (Sun 1988, LaPolla 1995, Li 2000).

Both possessive and existential-*you* can introduce Event-reporting propositions, as illustrated in the following examples. In these instances, the biclausal *you*-construction brings an event into the discourse, i.e., the ‘father dying’ or ‘customers coming’ events, in principle without establishing an autonomous discourse entity for transparent anaphoric reference. It is worth noting that both sentences are expressed in the irrealis modality, and the pivotal bare nouns are nonreferential – due to the interconnectedness between lack of factuality and lack of referentiality (Chafe 1994: 104)⁶.

⁶ Sasse (1987) stated that the event-reporting type of thetic constructions “fails to contain a referential NP, and thus fails to tell something about an entity” (1987: 526). The same correlation between the expression of event-reporting propositions and the inclusion of nonreferential or weakly referential NPs is also observed in Chinese presentational VS sentences (see the study based on the same BJKY corpus in Lena 2020a).

(19) Event-reporting (Possessive-*you*)

Cóng zánmen, wǒ zìjǐ jiēchù de yìxiē shìr a,
 from 1PL 1SG oneself encounter SUB few matter EMPH
 yǒu fùqīn sǐ a, huò qítā rén,
 EPP father die EMPH or other person
 zhè-ge zhígōng-men na bàn sāngshìr, dàduōshùr ne,
 this-CL employee-COL EMPH make funeral great.majority PAU
 jīběnshàng, shì ba, dōu shì huǒhuà.
 basically be EMPH all be cremation
 ‘From what we, or rather what I’ve personally come across, when you have your father die, or someone else, you know, for regular workers like us, well, most of the time you basically end up with a cremation instead of a proper funeral.’ (BJKY)

(20) Event-reporting (Existential-*you*)

Dǎsuàn jīntiān zhěnglǐ shénme, gànchéng shénme, ng,
 plan today organize what do what INT
 zuò yìxiàr jihuà.
 make a.little plan
 Ránhòu ne, ng, yǒu gùkè lái-le jiù jiēdài.
 then PAU INT EPP customer come-PFV then attend
 ‘(My daily work routine goes like this.) I plan what to organize today, get some tasks done, and make a bit of a plan. Then, when customers come, I attend [to them].’ (BJKY)

Event-reporting constructions include unanchored pivots, formally bare nouns, accompanied by predicates that fit the eventive semantics, i.e. a subclass of S-level predicates. The operation of entity-backgrounding is in direct contrast with the ability of quantified nouns to single out a referent. The use of bare nouns in these constructions tends to blur the distinctiveness of the entity engaged in the depicted event, leading to a more generalized focus. Conversely, quantified nouns highlight the entity, making it more prominent within the event. In what follows, it is argued that the quantification of the pivot is a necessary – albeit insufficient – condition for Topic-promoting.

6.2. Topic-promoting

Given the absence of indefinite articles in Chinese, the [num-CL] sequence, notably with the numeral *yī* ‘one’, serves as the closest equivalent (Chen 2004). This sequence individualizes a referent and fulfills the requirement for the Topic-promoting operation, as proposed by Li’s (2014) notion of “potential for foregrounding”. This Topic-promoting operation can be initiated by both existential and possessive-*you*, involving either I-level or S-level predicates:

(21) Topic-promoting (Existential-*you*; I-level coda)

Xià xiàngqí, a,
 play chess EMPH
 yǒu jǐ-ge tóngxué xià-de bú cuò.

EPP several-CL classmate play-COMP NEG bad
 Yǒushíhour, a, xiàng fàngjià le, méi shénme shìr
 sometimes EMPH like be.on.vacation CRS NEG.PFV some thing
tāmen yào yǒushíhour dào xuéxiào wánr lái (...).
 3PL will sometimes arrive school have.fun come
 ‘As for playing chess, there are some classmates who play quite well. Sometimes, like during holidays, when they have nothing to do, they would come to the school to hang out.’ (BJKY)

(22) Topic-promoting (Possessive-*you*; S-level coda)

Tā gèrén àirén ne, zhān diǎnr shǎzi,
 3SG personal partner PAU be.stained.with a.little fool
yǒu yí gūniáng jié<le>hūn le.
 EPP one.CL daughter marry<PFV> CRS
Tā zhè gūniáng jié<le>hūn le ne yòu huí-lai-le.
 3SG this daughter marry<PFV> CRS PAU again return-come-PFV
 Huí-lai zài zhèr niángriǎ zhù=zài zhèr le.
 return-come at here mother.and.daughter reside=at here CRS
 Kěshì zhè lǎo-Sòng ne, bùzěnme zhàogù tā.
 but this old-Song PAU not.really take.care.of 3SG
 Yīnwèi zhè lǎo-Sòng a, tā zhè àirén xiàng shǎzi sìde,
 because this old-Song EMPH 3SG this partner like fool like
tā gūniǎng yě shì ge shǎzi, yǒu zhème ge rén.
 3SG daughter also be CL fool EPP such CL person
 Lit. ‘As for him, his wife, you know, is a bit foolish. [They] had a daughter who got married, but then she came back. She returned and now lives here with her mother. However, this old Song doesn’t really take good care of her. You see, his wife is a bit of a fool, and his daughter is the same way. There are people like that.’ (BJKU)

As far as the anchoring of the pivot is concerned, the data shows that pivots in Topic-promoting constructions can be either anchored or unanchored. Nonetheless, anchored pivots are arguably the preferred choice. In (23), the new entity *yí-ge rén* ‘a person’ is introduced as anchored within an independent intonation unit (signaled by a comma after the pivot NP), with its attributes elaborated in the next unit through an I-level predication⁷. A regular chain of reference follows. In essence, these constructions explicitly prompt listeners to mentally store the relevant referent, to which new information is added in the ongoing discourse (see the file-card metaphor in Reinhart 1982; Vallduví and Engdahl 1996; Erteschik-Shir 2007; Krifka 2008). In contrast, prototypical Event-reporting constructions (e.g. (19–20)) exhibit a distinct pattern, in that they always lack an intonational break and, as mentioned earlier, include unanchored bare pivots and a subclass of S-level predicates.

⁷ Due to intonational breaks after the pivot, sentences such as (23) were excluded from the statistics (see Sect. 3).

- (23) Prototypical Topic-promoting
 [Wōmen=zhèr yǒu yí-ge rén], [míng jiào Yáng Héping].
 1PL=here EPP one-CL person name be.called Yang Heping
 Zhè-ge nǚde ya, shì Dàyouzhuāng de yí-ge nándiǎn.
 this-CL woman EMPH be Dayouzhuang SUB one-CL difficulty
 ‘We’ve got a person here named Yang Heping. This woman, you know, is quite a tough character from the Dayouzhuang neighborhood.’ (BJKY)

6.3. Quantifying function

As we recall from section 4.2, the pivot is represented by a headless NP necessitating an anaphoric resolution in 14% of the total instances, which also accounts for nearly one third of the quantified pivots. In (24), the sequence *yí-ge* [one-CL] selects an instance of the discourse-old Set *wōmen zhèr rén* ‘the people here, our community’. Due to the absence of the nominal head (cf. with *yí-ge rén* ‘one person’), the only element available for focus is the *yí-ge* sequence, i.e. the numerical quantity. Furthermore, in the example provided, the expression of a Quantifying focus coexists with the Topic-promoting function, enabling the speaker to elaborate on an episode concerning the newly introduced referent. In this sense, these constructions exploit the dual specificity of the [Numeral + Classifier] sequence, serving both as a quantifying element and a potential foregrounding device.

- (24) [+Quantifying] [+Topic-promoting]
 Existential-*you*; anchored pivot; S-level predicate
 [Wōmen zhèr rén]_{SET} (...)
 1PL here people
 Qián xiē rìzi yǒu yí-ge kǎoshàng xuéxiào
 before few day EPP one-CL pass.the.entrance.test school
 Kǎoshàng nà-ge qìchē zhìzàochǎng de,
 pass.the.entrance.test that-CL car factory SUB
 suǒyǐ tā dào nàr qù-le zhīhòu,
 so 3SG arrive there go-PFV after
 yí yuè cái èrshí lái kuài qián,
 one month only twenty around piece money
 bú dào sānshí kuài qián,
 not arrive thirty piece money
 suǒyǐ tā gēn zhèr bǐ jiù chà yuǎn le.
 so 3SG with here compare then lack far CRS
 ‘[Among] the people here... a few days ago there was one [of us] who got admitted to a school, he was admitted to a car manufacturing factory. Consequently, after going there, he’s only making about twenty yuan a month, not even thirty yuan. So, compared to what he used to earn here, the difference is significant.’ (BJKY) (=10)

While the Quantifying function of biclausal *you*-constructions is evident in such cases, it also extends beyond the inclusion of pronominal pivots. For instance, in following extract, the speaker first introduces his three kids into the conversation (i.e. the Set), and then resorts to the biclausal *you*-construction to specify a quantity (“two kids”), further characterized by

the coda predicate (“entered the party”). Moreover, the newly introduced entity is not subsequently mentioned; the conversation revolves around the general theme of parenting.

(25) **[+Quantifying] [-Topic-promoting]**

Suǒyǐ duì zǐnǚ jiàoyù de wèntí=shàng lái shuō ne,
so facing children education SUB problem=on come speak PAU
ng, zìjǐ bǐjiào yángé diǎnr.
INT oneself quite strict a.little

Xiànzài [wǒ zhè sān-ge hái zi]_{SET} a,
now 1SG this three-CL kid EMPH
yǒu liǎng-ge hái zi dōu rù dǎng le.
EPP two-CL kid all enter party CRS

Lit. ‘So, when it comes to the issue of educating children, I’m fairly strict myself. Currently, [out of] my three kids, I have two kids who have joined the Party.’ (BJKY)

In summary, while instances of co-expression patterns may arise where both Quantifying and Topic-promoting operations are observable, biclausal constructions can also be used exclusively to emphasize a specific quantity within a discourse-established set.

6.4. Contrastive function

The contrastive use of the biclausal *you*-construction directly stems from the partitive interpretation of the pivot. In the following extract, a pattern familiar from previous examples involves introducing a Set in the discourse, i.e. *tā mèimei* ‘his little sisters’, and then using the biclausal construction to specify a member of that Set, i.e. *yí dà mèimei* ‘one big little-sister’ (“the older one”). However, what characterizes such examples is that the newly introduced entity is explicitly contrasted with another member of the same Set, i.e. *xiǎo mèimei* ‘the little little-sister’ (“the younger one”).

(26) **[+Quantifying] [+Contrastive] [-Topic-promoting]**

Ng, tā dìdì zài wǒmen zhèr shàngxué.
INT 3SG younger.brother at 1PL here attend.school
[Tā mèimei]_{SET},
3SG young.sister

yǒu yí dà mèimei zài Kōngjūn Yùpéng xiǎoxué.
EPP one.CL big young.sister at Kongjun Yupeng elementary.school
Xiǎo mèimei zài wǒ=zhèr xiǎoxué shàngxué.
little young.sister at 1SG=here elementary.school attend.school

‘His little brother goes to school here. His little sisters, he has one older sister who is in the Air Force Yupeng Primary School. The little one goes to elementary school here.’ (BJKY)

When the discourse-old Set is presented as consisting of two elements, logically, the use of a *you*-construction cannot be solely attributed to a quantification operation. Consider the following example, which is the full extract of the sentence previously discussed in (17).

The speaker first introduces the Set *liǎng-ge jūwěihuì* ‘two neighborhood committees’ into the discourse. Then the two entities of which the Set is composed are presented in a pure relationship of contrast (“ $x_1 = \text{good}$, $x_2 = \text{bad}$ ”). Again, this articulation is not incompatible with the Topic-promoting function discussed above: the introduction of each discourse entity (“one neighborhood committee”) is followed by a section elaborating on its characteristics.

(27) [+Topic-promoting] [+Contrastive] [–Quantifying]

Nǐ bǐrúshuō, wǒ guǎn zhè [liǎng-ge jūwěihuì]_{SET} ba.
 2SG for.instance 1SG manage this two-CL neighborhood.committee EMPH
 Ng, dǐzi ne, yǒu yí-ge jūwěihuì bú cuò.
 INT base PAU EPP one-CL neighborhood.committee NEG bad
 Jiùshìshuō rényuán ya, bānzi, pèibèi-de dōu hěn,
 namely personnel EMPH group dispose-COMP all very
 dōu hěn qiáng, ng,
 all very strong INT
 jūwěihuì zhǔrèn ne yǒu wénhuà.
 neighborhood.committee director PAU EPP culture
 Xiàng zhèyàng de jūwěihuì ne,
 like such SUB neighborhood.committee PAU
 hǎo guǎnlǐ yìxiē. Yīnwèi bùzhì yíxiǎo shénme gōngzuò ne,
 good manage a.little because assign a.little what work PAU
 tāmen zìjǐ jiù gàn le.
 3PL oneself then do CRS
 Yǒu yí-ge jūwěihuì ne jiù chà.
 EPP one-CL neighborhood.committee PAU then bad
 Wǒ gāng yí qù de shíhòu a, jiù sān-ge rén,
 1SG just once go SUB moment EMPH then three-CL person
 zhè-ge jūwěihuì lǐtòu, nà-ge bā-xiàng jūmín gōngzuò,
 this-CL neighborhood.committee inside that-CL eight-CL resident work
 quán kào zhè sān-ge lǎotàitai gàn.
 whole lean.on this three-CL lady do
 Suǒyǐ ne, ng, gōngzuò ne jiù, jiù shòu diǎnr yǐngxiǎng.
 so PAU INT work PAU then then be.subjected.to little influence
 Lit. ‘For example, take the two neighborhood committees I’m in charge of. Well, there is one neighborhood committee that is quite good. The personnel, the team, the setup – they’re all strong. The director of the neighborhood committee is well-educated. Committees like this are easier to manage because they can take care of tasks on their own. There is one neighborhood committee that is not good. When I first arrived, there were only three people in that committee, and all the work for the eight-resident program was handled by these three elderly ladies. So, as a result, the work is somewhat affected.’ (BJKY)

In summary, the inclusion of anchored pivots of the partitive type inherently enables the articulation of Quantifying and Contrastive focus. While the contrasting of two entities based on their respective attributes, as seen in the preceding examples (26) and (27), generally

holds greater significance, it is worth noting that no predicate restriction *stricto sensu* is observed. Let us recall, in this respect, the example contrasting the episodic position (S-level) of two cars in (14).

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined biclausal presentational constructions in spoken Chinese, focusing on the interaction between pivots, predicates, and anchoring strategies in relation to the discourse functions these constructions convey. The correlation between (un)anchored pivot and predicate types, as proposed in prior studies, has been essentially confirmed. However, our analysis of corpus data highlights the need to differentiate between various anchoring strategies.

Uncontextualized sentences like *yǒu yí-ge xuésheng hěn cōngmíng* ('there is a student who is smart') are uninformative because I-level predicates are not meaningful in isolation, necessitating the anchoring of pivots. While the possessive-*you* construction links a new entity to activated or inferable entities, such as the speaker, another anchoring strategy often prevails: establishing an explicit Set-Member relationship between the pivot and a discourse-old group. The speaker first introduces a group of entities (e.g., "our community," "my kids," or "two cars seen in the street"), and then uses the biclausal construction to specify one or more items selected from this group.

This strategy serves three primary purposes: (i) introducing a new discourse entity by laying the foundation for a potential new topic (Topic-promoting); (ii) drawing attention to a meaningful quantity of a discourse-old Set (Quantifying); and (iii) setting apart the newly introduced entity from other members of the Set (Contrastive). Speakers can employ this construction to achieve any of these communicative goals individually, or all three goals may coexist simultaneously.

Observations indicate that utterances with unanchored pivots and S-level predicates are not uniformly thetic, and pinpointing the exact boundaries of theticity in biclausal constructions beyond prototypical cases is problematic. As constructional complexity increases, there is a gradual transition from thetic to categorical structures, though precisely identifying this shift remains elusive due to its context-dependent and incremental nature. Rather than making arbitrary assessments about the informational partitioning allowed in biclausal thetic constructions, this study proposes that the correlation between pivot anchoring and predicate selection can be understood in light of the functions these forms serve.

The approach taken in this work relies on natural spoken data and emphasizes extensive contextualization. Examining examples within their broader context allowed for the identification of systematic patterns that might otherwise remain unnoticed in sentence-level analysis. Future research would benefit from diverse and comprehensive dataset, and the inclusion of forms not covered in this study, particularly those featuring intonational breaks between the pivot and the coda. These structural variations may emerge as the preferred choice for introducing anchored pivots in Topic-promoting constructions, where the combination of anchored pivots and I-level predications establishes a more lasting presence for newly introduced topics within the discourse.

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