

# On the Syntactic Structure of the Presentational Amalgam Construction\*

Tetsuya MATSUYAMA

(Wakayama University)

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## Abstract

This paper concerns the syntactic structure of what Lambrecht (1988) has called the presentational amalgam construction (PAC) exemplified by *There's a woman lives in China*. We review Doherty's (1993) relative clause analysis of PAC which was recently supported by Haegeman et al. (2015), who argue that the underlined part *lives in China* is a relative clause. We identify several empirical problems with the analysis and show that these are accommodated under Harris and Vincent's (1980) "particle" analysis according to which the underlined part *lives in China* and the preceding NP *a woman* form a simple clause to which *there's* is adjoined as an existential "particle." Moreover, we discuss several problems with the "particle" analysis and demonstrate that the analysis is improved if we adopt a more articulated CP structure for the left periphery (Rizzi 1997). Specifically, we propose a syntactic structure for PAC in which the subject *a woman* moves from Spec-TP into Spec-FocusP to mark it as focused and *there's* houses TopP. We show that our analysis can account for a range of facts that are not captured under earlier analyses of PACs.

## 1. Introduction

In standard English, subject relative clauses do not allow their relative pronouns or complementizers to be omitted, as shown in the contrast (1a, b).

- (1) a. I know a man (who/that) she admires.  
b. I know a man \*(who/that) lives in China.

In conversation or in fiction, however, such omissions often occur when the matrix clauses have an existential *there* (Biber et al. 1999: 619). (2a, b) are actual utterances in conversation, while (2c, d) are utterances in quoted speech in fiction.

- (2) a. There's people *think he was murdered*.  
b. There's a lot of people *won't let you do it*.  
(Biber et al. 1999: 619)  
c. "...There's this handkerchief *doesn't belong to him*."  
(Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*)  
d. "Everywhere there's a computer *can benefit from this type of interaction*," he'd said.  
(COCA, FIC)

The italicized relatives without relative pronouns or complementizers in (2a-d), dubbed 'subject contact relatives (SCR)' by Jespersen (1961),<sup>1</sup> also occur in *it*-clefts and copular sentences like those in (3a, b).

- (3) a. It was our laughter stung him worst.  
b. Here's the one'll get it for you.  
(Doherty 1995: 156)

In this paper we confine ourselves to sentences like

(2a-d) that involve an existential *there*.<sup>2</sup>

Lambrecht (1988: 321) first discussed (2a-d) extensively and called them the presentational amalgam construction (PAC).<sup>3</sup> As the name indicates, the PAC consists of two clauses, each of which has one pragmatic function. The matrix clause with *there be* introduces a new referent in the discourse. The nominal designating this referent (*people* in (2a)), which we will refer to as the "antecedent" of the SCR, appears as a focus in a post-verbal position. The SCR (*think he was murdered*) makes a comment about the antecedent, which functions as a topic for the following SCR. Thus, *people* in (2a) functions as both a focus and a topic.

To account for the properties of PACs, four analyses have been proposed in the literature. First, the relative clause (RC) analysis (Doherty 1993) treats the SCR of a PAC as a variant of a restrictive relative. Second, the topic-comment (TC) analysis (Henry 1995, den Dikken 2005) considers the 'matrix' clause of the PAC (*there's people*) to be the topic of an articulated topic-comment structure, and the rest to be a "root" clause expressing the comment. Third, the juxtaposed analysis (Lambrecht 1988) takes the PAC as having a paratactic structure in which the matrix clause and the SCR are juxtaposed, with the antecedent shared

by both clauses. Finally, the “particle” analysis (Harris and Vincent 1980, Yasui 1987, Takaki 2010) treats the PAC as a “root” clause to which *there be* is attached as some kind of ‘existential particle.’ Recently, Haegeman et al (2015) have compared the first two critically and argued for the RC analysis on empirical grounds. Little attention has, however, been paid to the remaining two analyses.

Our main purpose of this paper is to evaluate the validity of the RC analysis of PACs that Hageman et al (2015) have taken to be adequate. A cursory examination of PACs reveals that the predictions that the analysis makes—(i) the SCR is a subordinate clause and (ii) the antecedent forms a constituent with the SCR—cannot be justified. It is also shown that these problems do not occur if we share with the “particle” analysis that the SCR is a “root” clause and that the analysis will be improved if we adopt the more articulated CP system pioneered by Rizzi (1997). Specifically, we will propose an alternative analysis of PACs which assumes that the “antecedent” of the SCR moves from Spec-TP to Spec-FocP (FocusP) to mark it as focused. This immediately captures the intuition that the “antecedent” of the SCR is simultaneously focal and topical.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the RC analysis, based on the literature and our corpus search. Section 3 develops an alternative analysis of PACs under the Split CP hypothesis. Section 4 compares Lambrecht’s analysis with ours and points out its empirical insufficiencies. Section 5 offers our conclusion to this paper.

## 2 . A Critique of the RC Analysis

This section evaluates the RC analysis of a PAC based on the literature and our corpus search.<sup>4</sup>

### 2 . 1 . The RC Analysis

Doherty (1993:163) argues that SCRs are restrictive relative clauses modifying antecedents to their left. He proposes that SCRs are bare IPs and do not involve movement of an element to Spec-CP.<sup>5</sup> The structure of a PAC like (2a) is schematically represented in (4).<sup>6</sup>

(4) [<sub>IP</sub> There’s [<sub>DP</sub> people [<sub>IP(=SCR)</sub> think he was murdered]]]  
Haegeman et al (2015) argue that unlike the TC analysis, the RC analysis makes two correct predictions about the syntax of SCRs: (i) SCRs

form a unit with their antecedents and (ii) SCRs are structurally subordinate to the matrix clauses. Evidence for (i) is demonstrated in the following sentence.

(5) There’s [one student lives in a hotel] and  
[another one who lives in a renovated railway  
station]. (Haegeman et al. 2015: 65)

In (5) the bracketed sequence consisting of the antecedent and the SCR is conjoined with the string composed of an antecedent and a regular relative clause, indicating that the antecedent plus the SCR form a constituency.

The subordinate nature of the SCR is borne out by the presence of an NPI in the SCR.

(6) There’s **no one** can do **anything** about it.  
(Haegeman et al. 2015: 65)

According to structure (4), the NPI **anything** in (6) is licensed by **no one** in the matrix since it is expected that **anything** in the SCR is within the c-command domain of **no one**.

### 2 . 2 . Some Problems

The arguments that Hageman et al present for Doherty’s analysis appear to be convincing, but they are not so conclusive as to support the constituency of the antecedent plus the SCR and the subordinate status of the SCR.

Let us first consider the constituency in question. As is often noted, the validity of coordination test like that in (5) is controversial for a diagnostic for a constituency. There are coordinations of non-constituent strings. For example, the bracketed strings in (7a, b), which many syntactic theories do not consider to be constituents, are coordinated.

(7) a. [Why does he]and[when does she]want to  
do that ?

b. Sam sent[me flowers]and[you chocolates].  
(Carnie et al. 2014: 609)

There is evidence that casts doubts on the constituency of the antecedent plus the SCR. As is well-known, parenthetical adverbials fail to intervene between antecedents and restrictive relative clauses (8).

(8)\*Tom cooked a dish, *as you know*, that I  
always enjoy. (McCawley 1982: 106)

In contrast, such intervention occurs in PACs, as observed by Doherty (1993: 157).

(9) There’s a couple above, *said George*, showed  
up there a short time back.

The contrast between (8) and (9) suggests that the

SCR and the antecedent do not form a unit so strongly as restrictive relative clauses and their antecedents.

The subordinate nature of the SCR is also called into question. It is a common assumption that subordinate clauses like relative clauses do not express an illocutionary force independently from their matrix. In *Sue asked if he was innocent*, for example, the interrogative subordinate clause *if he was innocent* does not carry an independent force, but is part of an assertion that the matrix clause expresses.

With this point in mind, examine the attested example (10), where *who's going to do it* expresses a question independently from the assertive matrix clause.

- (10) The idea is one thing, but then there's *who's going to do it*? (COCA, SPOK)

The availability of an independent interrogative force in the SCR weakens the subordinate status of SCR, but it also supports its root status.

Additional evidence for the non-subordinate status of SCR comes from tag-questions. It is generally assumed that “root” clauses whose propositions are asserted serve as targets for tag-questions (Hopper and Thompson 1973: 471). (11a) is ungrammatical because the tag is built on the subordinate clause, but if the matrix verb is a comment verb with the first person subject, the subordinate clause can serve as a host for a tag-question (11b). This is because comment verbs like *I suppose* are semantically bleached and therefore have lost the “root” status.

- (11) a. \*Gloria supposes acupuncture really works, doesn't it?  
 b. I suppose that acupuncture really works, doesn't it?

In these terms, observe (12)

- (12) There is some men go to church, {\*isn't there/ don't they}? (Takaki 2010: 2)

Forming a tag from *some men go to church* is possible, but not from *there is*. This indicates that the SCR is a “root” clause rather than a subordinate clause and that *there be* has lost the root status like comment clause verbs such as *I suppose*.

The discussion so far renders it difficult to argue for the constituency of the antecedent plus the SCR and the subordinate nature of SCR. In addition, Doherty's (1993: 156) central idea that SCRs are restrictive relatives is hardly maintained, as will be shown below. A close comparison of SCRs and

restrictive relatives shows a number of diverging properties between these two.

Restrictive relatives normally do not accompany proper nouns, pronouns, or genitive nominals, as shown in (13a-c), taken from Jackendoff (1977: 181).

- (13) a. \*John that came to dinner  
 b. \*He that came to dinner  
 c. \*John's book that you stole

Takaki (2010), however, attests SCR instances that accompany proper names (14) and pronouns (15). We can find SCRs with genitive nominals in the corpora (16).

- (14) “...There was *Lionel's* lifted eyebrow.” (BNC)

- (15) a... there 're *you* can do in a slightly different way than the way that they first appear... (BNC)

- b. Well er er there were *it* was big caverns that d' be underground. (BNC)

- (16) a. ...when I got to New Orleans, there was *my gentleman* got there before me. (COHA)

- b. There 's *Our Lady* appeared to us and you let yourself be pawed by some boy from the farm. (BNC)

These differences between SCRs and restrictive relatives indicate the need to distinguish between the two constructions, again weakening the analysis of SCRs as variants of restrictive relatives.

To summarize, the arguments so far lead to three conclusions. First, the intervention of parentheticals between the antecedent and the SCR indicates that the antecedent and the SCR are loosely combined. Second, the presence of an independent interrogative force in the SCR and the possibility of question tags being built on the SCR support the non-subordinate status of the SCR. Finally, the possibility of proper names, pronouns and genitive nominals to be accompanied by SCRs indicates that the SCRS are not relative clauses. These observations lead us to an alternative analysis of PACs.

### 3 . A Cartographic Analysis

This section proposes a more articulated structure for a PAC, which refines a “particle” analysis and is based on the cartographic analysis of the left periphery developed by Rizzi (1997).

#### 3 . 1 . A “Particle” Analysis

The “particle” analysis of PACs (Harris and

Vincent 1980, Yasui 1987) consists of two assumptions: (i) the SCR is a “root” clause and (ii) *there be* is some kind of “existential particle.”<sup>7</sup> One motivation for (i) comes from the fact that a PAC like (2a) is paraphrased by a simple sentence like *People think he was murdered* (Prince (1980: 247). The same holds for (2b-d). There are two arguments that support the assumption (ii). Consider what if the italicized SCRs are omitted from (2a, b) as shown in (17a, b).

- (17) a. \*There’s people.
- b. \*There’s a lot of people.

(17a, b) are almost non-sensical. For these to make sense, they need to be modified by the SCRs. This indicates that the propositional content of the *there*-clause is semantically empty and that it merely has a presentational function of “being there” (Lambrecht 1988:335). Moreover, the *there*-clause is syntactically defective as is shown by the fact that *be* lacks number agreement with its apparent subject (18).

- (18) a. There’s lots of people have tried to help him.
- b. There’s two cars have left already.

(Harris and Vincent 1980: 806)

Based on these observations, (2a) would be assigned a structure like that in (19).

- (19) [<sub>s</sub> there’s [<sub>s</sub> people [<sub>VP</sub> think he was murdered]]]

In (19) *people* and *think he was murdered* serve as subject and VP and form a simple clause to which *there’s* is adjoined. This structure can accommodate the problems that the RC analysis faced. First, the root nature of the SCR of a PAC is straightforwardly explained because the string, *people think he was murdered*, is no longer a relative clause but a simple clause composed of subject and VP. Thus, it comes as no surprise that “SCRs” accompany proper names, pronouns, or genitive nominals. Finally, the intervention of parentheticals between the “antecedent” and the “SCR” is a natural consequence of the analysis since such elements usually appear between subjects and VPs (*John, as you know, came later than Sue*).

The “particle” analysis is empirically more valid than the RC analysis, yet it still has some problems. First, it does not capture the intuition that the post-verbal subject is both focal and topical. Second, the structure cannot capture the fact that PACs display a *that*-trace effect (20a) and violations of the *wh*-island constraint (20b) as well as the Complex DP constraint (20c).

- (20) a. \*There’s a woman we think that will fall in love with John.  
(cf. There’s a woman we think will fall in love with John. )
- b. \*There’s a woman we wonder if will fall in love with John.
- c. \*There’s a woman we believe the rumor that will fall in love with John.

These effects are quite surprising because the structure (19) does not involve the movement of an operator that is standardly assumed to occur in the derivation of relative clauses.

### 3.2. An Alternative

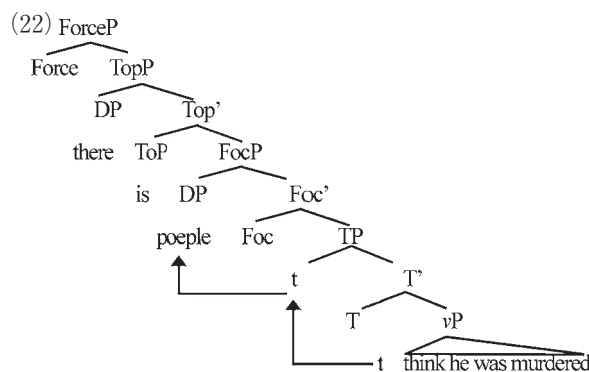
To improve the “particle” analysis, we adopt the Split CP hypothesis of the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997), which argues that CP is divided into separate peripheral projections as shown in a schematic representation like that in (21).

- (21) [<sub>ForceP</sub> Force [<sub>TopP</sub> Top [<sub>FocP</sub> Foc [<sub>FinP</sub> Fin ...

The topmost Force indicates the force of a sentence and the lowest Fin marks its finiteness. In between them appear Topic and Focus projections.

Based on the Split CP hypothesis, we propose that PACs contain at least three separate peripheral projections: a ForceP marking the force of the constructions as declarative in type, a TopP accommodating *there be*, and a FocP housing a focused subject.

On these assumptions, (2a) will have the following representation with the FinP projection and the internal structure of *vP* suppressed.



In (22), the subject *people* originates in Spec-*vP* and moves to Spec-TP due to the EPP requirement. It has been often noted that in subject-prominent languages like English, subjects are unmarked topics (Li and Thompson 1976). As Casilless-Suárez (2004: 37) argues, what is important for an element to be a default topic is being in Spec-TP rather than being subjects. For example, in a

locative inversion construction (*In the village live two women*), subjects in post-verbal position are understood not as topical, but as focal because they are assumed to not occupy Spec-TP. Given this, *people* is interpreted as topical when it occupies Spec-TP. Attracted by the Foc head bearing a Foc feature, the subject moves to Spec-FocP to mark it as focused. This captures the fact that the subject acts as both a focus and a topic.

One consequence of this analysis is that movement effects like those in (20a-c) follow from the movement of a focused subject to Spec-FocP. The ungrammaticalities of (20a-c) are attributed to the fact that movement of a focused subject violates whatever is responsible for the *that*-trace effect, the *Wh*-island constraint, and the complex DP constraint.

It is necessary to mention the role of *there be* before closing this section. As we saw in (17) and (18), the propositional content of *there be* is empty, and it is syntactically defective. Following Lambrecht (1988), we assume that *there be* merely has a pragmatic function of presenting a new discourse referent, more specifically, serving as “a reference point with respect to which the new discourse referent is anchored or located in the discourse (Lambrecht 1988: 334).” Similar kinds of expressions are attested in what look like SCRs in Belfast English. Observe the following sentences (adapted from Henry 1995: 132).

- (23) a. *You know John*, never shut his bake.
- b. *See my sister*, always wants anything going.

In (23a, b), the italicized expressions introduce the underlined nominals as new referents in the discourse. These nominals are identified with null subjects in the following SCRs. Henry proposes an analysis according to which the entire expression *you know John* occupies a topic position in the left periphery, while the SCR states something about a discourse new referent (*John*) within the topic clause. Refining Henry’s work in light of the articulated left periphery, den Dikken (2005: 698) assigns to a PAC the following representation.

- (24) [<sub>TOPP</sub> [<sub>S1</sub> *there’s one woman in our street*]<sub>TOP</sub> [<sub>S2</sub> *went to Spain last year*]].

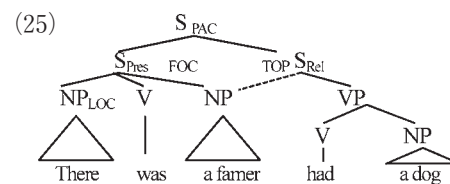
As Haegeman et al (2015) demonstrated, structure (24) predicts that the antecedent embedded in the S1 should not c-command into S2. However, this is not the case, as illustrated in (6) above. This problem, however, does not arise if *there’s* and the subject house TopP and FocP separately, as shown in (22)

above.

#### 4 . Lambrecht(1988)

This section compares Lambrecht’s analysis of PACs with our analysis in order to demonstrate our greater empirical success relative to Lambrecht.

Lambrecht (1988) argues that PACs consist of the matrix clause that presents a new discourse referent and the relative clause that comments on the referent. The two clauses, abbreviated as S<sub>Pres</sub> and S<sub>Rel</sub> respectively, are analyzed as being juxtaposed as shown in the representation (25). S<sub>Pres</sub> has no semantic subject-predicate division except for the presentational function of “being there” and therefore is taken to lack a VP node. S<sub>Rel</sub> expresses a semantically full-fledged proposition but lacks an empty subject position. The “empty” subject in S<sub>Rel</sub> is identified with the NP(*a farmer*) in S<sub>Pres</sub>. This identification is indicated by the dotted line.



The NP *a farmer* functions as a focus in S<sub>Pres</sub> and as a topic in S<sub>Rel</sub>; each role is represented by Foc and Top, respectively.

Although this analysis appears to be successful, it encounters some problems. First, it cannot account for the fact the NPI in the SCR is licensed by the negative in the matrix as in (6) above (repeated here as (26)).

- (26) There’s **no one** can do **anything** about it.

(Haegeman et al 2015: 65)

According to structure(25), the NPI **anything** should appear in the object position in S<sub>Rel</sub>, the position that cannot be c-commanded by **no one** in S<sub>Pres</sub>. In terms of the standard definition of c-command based on “the first-branching node,” S<sub>Pres</sub> should count as the first-branching node dominating **no one** but it does not dominate **anything**. It follows that **anything** is not c-commanded by **no one** under the standard definition of c-command. One might be tempted to suppose that the dotted line is a syntactic branch. If so, we should have two first-branching nodes dominating **no one**: S<sub>Pres</sub> and S<sub>Rel</sub>. This prevents **no one** from c-commanding **anything**.

Similarly, the analysis cannot establish the binding relation between an antecedent and a reflexive.

Observe(27), where the reflexive *herself* co-refers with the antecedent *a girl*.

(27) There's **a girl** has drowned **herself**. (COHA)  
For the same reason stated above, *a girl* cannot c-command *herself* under the standard definition of c-command, failing to establish the co-referential relation between the two.

In contrast, (6) can be straightforwardly explained in our analysis, which will assign (6) the following representation.

(28) [<sub>TOPP</sub> There's [<sub>FocP</sub> **no one** [<sub>TP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> can do **anything** about it]]].

In (28), *anything* is licensed by *no one* because the former is the c-command domain of the latter. A similar account is carried over to (27).

## 5 . Conclusion

In this paper, we demonstrated that the RC analysis of PACs that Haegeman et al(2015) argued for endures difficulties in accounting for the intervention of parentheticals between the antecedent and the SCR, the non-subordinate properties in the SCR, and the availability of proper names, pronouns, and genitive nominals accompanied by SCRs .

We also showed that these problems are accommodated under the “particle” analysis of viewing a SCR as a “root” clause. Despite its initial appeal, the “particle” analysis has failed to account for the intuition that the subject is simultaneously focal and topical and the fact that PACs exhibit violations of island constraints. Instead, we have proposed a cartographic analysis of PAC which assumes that *there's* houses TopP as a reference point and that the post-verbal subject moves from Spec-TP to Spec-FocP to mark it as focused. The subject's dual role of a focus and a topic straightforwardly follows from the proposed structure. The topic interpretation of the subject comes from it being Spec-TP (as an unmarked subject); the focus interpretation comes from the subject moving into Spec-FocP. The island effects result from movement of the subject into Spec-FocP.

Our analysis was compared with Lambrecht's (1988) analysis. The comparison revealed that Lambrecht's analysis fails to establish c-command relations between “antecedents” and the SCR, which can be correctly predicted under our proposed structure of PAC. The discussion in this paper lead us to conclude that our structure of PAC has more empirical support than Lambrecht's model and the

RC analysis.

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**Corpora**

British National Corpus Online (BNC)  
 Corpus of American Soap Opera (CASO)  
 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)  
 Corpus of Historical American English (COHA)  
 Now Corpus

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- \* This article is partially supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research(C) (No. 15K02604) of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.
  - 1 By the term SCR we do not mean that it is a true relative clause. We use it for the string of words composed of the SCR.
  - 2 (3a) is distinguished from sentences such as (2a-d) in that in (3a), the propositional content of the SCR is presupposed, whereas in each of (2a-d), it is asserted. (3 b) is understood as belonging to a class of (2a-d) because *here is* serves to present a new discourse referent like *there be*. We leave these constructions for future research.
  - 3 Lambrecht (1988: 319) recognizes another type of PAC whose matrix predicate is *have*, with the first person subject.
    - (i) I have a friend in the Bay Area is painter.
 We leave the *have*-type PAC for future research.
  - 4 The empirical scope of Doherty’s analysis goes beyond

PACs such as (2a-d) to SCRs in general. We must say that our criticism on the RC analysis will only hold for PACs, but not for SCRs such as (3a, b).

- 5 Evidence for the lack of a CP layer comes from the fact that like object contact relatives, SCRs do not allow left peripheral adverbials.
  - (i) The man \*(who) *years ago* Mary used to know well.  
 (Doherty 1993: 162)

In the corpus, however, we can attest to sentences in which SCRs allow left-peripheral adverbials. In (ii), *officially* and *definitely* are taken to be somewhere in the left-periphery because they precede aspectual auxiliaries many consider to belong to TP.

- (ii) a. However, there is nothing *officially* has been said about it. (Now Corpus)
- b. ...there was something *definitely* had been going on. (Now Corpus)
- 6 Here we will not go into the details of structure (4). See Henry (1995: 130-131) for its shortcomings.
- 7 Harris and Vincent (1980) do not explicate the notion of “particle.” Following Yasui (1987), Takaki (2010: 122) uses the term in the sense of “items that do not fit easily into syntactic and semantic generalizations about the language.” We will follow this definition here and leave the categorial status of *there be* for future research.

