

## **Chinese Clause Conjunction and Discourse Conjunction<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT.** *We study the conjunctions employing the method of discourse analysis. According to the scope of the conjunctions, we can divide them into two categories: clause conjunction and discourse conjunction. We conclude that all the conjunctions can connect clauses, but only causal, contrastive, additive, progressive, and coordinating conjunctions have discourse function, which are important to discourse comprehension. We propose that it is more appropriate to study connectives from the viewpoints of semantics, discourse and interpersonal levels.*

**Keywords:** conjunction; scope; complex sentence; discourse

1. **Introduction.** Conjunctions are words to connect clauses or sentences or paragraphs. According to the meaning of what the Chinese conjunctions connect, all the conjunctions can be divided to causal, contrastive, additive, progressive, hypothetical conjunctions, etc. Conjunctions are mainly used in complex sentence<sup>2</sup>, but the scope of some conjunctions is very large.

Chao(1968/1996), Xing(2001), Zhou(2002) argue that conjunctions should be studied in complex sentence, especially Chao (1968/1996 : P653) even thinks it is unnecessary to separate ‘suprasentential conjunctions’ from clause conjunctions, because ‘suprasentential conjunctions’ also have the usage of clause connection. But the question is, not all the conjunctions are suprasentential conjunctions and we can not infer their discourse functions from their usage in complex sentence. Nowadays, some experts concerned with discourse analysis express their interests in suprasentential conjunctions. Liao(1992), Fang (2000)&(2012), Xu(2007) , Zhang(2011) paid much attention to the suprasentential

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<sup>2</sup> The study in this article excludes conjunctions which can only connect words, such as “*he* (和), *gen* (跟), *yu* (与)”. These conjunctions mean ‘and’, but can’t connect clauses or sentences.

conjunctions. Liao(1992) listed all connective elements in the written genre which include suprasentential conjunctions. But it is a pity he didn't give a definite standard of judging what discourse connectives are and tell the relationship between clause conjunctions and discourse conjunctions. Fang (2000) & (2012) studied the usage of meaning-weakening conjunctions in Chinese oral language, analyzing their discourse functions.

Based on all the researches before, we believe that there are some differences between clause conjunction and discourse conjunctions. The function of one conjunction is concerned with its scope. We try to study conjunctions from the viewpoint of discourse, and discover the different functions in different levels.

**2. The definition of clause conjunction and discourse conjunction<sup>3</sup>.** The scope of conjunction refers to the parts which one conjunction domains. There are two types of conjunction scope if we distinguish adjacent joining and non- adjacent joining. Adjacent joining means the two connected parts are next to each other. Non- adjacent joining means there are some insertion elements between the two connected parts, maybe there is a long distance. To be specific, it includes 1) two connected parts are within one simple sentence; 2) two connected parts are two clauses within one complex sentence; 3) two connected parts are many clauses within one multiple complex sentence; 4) two connected parts are sentences or sentences groups. 5) two connected parts are paragraphs or turns. 6) two connected parts jump over paragraph or turns. We call No.1), No.2) and No.3) clause conjunction and No.4) , No.5) and No.6) discourse conjunction. Clause conjunction and discourse conjunction are a continuum and No.3) is a medium. Though the scope of No.3) is larger than one clause, but multiple clauses can't provide complete information. In written language, we use comma, not a full stop between these clauses and the meaning of conjunction is almost truth value. It can be shown as following:

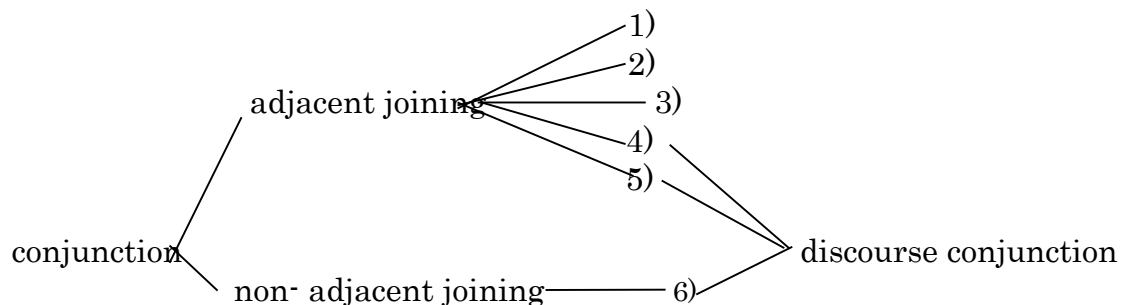


FIGURE 1. Classification of conjunction

Data shows the leap paragraph conjunction is the only real non- adjacent joining. We didn't find leap clause, leap sentence or leap sentence group. If the conjunction leaps turns, only because there appears feedback of speaker2 between two turns of speaker 1, so what

<sup>3</sup> The main classification standard of clause conjunction and discourse conjunction is scope. There is a related term called discourse markers. The differences between them are scope and semantics. Discourse markers have no truth value. Discourse conjunctions may have truth value, some of them are reduced to discourse markers.

the conjunction connects are still the speaker 1's words. But the feedback itself can't constitute a complete turn. If we don't concern feedback, the situation of leaping turns is the same as adjacent turn joining. Therefore, leap turn isn't counted as discourse conjunction. The following examples shows the different usages of '*danshi*(but)'. *Danshi* in example(1) connects two neighbor attributives, in example(2) connects two clauses, in example(3) *danshi* connects three clauses, the scope is larger than (1) and (2), but we can add *suiran* (although) at the beginning of sentence. (1), (2), (3) are clause conjunction, and (4), (5), (6) are examples of discourse conjunction, along with the enlarging of *danshi*'s scope, from clauses to paragraph and leaping over paragraph. Example(4) is composed of two sentences, and has two different topics, namely the viewpoint of responsible person in football association and the speech of participants, but these two topics can be summarized as one topic —the opinions of others. *Danshi* connects the author's ideas and other people's ideas. Usually, we need generalize the meaning of the connected parts. *Danshi* in Example (5) connects two different paragraphs. And in example (6), it connects paragraph one and paragraph three, paragraph two is a recalling of the life before, it is an insertion element.

(1) Duiyu sulv bu deng, *danshi* zuo hengding de yunsu zhixian  
 对于 速率 不 等、 **但是** 做 恒定 的 匀速 直线  
 For speed not equal, but do constant even speed straight line  
 ("For each inertia references whose speed is not equal but move in constant and even speed straight line.....")

Yundong de mei yi ge guanxing canzhaoxi eryan, .....  
 运动 的 每 一 个 惯性 参照物 而言.....  
 movement each inertia reference

(2) Xuexiao dangwei zhuyi le zhe jian shi, *danshi* meiyou caiqu cuoshi.  
 学校 单位 注意 了 这 件 事, **但是** 没有 采取 措施。  
 School unit notice this matter, *but* not take measure.  
 ("School noticed this matter, but didn't take any measure.")

(3) Minjianwu bu shi liuxing yishu, bu keneng wanquan touru  
 民族舞 不 是 流行 艺术 不 可能 完全 投入  
 Folk dance not popular art impossible totally invest in  
 ("Folk dance is not a popular art, so it is impossible to invest it in market totally and less likely to earn lots of money, but if we preserve our characteristics and improve quality, we must get more and more fixed audience.")

shichang, geng bu keneng zhuan shenme da qian, *danshi* zhiyao  
 市场 更 不 能 赚 什么 大 钱 **但是** 只要  
 market less likely earn some big money *but* provided  
 women baochi tese, tigao zhiliang, jiu yiding hui yingde  
 我们 保持 特色 提高 质量 就 一定 会 赢得  
 we preserve characteristic improve quality then must get

yuelaiyueduo de guding guanzhong.  
越来越多的 的 固定 观众  
more and more fixed audience

(4) ZhongGuo zuxie yi wei fuzeren zai hui shang tichu,.....  
中国 足协 一位 负责人 在 会 上 提出.....

Chinese football association one responsible person on the meeting propose  
("One responsible person of Chinese football association put forward on the meeting.....Some participants' speech also mention.....But, training is managed by the coach.....")

Yi xie yuhuizhe de fayan ye lunji .....  
一 些 与会者 的 发言 也 论及 .....

Some participants speech also mention

*Danshi*, xunlian shi you jiaolianyuan zhuchi de,.....

**但是**, 训练 是 有 教练员 主持 的.....

But, training is have coach manage

(5) ①.....Cong xin bing dao lao bing ji nian xialai, wo yi ge ren .....  
.....从 新 兵 到 老 兵 几 年 以 来, 我 一 个 人.....

.....from new soldier to old soldier several years, I myself

("Since I become a old soldier, myself.....")

②*Danshi*, rang ren geng juanlian de shi jundui li de na yi fen qing.

但是, 让 人 更 眷 恋 的 是 军 队 里 的 那 一 份 情。

But, let people more miss is army in that feeling

("But , what let me miss more is the emotion in the army")

(6) ①Zhishi zai wo you le gaofei shouru yihou, mama cai bu  
只是 在 我 有 了 稿 费 收 入 以 后 妈 妈 才 不

Only after I have author's remuneration mother then not

("Only until I had author's remuneration, mother didn't sell ice cream and groceries in the street.....")

shangjie mai binggui, mai zahuo le.....

上 街 卖 冰 棍、 卖 杂 货 了

in the street sell ice cream sell groceries

②Dao xianzai, wo de yan qian hai shichang fuxian chu naxie

到 现 在 我 的 眼 前 还 时 常 浮 现 出 那 些

("Up to now , there emerge those big and dense and anxious tears before my eyes.....")

To now my eyes before still often emerge out those

you da, you nong, you ji de leidi.....

又 大 又 浓 又 急 的 泪 滴.....

also big also dense also anxious tear

③*Danshi* hao jing bu chang, zuihou ji nian jingji shang

**但是** 好 景 不 长, 最 后 几 年 经 济 上

But good times not long, final several years economically

(“But good times didn’t last long, final several years her life is stable economically, but she was more concerned.”)

suran wending le, *keshi* ta geng caoxin le.  
虽然 稳定 了, 可是 她 更 操心 了。  
though stable, but she more concern.

3. **The range and characteristics of discourse conjunction.** We investigate 265 conjunctions in Zhou(2002), excluding the multi-category words and the conjunctions which can’t be used individually in Modern Chinese (for example *ran*然 which means but). The following discourse conjunctions are what we got.

TABLE 1. Discourse Connectives List

Sense	Connectives
Causal	<i>yinwei</i> (final position)因为 (后置连词) because, <i>suoyi</i> 所以 so, <i>yiner</i> 因而 therefore, <i>yinci</i> 因此 hence, <i>zhisuoyi</i> 之所以 because, <i>gu’er</i> 故而 therefore
Contrastive	<i>danshi</i> 但是 but, <i>keshi</i> 可是 but, <i>dan</i> 但 but, <i>buguo</i> 不过 but, <i>zhishi</i> 只是 but, <i>raner</i> 然而 but, <i>ranze</i> 然则 but
Additive	<i>name</i> 那么 then, <i>ranhou</i> 然后 then, <i>kejian</i> 可见 so, <i>yushi</i> 于是 then, <i>zongzhi</i> 总之 in short
Progressive	<i>erqie</i> 而且 but also, <i>conger</i> 从而 thus, <i>jiner</i> 进而 and then, <i>kuangjie</i> 况且 moreover, <i>hekuang</i> 何况 let alone
Juxtaposition	<i>bingqie</i> 并且 and, <i>buran</i> 不然 otherwise, <i>ciwai</i> 此外 besides, <i>fanzhi</i> 反之 on the contrary, <i>fouze</i> 否则 if not, <i>lingwai</i> 另外 in addition, <i>yaobu</i> 要不 otherwise, <i>yaoburan</i> 要不然 otherwise, <i>yifangmian</i> 一方面 on the one hand, <i>lingyifangmian</i> 另一方面 on the other hand

The characteristics of discourse conjunctions are the following:

Firstly ,all discourse conjunctions are carrying on the front. Xu(2007) propose a concept called ‘open-bear structure’. This kind of structure is composed of two parts, the first part named ‘carrying on the back’, and the latter part named ‘carrying on the front’. For example, connective ‘*bujin*’(not only) is the word ‘carrying on the back’, and ‘*erqie*’(but also) is the word ‘carrying on the front’. Example(7) is from Xu(2007), The subject ‘it’ means water.

(7) Ta *bujin* neng wei shengming de cunzai he yanxu  
它 不仅 能 为 生命 的 存在 和 延续

It not only can for life exist and continuation

(Water can not only give assurance for life’s existence and continuation, but also make water knife or water saw by utilizing the thrust of water flow spray with the help of high

and new technology which creates a miracle today.)

tigong	baozheng,	ergie,	zai	jintian	renmen	hai	neng
提供	保证,	而且,	在	今天	人们	还	能
provide	assure	but also	in	today	people	still	can
jiezhu	gaoxin	jishu	chuangzao	qiji---liyong	shuiliu		
借助	高新	技术	创造	奇迹 利用	水流		
depend on	high and new technology	create	miracle	utilize	water flow		
pengshe	de chongli,	zhicheng le	'shuidao'	huo jiao	'shuiju'.		
喷射	的 冲力,	制成	了 “水刀”	或 叫	“水锯”。		
spray	thrust	make	water knife	or	named	water saw	

According to Xu's(2007) definition, we find all the discourse connectives are the words 'carrying on the front', because the range of what need to carry on the front is very vague. What the connective connects is a complicated 'sense', even 'semantics plus pragmatics', or possibly only 'pragmatics'. Thus, the scope of 'carrying on the front' is over clause, even surpassing sentence. Though all the discourse connectives are 'carrying on the front', but they can be used at the beginning. That is to say, before these connectives may be full stop.

Secondly, seen from the semantic relation whom connectives connect, some relations don't use connectives. Only some connectives marking causal, contrastive, additive, progressive, juxtaposition have the function of discourse conjunction. But condition, purpose, hypothetical, concessive, choice connectives don't appear in discourse conjunction.

Thirdly, discourse connectives behave differently in different genres. In written language, the sense of discourse connectives is comparatively specific, we can find the semantic relation from complex sentence. But in oral language, discourse conjunctions mainly have interpersonal meaning or pragmatic meaning.

There is only one topic carried by the clause conjunction, so the content is simple and clear. Readers needn't summarize in order to understand the meaning. But to determinate discourse conjunctions is more complicated. We can judge from the following ways:

From the point view of scope, discourse conjunction connects sentence, segment, paragraph or leaping paragraph. That is, the scope is at least one whole sentence, and the direction is towards right. 'Carrying on the front' connectives involve in backward and forwards content, but judging scope type should be based on the content before, because the first part is necessary part for understanding. If the left scope is segment but the right scope is sentence, the whole conjunction belongs to segment conjunction.

From the viewpoint of sense, discourse conjunctions' scope are much larger, and they meet the strong requirement of discourse organization or pragmatics. Its value may be truth or non-truth. The semantics of discourse conjunctions mostly consistent with clause conjunction, but surely have discourse functions.

From the viewpoint of position, discourse conjunctions can occur before the subject. Discourse conjunctions in final position can appear at the beginning of the sentence, before it is a full stop, and after is a pause if you want. In written language, after the conjunction

could be a comma. When it is read, it could be prolonged or stressed.

Zhang(2007)shows some Chinese conjunctions can be used in pair. For example, ‘*budan* (不但) not only .....*erqie* (而且) but also’, ‘*suiran* (虽然) although .....*danshi* but’, ‘*yinwei* (因为) ..... *suoyi* (所以) ’; the fact is discourse conjunctions will not be in collocation any more. As far as the long segment is concerned, we can separate it at the discourse conjunction position, let the new paragraph begins with conjunction and plus comma after the conjunction.

Any conjunction can be clause conjunction, but only some of them can be discourse conjunction. One simple way to judge it is to see whether it could connect multi-complex sentence. Clause conjunction only can connect single layer sentence. Discourse conjunction can connect multi-complex sentence or even larger scope. Connectives such as ‘*Ruguo*(如果)if ’and ‘*suiran*(虽然)although’ can connect multi clauses, but these clauses are parallel and have only one layer. The two conditional clauses in example(8) are parallel, and (9) is the same, two concessive clauses which are governed by ‘*suiran*(虽然)although’ are parallel.

(8) *Ruguo*      *women*      *weibei*      *gongqiu*      *guilv*,      *renwei*      *de*  
**如果**      我们      违背      供求      规律      人为      地  
If      we      violate      supply and demand      rule      artificially  
(If we artificially violate supply and demand rule, and raise the prices of goods, we will have the consequence either .....or..... )  
*tigao*      *shangpin*      *jiage*,      *qi*      *houguo*      *yaome*.....*yaome*.....  
提高      商品      价格,      其      后果      要么      要么  
raise      goods      price      its      consequence      either      or

(9) *Ta*      *suiran*      *ziji*      *guo*      *rizi*      *jiejian*,      *congbu*      *mai*      *guizhong*  
她 **虽然**      自己      过      日子      节俭,      从不      买      贵重  
(Though she lives thriftily, never buys valuable clothing, but the whole family entertain guests enthusiastically and generously)  
She though herself live days thrifty      never      buy      valuable  
*yifu*,      *dan*      *yijiaren*      *daike*      *reqing*      *defang*.  
衣服, **但**      一家人      待客      热情      大方。  
clothing, but the whole family entertain guests enthusiastically      generously

**4. The importance of studying discourse conjunction.** By studying the function of discourse conjunction, we can find the organization of the whole text and the characteristics of Chinese text. Discourse conjunction is a way to distinguish the coherent from incoherent ones and readers can easily grasp the general meaning of the whole text through it. In discourse analysis, coherent and cohesion are two different concepts. Zhang (2001) points out that coherent expresses the relationship among clauses or above clause and connect the context and discourse. Hu (1994, P180) argues that as far as a meaningful and acceptable text is concerned, it shows different coherent in different layers, thus speakers intention go through the whole text, and reach the purpose of communication. But in some special

situation, coherent in language elements can't guarantee each communication intention succeed, on the other hand, coherent which is not very obvious can be cohesion. According to the previous study, we may know the difference between coherent and cohesion is the former one is the specific meaning relation, the latter one is the effect produced by the former one. By investigating the discourse conjunction, we can have the tool of analyzing coherent and the content cohesion from the largest range. The main function of clause conjunctions can help us understanding the logic meaning, and discourse conjunctions can help us comprehend the whole text.

**5. Conclusion: the levels of studying connectives.** In conclusion, connectives can be classified into two types, one can only connect clauses in complex sentence, the other can also connect larger scope such as paragraph. The scope of clause conjunction is adjacent language elements or clauses, its maximum context is single layer complex sentence. Discourse conjunction can connect large range, not only sentence, segment, but also paragraph or over paragraph. Causal, contrastive, additive, progressive, and coordinating discourse conjunction carrying on the front have the function of discourse conjunction, while condition, purpose, hypothetical, concessive, choice connectives have no discourse conjunction. The most important role of discourse conjunction is for discourse understanding.

According to our research, we think one should study connectives by three levels:

(a) complex sentence level. Investigate the distribution of connectives, conjunction of complex sentence and its relationship with main grammar element. In complex sentence level, connectives have specific logic meaning.

(b) discourse level. This level trends to structure study, and describe the sentence sequence which connectives appear and related hierarchy structure, the relationship between connectives and large discourse unit and topics. In order to explain how connectives influence discourse coherent, we need explain the usage of connectives from the viewpoint of discourse. The conjunction relationship in discourse level includes semantic relationship and topic relationship. Connectives in this level both have specific and reduced meaning.

(c) context level. This level is lean to communication study, such as analyzing the pragmatic function, communication intention, speech act etc. Connectives can cut topics, keep turns etc. Reduced connectives turn out at this level. The connectives have discourse function and interpersonal function. Discourse conjunction is concerned with semantics, scope, discourse structure, while interpersonal function is concerned with communication purpose.

The meaning of connectives in these three levels from concrete to reduced. The three levels correspond to three conjunction functions: (a) clause conjunction function, (b) discourse (text) conjunction function; (c) interpersonal function. Some connectives have all these three functions, but some conjunctions have only one or two functions. For the sake of simplicity, this article only considers clause conjunction and discourse conjunction. As for the interpersonal conjunction function, we will discuss it in another article.



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