

A Brief Analysis of the Abutment between the Speech Topic Marker and the Speech Discourse Marker in Chinese

--With *huashuo* as an Example

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ABSTRACT. This article, taking huashuo as an example, discusses the abutment between the speech topic marker and the speech discourse marker and their synchronic and diachronic features. Its main conclusions are as follows: first, huashuo has two virtual chains, one of which belongs to the diachronic plane and the other the synchronic plane. What's more, there's a junction between the two chains. Second, in the virtual chains, components indexed by huashuo become complicated gradually and evolve into the future tense and subjectivity. Third, the evolution from the topic marker to the discourse marker depends on the internal uniformity of the markers. At the same time, syntax, semantics and pragmatics conditions are necessary. This article aims to offer clues about the dynamic derivation, the basic cause and the inner mechanism in the research of the abutment between the speech topic marker and the speech discourse marker.

Keywords: Speech topic marker; Speech discourse marker; Abutment; Inner mechanism

1. **Introduction.** So far there has many a multitude of research in China on discourse markers and various speech discourse markers have been focused on intensively. (Zongjiang Li, 2010, 2014; Liping Sun, 2012; Caiying Yang, Chunli Zhao, 2013) Speech phrases are one of the main resources of topic markers (Danqing Liu, 2005). Moreover, the speech topic marker is very common in Chinese. Both the speech discourse marker and the speech topic marker evolve from speech phrases. In the process of grammaticalization, sometimes some speech phrases are able to function as discourse markers or topic markers,

which has been found by the predecessors (Xiaoling Li, 2008; Xiaobo Xu, 2011; Zhi Li, 2013). However, the phenomenon that the speech discourse marker is linked closely with the speech topic marker wasn't further analyzed by earlier researchers.¹ Thus, this article aims to discuss briefly their abutment with the analysis of *huashuo* as an example.

2. The Evolution of *huashuo* from the Topic Marker to the Discourse Marker.

Danqing Liu (2005) argued that the grammaticalization of some words could take place in succession. These words would become more and more delexical and possibly continue that way after becoming topic markers. It is true of the example of *huashuo*. The initial meaning of *huashuo* is 这本/回话说 [zheben/hui hua shuo] (the story said), but with *huashuo* evolving into a discourse marker, the notional meaning has disappeared.

2.1. ***Huashuo*₁ Acts as a Topic Marker.** In the initial stage, *huashuo* whose syntactic structure is S-V always appears in the starting position of the story-tellers scripts and there are the lexicalization and grammaticalization in its development, which have been discussed in detail (Chenlei Zhou, 2012).² Some descriptions for *huashuo* as topic markers are as follows:

***Huashuo*₁+NP.** When *huashuo*₁ is followed by the noun phrases, the topic marked by *huashuo*₁ is generally the argument of the verb in the comment, or the topic often provides the spatial-temporal framework and the narrative object to the following discourse.

(1)话说陈抟先生(话题), 表字图南, 别号扶摇子, 亳州真源人氏。(《喻世明言》)

Huashuo Chen Tuan xiansheng(huati), biaozi Tunan, biehao Fuyaozi, Bozhou Zhenyuan renshi.(Yushi Mingyan)

The story says that Mr Chen's secondary personal name is Tunan and his nickname is Fuyaozi, he comes from ZhenYuan in Bo State. (Clear Words to Illustrate the World)

***Huashuo*₁+S.** Liejiong Xu, Danqing Liu(2007) argued that the minor sentence could act as a topic ,what's more, the relationship between such a topic and comment was equivalent to that between the general topics and the general comments. *Huashuo*₁ can also guide the minor sentence which acts as a topic.

(2)话说国朝有一位官人(话题), 姓权, 名次卿, 表字文长.....(《二刻拍案惊奇》)

Huashuo guochao you yiwei guanren(huati),xing Quan,ming Ciqing,biaozi Wenchang...(Erke Paian Jingqi)

¹ The topic marker and the discourse marker in this article are defined in such a way: the topic markers are the common particles or morphemes in the Topic-Prominent Language and they can reflect the topic function. The discourse markers are words, phrases or minor sentences that are relatively syntax-independent and can contribute to indicate the direction of discourse understanding. What's more, the discourse markers won't change the truth conditional meaning of the sentence.

² There have been differences in the source of *huashuo* in the researches of Chenlei Zhou(2012) and Lingli Shi(2013).Zhou(2012) argues that *huashuo* has a subject-predicate structure initially and it's the short form of "zheben hua shuo" or "zhehui hua shuo".Shi(2013) argues that the early *huashuo* are two synonymous verbs used together.We are more supportive of the viewpoint of Chenlei Zhou(2012) in this article.

The story says that there is an Official in the present dynasty, whose last name is Quan, first name is Ciqing and secondary personal name is Wenchang...(Amazing Tales-Second Series)

Huashuo₁ in the Title. There are structures like *huashuo₁*+NP in Modern Chinese titles, such as “*huashuo* the Yangtze river”. *Huashuo* which functions as a topic marker always guides the topics in the sentence level, however, the scope of the topics guided by this kind of *huashuo* is throughout the whole discourse.

It is worth noting that *huashuo* as mentioned above is still the notional verb.

Topic Marker *Huashuo* in the Present Time. In the internet era, *huashuo* can also be used as a topic marker. However, this usage of *huashuo* which is different from the above usage has gone through the lexicalization and grammaticalization and its meaning is no longer “the story says”.

(3) 话说国庆外出疯玩之后 (话题), 一寝室人都没钱了, 又不敢问家里要, 集体节食。(百度, 2014-01-02)

Huashuo guoqing waichu fengwan zhihou(huati), yi qinshi ren dou meiqian le, you bugan xiang jiali yao, jiti jieshi. (Baidu, 2014-01-02)

In the National Day holidays, we had spent much money hanging out. After the holiday, all the people in our dormitory were out of pocket and dared not ask our parents for money and went on a diet collectively. (Baidu, January 2nd, 2014)

Xingna Qiang (2009) stated briefly that the topic marking methods could be divided into the lexical one and the grammatical one. The former has the lexical meaning and the latter the grammatical meaning. *Huashuo* can function as a topic marker both in ancient times and the internet age, but the properties of *huashuo* in these two eras are different. The lexical *huashuo* in the ancient times was labeled as *huashuo₁* and the grammatical *huashuo* in the internet age is labeled as *huashuo₁'* in the article. Even if *huashuo₁'* doesn't fully meet the standard of the grammatical topic marker, it has been close to the standard to a certain degree. We can call *huashuo₁'* “grammatical-to-be topic marker” in this article.

2.2. *Huashuo₂* between the Topic Marker and the Discourse Marker. During the times of story-tellers' scripts, in addition to guiding the minor sentence acting as a topic, *huashuo* could also guide the declarative sentences with the objective narrations. Such kind of *huashuo* is labeled as *huashuo₂* in this article.

(4) 话说徽州商人姓程名宰, 表字士贤, 是彼处渔村大姓。(《二刻拍案惊奇》)

Huashuo huizhou shangren xing Cheng ming Zai, biaozi Shixian, shi bichu yucun daxing. (Erke Paian Jingqi)

It's said that there is a businessman in Huizhou, whose last name is Cheng, first name is Zai and the secondary personal name is Shixian, and he lives in an influential and privileged family in that fishing village. (Amazing Tales- Second Series)

The tense of the declarative sentences marked by this kind of *huashuo* tends to be the

present or the past, and it is directly related to its objective narrative function. Yue Xuan (2011) held that the objective-narration marker *shuo* was derived from *huashuo* in the times of story-tellers scripts. We can also regard *huashuo*₂ as an objective-narration marker. In the process of developing into the objective-narration marker, *huashuo* finishes the lexicalization.

Nowadays, *huashuo* can function as an objective-narration marker too, but it's no longer a notional verb.

(5) 话说那个时期是女艺人集体剪短发的时间，代表就是孙俪。（中国日报网，2014-04-08）

Huashuo nage shiqi shi nvyiren jiti jian duanfa de shijian, daibiao jiushi sunli. (Zhongguo Ribao Wang, 2014-04-08)

It's said that female actresses cut their hair short collectively during that period and one representative was Li Sun. (China Daily Website, April 8th, 2014)

Huashuo acting as an objective-narration marker can also be divided into the lexical one and the grammatical-to-be one. The former in the times of story-tellers scripts could be labeled as *huashuo*₂ and the latter in the internet times as *huashuo*₂'.

2.3. *Huashuo*₃ Acts as a Discourse Marker. With the scripts for story-telling Zhu Gong Diao (a prevalent novel-writing style in the Song Dynasty in the 11th century) and Zhanghui novel (a traditional novel with each chapter headed by a couplet in Chinese) disappearing gradually, *huashuo* is accordingly fading away. However, *huashuo* which is different from the two former usages turns up again in the internet age. This kind of *huashuo* is commonly seen within the internet network, the newspapers and the dialogues between teenagers, whose functions are equivalent to the discourse marker. Such kind of *huashuo* in the internet times is labeled as *huashuo*₃ in this article.

(6) 小撒险些冻成冰雕，在工作人员的搀扶下才勉强爬下高台。话说小撒的御寒工具竟然是“刘德华同款”军大衣，……（腾讯，2014-2-13）

Xiaosa xianxie dongcheng bingdiao, zai gongzuorenyuan de chanfu xia cai mianqiang paxia gaotai. Huashuo Xiaosa de yuhan gongju jingran shi "Liu Dehua tongkuan" jundayi, ... (Tengxun, 2014-2-13)

Xiaosa was nearly frozen into the ice sculpture and with the help of the staff, he managed to get off the dais. It's amazing that Xiaosa's cold-proof equipment turned out to be the military coat same as Dehua Liu's. (Tencent, February 13th, 2014)

All of *huashuo* in Example 4, Example 5 and Example 6 have guided the declarative sentences, nonetheless, the discourse marked by *huashuo* in Example 4 or Example 5 are not with the subjective feelings and the discourse marked by *huashuo* in Example 6 is obviously with the subjective feelings.

What's more, the tense of *huashuo*₂ marking the declarative sentences in Chinese Vernacular Stories is often limited to the past and the present one. However, the tense of *huashuo*₃ marking the declarative sentences within the network information age is not strictly required, which can be past, present and future tense. In addition, *huashuo* is

initially a subject-predicate structure, and there is no phonetic interval between *huashuo* and the object. By contrast, when *huashuo* functions as a discourse marker, there can be a phonetic interval between *huashuo* and the object, which further confirms the grammaticalization of *huashuo*. It's the result of the re-analysis.

2.4. Brief Summary.

The Evolution of *Huashuo*. From the perspective of diachronic evolution, *huashuo* has undergone the following changes: the subject-predicate structure, the topic marker, the objective-narration marker and the discourse marker .

What's more, from the perspective of a synchronic level, *huashuo* has been equipped with the function of the topic marker, the objective-narration marker and the discourse marker simultaneously. However, the connotation of these markers are different in different phases: compared with *huashuo* which was lexical in the times of the story-tellers script, the meaning of *huashuo* as a topic marker in the internet age has weakened; as an objective-narration marker, *huashuo* can also be divided into the lexical one and the grammatical-to-be one. What calls for special attention is that the synchronic and the diachronic chains have converged on *huashuo* as a discourse marker. Combined with the above analysis, we can be aware of the evolution of *huashuo* in the synchronic and the diachronic level as the chart below shows:

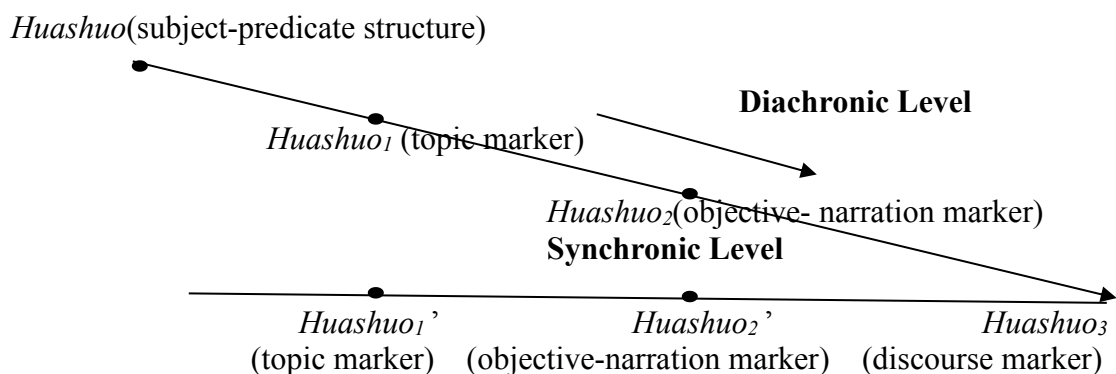


FIGURE 1. *HUASHUO* IN THE SYNCHRONIC AND THE DIACHRONIC LEVEL

In addition, the development of objects marked by *huashuo* is in this sequence:

- 1.The object: topic>topic >discourse>discourse
- 2.The syntax unit: NP>a minor sentence>a sentence of two or more clauses>a simple sentence/a sentence of two or more clauses
- 3.The subjectivity or the objectivity: the objectivity> the objectivity > the objectivity > the subjectivity
- 4.The tense: the past/present tense> the past/present tense > the past/present tense > the past/present/future tense.

***Huashuo* in the Synchronic Level.** Nowadays, from the perspective of synchronic level,

huashuo has been equipped with the function of the topic marker, the objective-narration marker and the discourse marker simultaneously. The number of the example sentences from the Modern Chinese corpus can amount to 883, which can reflect the approximate usage of *huashuo* at the moment.

TABLE 1. THE STATISTICAL TABLE ON THE USAGE OF *HUASHUO* AT THE PRESENT TIME

	<i>Huashuo</i> ₁ ' (Topic Marker)	<i>Huashuo</i> ₂ ' (Objective-narration Marker)	<i>Huashuo</i> ₃ (Discourse Marker)	All of <i>huashuo</i>
Amount	48	279	556	883
Proportion	5.44%	31.60%	62.97%	100%

The table above shows that the number of *huashuo* as a discourse marker is the largest, from which we can reach the conclusion that *huashuo* as a discourse marker has matured gradually.

3. The Convenient Conditions for the Evolution.

3.1. **The Syntactic Position.** Xiufang Dong (2007) summarized the original positions of the discourse marker before its evolution, and one of them was at the beginning of the minor sentence. Sixu Li (2012) pointed out that the position at the beginning of the sentence played a decisive role in the formation of the discourse marker. According to statistics from Chenlei Zhou (2012), when *huashuo* develops to guide minor sentences, it still turns frequently up at the beginning of the fiction and the paragraph. In the times of the story-tellers script, *huashuo* occupied the beginning of the whole novel or a chapter constantly, guiding the noun phrases to act as a topic, and the syntactic position of *huashuo* functioning as a topic marker was in the beginning of the sentence, which helped it evolve from a topic marker to a discourse marker.

3.2. **The Semantic Conditions.** In a conversation, the speaker is in the state of speaking. The speaker has announced the importance of the content marked by the speech phrases by employing the speech phrases to emphasize the speech act, which could draw the hearer's attention. Both of the topic marker and the discourse marker have the function to remind the hearer to pay attention: the former can remind the hearer of noticing the following topic and the latter the following discourse. Therefore, the semantic conditions of the speech phrases are helpful for them to act as these two kinds of markers.

3.3. **The Progressive Changes of the Marked Objects.** When *huashuo* guides a topic or an existential sentence, the spatial-temporal framework or the narrative object for the following discourse can be provided. From a topic to an existential sentence, the syntax unit marked by *huashuo* is changed from NP to the minor sentence. The change of the object of *huashuo* doesn't happen suddenly, it is due to the existential sentence as a transition, which belongs to the topic virtually. After the possession of the condition for guiding the

minor sentence, the types of sentences marked by *huashuo* begin to expand and are no longer limited to the existential sentence. The sentences marked by *huashuo* have become diversified and *huashuo* can guide two or more sentences. After being equipped with the syntactic convenience, the units marked by *huashuo* begin to acquire the modal meaning and evolve from the objectivity to the subjectivity.

3.4. The Uniformity of the Marked Objects. Youwei Shi (1995) argued that the topic was in fact the object of the statement in the dynamic process of communication. This property of the topic is helpful for *huashuo* to evolve from the topic marker to the objective-narration marker, because the objective narration guided by *huashuo*₂ is also the object of the statement. However, the difference is that the object marked by *huashuo*₁ belongs to old information and the object marked by *huashuo*₂ belongs to new information. From this perspective, *huashuo*₂ is consistent with *huashuo*₃.

4. The Internal Mechanism of the Evolution.

4.1. The Abutment of the Textual Function.

The Abutment of the Function of Discourse Opening. The discourse marked by *huashuo*₃ in the beginning of the text is used to convey the information the speaker is eager to express to draw the hearer's attention. The following discourse proceeds frequently around this information or is related to it. *Huashuo*₁ and *huashuo*₃ have something in common on this function, because when *huashuo*₁ marks a topic, the following discourse proceeds around or is related to it. However, the distinction is that *huashuo*₁ is at the sentence level and *huashuo*₃ at the textual level.

The Abutment of the Function of Topic's Shift and Continuance. *The Abutment of the Function of Topic's Shift.* *Huashuo*₃ in the middle of the text can function to shift the topic, and in the times of the story-tellers script, *huashuo*₂ in the middle of the text could be used to shift the topic too.

(7)黄飞虎点头无语，惟有咨嗟而已。话说徐芳治酒，与龙安吉贺功。次日又至周营搦战。（《封神演义》）

Huang Feihu diantou wuyu, weiyou zijie eryi. Huashuo Xu Fang zhijiu, yu Long Anji hegong. Ciri youzhi Zhouying nuozhan. (Fengshen Yanyi)

Feihu Huang nodded his head with nothing to say and just heaved a sigh. It's said that Fang Xu held banquets to celebrate with Anji Long. The next day, Fang Xu went to Cao's camp to challenge to battle. (The Legend of Deification)

The Abutment of the Function of Topic's Continuance. *Huashuo*₃ also has the function to continue the topic. When *huashuo*₃ acts as a discourse marker, the discourse "S₂" marked by *huashuo* may have a close relation with the previous discourse "S₁". The two discourses have a logical link by means of *huashuo*₂ and one of the manifestation is that "S₂" is the specification of "S₁" which is abstract. In this aspect, *huashuo*₂ has an analogous function with *huashuo*₃.

(8)明星利用自己的特权也是无独有偶的（抽象），话说潘粤明董洁结婚后不久，就

忙着准备婴儿用品（具体），为何？因为有医生说……（人民网，2014-3-11）

Mingxing liyong ziji de tequan ye shi wuduyouou de(chouxiang),huashuo Pan Yueming Dong Jie jiehun hou bujiu,jiu mangzhe zhunbei yinger yongpin(juti), weihe?Yinwei you yisheng shuo...(Renmin Wang,2014-3-11)

It happens that stars take advantage of their privilege (abstract). Soon after their marriage, Yueming Pan and Jie Dong were busy preparing for baby accessories (specific). Why? Because the doctor said that...(People's Net, March 11th, 2014)

Huashuo₂ in the times of the story-tellers script had an analogous function:

(9) 如今再表一段缘姻（抽象）。话说汴京开封府祥符县有一进士姓裴名习，字安卿，年登五十……（具体）（《初刻拍案惊奇》）

Rujin zai biao yiduan yinyuan(chouxiang).Huashuo Bianjing Kaifeng fu Xiangfu xian you yi jinshi xing Pei ming Xi,zi Anqing,niandeng wushi...(Chuke Paian Jingqi)

Now,let's talk about another marriage(abstract).It's said that there's a chin-shih in Xiangfu county of Kaifeng prefecture in Bianjing, whose surname is Pei, first name is Xi and alias is Anqing and he has been 50-years-old(specific)...(Amazing Tales-First Series)

In addition, *huashuo₃* which continues the topic can function in other ways. For example, *S₂* could be a question on the basis of *S₁*, *S₂* could be the reason of *S₁* or there could be transition between *S₁* and *S₂*.

4.2. The Abutment of the Interpersonal Function. The interpersonal function of *huashuo* includes not only the function to remind people of noticing or soften the tone, but also the following functions:

The Function of Evading Responsibility. The usage of *huashuo₃* can transfer information sources, which may diminish the speaker's responsibility to some degree. Such a function is derived from the original meaning of *huashuo*. Initially, *huashuo* was used to illustrate the information source -- the book. When *huashuo₃* is being used, superficially the following discourse of *huashuo₃* doesn't seem to be the information provided by the speaker even if the information comes exactly from the speaker. If the following discourse is not appropriate, the usage of *huashuo₃* can be conducive to evading responsibility of the speaker (Ziran He,2006).

(10) 照片中李冰冰素颜出镜，显得气色很好。而身旁的超市购物车里已经堆满了食物，尽显吃货本色。也有八卦的网友给女神留言问：“话说，谁给你拍的呀？”（新华网，2014-04-20）

Zhaopian zhong Li Bingbing suyan chujing,xiande qise henhao.Er pangbian de chaoshi gouwuche li yijing duiman le shiwu,jinxian chihuo bense.Yeyou bagua de wangyou gei nvshen liu yan wen:“Huashuo,shui gei ni paide ya?”(Xinhua Wang, 2014-04-20)

In the photograph, Bingbing Li was without make-up. There was a shopping trolley full of food beside her, which showed the true quality of the foodie thoroughly. Some gossip cyber citizen asked her: “Who took the pictures for you?”(Xinhua Net, April 20th,2014)

The Function of Objectification. The following discourse of *huashuo₃* can be equipped

with the subjectivity which is different from *huashuo* in the times of the story-tellers script. However, the objectivity of the following discourse of *huashuo* in the times of the story-tellers script might have the set effect in the cognition. Therefore, even if *huashuo* is marking a subjective object, sometimes, there is also an effect of making the subjective content objective. The function of objectification can be conducive to making the hearer more convinced of the discourse authenticity.

(11) 感谢亲爱的让我在这球场留下了能看的照片, 话说群里的图简直 (主观) 不忍直视! (百度, 2014-01-02)

Ganxie qinaide rang wo zai zhe qiuchang liuxia le nengkan de zhaopian, huashuo qunli de tu jianzhi(zhuguan)buren zhishi!(Baidu, 2014-01-02)

Darling, thank you for the decent photographs you have taken for me. The pictures in the chat group are pretty ugly (subjective). (Baidu, January 2nd,2014)

The Promotion of the Role of Speaker. *Huashuo*₃ is commonly seen in newspapers, microblogs and the dialogue between teenagers in which the relationship between authors and readers is usually equal. Initially, *huashuo* was an introductory particle to lead the following discourse in the traditional literature where the relationship between authors and readers was usually unequal. In the unequal relationship, the reader's status was low and the author's status was high.³ The speaker could build the relationship that's seemingly "high-low" by using *huashuo*₃, positioning himself or herself in a higher status, which could produce the effect of humor and make the speaker stand in a higher position to call the attention of the hearer.

(12) 森爹, 你好傻哦! 话说该让森萌萌练字了, 亮锅 (哥)。(新华财经, 2014-04-29)

Sendie,ni hao sha o! Huashuo gai rang Sen Mengmeng lianzile,liangguo(ge).(Xinhua Caijing, 2014-04-29)

Sen's dad ,you're so stupid!Liang,it's the time to let Sen Mengmeng practise calligraphy.(Xinhua Finance, April 29th,2014)

4.3. The Uniformity of the Function. This article has analyzed the textual function and the interpersonal function of *huashuo*₃. On the whole, all of these functions are the expression of the essential function of *huashuo*₃ that's to make information highlighted. Specifically speaking, the essential function plays an important role in making the hearer pay attention to the information that's marked by *huashuo*₃ in the discourse level. Firstly, from the perspective of the textual function when a discourse begins, the following discourse guided by *huashuo*₃ has the maximum information intensity in the whole text and the function of topic's shift and continuance can make the hearer's attention transfer to the marked object. Secondly, from the perspective of the interpersonal function, the speaker evading responsibility can lead the hearer to concentrate on the discourse rather than the

³ "Tao-carrying" belongs to the traditional ideas of Chinese Literature, where the authors are in a higher position and the readers are in a lower position. The relationship between the author and the reader was "upper-lower", which was common in the literary works in the times of the story-teller's script.

speaker themselves, the function of objectification can be conducive to making the information more authentic, which may attract more attention and the promotion of the role of the speaker can make the hearer concentrate on his discourse by improving his own position.

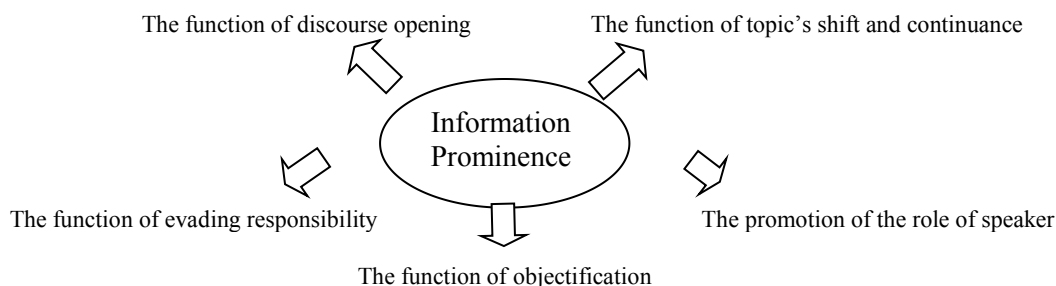


FIGURE 2. THE UNIFORMITY OF THE FUNCTION

No matter what the function of *huashuo*₃ is in the different discourses, they won't divorce from the essential function. The usage of each stage of *huashuo* has internal uniformity on this function. The topic marker is a formal linguistic means to highlight the topicality and the objective-narration marker is a formal linguistic means to lead the speaker's objective narration. Both of the topic marker and the objective-narration marker can help the listener to focus on the subsequent components. Although the function of *huashuo*₃ is more plentiful, it inherits and extends the function of *huashuo*₁ and *huashuo*₂.

5. Conclusion. This article concludes that the evolution from the topic marker to the discourse marker are as follows: firstly, *huashuo* has two different virtual chains. One of the chains belongs to the diachronic plane which is from the topic marker to the discourse marker, another belongs to the synchronic plane which includes the usage of both the topic marker and the discourse marker. What's more, the two virtual chains have a converging point in which *huashuo* is a discourse marker. Secondly, the virtual chain in the diachronic plane is metonymic. In the stage of the topic marker, *huashuo* is a notional verb. In the intermediate stage, the meaning of the content words and the function words coexist. In the stage of the discourse marker, there is only the meaning of the function words. Thirdly, the evolution from the topic marker to the discourse marker can't function without these four conveniences: the syntactic position, the semantic conditions, the progressive changes of the marked objects and the uniformity of the marked objects. Finally, the decisive factor of the abutment lies in the internal mechanism and that's the uniformity of the essential functions of the topic marker and the discourse marker. The connection between the topic marker and the discourse marker include the direct connection of the functions and the indirect connection through the intermediate link that's the objective-narration marker.

Lansheng Jiang (2004) pointed out that in the initial stage of function words, their functions were less and would be extended on the original basis through the adjustment of

the internal system. The speech words which can act as topic marker and discourse marker also follow this rule. In addition to *huashuo*, some speech phrases such as 要说[*yaoshuo*], 你就说[*ni jiushuo*] and 你比如说[*ni birushuo*] also have the usages of topic marker and discourse marker, and they have similar convenient conditions and similar internal mechanism.

What calls for special attention is that there are 341 example sentences from the newspaper searching system of the People's Net, occupying 38.6% of the total and there are 542 example sentences from the Baidu microblog and the Sina microblog, occupying 61.4% of the total. The users and the applicable style of *huashuo* as a discourse marker are still very limited and it remains to be seen whether *huashuo* as a discourse marker can become a regular member of the Modern Chinese.

At last, the article maintains that the following research can contribute to deepen our understanding on the abutment between the topic marker and the discourse marker: in the first place, the sources and the development of discourse marker are instrumental and many scholars have discussed these problems(Xiufang Dong, 2007; Zongjiang Li,2010;Yao Le,2011;Sixun Li,2012). Also, some speech topic markers can evolve into the speech discourse markers, but others can't. Moreover, there is not similar evolution in other kinds of topic markers. The motivation and mechanism of the distinction can explain the reasons of the abutment further. In the end, besides the discourse marker, the topic marker also has a close connection with the hypothesis maker or the example marker (Danqing Liu,2004;Lansheng Jiang,2004;Jinxia Li,2005;MeiFang,2006;Meilan Zhang, Siyu Chen,2006).We can see the understanding on the connection between the topic marker and the discourse marker more explicit by comparing different connections.

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