

# A Comparative Analysis of Discourse Markers in Dialogue and Monologue

## Taking "Yuan Zhuo Pai" and "Yi Xi" as Examples

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### ABSTRACT

This paper compares and analyzes the use of discourse markers in two structural forms of spoken language: dialogue and monologue. The corpus used in dialogue and monologue comes from "Yuan Zhuo Pai" and "Yi Xi" respectively. This article makes a comparative analysis of the number, type, and function of discourse markers used in the two structural formulas, and proves that discourse markers have certain stylistic characteristics in two structural formulas of spoken language.

**Keywords:** Discourse markers, Dialogue, Monologue.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse markers are a discourse component that can appear in both spoken and written styles, but commonly seen in spoken language. Discourse markers can be words, phrases, or minor sentence. They express procedural rather than conceptual meaning, and they have syntactic separability and functional meta pragmatics (Liu Liyan, 2005). Previous research has shown that the stylistic features of discourse markers have certain reference value for text classification (Meng Xiaoliang, Hou Min, 2009).

Since the 1980s, the study of discourse markers has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars at home and abroad, with foreign research starting earlier. In the past, foreign scholars' research on discourse markers mainly focused on three aspects: syntax-pragmatic research, semantic-pragmatic research, and cognition-pragmatic research (Ran Yongping 2000). The representatives of these three research fields are Schiffrin, Fraser and Blakemore. Schiffrin (1987) published the book *Discourse Markers*, which carefully analyzes the meaning of discourse markers commonly used in English in free conversation and their role in discourse coherence. Fraser (1990, 1999, 2009) believes that discourse markers are pragmatic categories extracted from syntactic categories such as

conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions. They have their own syntactic characteristics and rich pragmatic functions, and can be used to express the relationship between the current discourse and previous discourse. Blakemore (1987, 1992, 2002) studies how discourse markers play a role in pragmatic inference based on Sperber's and Wilson's relevance theory. She believes that discourse markers are the linguistic means by which the speaker guides and restricts the listener's understanding of the discourse.

The study of discourse markers in China started relatively late. After entering the 21st century, the number of discourse marker studies has gradually increased, the research field has also been expanding, and empirical research based on corpus has also been increasing. Ran Yongping (2000) first published "A Review of Pragmatic Research on Discourse Markers", arguing that the study of discourse markers has gradually shifted from "syntax/semantic-pragmatic" centered analysis to "pragmatic-cognition" research. Currently, domestic research on discourse markers has focused on the following four aspects: 1) Research on the pragmatic functions of discourse markers. There are studies that focus on all Chinese discourse markers, such as (Sun Liping, Fang Qingming, 2011), and those that focus on a particular category or individual discourse markers,

such as Ran Yongping (2004). 2) The study of the relationship between discourse markers and meta pragmatic awareness. For example, Wu Yaxin and Yu Guodong (2003) analyzed the relationship between discourse markers and meta pragmatics, and how different discourse markers reflect the speaker's meta pragmatic awareness. Liu Liyan (2005) summarized the three metapragmatic functions of discourse markers on the basis of metapragmatic awareness. 3) Research on discourse markers for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. For example, Fangmei (2013) comprehensively and carefully analyzed discourse markers in the teaching of Chinese as a second language. 4) The study of discourse markers in various genres. For example, the research on discourse markers in television interview discourse, news discourse, classroom discourse, and film and television lines has been involved.

In recent years, some scholars have paid attention to the stylistic characteristics and stylistic contrast of discourse markers. Li Xiuming (2007) analyzed the use of metadiscourse markers in three styles: legal style, treatise style, and prose style. Meng Xiaoliang and Hou Min (2009) conducted a quantitative analysis of the distribution of discourse markers in different corpora, confirming that a significant portion of discourse markers have obvious stylistic characteristics. Kan Minggang and Hou Min (2013) established a written language corpus and a spoken language corpus, and compared them from multiple perspectives, such as category set, coverage, and frequency, to analyze the similarities and differences in the use of the two structural discourse markers. However, the existing research on discourse markers mainly focuses on the macro level of written and spoken language from the perspective of styles, and rarely uses the method of comparative analysis to study the discourse markers used in the subdivision of structural formulas under styles. Therefore, this article intends to conduct a comparative study of the discourse markers used in the dialogic and monologic structural formulas in spoken language, with a view to attracting valuable insights and causing widespread discussion in the academic community.

The dialogue corpus used in this paper comes from the first, second and fourth episodes of the sixth season of the cultural talk show "Yuan Zhuo Pai", and the monologue corpus comes from six

speeches in "Yi Xi" speeches<sup>1</sup>. First, the corpus was transcribed using Feishu Miaoji, and then manually proofread to collate the 52275 character "Yuan Zhuo Pai" corpus and the 52761 character "Yi Xi" speech corpus. In this paper, we adopt the viewpoint of Liyan Liu (2005) and classify the functions of discourse markers into textual organizing function, contextual adaptation function and interpersonal interaction function, and each function is divided into different subcategories (see "Table 2"), and the discourse markers used in the two structural formulas are categorized and statistically analyzed in Excel. There is still controversy about the definition of discourse markers in the academic community. This article summarizes three basically uncontroversial standards from the research of predecessors: 1) discourse markers do not affect the truth value of propositions and express only procedural meaning, not conceptual meaning; 2) discourse markers are syntactically separable and syntactically dispensable; 3) discourse markers can promote the coherence of discourse units and can guide or constrain listeners' understanding of the content of discourse to a certain extent. This paper extracts discourse markers based on the above criteria. In this paper, we extract discourse markers based on the above criteria for statistical and analytical purposes.

## 2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE MARKERS USED IN TWO STRUCTURAL FORMULAS

The following section compares the discourse markers used in the two structural formulas in terms of number, type, function, frequency of use, and multifunctional situation.

### 2.1 *Comparison of the Number and Types of Discourse Markers Used in the Two Structural Formulas*

In terms of the number of instances, the monologue uses 170 discourse tokens and the dialogue uses 554 discourse tokens. The number of instances of discourse markers used in dialogues is about 3.26 times more than the number of instances of discourse markers used in monologues in a similar volume.

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1. The six presentations are: "What is Science", "The Truth About Cancer", "How to Face Love in the Golden Age of Singleness", "Urban Stalker", "Why We Married", "Seriously bullshit".

There are significant differences in the types of discourse markers extracted. Through statistics and comparison, it can be concluded that the total set intersection and two dedicated sets of discourse markers for the two structural formulas are used. The overall set is shown in "Table 1" and "Figure 1".

The types of discourse markers used by conversationalists are significantly more than those used by monologues.

Forty-nine percent of the discourse markers used in both structural formulas were specific to the dialogue, and only 11% were specific to the monologue. It can be seen that the discourse markers used by the dialogue are basically used by the monologue as well.

Table 1. The set of types and numbers of discourse markers used in two structural formulas

	Monologue use	Exclusive for monologue	Dialogue Use	Exclusive for dialogue	Shared by two structural formulas	Total use
Number of categories	24	5	42	23	19	47

a Note: Monologue use = Exclusive for monologue + Shared by two structural formulas; Dialogue Use = Exclusive for dialogue + Shared by two structural formulas

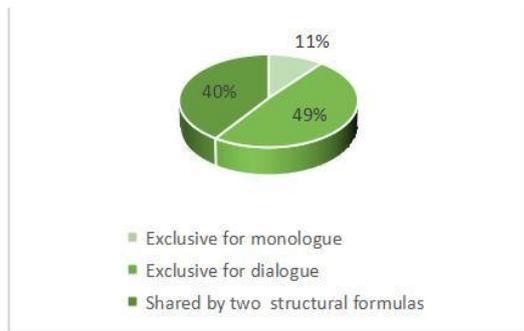


Figure 1 Comparison of the types of discourse markers used in the two structural formulas.

the communicative subject's attention to dynamic communicative contexts." (Liu Liyan 2005) In monologue, because it is the speaker who speaks alone, there is no verbal interaction between the communicative subjects, and naturally there is no change in the communicative context. Therefore, the discourse markers used in monologue have no contextual adaptation function. ("Table 2")

## 2.2 Comparison of the Usage Functions of Discourse Markers

The following section first identifies the classification of discourse markers functions and then contrasts them at both macro and specific levels.

### 2.2.1 The Functional Classification of Discourse Markers Used in the Two Structural Formulas

The biggest difference in pragmatic functions between discourse markers used in dialogue and monologue lies in the fact that dialogue has textual organization function, interpersonal interaction function, and contextual adaptation function, while monologue has no contextual adaptation function, only textual organization function, and interpersonal interaction function. "The contextual adaptation function of discourse markers reflects

Table 2. Functional classification of the use of discourse markers used in the two structural formulas

Function / Style	Dialogue	Monologue
Textual organizing function	Turn Opening	Text Opening
	Turn End	Discourse End
	Start a topic	Start a topic
	Set a topic	Set a topic
	Continue a topic	Continue a topic
	Pull back to the topic	Pull back to the topic
	Switch topics	Switch topics
	Explain the topic	Explain the topic
	Turn over	Paragraph connection
	Turn continuation	Paragraph continuation
	Occupy a turn	Fill in a paragraph
Interpersonal interaction function	Draw the attention of the communicative subject	Draw the attention of the communicative subject
	Limiting cognitive outcomes	Limiting cognitive outcomes
	Restricting context hypothesis	Restricting context hypothesis
Contextual adaptation function	Marking the state of communication	
	Adapting to linguistic context	
	Adapt to contextual context	
	Adapt to the on-site context	

### 2.2.2 Comparison of the Usage Functions of Discourse Markers

The next part of the paper will compare the functions of discourse markers at both macro and concrete levels.

#### 2.2.2.1 Comparison of the Macro Usage Functions of Discourse Markers

Through statistics and comparison, it is found that there are differences in the importance of discourse markers in two structural formulas in their use functions, as shown in "Table 3".

Table 3. Comparison of the importance of discourse marker use functions

Function	Dialogue		Monologue		
	Quantity	Proportion of quantity	Function	Quantity	Proportion of quantity
Discourse organization function	341	0.62%	Discourse organization function	124	0.73%
Interpersonal interaction function	190	0.34%	Interpersonal interaction function	46	0.27%
Contextual Conformity Function	23	0.04%			

In the use of discourse markers of two structural formulas, the textual organization function

dominates, but the monologue has a stronger interpersonal interaction function. This is

determined by the characteristics of the dialogue and monologue themselves. Monologue mainly refers to the one-way output of the speaker. Taking the monologue corpus "Yi Xi" speech used in this article as an example, there is almost no interaction between the speaker and the listener. Dialogues, on the other hand, rely on the dialogue and interaction between the speaker and the listener, which is a two-way process. Dialogues require mutual attention and cooperation between the two parties in order to complete the communicative activity together.

### 2.2.2.2 *Comparison of Specific Usage Functions of Discourse Markers*

First, it is the comparison of textual organizational functions.

In this paper, the five most used textual organizing function of the two structural styles are selected for comparison, and it is found that the functions of continuation of topic and description of topic are included in both structural styles, and the remaining three groups occupying a turn and filling in a paragraph, turn over and paragraph connection, and turn continuation and paragraph continuation are corresponding in pragmatic functions. See "Figure 2" and "Figure 3" below for details:

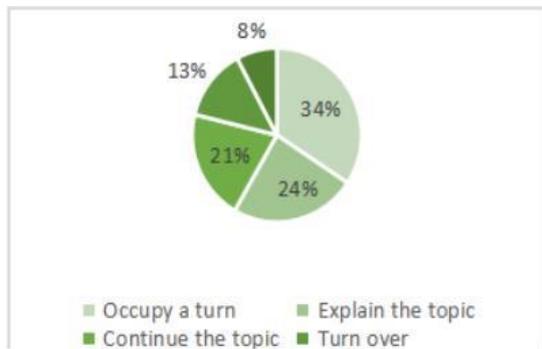


Figure 2 Comparison of discourse organization functions of discourse markers in dialogue.

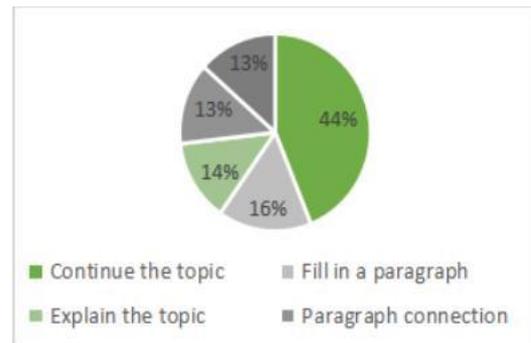


Figure 3 Comparison of discourse organization functions of discourse markers in monologue.

A comparison of the charts shows that the biggest difference between the two structural formulas in terms of textual organizing function is that the frequency of using the function of occupying a turn is significantly higher in the dialogue than that of filling in a paragraph in the monologue, and the frequency of using the function of continuing the topic is significantly higher in the monologue than that of continuing the topic in the dialogue.

The most frequently used discourse organization function of conversational style is to occupy turns. In actual oral communication, the speaker is limited by factors such as topic familiarity and preparation time, and cannot immediately initiate a conversation. However, speakers generally use discourse markers to occupy turns in order to gain control of the conversation and gain thinking time.

The filling in a paragraph and occupying a turn in the two structural formulas have similar functions, both of which have the effect of securing thinking time and maintaining the right to speak for the speaker. However, the importance of the two in structural formula is different. In the monologue, taking the speech in the corpus of this article "Yi Xi" as an example, the speaker prepares the content of the speech beforehand, so it takes less time to adjust the discourse in the speech, and therefore less use of discourse markers with the function of filling in a paragraph. It can be seen that in the use of discourse markers with filling and occupying functions, the proportion of monologue is significantly smaller than that of dialogue.

The most frequently used discourse organizing function of monologue is to continue the topic. Speech discourse is long, and each discourse consists of multiple topics. Speakers often cannot explain a topic clearly in one sentence, and need to

explain a topic in multiple consecutive sentences. During a speech, the speaker focuses on the topic currently being explained, so they will use discourse markers that have the function of continuing the topic multiple times to help the listener understand the topic. Unlike monologue, in conversational style, each speaker typically has a shorter discourse and speaking time, with fast turn-taking. Speakers strive to express their views in brief language within a short period of time, so the use of the function of topic continuation is less common than in monologue.

Second, it is the comparison of interpersonal interaction functions.

In the corpus extracted from this article, the interpersonal interaction functions of discourse markers used in conversational style include four functions: marking the state of communication, limiting cognitive outcomes, draw the attention of the communicative subject, and restricting context hypothesis. However, discourse markers in monologue lack the function of marking the state of communication, with only the remaining three functions.

This article selects discourse markers of the two structural formulas to compare their interpersonal interaction functions, as shown in "Figure 4" and "Figure 5" below for details.

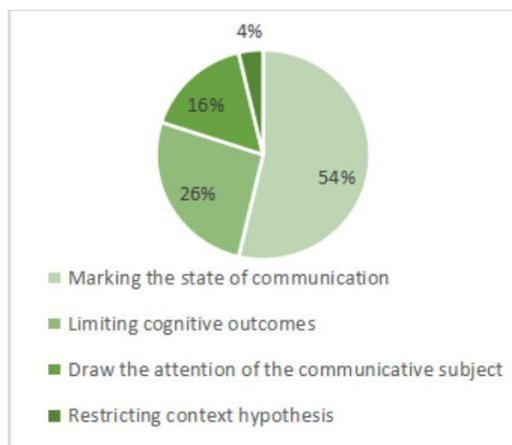


Figure 4 Comparison of interpersonal interaction functions of discourse markers dialogue.

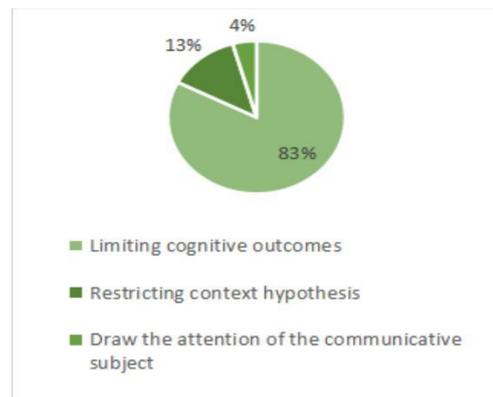


Figure 5 Comparison of interpersonal interaction functions of discourse markers in monologue.

Through comparison, it can be seen that the most commonly used interpersonal interaction function in dialogue is marking the state of communication in real-time conversations. Based on the principle of polite communication, the hearer will continuously indicate that he or she is in an obedient state during the interval between the speaker's statements, and use discourse markers that mark the state of communication to respond to the speaker. Among the interpersonal interaction functions of monologue discourse markers, the function of limiting cognitive outcomes dominates, which is caused by the structural characteristics of monologue. In the monologue corpus extracted in this article, "Is it" appears the most frequently in discourse markers that indicate interpersonal interaction functions. Speakers often add "Is it" to their own opinions to indicate their personal positions, limiting the cognitive results of the listener, and do not expect the listener to respond. Monologue refers to the speech of a speaker alone, lacking interaction. Therefore, in a long speech, the speaker needs to use discourse markers that have the function of limiting cognitive outcomes to help the listener understand their own views and positions, thereby helping the listener correctly understand the text.

### 2.3 Comparison of the Frequency of Discourse Markers Used in the Two Structural Formulas

From "Table 4", it can be seen that "So", as the most frequently used discourse marker in monologue, accounts for about 25% of the total discourse markers used in monologue discourse, while "Isn't it", as the most frequently used discourse marker in dialogue, accounts for about 15% of the total discourse markers used in dialogue.

This shows that the use of discourse markers in monologue is more concentrated, while the use of discourse markers in dialogue is less concentrated,

and the choice of discourse markers in dialogue is more diverse and free compared to the two structural formulas.

Table 4. Comparison of the ten most frequently used discourse markers in the two structural formulas

Usage frequency ranking	Monologue			Usage frequency ranking	Dialogue		
	Discourse markers	Quantity	Proportion		Discourse markers	Quantity	Proportion
1	So	43	25%	1	Isn't it	85	15%
2	Right	23	14%	2	Yes	69	12%
3	Like that	22	13%	3	It is	52	9%
4	Is that so	13	8%	4	This	46	8%
4	Then	13	8%	5	So	38	7%
6	Is it	11	6%	6	That is to say	35	6%
7	That is to say	8	5%	7	Right	31	6%
8	For example	5	3%	8	You see	25	5%
9	This	4	2%	9	Then	24	4%
9	But	4	2%	10	Is that so	23	4%

Comparing the ten most frequently used discourse markers in the two structural formulas, it can be seen that the six discourse markers "this, so, that is to say, right, then, right" appear in both structural formulas and rank among the top ten in terms of frequency of use. It can be seen that they are highly adaptable and relatively common in colloquial style. However, the use of the four discourse markers "so, right, right, and then" in the monologue is higher than that in dialogue, while the use of the two discourse markers "that is, saying, and this" in the monologue is lower than that in dialogue. The main function of the two discourse markers "that is to say" and "this" in the dialogue is to occupy the turn. The importance of the function of taking turns in dialogue can be seen, which is also consistent with the statistical results of the comparison between the textual organization functions of the two structural formulas mentioned above.

"Right, yes" are the two most frequently used discourse markers in dialogue, with a frequency of over 10%, but "right and yes" do not appear in monologue, so these two discourse markers have distinctive characteristics of dialogue. Similarly, "then" is the third most frequently used in monologue, with a frequency of 13%, while in dialogue, "then" is used less than 2%, so "then" has the distinctive stylistic characteristics of monologue.

The two most frequently used discourse markers, "right" and "yes", are both used to mark the state of communication. This is directly related to the corpus chosen in this paper. In "Yuan Zhuo Pai", a moderator and three guests take turns to speak, and during one person's speech, the other listeners will use discourse markers such as "right" and "yes" to mark the state of communication in response to the speaker in order to express their concern or agreement with the content of the speaker's speech. The most frequently used discourse marker in monologue "so", is mainly used to continue and end the topic. In long speeches, speakers use this discourse marker, which has the function of marking continuity and closure, to enhance the coherence within a topic and to mark the division between adjacent topics.

#### ***2.4 Comparison of the Multifunctional Situation of Discourse Markers in Two Structural Formulas***

According to the statistics, it can be found that the extracted discourse tokens are multifunctional in both structural formulas. Not only the same usage function can be expressed by different discourse markers, but also the same discourse marker has different usage functions in different contexts. ("Table 5")

Table 5. Comparison of the five discourse markers with the most functional categories in the two structural formulas

Dialogue		Monologue	
Discourse markers	Number of concurrent functions	Discourse markers	Number of concurrent functions
So	8	Then	7
But	7	So	7
It is	7	But	3
You are like	6	Then	3
That	5	Right	3

It can be seen from the above table that both structural formulas prefer discourse markers of the "so, but, that" type, which are formed due to the semantic weakening of conjunctions in use. According to the statistical results of this article, this type of discourse marker is often a discourse marker with multiple functional categories, and is used in both structural formulas, without significant stylistic preference.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In a text of equal length, the formality of discourse communication is negatively correlated with the number and type of discourse markers used. The types of discourse markers used by dialogue are richer than those used by monologue. This is the reflection of the formality of discourse communication on discourse markers. Based on the corpus of this article, "Yi Xi" has a higher formality than "Yuan Zhuo Pai". Accordingly, the number and type of discourse markers used in monologue are significantly less than those in dialogue. Dialogue, also known as conversational style, is generally more formal than monologue except for highly formal thematic dialogue such as court debates and academic discussions. The more formal a language is, the fewer the number and types of discourse markers it uses, so monologue use fewer discourse markers than dialogue.

Whether or not there is a contextual adaptation function is the biggest difference between discourse markers used in dialogic and monologic texts. The discourse markers used in dialogue include textual organization function, interpersonal interaction function, and contextual adaptation function, while the discourse markers used in monologue lack contextual adaptation function, and only have textual organization function and interpersonal

interaction function. This reflects the impact of the interactivity of the communicative subject and the dynamics of the communicative context on the function of discourse markers. The monologue lacks the interaction of the communicative subject and the changes in the communicative context, and therefore lacks discourse markers with contextual adaptation functions.

The differences in discourse length, dynamics, and interactivity between conversational and monolingual styles lead to differences in the specific functions of discourse markers used by the two. Dialogues have the characteristics of short text length and preparation time, as well as strong interactivity and dynamism, resulting in the use of functions that occupy a turn and mark the state of communication. Monologues are constrained by the characteristics of long text length, weak interactivity, and randomness, and they often use the functions of continuing topics and limiting cognitive outcomes.

It turns out that discourse markers can also be analyzed from the dimension of stylistic features, and some of them have stylistic features. For example, "right, yes, that is" has a distinctive conversational style, and "in fact, then" has a distinctive monologic style. There are also some discourse markers that are common in both dialogue and monologue, and they become common discourse markers in colloquial style.

Past research has proven that discourse markers have stylistic characteristics. This paper compares and analyzes discourse markers in dialogue and monologue, and proves that discourse markers also have certain stylistic characteristics in the structure subdivided under colloquialism, which has certain reference value for text classification. In addition, this article is also instructive for teaching Chinese

as a foreign language. In the actual teaching process, teachers should establish the concept of discourse markers and divide discourse markers into different language styles for teaching, which can help students clarify the correct rules for the use of discourse markers in different language styles, thereby reducing students' errors in using discourse markers.

Current research on discourse markers from a stylistic perspective focuses mostly on the macro level of written and spoken language, while few scholars have conducted research on the subdivided styles or structures of written and spoken language. At the same time, discourse marker research is developing in the direction of multidisciplinary intersection, thus the research in this field is rich in research space. However, due to the limitation of time, energy and ability, the number of corpora used in this paper is small and the manual processing of data is inevitably biased.

Therefore, the author considers expanding the number of corpora used for the two structural forms in the next step of research, and using spss for data analysis to improve statistical accuracy. Secondly, comparative studies of discourse markers in other different styles can also be conducted to expand and deepen the study of discourse markers from the stylistic perspective. The study of discourse markers can help people understand the cognitive psychology behind discourse generation, improve their language expression skills, and thus more effectively complete communication activities.

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