

The Study on Semantic Relations of New Vision College English

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Abstract: The this paper, based on Hoey's means of recognizing clause relations and Crombie's theories of semantic relations, analyzes the semantic relations of written texts of active reading in New Vision College English, a series of the textbooks of non-English major students in Dalian Neusoft University of Information. The primary purpose is to help students grasp the written characteristics of textbooks better and locate the key points when reading long sentences or discourse. The research results show that temporal relations and cause-effect relations are with more frequencies than contrast relations. And the discourse markers of clause relations are mostly characterised by the application of conjunctions to indicate the logical relations. The study plays key roles in teachers' language pedagogy and students' language acquisition.

1. Introduction

Reading, as an indispensable ability in English language learning, helps students acquire a variety of knowledge. Moreover, passage reading is distributed in various examinations for learners. Whereas, it is a difficult point for most students to grasp the information of articles in detail and classify the sentence components, even some students avoid reading passages directly and guess the answers to questions in the formal examinations.

Over the past years, countless research are conducted based on semantic relations, but it is not common that textbooks are abstracted as the target. While the textbook, the direct reading resource for students, is worth studying for students' understanding the logical relationships in texts.

In Dalian Neusoft University of Information, New Vision College English is the textbook for non-English major students, among which the passages of active reading are reading in depth contents in English classes. Due to the existence of complex sentences or the sentences with various clauses, students are confused about the semantical relations of propositions, even the meanings of the articles. Therefore, it is clearly of great importance to study on the written discourse, especially the analysis of clause relations in active reading. This paper targets Book 1 to Book 4 of New Vision College English, exploring the characteristics of semantic relations between clauses.

2. Theories

Hoey (1983, based on Winter, 1971) recognizes three types of signals, as the means to achieve discourse relations: subordination, conjunction, lexicalization, which can be realized by repetition, paraphrase and interrogation. [1]

Based on Crombie, inter-propositional is emphasized in discourse analysis as it reveals the cognitive process which underlines the construction and comprehension of coherent discourse. He divides the inter-propositional relations into general semantic relations, mostly found in written discourse such as cause and effect, and interactive semantic relations, commonly found in spoken discourse like elicitation and response. [2] Among the general semantic relations, this paper makes contributions to the analysis of

active reading of New Vision College English in terms of the common patterns temporal relation, contrast relations and cause-effect relations.

3. Research Target and Results Analysis

Book 1-Book 4 of New Vision College English are chosen as the target and 8 passages in 8 units are included in each book, ranging from more than 600 words to 1000 words in each passage. And the software AntConc is adopted to calculate the statistics of different selections of discourse markers of general semantic relations and the author analyzes semantic relations, choices of the lexicon and the logical clause relations.

3.1. Temporal Relation

Temporal relations refer to the temporal connection between events which can be the chronological sequence or overlapping in time. [3] The following are the main ways to express the temporal relations in the discourse of active reading.

Table 1. Distribution of temporal relations

Temporal Relations	Figure
when	78
while	19
after	32
afterwards	2
before	15
time	89
until	11

It is obviously seen in the table that among the 32 passages, the semantics of temporal relations is found with high frequency, especially the distribution of *when* and *time*. In addition, *while*, *after*, *before*, *afterwards*, and *until* are employed in passages. For instance, the conjunction *when* in the sentence *I can tell you, as I'm sitting here dying, when you most need it, neither money nor power will give you the feeling you're looking for* leads a subordinate relation with different subjects, indicating the overlapping in time and describing the actions of needing and giving you the feeling you're looking for conducted at the same time. Moreover, in the utterance *It's a chilly winter evening, two hours after we arrive from New York, and we're with my friends in a Sichuan hotpot restaurant in Beijing* the lexicon *after* represents the chronological sequence with the same subject, showing the act of being with my friend appears after the act of our arriving from New York. Besides, *time* in *I suddenly recall the first time I tasted Chinese food in China* is located in the middle and *He manages to smile politely and to look doubtful at the same time* at the end of the sentence, reveals a detailed moment of the acting agent and the co-existence of two behaviors *smile politely* and *to look doubtful*. In general, the semantic relation markers of temporal relations, in most cases, do not appear at the beginning with the capitalized letter, which may causes students to ignore the logical relations when reading the passage. Instead, they are usually used as the

parenthesis after commas.

3.2. Contrast Relation

Contrast Relations involve in the comparison of two things, events or abstractions according to some particular respect in which they are similar or different. [4] The specific usage of contrast relations in active reading is listed as follow.

Table 2. Distribution of contrast relations

Contrast Relations	Figure
but	13
however	12
contrary to	2

As is seen clearly in the table, despite the representatives of contrast relations such as *but*, *however*, *contrary to* not being so commonly distributed in the active reading of New Vision College English, there still exists some typical ones, among which *but* is applied for 13 times and *however*, *contrary to* for 12 times and twice respectively. For example, in *Contrary to popular belief, researchers have found that men gossip just as much as women* the phrase *contrary to* implies the two believes convey controversy. Also, *but*, with the middle location in the sentence *But the next time, you'll get it right* illustrates the comparison of two events. Likewise, *however*, located in the distinct component in the utterance *However, gradually, over the months I've lived in China, I now realize that it's the feel of the food and Occasionally, however, we do have a teacher or mentor who truly wants us to develop our own thinking* makes a comparison with the contents mentioned before. In spite of the fewer frequencies, contrast relation is helpful for inferring the meanings.

3.3. Cause-effect Relations

Cause-effect relations are where there is always a cause (which is not hypothetical), and an effect (which is not necessarily intended), but with the variations of reason-result, means-result or ground-conclusion, etc. [5] The distribution of cause-effect relations is shown in the next table.

Table 3. Distribution of cause-effect relations

Cause-effect Relations	Figure
because	51
so	66
due to/because of	11
for	72

According to the table, cause-effect relations are mostly expressed by discourse markers *because* and *so*, *instead*, the phrase *due to* and *because of* are rarely adopted. However, generally, the cause-effect relations are embodied frequently in the 32 passages of active reading, in which *so* occupies 66 times and *because* 51 times. For example, *So while we may grow out of our dreams, at the same time, we grow up.*

Application of *so* is to explain the ground-conclusion, which is broadly employed in New Vision College English. Another finding from the data is that the usage of *so* is often to guide an imperative sentence. And a case in this point is that *So, imagine a freezing day in February, and you're on the banks of Lake Zurich in Switzerland*. Furthermore, In *They do what they loved doing, because they're good at it* the reason is expressed by the clause led by *because*, meaning the reason-result relations. Finally, the distribution of the preposition *for* accounts for 72 times to deliver the reasons. *The fight has been going on ever since, and is notable for its lack of tolerance towards scientific fact* is an instance.

4. Conclusion

The lexical choices of words are permitted by the grammar of their lexical patterns. The analysis of active reading of the textbook New Vision College English based on the unit of clauses reveals that the application of temporal relations and cause-effect relations are distributed more frequently than the usage of contrast relations. While they share something in common that conjunctions are the main discourse markers. The significance of the study lies in promoting students' capability of reading comprehension and acquisition of reading materials with the aid of teacher's directions or emphasis on the conjunctions or phrases which expound semantic relations. Meanwhile, due to the boundedness of the software and the author's ability to proofread, there are limitations to be improved. For instance, the lexicon *so* may refer to the inversion or modify the adverbs and adjectives instead of cause-effect relations in the clause, but in general, the limitations have little impact on the result. Therefore, the precise data leaves room for the future researchers.

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