

## ***Jieguo* as a Discourse Marker in Spoken Mandarin Chinese: A synchronic Perspective on Semantic Change**

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This study incorporates a cognitive, functional, and discourse approach to explore the discourse-pragmatic functions of *jieguo* in spoken Mandarin Chinese. In contemporary Mandarin Chinese, *jieguo* is a polysemy layered (Hopper 1991) with verbal ('to fruit'), nominal ('result; outcome; ending'), and connective uses, an indicator of the residue of grammaticalization. Of particular interest to this study is the connective *jieguo*, whose extended functions in discourse still lack an integrated account in spite of a few research efforts (e.g., 王 [Wang] 2005, 姚 [Yao] 2008, 2010, 周 [Zhou] 2008). Moreover, since these previous studies restricted their analyses to written texts, the functioning of *jieguo* in talk-in-interaction also remains to be comprehensively investigated. The multifunctionality of the connective *jieguo* in conversations, as we contend, can shed light on its synchronically continuing process of semantic change. Accordingly, this study applies the Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al. 1974, Schegloff 2007) method, along with the assumptions of Interactional Linguistics and Discourse and Grammar, to the aforementioned unsolved issues concerning *jieguo*, with the particular aim to pinpoint the evolution and characteristics of its semantic change from a synchronic perspective.

Based on over 10 hours of naturally-occurring conversations of Mandarin Chinese spoken in Taiwan, *jieguo* is found to have embarked on the pathway of developing into a "discourse marker" (Fraser 1999, Schiffrin 1987, Schourup 1999, among others) that signals the speaker's rhetorical stance toward the sequential relationship between units of discourse. As a "sequentially dependent element which brackets elements of talk" (Schiffrin 1987:31), it functions not only "locally" between adjacent utterances, but also "globally" by marking episodes and imposing a hierarchical structuring of conversations. At the local level, *jieguo* specifies sequential relationships of primarily two kinds: causal consequence and counter-expectation. At the global level, *jieguo* displays both addressee-oriented and speaker-oriented discourse functions. The former refers to the function of expressing anticipation of a story or episode ending, while the latter subsumes such functions as (i) demarcating the boundary, (ii) indicating the turning point, and (iii) projecting the climax of a story or episode, as well as (iv) marking the transition of conversational topics.

While the relationship of sequentiality and cause-consequence can be regarded as inheriting the underlying meanings (i.e., (i) result; outcome; ending and (ii) causal consequence) of the nominal *jieguo*, the intriguing function of counter-expectation and its extended global episodic functions are suggested to be a result of metonymization (Traugott and Dasher 2002). According to Wang (to appear), the nominal *jieguo* has a semantic prosody (cf. Hunston 2007, Partington 2004, Sinclair 2004, Tao 2003, among others) of counter-expectation. Over repeated language use, this attitudinal meaning has come to be the generalized invited inferences of *jieguo* as it further develops discourse marker functions.

The over-proposition/discourse scope and subjective and procedural meanings of *jieguo* as a discourse marker thus evidence the on-going semantic change of *jieguo* in synchronic Mandarin Chinese, whose correlated paths of directionality correspond to those proposed by Traugott and Dasher (2002): content > content/procedural > procedural, s-w-proposition > s-o-proposition > s-o-discourse, and non-subjective > subjective. Henceforth, this case study lends supportive evidence from Mandarin Chinese to the regularity of semantic change and the role of metonymization as one shaping force leading to the inception of semantic change (Traugott and Dasher 2002). Last but most importantly, it is hoped that the semantic change of *jieguo* advocates the emergent view of grammar, in which linguistic structures/meanings are seen as adaptive, ever-evolving, and constantly being negotiated in discourse practice (Hopper 1998, Huang 1998, Tao 2003).