A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO DISCOURSE COHERENCE

基于功能语言学的
语篇连贯研究

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序

在介绍本书及其作者之前，有必要先谈一谈促成我与本书作者认识的原北京师范大学外语系主任王蔷教授。我与王蔷教授都曾参加教育部外语教学专业指导委员会的工作，深感她工作踏实、注重实际、关心集体的优良作风。她与她的同事——已故钱瑗教授一样，为如何建设和发展北京师范大学外语系废寝忘食。她曾多次跟我说，北师大外语系有不少中青年教师，他们英语功底深厚，教学经验丰富，只是没有机会提高，没有合适的老师指导。这样，我这个北师大的兼职教授和博士生导师感到责无旁贷，应该把为北师大培养高层次人才作为己任。在2000年北师大外语系新春茶话会上，由王蔷教授引见，我第一次见到了准备报考博士研究生的本书作者程晓堂。

在以后的多次接触中，我对晓堂有了更多的了解。在我所接触过的准备攻博的年轻人中，晓堂具有一些独特的条件。首先，他的硕士研究生阶段的学习是在英国专家与中国教授共同指导下完成的，他还去英国进修过，对研究生如何学习和研究已经受到过正规的教育和熏陶。其次，他在境外已发表了一些论文，表现出一定的研究潜力和敢于攀高的精神。第三，他把国外积攒起来的外汇，不是热衷于带回八大件，而是定期在网上从国外订购图书，像韩礼德的原版著作他已买了多本。最后，在高校里，有人教学效果很好，就是出不了科研成果；有人科研搞得不错，教学却不太认真负责；更有一些人，不关心集体，不愿意承担给自己添麻烦的教学行政工作。晓堂在教学、科研和行政工作上都很认真，且取得了成绩。所以，晓堂以他优异的成绩考取博士研究生之后，我一方面为他庆幸，一方面为自己能给北师大做些工

作和实现钱瑷教授的生前嘱托而高兴。事后证明，由于晓堂基础扎实，独立工作能力强，博士研究生学习进展顺利。他在答辩会上对论文的陈述和对提问的回答条理清楚，重点突出，语言流畅，赢得了答辩委员会的好评。

本书就是晓堂在其博士论文的基础上完成的，其中有不少创新点。我一直认为，许多博士论文最后以专著形式出版，但许多很好的专著不一定符合博士论文的要求。两者的差别在于创新。在这本基于博士论文的专著中，作者首先开宗明义地指出他要研究语篇的连贯性。这不是新鲜事，已有很多学者研究这个问题，也有许多博士论文把它作为选题。所有这些，未能穷尽对本课题的研究。有的满足于对已有理论进行综述，有的则着力于采集较多的实例来验证现有理论。晓堂在本书中则提出一系列问题，比如什么是连贯？如何实现、如何表现、如何分析语篇连贯？这些问题一下子把读者带入语篇连贯研究的神秘王国。可见，从事科学研究要敢于提出质疑、提出问题。

语篇分析领域的人都知道，韩礼德最初研究英语的衔接时偏重于进行语言分析。此后有关连贯研究的文献日益增多，对韩礼德的评论大有铺天盖地之势。在这种大环境下，晓堂能勇敢地指出，现行的研究过于强调连贯是心理现象，而不是语言现象。尽管韩礼德早就解释过，他作为语言学家，首先考虑的是如何从语言学上对衔接和连贯作出解释，那么晓堂今天能不随潮流，坚持从语言学的视角进行连贯研究，是无可非议的。

晓堂最初涉足外语教学理论和教学法，所以理论语言学，特别是系统功能语言学理论原本不是他的长项，但他在攻博前后，能够非常用心地学习补课，迎头赶上，才在本书中树立如此明确的指导思想。在本研究中，他坚持了韩礼德的思想，语篇的连贯与否在于是否传达了意义，具体表现在概念连贯、人际连贯和篇章连贯。但在如何落实这三方面连贯的问题上，提出了不少自己的观点，如概念连贯包含正常性、描写顺序、话题延续性和连贯关系；人际连贯包含角色定位和

知识预设；篇章连贯除传统的主位结构和信息结构外，尚有命题宏观结构和语类宏观结构。本研究继承和发展了系统功能语言学派的基本理论。

我曾经在多种场合表示过自己的怀疑：即一些基于心理语言学的连贯研究，虽然举了一些例子，企图说明不衔接的句子也可以是连贯的，而一些衔接的句子也可以是不连贯的，但这些结论有两点不太令人信服。一是有些例子明摆着是自编的，而不是真实的自然语言，因而没有说服力；二是既然是语篇分析，就不应当掐头去尾，单挑两句对话，来证明自己对他人的批评。晓堂在本书中避免了这种不科学的倾向。他采集了大量真实语篇便是一例。另外，他分析了大量中国学生的英语作文，试图使自己的研究对如何提高学生英语写作能力有所启示。这使得本项研究更具有实践价值。这也是任何科学研究真正的力量所在。

如前所述，在本书出版前，晓堂已有不少佳篇发表，如由外语教学与研究出版社出版的《英语学习策略》和《英语教材分析与设计》。不久前，他又在高等教育出版社出版了专著《任务型语言教学》。晓堂正值壮年，深信他今后会走得更远，也会像过去那样，以行动和成果，展示自己的才华和智慧。

<div style="text-align:right">

胡壮麟

2004 年 9 月 10 日教师节

北京大学蓝旗营

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This book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation. In the process of writing the dissertation and publishing this book, I owe a great deal to many people.

First, I would like to dedicate my most sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Hu Zhuanglin, who instilled in me a real interest in linguistics. As early as the late 1980s, when I was an undergraduate and then a graduate student at Beijing Normal University (BNU), I had heard and read a "big name", Hu Zhuanglin from Peking University. Although I had taken some linguistics courses during my BA and MA studies, I dared not even hope that I could someday have a chance to study linguistics from renowned linguists like Professor Hu.

In 1998, when I had been a faculty member at BNU for six years, I heard that Professor Hu had accepted the invitation to supervise PhD students at BNU. I was excited because it was a good chance for me to embark on PhD studies while teaching at the same time. With encouragement and help from my colleagues at BNU and my family, I became a PhD student of Professor Hu in 2000.

During the time of my PhD studies, I benefited profoundly from Professor Hu's enlightment: his lectures, his comments on my assignment essays, and most importantly, his suggestions on my dissertation. Undoubtedly, without Professor Hu's supervision and inspiring criticism, the

dissertation could not have been finished.

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Cheng Xiaotang
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Abstract

Coherence is a major property of discourse. In the past three decades, coherence research has been an important area in discourse analysis. Coherence research helps us to better understand how natural language (discourse) is structured and how language realizes multi-functions at the discourse level. Although coherence research has not had a very long history, it has attracted attention of more and more researchers. This is because coherence research has not only theoretical significance but also great potential in applied linguistics.

From thirty years ago, when coherence was not used as a technical term, to the present day, when coherence has become an important concept in discourse analysis, coherence research has made great achievement. However, for various reasons, there is little consensus as to the nature of coherence and coherence research approaches. In fact, presently, researchers' views diverge greatly when answering the question of what is coherence. As to how coherence is realized, revealed and how to analyse coherence in discourse, divergences outnumber consensus.

Generally speaking, existing coherence studies have three major problems. First, there is an over-emphasis that coherence is a mental phenomenon, rather than a language phenomenon and that coherence is not an inherent property
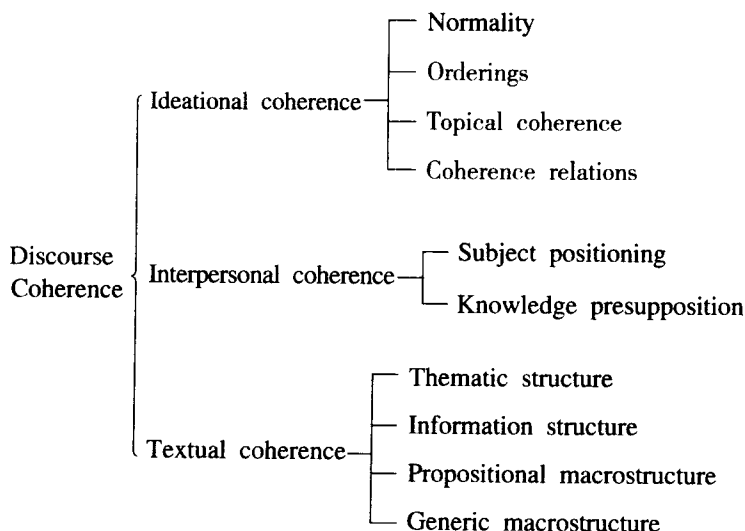
of discourse. Furthermore, researchers taking this view firmly disapprove of the text-based approaches to coherence. Second, coherence researchers often devote their attention to only one aspect of coherence and ignore the others. This is very akin to the story of the six blind men and the elephant. Each has touched one part, but no one could have an overall picture. Consequently, most existing coherence theories do not have enough explanatory force. Obviously, simplistically combining these theories does not help to solve the problem, because some of these theories are competing against each other. Therefore, to establish a coherent and consistent framework of coherence, we need explore other approaches. Third, most coherence researchers have not located their study within the framework of a well-established linguistic theory. After all, the object of coherence study is language. Thus coherence research must be guided by certain linguistic theories. Otherwise, it will be doomed to be fragmentary and unsystematic.

The present study first solved the first problem through a critical appraisal of existing coherence theories. The conclusion is that coherence CAN be viewed as an observable and analysable property of discourse and that the text-based approaches ARE valid methodologies for coherence research. The main purpose of the present study is to solve the second and the third problems mentioned above. The proposed solution is to locate coherence research within the framework of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and explore the nature and realization of coherence from the perspective of the three metafunctions. The present researcher's assumption follows this thread of reasoning: Language is principally used to convey meaning. In order to convey meaning effectively, the language used must be

able to fulfil the intended communication functions. Therefore the whole matter of discourse coherence is whether and to what extent discourse is constructed to realize the functions intended by its producer. Only when a discourse has conveyed these three strands of meaning successfully, will the target discourse receivers be able to make a sensible (coherent) interpretation of the discourse. Thus our contention is that coherent discourses are those that successfully realize the three metafunctions of language.

Based on the above assumption, the present study proposes a new framework of discourse coherence, in which coherence includes three broad dimensions: ideational coherence, interpersonal coherence and textual coherence. Each of these three dimensions has some sub-categories, diagrammed as follows:

Discourse Coherence
- Ideational coherence
  - Normality
  - Orderings
  - Topical coherence
  - Coherence relations
- Interpersonal coherence
  - Subject positioning
  - Knowledge presupposition
- Textual coherence
  - Thematic structure
  - Information structure
  - Propositional macrostructure
  - Generic macrostructure

In this framework, ideational coherence refers to the property that discourse reveals when it effectively conveys ideational meaning. Coherence discourses usually accurately and effectively represent real or fictional worlds. Discourse has ideational coherence when: (1) it shows a degree of normality; (2) it represents the worlds in certain orderings; (3) it has a focal topic at both local and global levels; and (4) it establishes and very often indicates relations between events or states of affair.

Interpersonal coherence refers to the property that discourse reveals when it effectively conveys interpersonal meaning. At the discourse level, there are mainly two ways to achieve interpersonal coherence: (1) subject positioning: the writer assigns appropriate communication roles for themselves and the intended audience; and (2) knowledge presupposition: coherence discourses presuppose the right quantity and quality of existing knowledge in the part of the reader.

Textual coherence refers to proper organization of the discourse itself. Textual coherence is achieved when discourse is appropriately governed by local and global structures such as the thematic structure, the information structure, the propositional macrostructure and the generic macrostructure.

Analyses of sample texts or text extracts have shown that these aspects of coherence indeed exist in natural discourses. Our analyses of EFL student writing samples have shown that failure to meet (some of) these criteria often results in incoherence or disturbed coherence.

Although extensively drawn on existing studies, the present study has made contributions to coherence research in the following aspects: (1) it has argued for the need to rediscover the value of text-

based approaches to coherence studies; (2) by applying Hallidayan SFL to the study of discourse coherence, the present study has introduced a new approach to coherence, which is more consistent and coherent in itself than some other theories; (3) it has revisited and further developed major existing concepts about coherence; (4) it has analysed a considerable number of EFL student writing samples to see why these writings may lose varying degrees of coherence; and (5) by exploring how the three metafunctions of language are realized at a level above the clause, the present study has made an attempt to further develop Hallidayan SFL.

Key words

- systemic functional linguistics;
- discourse analysis;
- discourse coherence;
- ideational coherence;
- interpersonal coherence;
- textual coherence

前言

连贯性是语篇的主要特征之一。在过去30多年的时间里，连贯研究一直是语篇分析的一个重要方面。连贯研究不仅具有理论价值，而且具有较高的应用价值。它有利于我们进一步认识自然语言的结构以及自然语言在语篇层次上如何实现语言的多重功能。连贯研究的历史并不长，但对它感兴趣的学者却越来越多。

应该承认，从30年前连贯还不是一个专门术语到今天连贯已成为语篇分析中的一个极为重要的概念，连贯研究已经取得了重要成就。但是，由于各种复杂的原因，众学者对连贯的本质以及连贯研究方法的认识还存在很多分歧。事实上，关于连贯究竟是什么，目前学界的分歧多于共识。至于连贯如何实现、如何表现以及如何分析语篇的连贯特征，则更是众说纷纭。

总体来看，近些年来的连贯研究主要存在三个问题。第一，很多连贯研究者过于强调连贯是心理现象，而不是语言现象，强调连贯不是语篇本身的特征，而是独立于文本之外的某种特征。另外，持这些观点的研究者还断然否定基于文本的连贯研究方法。第二，连贯研究者往往只研究语篇连贯的某一个方面，而忽视其他方面。这样就不免类似于盲人摸象，每人都摸到一部分，但都看不到连贯的全貌。其结果是，现有的连贯理论多数不具备足够的阐释力。有的认为连贯是基于文本的语言现象，而有的则坚持认为连贯独立于语篇之外，是一种心理现象；有的只能阐释语篇中的局部连贯性，有的则只能解释语篇宏观的整体性；有的阐释语篇中各种命题的相互关系，有的则阐释语篇的语类结构。那么是不是把这些理论加在一起就能解决问题呢？答案显然是否定的。且不说有些理论本身就是彼此排斥的，那些并不相互排
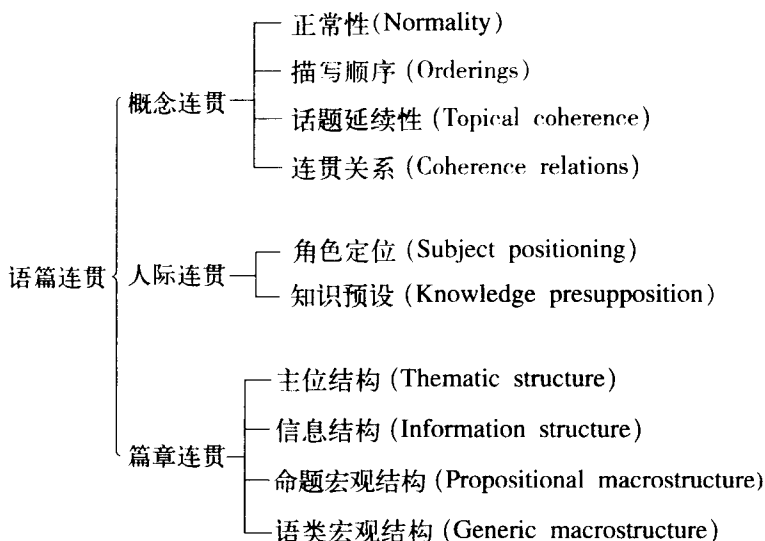
斥的理论也很难简单相加。看来，要建立一个全面、协调、统一的连贯理论体系，还需要另辟途径。第三，多数研究者没有把他们的研究置于某种成熟的语言学理论框架之中。连贯研究毕竟是以语言为对象的研究。既然以语言为研究对象，那么就必须有语言学理论作指导。否则，连贯研究就很可能成为空中楼阁，并且是零碎的、不系统的。

　　本书在以批判的方法解决上述第一个问题之后（见第三章），着重尝试性地解决后面的两个问题（见第四至八章）。本书提出的解决方案是：把连贯研究置于以韩礼德为代表的系统功能语言学理论框架中，从语言的三个纯理功能的角度探讨连贯的本质、表现及其实现手段。本书的基本思路是：判断语篇是否连贯的最基本依据是语篇是否有效地传达了作者（说话者）希望传达的意义；根据系统功能语言学的思想，语言应同时传达三重意义，即概念意义（ideational meaning）、人际意义（interpersonal meaning）和语篇意义（textual meaning）；因此，我们可以通过分析语篇是否有效地传达了这三重意义来考察语篇的连贯性；由于系统功能语言学已经较为成熟地揭示了在小句层次用于实现三重意义的语言手段，我们可以尝试性地把这一理论应用到小句以上层次的语篇分析之中。既然基于语言三个纯理功能的三重意义基本涵盖了语篇应该传达的方方面面的意义，所以从这一理论出发来研究语篇的连贯性可以使我们看到连贯的全貌。同时，由于系统功能语言理论本身的系统性和完整性，基于这一理论的连贯研究也应该具有系统性和完整性。

　　根据上述思路，本书提出了一个新的语篇连贯框架。在这个框架中，语篇连贯包括三个大的方面，即概念连贯、人际连贯和篇章连贯 ❶。其

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❶ 在本篇论文中，discourse coherence 有别于 textual coherence。前者译为"语篇连贯"，涵盖所有方面的连贯性。后者译为"篇章连贯"，指根据三大纯理功能中的语篇功能（textual function）提出的一种连贯性。严格来讲，textual coherence 译为"语篇连贯"更妥，但这样就会与 discourse coherence 的翻译相混淆。为了避免这一问题，我们在中文摘要中暂且把 textual coherence 译为"篇章连贯"。

中每个方面又体现在若干更为具体的连贯特征，如下图所示：

```
                        ┌── 正常性（Normality）
                        │── 描写顺序（Orderings）
             概念连贯 ──┤── 话题延续性（Topical coherence）
                        └── 连贯关系（Coherence relations）

                        ┌── 角色定位（Subject positioning）
语篇连贯 ──┤ 人际连贯 ──┤
                        └── 知识预设（Knowledge presupposition）

                        ┌── 主位结构（Thematic structure）
                        │── 信息结构（Information structure）
             篇章连贯 ──┤── 命题宏观结构（Propositional macrostructure）
                        └── 语类宏观结构（Generic macrostructure）
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　　在这个语篇连贯框架中，概念连贯是指语篇为了有效地传达概念意义而表现出来的连贯性。连贯的语篇应该能够准确、有效地再现（represent）真实的或想象的物质世界和经验世界（包括人物、事物、经验、事件、感受等）。为此，语篇应满足下列条件：（1）语篇再现的内容有一定的正常性，如果语篇需要再现非正常的事物，则必须解释这些非正常事物与正常事物有什么区别以及它们存在的可能性；（2）语篇必须按一定的顺序进行描写；（3）语篇的局部及整体必须保持话题的延续性；（4）语篇成分之间必须有某种逻辑—语义/语用关系。

　　人际连贯是指语篇为了有效地传达人际意义而表现出来的连贯性。语言中用来表达人际意义的手段很多。在语篇层次上，主要有两种手段：（1）角色定位，即作者赋予作者本人和读者的交际身份

（communication roles），连贯的语篇赋予作者和读者的身份既要有利于传递意义又要能被双方认可和接受；（2）知识预设，连贯语篇对读者已有知识的预设应该是基本准确的，错误地预设知识可能导致语篇不连贯。

篇章连贯是指语篇为了有效地组织语篇本身而体现出来的连贯性。为了使语篇本身显得有组织、有条理，语篇必须充分利用多种微观和宏观结构：（1）主位结构；（2）信息结构；（3）命题宏观结构；（4）语类宏观结构。

为了检验上述语篇连贯框架的设想，本书在阐述各种连贯特征时，对若干个具体的语篇或语篇片段进行了分析，另外在第八章还以一个完整的语篇为基础，分析了该语篇体现的各种连贯特征。这些语篇分析实例表明，本书提出的各种语篇特征在自然语言中确实存在。另外，本书还分析了大量的以英语为外语的学生的英语作文或作文片段。这些分析表明，某些学生的英语作文之所以缺乏连贯性主要是未能满足必要的连贯条件，也就是说没有充分利用各种连贯手段或者没有遵守某些连贯原则。

本书在充分利用前人研究成果的基础上，对连贯研究作出了新的贡献：（1）本书提出了一种新的连贯研究途径，即以功能语言学理论为指导，根据三大纯理功能的思想，全面探讨语篇连贯的实现条件、表现手段和原则；（2）在综述、分析、评价现有连贯理论的基础上，提出了一个更加完整、更加系统的语篇连贯框架体系；（3）以大量语篇实例为基础，探讨连贯的实现条件和表现手段。这一做法继承并发展了基于文本的语篇连贯研究途径，重新探讨了基于文本的连贯研究的价值；（4）结合以英语为外语的学生的英语作文来进行连贯研究，尝试了把理论研究与实际应用相结合的研究途径；（5）通过探讨在小句层次以上（即语篇层次）语言如何实现三大纯理功能，尝试性地发展了系统功能语言学理论。

由于本书试图建构一个较为完整的语篇连贯体系，涉及的面较