

A Study on the Discourse Markers of "Wo Gei Ni Shuo" in Modern Chinese

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Abstract. The discourse mark "wo gei ni shuo" is very important in natural dialogue. This study explores the position, pragmatic function and formation of the discourse mark "wo gei ni shuo". Discourse mark "wo gei ni shuo" has three kinds of position in sentences, among which the highest frequency of use found in middle of sentences, and the semantic meaning is mostly directed to the following information unit; The discourse mark "wo gei ni shuo" has four pragmatic functions of emphasizing information, subjective cognition, suggestion evaluation and imperative. The formation of discourse markers is the result of both lexicalization and grammaticalization. Studying the use position, pragmatic function and formation of discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" is helpful to the development of text teaching and international Chinese teaching.

Key words: discourse marker, "wo gei ni shuo", use location, pragmatic function, formation and evolution

1. Introduction

Discourse markers are dependent components that sequentially divide speech units. They have little conceptual meaning, do not affect the truth value of propositions, and serve as connecting elements between discourse units, indicating the relationship between preceding and following discourse [2]. As an important part of natural dialogue, discourse markers are widely used and have rich discourse functions depending on their form, location, and mode of use [6, 7, 12]. Therefore, this study chooses 'wo gei ni shuo' as the research object."

The "wo gei ni shuo" mentioned in this study must conform to the above characteristics, as follows (1):

(1) 杨嫂走了两步又站住了,她想起一件事情便回来对觉新低声报告道:“大少爷,我给你说,大小姐有恭喜了。”(巴金《春》,CCL)

Sister-in-law Yang took two steps and then stopped. Remembering something, she came back and reported in a low voice to Juexin: "Master, I want to tell you that the lady has been congratulated." (Ba Jin, Spring, CCL)

The phrase "wo gei ni shuo" in example (1) does not have a structural relationship with the preceding words "da shao ye" and the following main sentence "da xiao jie you gong xi le", but rather serves as a connecting component between them. Its deletion does not affect the semantic expression of the sentence, which aligns with the discourse markers' characteristics identified in this study.

The modifier of discourse marker was first proposed in 1953, indicating that it is a modifier that does not affect the grammatical structure, but has certain functions in pragmatics (Randolph Quirk, 1953). Since the 1970s, discourse markers have been the subject of scholarly research. Building upon this foundation, Liao Qiuzhong (1986) directed his attention towards discourse markers, thereby initiating domestic scholars' interest in these linguistic devices. Liao described discourse markers as "elements that connect and organize speech or writing." Subsequently, Liu Fengxia (1995) used the term "discourse markers" in her paper to explore four types of discourse markers. Nowadays, studies on discourse markers are mainly based on individual cases [1, 5, 9].

Among them, research on the discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" is mainly conducted from two perspectives: definition and function. Firstly, Chen Lijun (2010) pointed out that "wo gei ni shuo" has evolved into a frequently used fixed phrase, thus functioning as a discourse marker. This transformation of the verb "gei" in the expression "wo gei ni shuo X" shifts its representation from an action to that of the speaker [1].

On this basis, Si Luohong (2016) proposed three discourse patterns of "wo gei ni shuo" and analyzed five semantic relations, arguing that "wo gei ni shuo" has three pragmatic functions: emphasis, subjective evaluation and imperative, and emphasizing function is the core [9]; Ji Jingwen (2022) also analyzed the pragmatic functions of "wo gei ni shuo" from the perspective of

interactive linguistics, proposed that the discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" has both textual organization and interpersonal interaction functions, and analyzed the process of "*wo gei ni shuo*" [4]. However, further generalization and induction are still needed for the pragmatic functional classification of the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*". Additionally, the relationship between lexicalization and grammaticalization in the diachronic evolution of "*wo gei ni shuo*" requires further analysis. Moreover, with the updating of the corpus, it is necessary to update and supplement the usage pattern of the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*". Therefore, based on previous studies, this study thoroughly examines the corpus of discourse markers "*wo gei ni shuo*" in the CCL corpus and discusses its location of use, pragmatic function, formation and evolution in order to supplement the understanding of the pragmatic function and formation as well as evolution of "*wo gei ni shuo*" and promote the development of discourse teaching and teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

2. The Use Position of Discourse Mark "*wo gei ni shuo*"

The CCL corpus search scope includes 346 corpora for "*wo gei ni shuo*", out of which 58 conversational corpora meet the discourse marking standard. According to Table 1 within the CCL corpus, "*wo gei ni shuo*" is most frequently used in middle of sentences and accounts for 50% of the total corpus. Its frequency at the beginning of short sentences slightly decreases to represent 48.3% while its lowest occurrence happens at the end with only a representation rate of merely 1.7%. In this context, X represents referent information units where either X1 or X2 are located when using a discourse marker within a clause.

Table 1. Discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" uses location and its information directivity

<i>wo gei ni shuo</i>	Indicating the preceding information Number of example sentences	Indicate previous information scale	Indicating the information that follows Number of example sentences	Indicate following information Ratio	Total
<i>wo gei ni shuo</i> +X	0	0	28	48.3%	48.3%
X1+ <i>wo gei ni shuo</i> +X2	2	3.4%	27	46.6%	50%
X+ <i>wo gei ni shuo</i>	1	1.7%	0	0	1.7%

First, "*wo gei ni shuo* +X" indicates that the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" is located at the beginning of the subsentence. At this point, the speech marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" all points to the following message X. Structurally, "*wo gei ni shuo*" is very closely related to X. In general, there is a phonetic pause between "*wo gei ni shuo*" and the following information unit, separated in written language by punctuation marks. For example (2):

(2) 鹿三不耐烦了：“嘉道嘉道,你尽听嘉道的话!我给你说,像你嘉轩叔这样仁义的主儿家不好寻哩!我是眼见为信。”
(陈忠实《白鹿原》,CCL)

Lu SAN was impatient: "Jiadao Jiadao, you listen to Jiadao! Let me tell you, it is not easy to find a righteous master like your uncle Jia Xuan! I believe what I see." (White Deer Plain by Chen Zhongshi, CCL)

The discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" is positioned at the onset of a subordinate clause, with X representing the semantic content of "*wo gei ni shuo*". The relationship between the two is closely intertwined and separated by commas. In "Lu SAN," the usage of "*wo gei ni shuo*" serves as an introduction to their own perspective, namely, X: "xiang ni jia xuan shu zhe yang ren yi de zhu er jia bu hao xun li" Furthermore, it anticipates recognition from the other party.

In addition, the discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" is sometimes located between clauses and has a role in structurally revealing. In this case, the semantic meaning of the utterance mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" is mostly directed to the X2 of the latter sentence, for example (3):

(3) “妈,我给你说,我买的是华泰出国险,都是同一个公司的,这个出国险主要服务出国人员……”(公众号 2016.5.3,CCL)
"Mom, let me tell you, I bought Huatai overseas insurance, both from the same company, and this overseas insurance mainly serves overseas people……" (Public number 2016.5.3, CCL)

The discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" is located between the independent language X1 "ma" and the last sentence X2 "*wo mai de shi tai hua chu guo xian*", connecting the preceding and the following to make the sentences more coherent. "*wo gei ni shuo*" and X2 are semantically related.

In addition to this, the discourse marking "*wo gei ni shuo*", which lies between the clause and the clause, also has special cases of semantically pointing to X1, as in example (4):

(4) 记者：“我先替你请人家吃个饭,行不行?这事你自己知道就行了,我给你说,听见没?” (公众号 2016.4.27,CCL)
Reporter: "Let me buy someone a meal for you first, OK? Just keep it to yourself. I'll tell you, you hear me?" (2016.4.27, CCL)
"*wo gei ni shuo*" semantic refers to X1, "zhe shi ni zi ji zhi dao jiu xing le", representing the conditions that the "reporter" expects the addressee to comply with.

In addition, when the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" is located at the end of a small sentence, structurally, "X" and "*wo gei*

ni shuo" are closely related, but linked together, and then "*wo gei ni shuo*" semantically refers to the front X, as in example (5):

(5) “我想请问下六区莱索恩 LM 哪个工会厉害,知道的麻烦告知一声,谢谢了!”

“混蛋,我是莱索恩的亡灵 DZ,LM 没前途我给你说,删号来练 BL 吧。(百科,CCL)”

"I would like to ask the lower six district Lesothon LM which union is powerful, know the trouble let me know, thank you!"

"Asshole, I am Lesothon's ghost DZ, LM has no future *wo gei ni shuo*, delete the number to practice BL." (Encyclopedia, CCL)"

The context here is to discuss the gameplay of "World of Warcraft," where "LM" refers to the alliance camp in the game. Structurally, there is no comma separating "*wo gei ni shuo*" from X, which is "LM mei qian tu" There is no pause, and it is closely related. X represents B's point of view, and semantically, "*wo gei ni shuo*" refers to X.

3. The Pragmatic Function of Discourse Mark "*wo gei ni shuo*"

The study of the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" can be categorized into two aspects: its role in organizing discourse and facilitating interpersonal interaction [4]. This discourse marker serves to ensure coherence in both form and content within a conversation, while also fulfilling various interpersonal functions such as emphasizing information, issuing warnings or notifications, evaluating and suggesting ideas, as well as giving orders or instructions. The subsequent discussion will primarily focus on exploring the interpersonal interaction function of the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*".

3.1. Emphasize the informational function

When the speaker wants the addressee to focus on a certain information, the use of speech marks "*wo gei ni shuo*" to attract the other party's attention, so as to emphasize the information that the addressee may not know, so that the emphasized information becomes the focus. For example (6):

(6) “你这个窝囊废!我给你说,你妈前几天已经给地委纪律检查委员会揭发控告了这件事。”

张克南:“妈!你怎能做这事呢?这事谁要做叫谁做去吧!咱怎能做这事呢?这样咱就成了小人了!”(路遥《人生》,CCL)

"You loser! Let me tell you, your mother has reported this matter to the local Party Committee for Discipline Inspection a few days ago."

Zhang Kenan: "Mom! How can you do this? Let whoever wants to do it do it. How can we do it? Then we shall be little people!" (Lu Yao, Life, CCL)

In example (6), the speaker uses the words "*ni ma qian ji tian yi jing gei di wei ji lv jian cha wei yuan hui jie fa kong gao le zhe jian shi*", and then "*ni zen neng zuo zhe shi ne*?" Indicating that the addressee did not know this in advance, the utterance mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" emphasizes the information that the speaker thinks the addressee does not know, making the emphasized information the focus.

3.2. Function of subjective cognition

In a specific context, the speaker's use of "*wo gei ni shuo*" can be used to introduce his own point of view, indicating his own claims and opinions, such as (7):

(7) 平安宁夏的微信编辑也非常贴地气地说了一句“我给你说,在现场许厅长批评的比这很多了,我没敢多写。”(公众号 2016.5.2,CCL)

Ping An Ningxia's wechat editor also said very angrily, "Let me tell you, Director Xu criticized much more than this at the scene, I did not dare to write more." (official account 2016.5.2, CCL)

Example (7) using "*wo gei ni shuo*" to elicit the editor's point of view "*zai xian chang ting zhang pi ping de bi zhe hen duo le*", indicating the editor's opinion "*wo mei gan duo xie*".

In special contexts, speakers can also use "*wo gei ni shuo*" to express their different views and ideas and clarify facts, such as (8):

(8) “我给你说,上回说我过年赌钱竟是她胡吊扯出来类!其实我压根都没有赌钱,你也白听她胡吊扯。”(公众号 2016.5.4,CCL)

"Let me tell you, the last time I said that I bet money for the New Year was actually pulled out of her class! In fact, I didn't gamble at all, and you listened to her nonsense for nothing." (2016.5.4, CCL)

Example (8) The speaker uses "*wo gei ni shuo*" to draw out his disagreement with the gambling statement "*shang hui shuo wo guo nian du qian jing shi ta hu diao che chu lai lei*!" to clarify the fact that there is no gambling "*qi shi wo ye gen jiu mei you du qian*".

3.3. Evaluation and suggestion function

Discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" can lead to the speaker's evaluation of a certain person or thing, and on the basis of subjective evaluation, they put forward their own suggestions, usually raised questions above, such as (9):

(9) “我要求他在网上对我表达他的爱意,在网上向所有人表白对我的爱。我觉得我这样的要求并不过分?”

“过分?我给你说,你太天真了,你的要求能触及他的筋骨吗?不能,所以绝对不要相信他的话。”(百科,CCL)

"I asked him to express his love for me online, to declare his love for me online to everyone. I don't think I'm asking too much?"

"Too much? *wo gei ni shuo*, you are naive. Can your request touch his bones? No, so never take his word for it." (Encyclopedia, CCL)

The preceding query inquires, "*wo jue de wo zhe yang de yao qiu bing bu guo fen*?" The speaker subsequently employs the phrase "*wo gei ni shuo*" to convey their belief that "*ni tai tian zhen le*" and proceeds to offer counsel: "*suo yi jue dui bu yao xiang xin ta de hua*"

3.4. Imperative function

The discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" has the pragmatic function of leading the imperative sentence, which is a sentence that asks the other person to do or not to do something, and has the imperative tone, which can be divided into two categories: one is to indicate command and prohibition, and the other is to indicate request and dissuade (Huang Borong and Liao Xudong, 2017). The discourse mark "I say to you" has the function of strengthening the mood when leading the first kind of imperative sentences, while it has the function of easing the mood when leading the second kind of imperative sentences. "*wo gei ni shuo*" leads the first type of imperative, as in example (10):

(10) “彼佳,我给你说,住嘴!”伯爵喊道。(盛震江译《战争与和平》,CCL)

"Petya, *wo gei ni shuo*, shut up!" "Cried the count. (Translated by Sheng Zhenjiang, War and Peace, CCL)

The speaker elicits the demand for "*zhu zui*" with "*wo gei ni shuo*", indicating that "*bo jue*" commands "*bi jia*" to be silent, and forbids "*bi jia*" to speak, in a strong and resolute tone, reinforced by an exclamation point.

When "*wo gei ni shuo*" leads to the second type of imperative, it has a calming effect, as in example (11) :

(11) 姆妈厉声说道:“我给你说,我们只能去看看,不能提婚事。这事以后再说。”(公众号 2016.4.16,CCL)

The mother snapped, "*wo gei ni shuo*, we can only go to see, not to mention the marriage. We can talk about that later." (Public number 2016.4.16, CCL)

The speaker uses "*wo gei ni shuo*" to elicit the negative view of "*wo men zhi neng qu kan kan*", indicating that the speaker's dissuasion of "*ti hun shi*" is gentler in tone.

4. The Formation and Evolution of the Discourse Mark "*wo gei ni shuo*"

lexicalization is the solidification of syntactic units into words, that is, the process in which a phrase or other linguistic units determined by grammar become a stable lexical item after undergoing time changes and enter the lexical system [10]. grammaticalization refers to the process or phenomenon in which words with real meaning in a language are transformed into elements without real meaning and only represent grammatical functions. In traditional Chinese linguistics, lexicalization is called "virtual word" [8].

Regarding the lexicalization of discourse marks "*wo gei ni shuo*", Dong Xiufang (2010) believes that discourse marks formed by phrases or clauses are usually idiomization (idiomization is the primary stage of lexicalization), and there are variants of discourse marks in this process [2]. This study holds that discourse marks "*wo gei ni shuo*" evolve from the phrasing. The clauses "*wo gei ni shuo X*", such as "*wo gei ni shuo yi jian shi*", their overall form is not necessary for expression. The grammaticization of the discourse mark "*wo gei ni shuo*" is the grammaticization of "*gei*" and "*shuo*" in "*wo gei ni shuo*", and the "*gei*" introduces the addressee "you" from the verb to the preposition, forming the prepositional phrase to modify "*shuo*", while the communicative subject "*wo*", after combining with the verb "*shuo*", gradually weakens the conceptual meaning of "*shuo*" through time development and change. "I say" shows a subjective tendency from action meaning to modal meaning, and some of the conceptual meaning of "*wo gei ni shuo*" gradually disappears, and the function of discourse organization and interpersonal interaction is gradually enhanced, and it turns into discourse marker [4].

In the process of lexicalization and grammaticalization of "*wo gei ni shuo*", this study believes that both are carried out simultaneously. On the whole, the occurrence and completion of grammaticalization and lexicalization are mutually possible. Among them, from the perspective of the occurrence and completion of lexicalization, this possibility comes from the fact that the "*shuo*" in "*wo gei ni shuo*" can be used as a discourse marker after the grammaticalization is completed (Fang Mei, 2018). After the completion of the elaboration, "*shuo*" cannot serve as a syntactic component alone and cannot take an object afterwards, thus making the discourse marker "*wo gei ni shuo*" lexicalized. From the perspective of the occurrence and completion of grammaticization, in the evolution of "*wo gei ni shuo*", "*wo*" gradually becomes the subject of speech, not the real subject of the clause. The combination of "*wo*" and the imaginary "*shuo*" indicates the subjective tendency in modality, the syntactic structure and conceptual meaning gradually disappear, and the pragmatic function is gradually enhanced. It provides the possibility for the lexicalization process in which the clause "*wo gei ni shuo*" gradually evolves into "*wo gei ni shuo*". In general, the deletion of "*X*"

in "wo gei ni shuo X" sometimes does not affect the expression of sentence structure and semantics, which can provide conditions for the lexicalization of "wo gei ni shuo". The lexicalization of "wo gei ni shuo" is the basis of the grammaticalization of its internal components, that is, the grammaticalization of internal components is carried out at the level of "wo gei ni shuo", instead of "wo gei ni shuo X". And the grammaticalization of the internal components of "wo gei ni shuo" makes it possible to lexicalize the internal components of "wo gei ni shuo". Lexicalization and grammaticalization are carried out simultaneously and interact with each other, making "wo gei ni shuo" eventually evolve into discourse markers.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the discourse marker corpus "wo gei ni shuo" in CCL corpus, this paper investigates the use position, discourse function and evolution from two perspectives. The main conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, in terms of usage location, the discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" can be used in the middle, at the beginning, and at the end of a sentence. "wo gei ni shuo" is most frequently used in the middle, with its semantic meaning referring to the following information unit, while a few its pragmatic meaning refers to the previous information unit. The frequency of using "wo gei ni shuo" at the beginning of a sentence is second highest when all semantics point to the following information unit. The utterance marker "wo gei ni shuo" is least frequently used at the end of a sentence when all semantic meanings refer to the previous information unit.

Secondly, in terms of pragmatic function, discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" has four interpersonal interactive pragmatic functions: emphasizing information, subjective cognition, evaluation and suggestion, and imperative. The main function is to elicit the speaker's subjective attitude and suggestion, and attract the attention of the speaker.

Thirdly, with regard to formation and evolution, this study proposes that the emergence and development of the discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" can be attributed to simultaneous processes of lexicalization and grammaticalization. The lexicalization of "wo gei ni shuo" serves as the foundation for the grammaticalization of its internal components, which takes place at the level of "wo gei ni shuo" rather than "wo gei ni shuo X". The grammaticalization of these internal components, such as "shuo" and "wo shuo", facilitates the possibility for lexicalizing "wo gei ni shuo", thereby mutually influencing each other in shaping its evolution into a discourse marker.

This study examines the discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" from various perspectives; however, there are still some limitations. Firstly, due to the volume of this article, different forms of the discourse marker "wo gei ni shuo" were not analyzed in this study. In future research, we will focus on comparing and contrasting the usage patterns and functions of "wo gei ni shuo" and its variants. Secondly, due to time constraints, this study only investigated the CCL corpus; future studies will conduct a more comprehensive analysis including the BCC corpus and other corpora. By exploring its usage positions, pragmatic functions, as well as its formation and evolution process as a discourse marker, this study identifies three distinct usage positions for "wo gei ni shuo", along with their respective frequencies and semantic orientations. Additionally, it analyzes four pragmatic functions in interpersonal interactions. Applying these findings in text-based instruction can enhance students' comprehension of conversational texts and improve their reading skills. Furthermore, when applied in international Chinese education settings, it can facilitate better language acquisition for international students by enhancing their oral communication abilities.

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