

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The relationship between language and discourse has been one of the most extensively discussed areas in linguistics. Many linguists believe that one of the most accessible ways to understand the structure of language is through spoken discourse in which the formulaic linguistic patterns are truly manifested (Biq 2000). In this study, we would adopt a corpus-based approach to examine the interaction between Chinese complementation structure and spoken discourse. In particular, we aim to investigate how the use of Chinese complementizer *shuo* is conditioned by discourse factors and what discourse functions complementizer *shuo* performs. Furthermore, this study also aims to examine how the discourse functions performed by complementizer *shuo* are related to those performed by discourse marker *shuo*, as shown in *ruguo shuo* “if”.

#### 1.1 Definition of Complementation and Complementizer

Complementation structure refers to a context in which a sentential or phrasal unit serves as an argument of the predicate. In a broader sense, complementation can be a very general notion, which includes all obligatory constituents of the predicate. Noonan (1985) gives a typical definition of complementation:

By complementation we mean the syntactic situation that arises when a notional sentence or predication is an argument of a predicate (1985:42)

The argument can either be a subject, an object of a predicate verb or a complement of a copula. For example, a complement can be placed in a subject position as shown in (1), where the italicized parts function as the subject of the predicate verb *annoy* (Noonan 1985:42):

- (1) a. *That Elliot entered the room* annoyed Floyd.  
b. *Elliot's entering the room* annoyed Floyd.  
c. *For Elliot to enter the room* would annoy Floyd.

A complement can also be an object of a verb as shown in (2), where all of the italicized parts serve as the object of the predicate verb *remember*. (Noonan 1985:42):

- (2) a. Zeke remembered *that Nell left*.  
b. Zeke remembered *Nell's leaving*.  
c. Zeke remembered *to leave*.

Also, a complement can follow a copula to serve as an elaboration of the subject as shown in (3), where the italicized parts are the complements of their BE-verb copulas (Bresnan 1970:313):

- (3) a. Your problem is *that you are arrogant*.  
b. The command was *for all troops to move out*.  
c. The main question is *whether they will support us*.

Complementizers are the items which function to identify complements and link them to the predicate verb. Noonan (1985) maintains that complementizers can be a word, a particle, a clitic or an affix, with different languages requiring different types of complementizers. In English, the common complementizers include indicative *that*, WH words such as *if* and *whether*, gerundial suffix *-ing* and infinitival marker *to*, as we can see in (1), (2) and (3). As different complementizers are used, different interpretations of the complements are yielded.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

Previous research has shown that languages may use different complementizers to mark complementation structure, and different complementizers in turn often yield

different interpretations of the complementation structure. Some researchers have proved that different complementizers in English indeed code different functions of the complementation structure (Bresnan 1970, 1972, Noonan 1985, Frajzyngier 1991, 1995, Frajzyngier & Jaspersen 1991, Thompson & Mulac 1991-a, 1991-b). The same phenomenon is also observed in Japanese complementation structure (Suzuki 2000).

Along this line, Chinese, like English and Japanese, may use different forms of complementizers to mark complementation structure. It has been maintained that the saying verb *shuo* can function as a complementizer in Chinese (Li and Thompson 1981, Huang 1982, 2003, Wang et al. 2000, 2003, Su 2002, 2004). Some of the previous studies attempted to examine the syntactic functions of complementizer *shuo* (Li and Thompson 1981) while others focus on its semantic features (Huang 1982, 2003). Nevertheless, no study has been devoted to the discussion on the optionality of complementizer *shuo*, given the fact that complementizer *shuo* is not grammatically required. In other words, how the presence and the absence of complementizer *shuo* differ in the interpretation of the complementation structure in discourse deserves further study.

Unlike the previous studies, the purpose of the current study is to examine how different types of complementation structures in Chinese perform different functions from a discourse-pragmatic perspective. We believe that the occurrence of complementizer *shuo* is discourse-conditioned. The presence of complementizer *shuo* performs certain discourse functions and that these functions are associated with the nature of interaction in conversation. Furthermore, it will also be pointed out in this study that the discourse functions of *shuo* have been extended to non-complementation structure, an adverbial connective position. We will investigate the data where *shuo* functions as a discourse marker such as in *jiushi shuo* “that is to say,” *piru shuo* “for example,” *bru shuo* “for instance” and *ruguo shuo* “if.”

### **1.3 Organization of the Thesis**

Following this chapter, Chapter Two will review previous studies on complementizers in different languages primarily English and Chinese. Chapter Three details the database and research questions. Chapter Four discusses the discourse functions of *shuo* as a complementizer and how these functions are conditioned by discourse factors. Chapter Five focuses on the discourse functions of *shuo* as a discourse marker in a connective frame and how these functions are related to those of *shuo* as a complementizer. Chapter Six summarizes the findings of this study and proposes suggestions for further research.