A Textual Research on the Function of "Some People Say" in Modern Chinese

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Abstract

"Some people say" have an obvious connective function in the discourse, which constitutes "communicative speech block" or "speech block", that is, "Some people say + direct elements". Based on a large number of corpus observations, this paper discusses the position, function and co-occurrence of "Some people say", with a view to complementing the study of speech-like parenthesis.

Key words: "Some people say"; Nature; Text position; Text function

INTRODUCTION

"Parenthesis" is a sentence combination. It has very flexible location, fixed or semi-fixed form and do not participate in the sentence, which attached to the sentence, and it cannot be independent of the sentence and have special effects on the semantics. For example: *You see, it seems*, *I said*, *no doubt* and so on. In the past, the study of the parenthesis was confined to the syntactic level. In recent years, with the introduction and development of pragmatics and discourse linguistics, the research in this area has also increased. Liao (1986) studied the textual connective function of this kind of composition from the aspect of text. Si (2009) did a more comprehensive study on the parenthesis, and examined the subjectivity of the parenthesis and other pragmatic functional significance

from the pragmatic point of view. There has been a great deal of research on discourse markers, but there is no special research on the parenthesis of "Some people say", which has a high frequent use. Therefore, this article will start a multi-angle discussion on the parenthesis of "Some people say", in order to make up the vacancy of speech-like parenthesis.

1. THE NATURE OF "SOME PEOPLE SAY"

The author took "Some people say" as search word, a total of 5033 corpus were retrieved from CCL Modern Chinese corpus of Peking University, and 9111 corpus were retrieved by inputting "(someone) $ 10(say)"[1]. Through analysis, we take "Some people say" as a typical form, and take the parenthesis of other components (or Some people say, Some people explain, etc.) in the middle or end sentence as varies form of "Some people say".

According to Li (2013), "if the phrase in question has multiple meanings and multiple properties, it should be further decomposed into its various meanings, its use and its nature." Through the observation of corpus, "Some people say" can be found in two types: The first one has a clear text connective function in a sentence. The other one has grammatical function in a sentence. This paper only studies "Some people say" in the first case, which has a clear text connective function. For example:

[Some people say], clouds and fog are the water vapor that evaporated into the air. The cloud is floating in the sky and the fog filled the ground, which this statement is wrong.

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[1] (Some people) $10 (say) said: There are less than or equal to 10 characters between "Some people" and say in order to get more data and avoid missing data which may failed to retrieve, and to determine the nature of "Some people say" and whether other ingredients can be added into it.

1.1 The Inner Structure of "Some People Say"

The sentence of "Some people say" can be described as: personal pronoun "people" + [modified components (verbs or adverbials, etc.)] + Verbs "Speech / Words" + [modified components (auxiliary words)]. From a grammatical point of view, "Some people say" is a pivotal sentences, "people" both do the object of "have", and do the subject of "say", but through a large number of corpus analysis, we can be found that verb "have" have the signs of grammaticalization. For example:

(a) A good garden, just like a good poem or a good song: Have scenery, [people] and feeling.

(b) When I was in high school, [Some people say] If someone blinded his eyes to listen to my singing, he would think I was Qi Qin. I like people say that I am Qi Qin, because I particularly like him.

From the above two examples, we can easily see that in the example (a), the word "have" emphasizes on the "existence", so the verb "have" is very strong and is a notional verb; while the "have" in example (b) does not emphasize the verbal meaning in semantics, but refers to somebody[2]. In this regard, Cai (2004) explained that such "have" is virtual and it acts as auxiliary verbs. By searching the corpus that tagged part of speech, we find that "somebody" is mostly labeled "r" (personal pronoun). Therefore, from the point of function and nature view, "someone" is a temporary predicate-object structure, some of which is a person deixis (third person pronoun) that have a certain solidification and with the tendency of lexicalization. In this paper, "someone" in the "Some people say" is regarded as third person pronouns with a clear tendency to compound words.

As for the coagulation problem of "Some people say", the search result is "0" and retrieval result of the input "Some people / r say/ v" is "536" by inputting "Some people say" in the national language corpus.

It can be seen that "Some people say" has a certain degree of coagulation, which is not strong and have many variants. In this paper, "Some people say" and its variants are considered as a phrase with the function of text cohesive function.

1.2 The Semantic Nature of "Some People Say"

When discussing the function of discourse markers, He (2006) mentions "communicative discourse markers" and puts "Some people say" into parenthesis, he believes that it has the function of discourse markers. He also points out that "Some people say" is the source of maker information. It reduces the subjectivity of the utterance or provides information by reporting others' words, so that the speaker can express his views more objectively and enhance the acceptability of the discourse. In addition,

from a pragmatic point of view, the use of hedges "Some people say" rather than the name means that the speaker is not sure the true extent of the report content at first, the speaker is avoiding responsibility secondly, the speaker is avoiding positive communication conflicts and enhance verbal acceptability in order to take care of each other's face thirdly. In addition, the speaker can also be under the guise of "Some people" to say a statement or explain their own attitude to a phenomenon, or attitude and emotion of things. It means that the "Some people say" refers to the speaker himself, and this reporting speech forms with a strong subjectivity and subjectification[3]. Shen (2001) points out that this type of language structure expresses the speaker's perspective, emotion and understanding. For example:

(a) If [Some people say]: "There must be 2 in 13 people that born in the same month." People will certainly be skeptical. In fact, this conclusion is correct, it is based on "pigeon principle" to come. (Assuming, people are not necessarily to say like that)

(b) When a stone fell into the water, and it soon sank into the water; when a leaf falls in the pond, the drift will float on the surface. Perhaps [Some people say] It is because that the stone is heavier than the leaf. So, the warships is made up of steel that more heavy than stone, how will not sink it? (conjecture, with strong subjectivity)

Through the observation, we can found that "Some people say" is mainly used to report the words of others or mark the contents of the statement, and the speech block constituted by "Some people say + report content" has a significant cohesive function with the context. Therefore, "Some people say" not only has the discourse marker function, but also has a clear chapter cohesive function.

2. "SOME PEOPLE SAY" AND THE DIRECT ELEMENT X OF THE CHAPTER

There are two forms of "discourse speech block": the first one is the former + chapter connective components + the latter, the other one is the text linking components + the latter. "Some people say" belongs to the second one, and it has the obvious mark and enlightening effect on the subsequent textual component (this article is set to X). "Some people say" is located at the beginning of the sentence in the majority cases, so "Some people say" has a clear chapter cohesive function to mark and enlighten the context.

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[2] *Modern Chinese Dictionary*. (2013, Sixth Edition) explained in "have" to verb and general reference, which have the similar function with "Some". See p.1578.

[3] "Subjectivity" refers to such a characteristic of language that the speaker of this passage show their position, attitudes and feelings while saying some words.

"Subjectification" refers to the language use corresponding structure form or experience the corresponding revolution process in order to express this subjectivity. See Shen Jiaxuan (2001).

2.1 The Features of "X"

First, from the aspect of syntactic properties and syntactic structure and judging from the tone of the sentence, the majority of X is declarative sentences, but it also have the case of Interrogative sentence:

[Some people say]: I sat in the house motionlessly, is it not static? Quiescence is there, but it is only a relatively still.

From the structure of the sentence, the majority of X is a single sentence, there are also complex sentences and sentence groups. For example:

(a)   We tried our best to fight the game. [Some people say] I do not agree that I beat the opponent alone. (Single sentence)

(b)   When I was in high school, [Some people say] If someone blinded his eyes to listen to my singing, he would think I was Qi Qin. (Assuming complex sentences)

Second, from the aspect of semantic aspect, X states the contents, most of which are statements of the objective facts or phenomenon. For example:

(a)   [Some people say], Behind every successful man, there is an extraordinary woman.

(b)   [Some people say], "syndrome" would have to "comprehensive management", but by whom "integrated"?

2.2 The Relationship Between "Some People Say" and X

"To determine whether a word is a text connective component or not," Liao (1986) pointed, "we not only need to see its function, but also to see its position", which emphasizing the location have the auxiliary function. He also suggested that "the majority of the connecting elements in the text are located at the beginning of the sentence, which before the subject, and only a few of them are located before the predicate in the sentence." Observed, "Some people say" is almost like this. For example:

Materialism believes that the primacy of the world is matter. What is the "matter"? [Some people say]: Doesn't the "matter" is the specific things that we usually contact? This answer is good, but not the philosophical sense of "matter".

In addition, there are still other occasions between "Some people say" and X, for example:

She was cute, but a little lazy, [Some people say], she always wanted to lie in bed for a while in the morning.

There is only an unlined garment on the dead man, who has the riddled look. "He must have been died of frozen." [Some people say].

Although the special situation is rare , it still can be found that "Some people say" has its own unique position and function when compared with other elements of the text, The position of "Some people say" is more flexible , which can be located before the X (sentence-initial), can

also be located in the X (in the sentence) or after X (in the end of the sentence). When located at the beginning of the sentence, "Some people say" have obvious function to mark and enlighten the following text unit. When located in the sentence, such as in the preceding sentence, "Some people say" can not only highlight the sentence of "she is very cute, but a little lazy" from a functional point of view, but also have the function to enlighten and emphasize the following sentence of "she always wanted to lie in bed for a while in the morning." When located at the end of the sentence, "Some people say" have the function of complement and highlight the preceding text. As the preceding example, "Some people say" added and explained the preceding sentence of " must have been died of frozen", which stressed that some people said but there is no conclusive evidence to demonstrate "the dead man" must have been died of frozen.

3.   THE CONTEXT AND THE FUNCTION OF "SOME PEOPLE SAY"

If C is used as the parenthesis of "Some people say", "X" is the core sentence co-occurring with "Some people say" (or the marked content of "Some people say"), then the sentence can be expressed as: C + X. "C + X" constitutes a verbal comment block (Li, 2012). If the sentence has the preceding sentence or the following sentence, it can be expressed as: (A) + C + X + (B).

3.1   The Relationship Between "C + X" and the Preceding Sentence A

There are differences between "Some people say + X" and "in other words," "Frankly speaking" and other language blocks, which shows that the language block can be connected to the preceding sentence A and the following sentence B simultaneously, it can also connect only one of them. Through the analysis of corpus, we can be found in the speech block and the preceding sentence A mainly have the following relations:

(a) As a follow-up sentence, "C + X" is a summary or inference of the preceding text, for example:

Ancient Japan often compared samurai to the carp. On one hand, the Japanese love to eat the living carp that killed by a knife, while on the other hand, they also have good impression of it. Therefore [Some people say], the happy dispatch of Japanese have the relation to carp more or less.

(b) "C + X" as a follow-up sentence is the explanation of the reason or result of the above phenomena or events:

Lu Xiaofeng reluctantly smiled and said: "You are not old, [Some people say], the life was really began when a man over his fifty." (Explain the reason)

(c) The turn relationship between "C + X" and the preceding sentence A, for example:

In the Qinghai Tibet Plateau, people can often see the snow lotus with their fearless and lofty characters. [Some

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people say], the couple of Chen Jinshui and Liu Xiaoyun are just like a snow lotus.

The preceding sentence of "Some people say" talks about the "Snow Lotus" problem, The connection component of the X and the following is talk about the story of "Liu Xiaoyun and Chen Jinshui" , which belongs to two topics, and the two topics can form the transfer that realized by the two synonymous terms: "snow lotus" and "lotuses".

To sum up, from the structure of the chapter, the relationship between "C + X" and the preceding sentence A have three cases, which include forward, reverse and turn.

3.2 The Relationship Between "C + X" and the Following Sentence B

The semantic and structural relationships between "C + X" and the preceding sentence A are discussed above, and next we will discuss the relationship between "C + X" and the following sentence B. Through observation, "Some people say + X" and the following sentence B mainly has the following structure relations:

(a) "C + X" and the following sentence B constitutes a turning relationship, for example:

[Some people say], the Greeks works in procrastination and have no definite idea. However, journalists in the 12th Paralympic Games came to see this fact ....

(b) Following sentence B explained the "C + X", for example:

"[Some people say] I did not do well this season, so I hope to win in Athens and draw a full stop to this year's competition," said Kousuke Kitajima.

(c) There are anaphora and reference relationship between the following sentence B and "C + X", and it comments on the speech block which includes positive comments, negative comments, and the speaker has not given any comment but requires the speaker or reader other than himself to comment, for example:

The international community must prevent the rise of unilateralism in today's world, which is becoming increasingly interconnected, said Albert. [Some people say], It is wrong to say that only unilateralism that can play a role when countries cannot reach agreement.

This can be obtained that the relationship between the following sentence B and discourse block of "Some people say + X" have mainly two types: forward and reverse.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, "Some people say" has more flexible location, which can appear at the beginning of the sentence and

the middle of the sentence, it also can appear between the subject and predicate with "subjective" meaning. The speaker also strengthens the statement, which combined with the use of language means, such as modal adverbs, modal auxiliary words and the repetition of words. Therefore, the majority of "C + X" in the sentence is a declarative sentence with steady tone, only a few of them is the non-question rhetorical question. X can be a single sentence, it can also be one or a few of clauses in a complex sentence that have cis or turn the semantic relationship between the context. "Some people say" can make the transition of context more natural in cis, and "Some people say" have the subjective and disjunctive connectivity in turn.

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