

Paragraph Comprehension from the Perspective of Conjunctions and Structure under Structuralism

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Abstract

People frequently struggle with comprehending the text they read and require more intensive support to develop proficiency in reading comprehension. Some find it perplexing observing all the elements and constituents of the paragraph theory. Good readers, however, can understand what a paragraph is by studying the conjunction relationships between sentences and group of sentences in the paragraph and can also understand the organization of the text by analyzing the conjunction relationships in a paragraph or a text when they deal with a written text. Such analysis of the conjunction relationships in a paragraph or a text can be used as a basis for understanding how the author organizes and presents materials. The inspiration of structuralist view of education is that students need to learn and discover the structure of knowledge. The research methods of the paper are ones of knowledge, experience, observation, logical reasoning and keen analysis of English examples or materials. This paper provides guidance for the skills of logical relationship comprehension, text structure determination and main idea identification, and introduces some practices of using the skills. These skills have brought us some findings: We can use the conjunction relationships between the sentences in a paragraph to determine the structure of the paragraph, whether they are signaled or unsignaled, including finding the main idea; The contextual clues can be adverbs, pronouns, nouns, verbs, and preposition groups besides conjunctions; Items in one type of relationships are of equal weight and one sentence in another type of relationships is given more importance than the others; There is a relationship between the type of conjunction relationship involved and the location of the topic sentence; The role of the main idea or topic sentence is not in whether it always provides important information, but in its organizational function. These findings guide readers to apply the knowledge of paragraph organization system to help them deal with English texts.

Keywords: conjunction relationships, structure, main idea, organization, paragraph analysis

1. Introduction

For college students, the development goal of reading comprehension is to successfully read articles related to their major in English newspapers and English literature, integrate relevant contents, analyze the author's views and positions, and better understand the logical structure and implied meaning (2020, College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education of China). Therefore, improving students' structural ability has become an important factor in college English reading comprehension. In order to effectively learn the structure and improve reading comprehension, students must pay attention to what is being said or how it is being said. An important advantage of doing this is that students' attention is focused on the language features that will occur again and again. Their study today will make tomorrow's reading more effective. When reading, they must understand texts, not just a text. They must be interested in the features of reading texts and the strategies to deal with them that are generalizable. These features and strategies can include pronoun reference, lexical cohesion, guessing words from context and comprehending complex sentences.

Teachers must help students understand the logical relationships in texts, build the awareness of using the logical relationships in texts as the framework for students' reading comprehension, and explicitly teach students to use the logical relationship in the text to understand the text structure, so as to support students' reading comprehension ability. Although comprehension instruction is only one part of the overall literacy block, it may be essential to lay a solid foundation for students' complex comprehension skills (Hudson et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers must strengthen the guidance of understanding the logical relationships in texts, determining the text

structure and identifying the main idea, and use some practices and skills to help students with continuous reading comprehension difficulties. This paper studies the skills of understanding a paragraph, including finding the main idea.

1.1 On Paragraph Comprehension under Structuralism

1.1.1 Literature Review on Paragraphs and Structures

Paragraphs have a number of functions in discourse studies. For example, it encourages a writer to pay full attention to the diverse aspects of his or her information; It helps to distinguish one idea in an article from another idea (Owusu, 2020). The paragraph can be regarded as a discourse marker, a powerful technique, a device for structure, a unit of grammatical and lexical devices, a helping hand for readability, a pillar of cultivating writers, a pedagogical problem, or all these and more (Duncan, 2020). The study by Owusu recommended that second language teachers should pay special attention to students' paragraphs, especially in writing of concluding sentences, and observance of paragraph transitions, that is, paragraph coherence. In addition to the unity of idea and topic, paragraphs also need to achieve the coherence of expression. The sentences in the paragraphs in the article need to be naturally and logically linked together rather than stacked together.

Some classical second language writers (such as: Stern, 1976; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Warriner, 1988; Lunsford & Connors, 1995; Driscoll & Brizee, 2000; Langan, 2001; Sekyi-Baidoo, 2003; Kirzner & Mandell, 2007 and Beare, 2012) on discourse researches have paid attention to the key theoretical issues of paragraph theory such as: definition, types, structure and elements (Owusu, 2020).

The main characteristics of structured literacy methods include explicit, systematic and sequential literacy teaching at multiple levels-----phonemes, letter-sound relationships, syllable patterns, morphemes, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and text structure (Spear-Swerling, 2019). The research done by Strong (2021) shows that text structure is not a standard or skill that can only be taught occasionally. Instead, students should be taught how to identify and use text structures every time they read in all content areas.

There is a system behind paragraph organization. In other words, there are paragraph development patterns such as enumeration, order or sequence, definition, compare/contrast, classification and analysis, cause and effect, problem-solution-evaluation, persuasion and argumentation. The research (Sabarun, 2019) found that most respondents (50%) stated that the skills to develop through the paragraph writing course was the understanding of the paragraph development.

1.1.2 Bruner's Structuralist View of Education

On the Basic Structure of Discipline

Bruner (1960) put forward the idea of the basic structure of discipline when constructing his teaching theory. He believes that any discipline has a basic structure, that is to say, its internal regularity. The so-called basic structure refers to the basic concepts, basic principles and laws of various disciplines. No matter what subject we teach, our teaching must enable students to understand the basic structure of the subject. This is the minimum requirement in the application of knowledge, so as to help students solve the problems or resolve events encountered outside the classroom or in future classroom because these basic structures reflect the connection between things and include universality and strong adaptability. Understanding the basic principles can make the subject easier to understand; Understanding the basic principles is conducive to human memory. Teaching the basic structure of the subject will help students understand the subject and remember knowledge. When people learn something, they lose their memory, but they also keep something in mind, which will make them rethink when they need it. At the same time, learning the basic structure reduces the gap between high-level and low-level knowledge, which is conducive to students' learning by analogy and drawing inferences from one instance. He stressed that students should actively participate in the learning process of knowledge construction and structure formation, and master the general relationship between the whole knowledge and things rather than the conclusion of sporadic experience or things or knowledge.

It should be noted that if you are familiar with a discipline, you should not only master the basic structure of the discipline, but also master the attitude and methods of the discipline.

On Discovery Learning

Discovery teaching mode is the central concept of Bruner's structural curriculum theory. One of the safeguards of discovery learning is that teachers talk about basic principles, guide students to explore, induce and maintain students' enthusiasm for exploration (Bruner, J. S., 1960). Discovery learning is based on Bruner's cognitive

psychology learning theory. He believes that learning is to establish a cognitive structure, which is equivalent to what we call the subjective world and the composition of the experience system in the mind. The establishment of cognitive structure is an active subjective activity with subjective initiative. Therefore, Bruner attaches great importance to active learning and emphasizes that students think, explore and discover things by themselves.

1.1.3 Feasibility of College Students' Learning Structure under Structuralism

Compared with primary school students, college English teaching can be modernized and theorized, and the course content can be abstracted; In addition to basic knowledge and skills, college students also need the education and training of advanced English structures; Despite the development trend of continuous differentiation and integration of knowledge, college students need to understand the relationship types of the internal knowledge structure of the discipline itself in order to learn the differentiated knowledge of various disciplines; Although there are universal connections and mutual penetration between the knowledge of various disciplines, college students need to understand the differences between the knowledge of various disciplines so as to actively or passively accept the fragmented knowledge, systematize the fragmentary knowledge and form their own knowledge network; Implementing discovery learning method once in a while is undoubtedly an effective means. Whether students firmly grasp knowledge, cultivate various psychological qualities, form inquiry habits and develop students' transfer ability is of great value; Using discovery teaching mode combined with other teaching methods can teach students to learn structure while learning indirect knowledge; The discovery learning method is applicable to college students as college students have mastered a lot of knowledge, have rich social practice experience and know all kinds of phenomena and can think more independently than little children; Discovery learning method encourages students to explore and guess boldly, explore and discover the laws of things, and master the methods of exploration. Learners will gradually establish scientific exploration methods in the practice of solving problems and trying to find problems through practice; Using discovery teaching method can reduce students' dependence on teachers and teaching materials, cultivate students' curiosity, reasoning ability and observation ability so that they can master the methods of exploring problems, acquire knowledge and become a discoverer; It is a valuable theory to combine the structure of mastering knowledge with the structure of discovering knowledge, but Bruner makes it absolute, which affects students' interest in learning. However, after a period of learning and discovering the knowledge structure, students' interest will increase.

2. Paragraph Comprehension from the Perspective of Conjunctions and Structure

2.1 *The Structure of Paragraphs: The Learner Should Know*

Once a writer decides on the appropriate form or forms of genre to convey the material most effectively, he or she develops a plan to use the proper form or forms of patterns for organizing paragraphs, passages, or entire texts.

A text conveys the author's ideas, and if it is well written, it conveys them coherently. The typical straight line of development of an English paragraph is the basis of its coherence (Bander, 1978). An English paragraph is coherent when its ideas are clearly related to each other in orderly sequence. Each sentence in this paragraph should naturally grow out of each previous sentence in the process of developing the central idea. Ideally, there should be a sense of movement or flow, a going forward and building on what has been said before. In other words, the sentences in the text should be combined in a meaningful way. They should come together in a way that provides a structure for the paragraph. In some types of paragraphs, this structure indicates what the author thinks is more or most important. Prominence is an organizational language principle which plays a role in all levels of language representation including discourse structure (Schumacher & von Heusinger, 2019). Mature readers can see and explain this structure. It is conveyed to the reader through the conjunction relationship between sentences and groups of sentences in the paragraph. Readers can observe a paragraph's coherence by looking at conjunctions, signal words or various transitions added by the writer to alert the reader to the direction the development idea is taking. Conjunctions facilitate text cohesion and comprehension by making explicit the logical relationships between ideas in written language. Conjunctions play their novel, abstract, and text-connecting role. Fraser et al. (2021) pointed out that the confluence of general vocabulary and conjunctions leads to individual differences in English language learners' reading comprehension. Conjunctions are a special form of lexical knowledge, which should not be classified as general lexical knowledge in teaching.

Signal words can be found anywhere in the paragraph. Signal words form close connections between sentences and paragraphs and they are classified according to their function. The following methods/techniques or conjunction relationships are the different theme development methods employed by English language learners in performing written discourse (Shawish, 2018).

- 1) Addition: Some words signal more of the same to appear. For example: and, furthermore, more than that, also, likewise, moreover, in addition, what's more, next, too, besides.
- 2) A turn in the course of events/ turning words: Words that change the direction of thought include: however, but, otherwise, nevertheless, yet, still.
- 3) Order: first, second, then, after, before, when, next, last, at last, afterward, finally, last, at last, soon, meanwhile, in the end, until, to begin with.
- 4) Summary: in short, in conclusion, in brief, to sum up, in a word.
- 5) Cause and Effect: as a result, for, thus, because, for this reason, so, therefore, as, since, consequently, the reason is that, result from, so that, in order to, that's why, accordingly, result in.
- 6) Example: for example, for instance, such as, as, like.
- 7) Comparison and Contrast:

Comparison: first, furthermore, for one thing, another, too, moreover, equally important, then, at the same time, besides, in addition to, in fact, like.

Contrast: on the contrary, different from, on the other hand, unlike, whereas, despite, in contrast, although, instead.

- 8) Definition: Words that signal the author defines the specialized terminology. They are: is/are, is/are defined as, consist of, mean, is/are distinguished by, refer to, is/are commonly called, and is/are described as.
- 9) Alternative: or, nor, alternatively.
- 10) Restatement: in other words, that is to say, I mean, namely.
- 11) Amplification: to be more specific, thus, therefore, consist of, can be divided into.
- 12) Exclusion: instead, rather than, on the contrary.

Most often, context clues are implicit, so the reader must find out the relationship by considering the information in the sentence. If the context clues are explicit, various context clues can be used. The context clues are usually conjunctions, but they can be adverbs, pronouns, nouns, verbs, and preposition groups. The term *conjunction relationship* doesn't mean the use of a conjunction, but rather refers to the relationship between two or more sentences or clauses (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). A reader can also see how a writer achieves coherence by arranging a paragraph's details in a systematic way that is appropriate for the subject matter.

There are two types of relationships. In one type of relationships, the items involved carry equal weight. In another type of relationships, one sentence is given more importance than the others. These two types produce two kinds of paragraphs. One is a paragraph mainly composed of items with equal weight, and the other is a paragraph containing a topic sentence with details. With addition, alternative, time and arrangement and restatement, etc., the sentences should be combined in a way that provides a structure for the paragraph that indicates the author considers items, steps or information to be both important or equally important as they may involve more than two items. Example: X-ray therapy, that is, treatment by use of X-ray, often stops the growth of a tumor. Both *X-ray therapy* and *treatment by use of X-ray* are of equal weight.

With exemplification/example, amplification, summary, definition, exclusion, cause-effect, a turn during event, contrast, etc., on the contrary, sentences are formed by using paragraph structure to indicate what the author thinks is more or most important.

Example 1: The first part of the exam will consist of two pairs of slides. In this sentence, *two pairs of slides* describes *the first part of the exam* in greater detail; *the first part of the exam* is more important than *two pairs of slides*.

Example 2: We see the world wrong, on the contrary, the world deceived us. *The world deceived us* is more important than *We see the world wrong*. In this sentence *The world deceived us* is contrary to the expectation raised by *We see the world wrong*; *The world deceived us* is more important than *We see the world wrong*.

So, there are two types of conjunction relationship. The most common relationship with items of equal weight is the time or arrangement relationship. Each sentence describes a step in a process or in a series of events that occur in the description. Look at the example below. Readers must pay equal attention to each part of the description and construct a picture of how the ship sailed.

Example: The masts of a vessel were showing above the top of an iceberg. As the captain watched, the ship came into view from behind the berg. She passed the last of the ice along the channel and drifted into the open water. Her ice-covered masts, sails and ropes glittered in the sunlight. She looked like a ghost as she approached the whaler.

If the items in a conjunction relationship are not of equal weight, the reader must give a weighting to the appropriate item in the relationship to understand how the author organizes the paragraph. In amplification and exclusion (For example, *he speaks in concepts rather than specifics*. source: A Brief English-Chinese Dictionary) relationships, the most important items usually appear first. In this example, *in concepts* is more noticeable.

Then, the reader must look at how the paragraph deals with part or all of the first sentence in more detail. Example: The variety of things put up for sale is really wonderful—dishes, books, used clothing, tools, tires, empty bottles, bicycles, furniture. A man in Atlanta, Georgia, even sold a full-size replica of a 1931 Ford.

The second sentence gives more details of the first sentence and expresses the controlling idea “wonderful” of the topic sentence. From an organizational point of view, the first sentence is the topic sentence in the paragraph. This is a general statement, which is enriched by the rest of the paragraph.

In the turning relationship, the second item in the turning relationship is more important than the first item. For example, in the sentence *The return is uncertain. However, the investment is worth a try* the overall effect is positive because of the positive message of the second part of the turning relationship. In *The investment is worth a try. However, the return is uncertain* the overall effect is negative because of the negative message of the second part of the turning relationship. Here is another example of a turning relationship. The Japanese have their electronics, the Germans their engineering. But when it comes to command of global markets, the U.S. owns the service sector.

In this example, the turning relationship is signaled by *But*, and the noticeable idea is that *the U.S. owns the service sector*—the second part of the turning relationship.

Teachers can explicitly teach students to use the conjunction relationships between the sentences in a paragraph to determine the structure of the paragraph so as to identify a main idea statement, so as to support students' reading comprehension ability.

Now let's analyze a whole paragraph and see how the conjunction relationships determine the structure of the paragraph.

2.2 A Sample Analysis

Topics include paragraphs. By definition, a paragraph must have a main idea, a sense of unity around the idea, structural coherence, and all-round development; paragraphs are the structural elements of a cohesive manuscript; and the following paragraph can extend or refute the argument just put forward or introduce a new topic sentence (Hicks, 2020).

Main idea generation is a higher-level understanding skill, which requires students to read the text, connect the information across the paragraph or section of the paragraph, determine the most important information, and express the information in their own language. Many students find it difficult to produce main ideas because they have to actively think about the text (i.e., monitoring for meaning), determine the most important information, and eliminate irrelevant information or details. In order to help them understand and learn from text, they need to skillfully generate the main ideas of smaller parts of the text (Stevens & Vaughn, 2021). The following is an example showing how to use the conjunction relationships between the sentences in a paragraph to determine the paragraph structure and identify a main idea statement.

The following paragraph is about possible reasons for “dumb English” in China. Now let us use the conjunction relationships to determine the structure of the paragraph and identify the main idea statement.

(1) There are many reasons accounting for this dumb English in China. (2) First of all, examination-oriented educational system plays a vital role in China today. (3) Teachers and students neglect speaking practice because it is not heavily tested. (4) In addition, English is just a foreign language in China and students don't need to speak it for survival. (5) And lastly, the lacking of oral practice makes students turn out to be too shy to speak. (6) All these factors work together to contribute to the “dumb English” phenomenon.

Source: Jinding Peng, Paragraph Extension and Rhetoric in English Writing. jdpeng@126.com

Judging from the explicit and implicit causality, this paragraph is a causal structure. The first sentence *There are many reasons accounting for this dumb English in China* is the topic sentence of the paragraph. We can confirm our intuition by examining the conjunction relationships. Sentence (1) itself is in a cause-effect relationship. In

this relationship, *dumb English* is the effect and *many reasons* are the causes and *dumb English* is more important than *many reasons* as in a cause-effect relationship, the effect is generally more important than the cause. Sentences (1) and (2) are in a cause-effect relationship, (1) is the effect and (2) is the first cause or reason signaled by *First of all*. In this cause-effect relationship, sentence (1) is more likely to be the topic sentence than sentence (2) as sentence (1) contains the effect.

Sentence (3) itself is in a cause-effect relationship with the conjunction word *because*. Sentence (3) and sentence (2) are in a cause-effect relationship without the conjunction word *therefore* before sentence (3). We could insert words or phrases like *so, therefore, thus, hence, as a result* before sentence (3). Sentences in a cause-effect relationship are of no equal importance and the effect of sentence (3) could be given more weight than the cause of sentence (2). Because (3) is the effect and (2) is the cause while (1) is the effect, sentence (1) still remains the key sentence.

Sentence (4) is in a cause-effect relationship with sentence (1). (4) is the second cause or reason signaled by *In addition*, and (1) is the effect and is more important than (4). (4) and (2) are in a relationship of addition. Sentence (4) is equal to sentence (2), and (4) and (2) are the reasons, (1) is the effect, so sentence (1) remains the topic sentence.

Sentence (5) is in a cause-effect relationship with sentence (1). (5) is the third cause or reason signaled by *And lastly*, and (1) is the effect and is more important than (5). (5) (4) and (2) are in a relationship of addition. Sentence (5) is equal to sentence (4) and sentence (2), and (5) (4) and (2) are the reasons, (1) is the effect, so sentence (1) remains the topic sentence. Sentences in a relationship of addition are of equal importance, although the shortest or more general of the sentences could be given more weight.

Sentence (6) itself is a cause-effect relationship, with the *dumb English* phenomenon being the effect which is more important than *all these factors work together* being the reason in this cause-effect relationship. So, sentence (1) remains the topic sentence.

A coherent text involves conjunction relationships like those described above. In some texts, depending on the types of relationships, a paragraph has a topic sentence with more weight than the rest of the paragraph. In other texts, paragraphs contain almost equally important items. The role of the topic sentence depends in part on the type of conjunction relationship it is involved in. The topic sentence may contain the most important piece of information in the paragraph if the types of conjunction relationships are summary, cause and effect, amplification, exemplification, contrast, exclusion, transition. If the type of conjunction relationship is amplification, the topic sentence usually does not cover a great deal of information in the paragraph itself, but provides a generalization which prepares the reader for what follows. If the type of conjunction relationship is definition, the topic sentence may or may not contain a great deal of information in the paragraph. If the type of conjunction relation is amplification, the topic sentence usually does not cover a large amount of information of the paragraph itself, but provides a summary to prepare the reader for the next content.

The topic sentence is in the most cases the first sentence in a paragraph. Sometimes it is the last sentence and very rarely it appears between these two. Sometimes, the topic sentence is both the first and last sentence. There is a relationship between the kind of conjunction relationship involved and the position of the topic sentence. If the paragraph belongs to amplification or exemplification relationship, the topic sentence is most likely to be at the beginning. If it belongs to contrast or summary relationship, the topic sentence is most likely to appear finally. If the paragraph belongs to cause-and-effect or definition relationship, the topic sentences are likely to appear sometimes at the beginning, sometimes finally. "Being able to identify the main ideas within a complex multi-paragraph content-area text is an essential reading comprehension skill" (Shelton et al., 2021, pp. 217-223).

3. Pedagogical Implications

A number of important implications for English paragraph comprehension instruction follow from a belief of Bruner's Structuralist View of Education. Here I will elaborate the implications of Bruner's Structuralist View of Education for English paragraph comprehension instruction and will also examine how to use the conjunction relationships to help learners cope with paragraphs.

3.1 Implications for the Instruction of Structure

It is a common practice in college reading classroom that students rely on their teachers in their reading class. The teacher may go through texts word by word and sentence by sentence in order to let students understand everything about the text in terms of grammar and vocabulary. We are all aware that the role of grammar and

vocabulary is essential to the success of English language learners. However, this doesn't necessarily mean grammar and vocabulary are always the focus in the English reading classrooms.

Bruner's Structuralist View of Education shows that instruction of structure is one part of the overall literacy block. Therefore, our teaching must enable students to understand the basic structure of the English language in order to help students to learn outside the classroom or in future classroom and to apply the knowledge.

3.2 Suggested Paragraph Analysis Ways

Mature readers do not need to deliberately do the above analysis. They use intuition to know about the conjunction relationships and their positions in prominence and make judgements based on this as they read. In this way they find out the organizational structure of a paragraph, look for the topic sentence, and judge which parts of the paragraph are comparatively important. If they cannot, they can use the methods suggested below to make decisions intuitively.

The reader can figure out where the main idea in a paragraph is by the kind of analysis of the paragraph about *dumb English*. Often, students can learn from teachers giving an explanation of the structure through an example (Stevens & Vaughn, 2021). The research shows that the teaching of text structure can improve students' reading comprehension of expository texts (Roehling et al., 2017). It is useful for teachers to use such paragraph analysis as an example to teach students to understand paragraphs. In order to gain an advantage, students should be familiar with the relationships and their weightings. They don't need to be very skilled in identifying relationships in the text, but they need to find out how the teacher analyzes the paragraph and follow teachers' analysis of the paragraph. They need to do some exercises to make decisions or judgments about whether the paragraph has a main idea, or just a group of sentences with equal weight. The easiest way to get familiar with various relationships is to start with relationship of signal words because signal words provide some clues to the relationship. Some relationships of signal words, however, are not direct and care is needed. Some signal words are inexplicit. *Thus*, for example, can be a signal word of cause-effect, exemplification, and amplification. *While* can be a signal word of time or contrast. Some signal words are misleading. *On the contrary* signals exclusion not contrast. *All the same* signals contrast and not inclusion.

After readers get familiar with marked relationships involving two sentences or clauses, they can move to the study of marked relationships where a part of the relationship consists of several sentences or clauses. By asking them to propose markers that can be placed between sentences, a study of relationships without signal words becomes easier.

Before using the conjunction relationships between the sentences in a paragraph to teach students how to determine the paragraph structure to identify the main idea statement, "students need to learn that texts are organized in specific ways" (Stevens & Vaughn, 2021, pp. 300-308). The teacher can post guiding questions that students can ask to help identify the structure of the passage and find the topic sentence like: What kind of paragraph development pattern is this? How are two sentences related to each other? Are they of equal weight? Or is one more important than the other? Or is one the most important among them? What signal words tell us their mutual relationships? What signal words could be placed between sentences? If readers don't get familiar with the types of conjunction relationship, analogy and intuition would work for them.

Readers can practice reading the first sentence of the paragraph, then stop to guess what the rest of the paragraph is about, and to explain how the clues in the first sentence enabled them to guess. After guessing and proving reasonable, they look at the text. In most cases, there is enough information in the first sentence to make a reasonable and accurate prediction. Stevens (2021) stated, "Stopping to identify the most important information after reading a brief section of text supports monitoring for understanding" (pp. 300-308).

Teachers can improve the students' reading comprehension by an intensive main idea identification strategy, sentence-level message, which requires students to determine the subject and important words in each sentence, and then synthesize this information to write a main idea statement for a section of the text (Pollack et al., 2021).

Here are some examples.

(1) I know that both of you think going college is a good chance, a chance you never had, and I know you are right.

The clues in this sentence are *both of you think* and *I know*. It can be predicted that the next sentence begins with *But* and contains the main idea. As predicted, the next sentence is: But I also realize that you want me to use my own judgment, and what you want most is to make me happy.

(2) Professor Harmer carried out a series of experiments on sunflowers in the field to study the reason for the sunflower tracking the sun.

Source: Andy Fell (2016). *Sunflowers Move by the Clock*.

The clues are the indefinite or general noun groups *a series of experiments* and *the reason for the sunflower tracking the sun*. It is expected that these will be discussed in more detail and in fact they are dealt with later—the general noun groups (*experiments on sunflowers in the field, in pots outdoors and in indoor growth chambers*) and the reason (*A plant growth-regulating hormone, called auxin, appears to be a key driver*). Notice that although this has an organizational function in the paragraph, it does not give a lot of information. The relationship is of an amplification with general indefinite noun groups in the first sentence being explained in more detail in the rest of the paragraph, which is the most common type of arrangement for a paragraph which has a topic sentence.

(3) She was standing almost directly behind the girl, a woman well past forty,.....

Source: Shutang Zheng, 2011. *New Horizon College English 2 Reading Tutorial* (2nd Edition).

In this sentence, the clues *she* (a woman) and *the girl* make us expect a contrast. In fact, the following sentences describe the features of this woman. This contrast does not appear until the next paragraph describes the features of the girl, and so do Blandford's (a character in the story) reactions to this dilemma. Doing this predicting exercise can help students discuss a text in an interesting and useful way and form a useful reading threshold. If a reader can well predict what will come after the first sentence, he or she can easily read the rest of the paragraph. This prediction includes the use of clues that suggest conjunction relationships.

Readers can learn some simple strategies to look for the main idea of the paragraph. First find out what kind of paragraph it is. Then, if it is a paragraph with a main idea, find out where the main idea is. To check your decision, look for any clues near the main idea. If there is not a clue, try putting into a suitable word. Make sure that the weightings given in a type of relationships give weight to the sentence you have chosen. If it is just a set of equal steps, just see how many steps there are. Notice they have equal weightings; Look for clues in the first sentence itself. For example, when you choose the first sentence as the main idea, look for the general noun groups which are discussed in detail in the rest of the paragraph.

4. Conclusion

Readers can understand what a paragraph is by studying the conjunction relationships between sentences and group of sentences in the paragraph, and can also understand the organization of the text by analyzing the conjunction relationships in a paragraph or a text when they deal with a written text. They can also use the analysis of the conjunction relationships in a paragraph or a text as a basis for assessing the writer's skills in organizing and presenting the materials. Using this type of critical approach to study texts will naturally produce the idea of organization in learners' own compositions.

The role of the main idea or topic sentence is not in whether it always provides important information, but in its organizational function. The conjunction relationships between the sentences in a paragraph determine the structure of the paragraph whether they are signaled or unsignaled. In some of them, one sentence is given more prominence in the paragraph's structure. If we can find out the structure, we can make the interpretation of the ideas in the paragraph closer to us, more cordial and easier to understand. Good readers can more intuitively understand the author's real intention. If they can't, they can use a variety of strategies to make intuitive decisions.

Of course, this paper has its limitations. For example, it would be perfect to combine the analysis of English Language examples or materials with statistical analysis. Some students are weak in observation and thinking and couldn't comprehend the paragraph as above. Learning English requires not only mastering the basic structure, but also mastering the attitude and methods. All these will call for further research.

Despite these limitations, this paper will throw some light on college English reading comprehension and draw the attention of English reading teachers and students to the importance of the conjunctions and structure. This paper can lay a foundation for further research in related fields, make some changes in English reading teaching, and make English reading teaching more effective and fruitful.

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