

Interactional Functions of *Suoyi* 'So' in Mandarin Conversation

by

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## Abstract

An increasing number of studies of language and interaction have reported that causal conjunctions can be used to mark something other than causal connection in conversation (Bolden 2009; Walker, 2012). *Suoyi* ‘so’ is a causal conjunction indicating results and conclusions in Mandarin. Previous research has sketched its function as a discourse marker in discourse and turn organization based on the data of TV shows (Fang, 2000; Yao, 2009). Its interactional functions in naturalistic Mandarin conversation are largely undocumented. This study explores interactional functions of the conjunction *suoyi* ‘so’ in Mandarin conversation.

Adopting the methodology of conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, this study examines the interactional functions of *suoyi* when it occurs at different sequential positions in Mandarin conversation. The data for this study are 12 hours of naturalistic Mandarin conversation. An examination of the data shows that *suoyi* can be used at turn-initial, mid-turn, and turn-final positions. Specifically, the turn-initial *suoyis* have three main interactional functions: 1) to link the subsequent talk to the immediate prior speaker’s talk and explicate the current speaker’s epistemic stance; 2) to preface a display of understanding; and 3) to continue a pre-prior talk or activity. The mid-turn *suoyis* perform two main functions: 1) to introduce a result or conclusion, and 2) to be used at the possible closure of a topic. The turn-final *suoyis* in the data perform the function of marking the possible completion of a turn. This study describes the undocumented usages of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation and contributes to our understanding of the interactional functions of *suoyi* from a cross-linguistic perspective.

*Keywords:* conjunction, *suoyi*, interactional functions, Mandarin conversation, conversation analysis, interactional linguistics

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the grammatical features of *suoyi*. Section 1.1 discusses the grammatical features of *suoyi*, Section 1.2 presents the research questions of this study, and Section 1.3 describes the organization of the thesis.

### 1.1 *Suoyi* in Mandarin

*Suoyi* ‘so’ is a conjunction introducing a result clause in Mandarin. It expresses the result and conclusion (Lü, 1980). When used with a reason-clause, *suoyi* is at the beginning of the second clause (Zhu, 1982; Liu, 2001). The reason-clause can be introduced by a conjunction indicating reason such as *yinwei* ‘because’ (see Example 1), or without any conjunction (see Example 2).

Example 1 (Lü, 1980: 521)

因为 猫头鹰 是 益 鸟, 所以 要 保护 它。

*yinwei maotouying shi yi niao, suoyi yao baohu ta.*

**because** owl be beneficial bird, **so** will protect 3sg.

‘Because owls are beneficial birds, so (we should) protect them.’

Example 2 (Lü, 1980: 521)

这里 气候 凉爽, 风景 优美, 所以 夏天 人 很 多。

*zheli qihou liangshuang, fengjing youmei, suoyi xiatian ren hen duo.*

here climate cool, landscape beautiful, **so** summer people very numerous.

‘The climate is cool here and the landscape is beautiful, so there are many people in summer.’

Moreover, *suoyi* can be used in the structure of “... *zhisuoyi*..., *shiyinwei*” ‘the reason why...is because...’ (Lü, 1980) (see Example 3). In this structure, *suoyi* is used between the subject and

predicate of the first clause to introduce the result or conclusion, and the reason follows the *suoyi*-clause. This structure is used to emphasize the reason (Lü, 1980).

Example 3 (*Xiandai hanyu cidian* ‘Modern Chinese Dictionary’, 2005: 1311)

我之所以对他比较熟悉，是因为我和他在一起工作过。  
*wo zhi suoyi dui ta bijiao shuxi, shi yinwei wo he ta zai yiqi gongzuo guo.*  
I PRT so to 3sg relative familiar, be because I and 3sg at together work EXP.  
‘The reason why I know him well, is we used to work together.’

In addition to being used as a conjunction, *suoyi* can be used as a noun (*Xiandai hanyu cidian* ‘Modern Chinese Dictionary’, 2005: 1311). As a noun, *suoyi* means a reason or an action. It can be the direct object of a limited number of verbs in fixed expressions. For example, (*Xiandai hanyu cidian* ‘Modern Chinese Dictionary’, 2005: 1311):

Example 4 (*Xiandai hanyu cidian* ‘Modern Chinese Dictionary’, 2005: 1311)

不知所以  
*bu zhi suoyi*  
NEG know reason  
‘to not know the reason’

*Suoyi* as a noun is used in a very limited number of expressions and is mostly considered a fixed expression in Mandarin. Thus, this study focuses on *suoyi* as a conjunction in Mandarin conversation.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This study aims to explore the interactional functions of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation.

Previous studies have examined the causal connections between the reason-clause and *suoyi*-

clause, the position of the *suoyi*-clause in relation to the reason clause, and *suoyi* as a discourse marker in Mandarin. However, to my knowledge, there is little research on the interactional functions of *suoyi* in naturalistic Mandarin conversation. To address this gap, this study focuses on the following research question:

- What are the interactional functions of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation in relation to its sequential position?

Sequential position is potentially relevant to the interactional functions of *suoyi*. *Suoyis* occurring at different sequential positions in conversation may have different interactional functions. Thus, this study analyzes the functions of *suoyi* at different sequential positions in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

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

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on *suoyi* in Mandarin grammar and Mandarin spoken discourse. Chapter 3 discusses the data, the transcription system, and the methodologies adopted in this study. Chapter 4 explores the interactional functions of turn-initial *suoyi*; Chapter 5 investigates the interactional functions of *suoyi* when it occurs at the mid-turn position. The interactional function of turn-final *suoyi* is described in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings and discusses the implications and limitations of this study.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to *suoyi* in Mandarin grammar, and how it is used in Mandarin spoken discourse.

### 2.1 *Suoyi* in Mandarin Grammar

*Suoyi* is described as a subordinate conjunction that prefaces the second clause in the reason- + *suoyi*-clause (Chao, 1968) (see Example 5).

Example 5 (Chao, 1968: 115)

他 因为 下雨, 所以 不 来 了。

*ta yinwei xiayu, suoyi bu lai le.*

3sg because raining, **so** NEG come CRS.

‘Because it is raining, he is not coming.’

Chao (1968) argues that the *suoyi*-clause can also precede the reason-clause when the reason-clause is a nominal predicate that ends with *de yuangu* ‘the reason that’ (see Example 6).

Example 6 also shows that *suoyi* as a subordinate conjunction can follow the subject (Chao, 1968:115).

Example 6 (Chao, 1968: 115)

他 所以 不来, 是 因为 下雨 的 缘故。

*ta suoyi bulai, shi yinwei xiayu de yuangu.*

3sg **so** NEG, be because raining NOM reason.

‘That he is not coming, is for the reason that it is raining.’

However, according to Li & Thompson (1981), the *suoyi*-clause seems to only follow the reason-clause. They describe that *suoyi* is an “adverbial backward-linking element” at the beginning of a clause which is used to link the current clause to the prior one (Li & Thompson, 1981: 653).

The majority of previous studies on *suoyi* in Mandarin have focused on how it is used to mark inferential or causal relations between clauses (Liao, 1986; Huang, 1990; Xing, 2003; Dong, 1999). Liao (1986) argues that *suoyi* is a connective element which functions to link reason and result. When *suoyi* performs this function, the *suoyi*-clause follows the *yinwei*-clause. Liao (1986) proposes that there are two types of connective devices within a discourse: conjunctions used to connect clauses, and connective elements used to connect discourse. When used as a conjunction, Liao (1986) argues that *suoyi* is used to connect the result-clause to the reason-clause. This is similar to what the previous research on Chinese grammar has reported (e.g. Chao, 1968; Li & Thompson, 1981). What is different from other research on Chinese grammar (e.g. Chao, 1968; Li & Thompson, 1981) is that Liao (1986) proposes the use of *suoyi* as a connective element to connect discourse. As a connective element, *suoyi* can be used at the beginning of a sentence or paragraph to connect the whole sentence or paragraph to the preceding reason. Liao’s (1986) observations shed light on the discourse functions of *suoyi*.

In the research on Chinese complex clauses, scholars mainly study the causal relation between the reason- and *suoyi*-clause in written discourse (Huang, 1990; Xing, 2003; Dong, 1999). For instance, Wang (1985) argues that *suoyi* can indicate three different relations between clauses: 1) illustrating a consequence, 2) deducting a conclusion, and 3) emphasizing a result. Wang (1985) and Chu and Tao (2008) report that time references and epistemic markers can be found in some *suoyi*-clauses when they express different types of causal relations. For example,

when emphasizing a result, the *suoyi*-clause may be used with a certain time reference to show that the result happens after the reason (Wang, 1985; Chu & Tao, 2008).

The previous research on Chinese grammar mainly focuses on the causal relation between the reason- and *suoyi*-clause, and how *suoyi* is used as a connective element in Chinese discourse. The next section provides an overview of the uses of *suoyi* in Mandarin spoken discourse.

## **2.2 *Suoyi* in Mandarin Spoken Discourse**

Drawing on the research in Chinese grammar on causal clauses, recent studies have focused on the use of the *suoyi*-clause in Mandarin spoken discourse (Fang, 2000, 2012; Yao, 2005, 2009; Song & Tao, 2008, 2009). These studies have mainly focused on four aspects: 1) how *suoyi* is used as a causal clause marker, 2) how *suoyi* is used as a discourse marker, 3) the prosodic features of *suoyi*, and 4) the positioning of the reason- and *suoyi*-clause.

First, previous research has documented that *suoyi* can be used as a causal clause marker (Fang, 2012; Yao 2009). Fang (2012) describes that *suoyi* has three main functions in Mandarin spoken discourse: 1) *suoyi* is used to indicate the result of an event; 2) *suoyi* is used to express inferential conclusion; and 3) *suoyi* is deployed to initiate a response to a request. Yao (2009) examines the use of *suoyi* in Mandarin TV talk show programs. He argues that *suoyi* is used in the following three ways: 1) to introduce a result; 2) to express an inference, and 3) to introduce an assessment. Yao (2009) points out that when *suoyi* is used to introduce a result, both the reason- and *suoyi*-clause introduce something that has already happened. When *suoyi* is used to introduce an inference, the speaker tends to deploy epistemic markers such as *wo juede* ‘I think’ in the *suoyi*-clause. The epistemic markers show that the speaker is introducing his/her own

subjective conclusion. When the *suoyi*-clause is used to present the speaker's opinion, there is no causal relation between the *suoyi*-clause and its prior clause.

Second, *suoyi* has functions other than a causal clause marker in Mandarin spoken discourse. Research shows that *suoyi* may be used to organize topics and turns (Fang 2000; Yao, 2009, 2015). For example, Fang (2000) argues that Mandarin conjunctions go through semantic reduction, and that conjunctions such as *suoyi* can be used as discourse markers for topic and turn organization. For example, *suoyi* can be used by speakers to return to a prior topic. Fang (2000) also describes that when *suoyi* is used to manage topics, it tends to occur at the beginning of a turn. Fang (2000) and Yao (2009) point out that when *suoyi* performs the function of returning to a previous topic, the speaker usually partially repeats some phrases in the prior talk.

Yao (2009) reports different functions of *suoyi* as a topic management token than those described in Fang (2000). Fang (2000) argues that *suoyi* is not used to switch the current topic to a new one, while Yao (2009) argues that *suoyi* may be used for such a topic change. Yao (2009) points out that this function of *suoyi* is very similar to that of *so* in English.

Aside from the topic management function, *suoyi* is also shown to have a turn-organizing function (Fang, 2000; Yao 2009). When *suoyi* occurs at the mid-turn position, *suoyi* can be used to hold the turn (Fang, 2000; Yao, 2009). Fang (2000) argues that when *suoyi* is used to hold a turn, its subsequent clause does not necessarily have to be a result or conclusion. Yao (2009) argues that the mid-turn *suoyi* can be used as a floor holder or pause filler. When speakers are searching for some information and trying to keep the turn, they may use *suoyi* followed by a pause (Yao, 2009).

In addition to the mid-turn position, Yao (2009, 2015) reports that *suoyi* also occurs at the turn-initial position. When occurring at the beginning of a turn, *suoyi*s may be used to initiate a new turn (Yao, 2009). Yao (2009) cites the term of “resumptive opener” to describe this function of *suoyi*, which was first used by Clancy and her co-authors (Clancy et al., 1996). According to Clancy et al. (1996), resumptive openers are the reactive tokens that appear “in short (typically monosyllabic), non-lexical, vocalic forms” (Clancy et al., 1996: 362). Resumptive openers appear at the beginning of a new turn, and they are used to signal the change of speakership (Clancy et al., 1996). Yao (2009) argues that “resumptive opener” *suoyi* signals the change of speakership and develops the current topic of the conversation. Although Yao (2009) does not mention the interactional functions of the “resumptive opener” *suoyi*, the example he provides is a *suoyi*-prefaced interrogative form that is used to seek information. Based on the definition of “resumptive opener” proposed by Clancy et al. (1996: 362), it does not seem to be accurate to categorize *suoyi* as a “resumptive opener”. As a conjunction, *suoyi* is neither shown as a reactive token nor in a non-lexical form in the examples provided by Yao (2009).

In addition to starting a new turn, turn-initial *suoyi* is also used to compete for the floor (Yao, 2015). Yao (2015) shows that *suoyi* may occur at the turn-initial position, when its prior turn is interrupted and is syntactically incomplete. Yao (2015) claims that because the prior speaker’s turn is interrupted by the *suoyi*-prefaced turn, *suoyi* is used to compete for the floor. Yao (2009, 2015) provides valuable findings concerning the use of *suoyi* in relation to its turn position. The findings of Yao’s studies (2009, 2015) highlight the importance of spoken discourse in the study of Mandarin Chinese grammar. However, the findings presented in Yao’s studies (2009, 2015) do not underscore the importance of researching the functions of discourse markers in relation to their social actions and sequential positions. Furthermore, these studies

(Fang, 2012; Yao, 2009; 2015) based on spoken discourse data are all from Mandarin TV talk show programs. How *suoyi* is used in everyday Mandarin conversation still remains understudied.

Third, studies have examined the prosodic features of *suoyi* in Mandarin TV talk show programs. For example, Xie and Fang (2016) explores the prosodic features of conjunctions in conversations in Mandarin TV talk show programs. They argue that, in general, when a conjunction serves to organize a turn or discourse as a discourse marker, it is produced with a longer duration than when it is used as a conjunction to connect two clauses. They further show that when *suoyi* is used to initiate or foreground a topic, it is significantly lengthened. Xie and Fang (2016) also examines the pitch level of *suoyi*. They claim that there is no significant difference between the pitch level of *suoyi* when it is used as a discourse marker and when it is used as a causal conjunction. Xie and Fang's study (2016) is one of the very few studies that address the prosodic features of *suoyi* in conversation in Mandarin TV talk show programs. It contributes to our understanding of the prosodic features of conjunctions in relation to their different uses in Mandarin spoken discourse. However, Xie and Fang (2016) has not taken into consideration the sequential positions and the interactional functions of *suoyi* when analyzing its prosodic features.

Finally, in the literature on *suoyi* in Mandarin spoken discourse, a body of research has studied the relative positioning of the reason-clause and *suoyi*-clause (Biq, 1995; Wang, 2006; Tsai, 1996; Song & Tao, 2008, 2009; Li, 2016). Recent studies show that *yinwei*- and *suoyi*-clauses are not necessarily used together (Biq, 1995; Song & Tao, 2008, 2009; Li, 2016). Song and Tao (2008, 2009) investigates and compares the relative positioning of the reason-clause and *suoyi*-clause in Mandarin and English. In Mandarin, the *suoyi*-clause tends to follow the reason

clause in a complex sentence; whereas in English, *because* and *so* cannot be used in the same sentence (Song & Tao, 2008). Song and Tao (2008) reports that when using an initial *yinwei*-clause to introduce a reason, nearly 50% of the cases are in the form of [*yinwei*- + *suoyi*-clauses].

Previous studies contribute to our understanding about how *suoyi* is used in Mandarin, but also leave many open questions. This review of the previous research on *suoyi* shows two main gaps in the literature. First, most studies are not based on naturalistic Mandarin conversation. Thus, this study aims to provide a systematic description of how *suoyi* is used in naturalistic Mandarin conversation. Second, most of them have not discussed the interactional functions of *suoyi*. This study explores the interactional functions of *suoyi* in everyday Mandarin conversation.

### **2.3 Summary**

This chapter reviews the studies of *suoyi* in Mandarin grammar and spoken discourse. Specifically, *suoyi* can be used to introduce a conclusion, result, or comment (Fang, 2012). Previous research has also sketched the functions of *suoyi* as a discourse marker based on the data of Mandarin TV talk shows. Specifically, *suoyi* has functions in organizing discourse and turns (Fang, 2000; Yao, 2009, 2015). However, there is no systematic study of the interactional functions of *suoyi* in everyday face-to-face Mandarin conversation. Before proceeding to the interactional functions of *suoyi* in the data, the following chapter describes the methodology of the current study.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter introduces the data, transcription system, and methodologies adopted in the present study. Section 3.1 describes the data of this study, and Section 3.2 provides an overview of *suoyis* in the data. Section 3.3 discusses the transcription system that is used in this study. Section 3.4 introduces the methodologies used in this study, which are conversation analysis and interactional linguistics.

### 3.1 Data

The data for this study are from Mandarin Multimodal Conversation Corpus (MMCC). The data were collected by Chinese linguistics researchers at the University of Alberta. The data used in this study were conversations among native Mandarin speakers recorded in 2009 and 2014. The conversations that were recorded in 2009 were collected in Berlin, Germany, and the rest of the conversations were recorded in Edmonton, Canada. All the speakers in this dataset are native speakers of Mandarin from mainland China.

This study examines 9 conversations totaling 12 hours of naturalistic face-to-face Mandarin conversation from the corpus. The conversations are one dyad, five triads, two four-party conversations, and one five-party conversation. The durations of the conversations last from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. The total number of speaker is 29. The participants include 13 males and 16 females, who were all university students. The participants were friends, classmates, colleagues, or acquaintances. Different interactional settings are involved, including lunch or dinner conversation, project discussion, cooking, and card games. The topics of their conversations vary, ranging from university life, cooking instruction, and social relationships to travel etc. All the conversations were video- and audio-recorded.

### 3.2 Overview of *Suoyis* in the Data

In the current data, there are 131 tokens of *suoyi*. They occur at three positions: turn-initial, mid-turn, and turn-final position. It can be seen in Table 1 that turn-initial *suoyis* make up 29.7% (N=39) of total *suoyis* occurrences. The mid-turn *suoyis* account for 61.1% (N=80) of all *suoyi* tokens. There are only 12 tokens of *suoyi* that occur at the turn-final position, making up 9.2% of the total occurrences of *suoyi*.

Table 1 Overview of *suoyis* in the data

Positions of <i>suoyis</i>	Occurrences	Percentage
Turn-initial <i>suoyis</i>	39	29.7%
Mid-turn <i>suoyis</i>	80	61.1%
Turn-final <i>suoyis</i>	12	9.2%
<b>Total</b>	131	100%

The detailed analyses of the interactional functions of *suoyi* in the three turn positions will be provided in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

### 3.3 Data Transcription

All of the data were transcribed according to the GAT-2 (Selting et al., 2009) transcription system, and modified by Li (2014). This transcription system has the most elaborate notation of the final pitch movement, which is the most useful to research a tone language like Mandarin.



The first column on the left represents the sequence of the intonation units. The second column in the middle represents the pseudonyms of the participants. The pseudonym is omitted if the speakership does not change. After the pseudonyms, the dialog is transcribed into four lines. The first line is Chinese characters. The second line shows the Pinyin (the Phonetic Alphabet system annotating the pronunciation of Chinese characters in Romanized letters) of the characters above. The third line is a word-for-word English translation to the corresponding words. The last line is a free translation in English.

### **3.4 Methodology**

Two methodologies are adopted in this study: conversation analysis and interactional linguistics. These two methodological frameworks will be discussed in detail in Sections 3.4.1 and Section 3.4.2 below.

#### **3.4.1 Conversation Analysis**

Conversation analysis (henceforth CA) is a qualitative research approach to study talk in interaction. It explores the patterns of language use and actions carried out in talk-in-interaction. CA research focuses on talk-in-interaction, which is the primordial site of social life (Schegloff, 1996a). CA research contributes to the understanding of how people design their talk and make it meaningful to others. This research originated from Sacks and Schegloff's collaboration in the 1960s. The basic notions of CA such as conditional relevance and turn-taking were developed in the 1960s and 1970s (see Schegloff, 1968; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1972). Over the past decades, a large body of CA research has been carried out that discovers the structures and mechanisms of conversational interaction. By analyzing audio and video

recordings, CA treats the observable behaviors of participants themselves as the evidence for analytical categories. The reason to analyze the participant's perspective in CA research is:

...it is the parties' understandings of prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is THEIR understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns affords both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns-resources intrinsic to the data themselves.

(Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974: 729)

According to Drew (2004), there are four principle concepts in CA: 1) Turns-at-talk and turn-taking, 2) turn design, 3) social action, and 4) sequence organization. How speakers take turns speaking is one of the most fundamental forms to examine the organization of a conversation. Specifically, it relates to how the current speaker selects the next speaker, what is relevant to say, when the next speaker should start a talk, and so on. Turn design refers to how a speaker designs an action and leads the direction of the conversation, and how participants respond. In terms of social action, CA shows how one speaker understands the other's prior conduct through participants' observable behaviors. Thus, conversational analysts can study the participants' understanding of those social actions such as inviting, rejecting, agreeing, and requesting, through their displayed linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors. Finally, sequence organization provides conversational analysts with evidence to study social actions. Specifically, the sequential position of a turn is crucial for the understanding of the speaker's action in an interaction (Schegloff, 2007).

Applying CA methodology, this study examines the functions of *suoyi* in relation to its different sequential positions. All categories of the function of *suoyi* are drawn from and evidenced by the participants' own behaviors.

### **3.4.2 Interactional Linguistics**

Interactional linguistics is a perspective used to research how people use language to accomplish interactional tasks, i.e., the interactional functions of linguistic structure. From this perspective, scholars view language as a “living object to be studied *in vivo* (e.g. on the street)”, rather than something to be researched in a lab (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009: 1). Analysts adopt the methodology of conversation analysis to investigate everyday conversation and institutional interaction. As it has been pointed out by Schegloff, Ochs, and Thompson (1996), interactional linguistics research is compartmentalized into three types: 1) the functional approaches of language in communication, 2) the linguistic anthropology and cultural aspects of the language, and 3) the conversation analysis of language structure and use. The authors argue that different from general linguistic research, interactional grammar research is based on naturalistic conversation, rather than a specific theory or frame.

Interactional linguistics emerged in the 1990s (Barth-Weingarten, 2008). Couper-Kuhlen and Selting define interactional linguistics as “a perspective on language structure and use informed by language’s natural habitat in the interaction order” (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2001: 1). According to them, the goal of interactional linguistics is to provide a “better understanding of how languages are shaped by interaction and how interactional practices are molded through specific languages” (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 2001: 3). Moreover,

interactional linguistics adopts a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective and analyzes how different languages contribute to the nature of social orders.

In this study, prosody and bodily-visual behaviors are only mentioned when they are relevant to the interactional functions of *suoyi*. There are 4 excerpts in this thesis which involve the accounts of prosody and bodily-visual behaviors.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter introduces the data, data transcription system, and methodologies used in this study. The data of this study are 12 hours of naturalistic Mandarin conversation. There are 131 tokens of *suoyi* in the data. The methodologies adopted in this study are CA and interactional linguistics.

## Chapter 4 Interactional Functions of *Suoyi* at Turn-Initial Position

This chapter reports on the interactional functions of turn-initial *suoyi* in the data. In the data, 39 tokens of *suoyi* occur at the turn-initial position, accounting for 29.7% of all *suoyi* tokens. Turn-initial *suoyis* can be seen to exhibit three main functions.

Table 2 Interactional functions of turn-initial *suoyis* in the data

Interactional functions of <i>suoyi</i>	Occurrences	Percentage
Linking the subsequent talk and explicating the speaker's epistemic stance	11	28.2%
Prefacing a display of understanding	7	17.9%
Continuing a pre-prior talk or detailed activity	13	33.3%
Others	8	20.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that turn-initial *suoyis* perform three main functions. First, turn-initial *suoyis* link the subsequent talk to the immediate prior speaker's talk. Second, they preface a display of understanding. Third, they continue a pre-prior talk or detailed activity. Section 4.1 demonstrates how *suoyi* is used to link the subsequent talk to the immediate prior speaker's talk and explicate the current speaker's epistemic stance. Section 4.2 illustrates how *suoyi* is used to preface a display of understanding, and Section 4.3 shows how *suoyi* is used to continue a pre-prior talk or detailed activity.

In addition, 7 tokens of *suoyi* are categorized as “others”. They perform a variety of functions such as to take the floor, followed by a question particle to request information, etc. Due to their heterogeneity and limited number, they will not be discussed in this chapter.

#### **4.1 *Suoyi* Used to Link the Subsequent Talk to the Prior Speaker’s Talk and Explicate the Current Speaker’s Epistemic Stance**

When *suoyi* occurs at the turn-initial position, it is frequently used to link the subsequent talk to the immediately prior speaker’s talk and explicate the current speaker’s epistemic stance. This type of *suoyi* displays that the speaker frames the immediate prior speaker’s talk as the ground of his or her own opinion. The speaker usually expresses a subjective opinion or comment on the event they are discussing in the *suoyi*-prefaced turn.

Excerpt 4.1 shows how a speaker uses *suoyi* to link the subsequent talk to the immediate prior speaker’s talk and explicate the current speaker’s own epistemic stance. This excerpt is taken from a conversation among three friends, Lun (female), Chu (male), and Wai (male). Before this excerpt, Lun has introduced her experience of being scammed when she was renting an apartment, and how it was impossible to get her deposit back. Wai happened to also be renting an apartment and had just paid the deposit. After Lun’s telling, Wai discusses the return of his rental deposit with the other participants.

Excerpt 4.1 (068 Sufour 57:15, 3437)

- 1        Wai:     诶 我的房租 还是 要 得 到 的;  
              *ei wode fangzu haishi yao de dao de;*  
              PRT my rent still request CSC receive PRT;

‘My deposit<sup>1</sup> will be returned.’

- 2           一 手 交 钱   [一 手 交 钥 匙;  
*yi shou jiaoqian*   [*yi shou jiao yao yaoshi*;  
one hand give money [ one hand give key;  
‘No deposit, no key.’

- 3           Chu:                           [哎 (没有) 那个 绝对 会  
  [*ai (meiyou) neige juehui hui*  
  [PRT (NEG have) that CL absolutely will  
  给 你 的。  
  *geini de.*  
  give you PRT.  
  ‘It will definitely be given to you.’

- 4           <<p>他 不 可能 不 给 你.>  
  <<p>*ta bu keneng bu gei ni.*>  
  <<p>3sg NEG possible NEG give you.>  
  ‘It’s impossible that he doesn’t give it to you.’

- 5   -> Wai:           所以 我 觉得 那个 人 还 没有 böse 到  
  *suoyi wo juede nage ren hai meiyou böse dao*  
  so    I think that CL person still NEG have wicked to  
  那 种 地 步;  
  *neizhong dibu;*

---

<sup>1</sup> Although the speaker uses the word *fangzu* ‘rent’ (line 1), it refers to “deposit” in the interactional context.

that CL condition;

‘So I think that person isn’t that wicked.’

- 6                   只是 [还是     (要扣.)  
                      *zhishi [haishi (yaokou.)*  
                      only be [still be (will deduct.)  
                      ‘But (the deposit) will still be deducted.’

- 7           Lun:                 [还是     很有         良心     的。  
                                  *[haishi hen you     liangxin     de.*  
                                  [still be very have conscientious PRT.  
                                  ‘(Your landlord is) a man of conscience.’

- 8           Wai:                 对 对 对 对 对。  
                                  *dui dui dui dui dui.*  
                                  yes yes yes yes yes.  
                                  ‘Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.’

At the beginning of this excerpt, Wai asserts (line 1) that his deposit will be returned. In line 2, Wai further clarifies how to get his deposit back, that is, *yishou jiaoqian, yishou jiaoyaoshi* ‘no deposit, no key’. In line 3, Chu uses *meiyou* ‘no’ as a metalinguistic device to show his rejection to Wai’s utterance in line 2 (Biq, 1989). Then, Chu employs extreme case formulations *juedui* ‘absolutely’ (line 3) and *bukeng* ‘impossible’ (line 4) to express his opinion that the deposit will be returned to Wai (Pomerantz, 1986).

In lines 5 and 6, Wai further presents his opinion that his deposit may be deducted, but his landlord is not as wicked as the person who scammed Lun. Wai begins his talk in line 5 with *suoyi* followed by the epistemic marker *wo juede* ‘I think’ which signals that the subsequent statement is Wai’s personal view (Fang, 2005). The referent of the phrase *nage ren* ‘that person’ is the same as the person Chu talks about in line 4, who is Wai’s landlord. The same referent is one connection between lines 4 and 5. The phrase *nazhong dibu* ‘that situation’ refers to the adverse condition reported by Lun before this excerpt (Fang, 2002). That is, Lun did not get her deposit back. By contrasting his landlord with the person that scammed Lun, Wai forms the opinion that his landlord is not that wicked (line 5). By using *suoyi* to preface his turn in line 5, Wai frames Chu’s opinion, the deposit will definitely be given to Wai (lines 3-4), as the ground of his own opinion in lines 5 and 6 (i.e., the landlord is not that wicked). Thus, it can be seen here that *suoyi* is used to link the subsequent talk to the prior speaker’s talk and explicate the epistemic stance of the current speaker.

Excerpt 4.2 is another case in point. In this conversation, Ann (female), Bao (female), and Cai (female) are friends who are talking about their opinions about relationships. Prior to this excerpt, Ann reported that her ex-boyfriend refused to buy her a rose and he claimed that buying a rose was a waste of money. In this excerpt, Bao tells Ann and Cai about her cousin’s excellent husband who financially supports her cousin. *Ta* ‘he’ starting from line 1 refers to the cousin’s husband.

Excerpt 4.2 (090 juhui 48:29, 2868)

1        Bao: 哇 现在 他 回        荷兰        嘛;  
               *wa xianzai ta hui        helan        ma;*

PRT now 3sg return the Netherlands PRT;  
'He is going back to the Netherlands.'

2           他 说 马 上 把 我 妹 妹 带 过 去。  
*ta shuo mashang ba wo meimei dai guoqu.*  
3sg say soon BA wo cousin bring over.  
'He said he will take my cousin (to the Netherlands) soon.'

3           读     完         本 科         嘛;  
*du wan benke ma;*  
study complete undergraduate PRT;  
'(My cousin has already) completed (her) undergraduate studies.'

4           她 现 在 在 那 个 银 行 工 作;  
*ta xianzai zai nage yinhang gongzuo;*  
3sg now at that CL bank work;  
'She works at the bank now.'

5           他 说 银 行 别 工 作 了。  
*ta shuo yinhang bie gongzuo le.*  
he say bank NEG work CRS.  
'He said don't work at the bank (anymore),'

6           到 这 里 再 读 个 硕 士;  
*dao zheli zai du ge shuoshi;*  
at here also study CL Master;

‘come get a Master’s degree here.’

7            供    我   妹妹.  
*gong   wo   meimei.*  
support I   cousin.  
‘(He will financially) support my cousin.’

8            Cai: 哇:::  
*wa:::*  
wow:::  
‘Wow.’

9            Bao: 那 男 的   八 三   年   比   我 还   小   一 岁   嘛.  
*nei nande   basan   nian   bi   wo hai xiao   yisui ma.*  
that man eighty three year compare I still young one year PRT.  
‘That man was born in 1983, (he is) one year younger than me.’

10           Cai: 哇:::  
*wa:::*  
wow:::  
‘Wow.’

11           Bao: 嗯 他 学 的   专 业   好;  
*en ta xue de   zhuan ye hao;*  
PRT 3sg study NOM major good;  
‘His major is good.’

- 12           学    什么;  
*xue shenme;*  
study what;  
'He studies...'
- 13           飞机    什么  的.  
*feiji shenme de.*  
airplane some PRT.  
'aviation or something like that.'
- 14        Ann:  哦  那  很;  
*ou na hen;*  
oh that very;  
'Oh that's very...'
- 15        Bao:  嗯.  
*en.*  
umm.  
'Umm.'
- 16           (0.6)
- 17           然后?  
*ranhou?*  
then?

‘Then...’

- 18 -> Ann: 所以 我就 觉得 一个 男人 嘛 不是 说-  
*suoyi wo jiu juede yige nanren ma bushi shuo-*  
so I just think one CL man PRT NEG be say-  
‘So I think that a man, is not...’
- 19 [为了 图 图 你的 钱 跟 你 在一起。  
*[weile tu tu nide qian gen ni zai yiqi.*  
[for contrive contrive your money with you together.  
‘to stay with you because of your money.’
- 20 Bao: [也 是 中国人;  
*[ye shi zhongguoren;*  
[also be Chinese;  
‘He’s also Chinese.’
- 21 Ann: 但是 你 就 对 (这人) 一毛不拔;  
*danshi ni jiu dui (zheiren) yimaobuba;*  
but you just to (this person) very stingy;  
‘But (if) you are a real tightwad,’
- 22 我就我 真的 没办法 相信 你是 喜欢 我。  
*wo jiu wo zhende meibanfa xiangxin ni shi xihuan wo.*  
I just wo really NEG way believe you be love me.  
‘I really can’t believe that you love me.’

In lines 1 to 7, Bao tells Ann and Cai that her cousin's husband would like to financially support her cousin to get a Master's degree in the Netherlands. Then, she continues to introduce the age (line 9) and major of her cousin's husband (lines 11-13). Bao's turn in line 17 is cut-off by Ann's *suoyi*-prefaced turn in line 18. In line 18, *wo jiu juede* 'I just think' displays that its subsequent talk (lines 18 and 19) is a subjective opinion of the speaker (Endo, 2013). To introduce a subjective opinion is a practice to explicate the speaker's epistemic stance (Kärkkäinen, 2003; Endo, 2013). Ann uses the generic indefinite expression *yige nanren* 'a man' (line 18) to express her stance towards the referent, her ex-boyfriend. That is, she was not with her ex-boyfriend because of his money (line 19), but it was hard for her to feel her ex-boyfriend's love because he was stingy with money when it comes to her (lines 21-22). Lines 18 to 19 and line 21 to 22 are all based on Ann's own experience. It seems that Bao's report about her cousin's great husband triggers Ann's complaint about her ex-boyfriend which was mentioned before the excerpt. That is, unlike Bao's cousin's husband who is willing to spend money to support her cousin, Ann's ex-boyfriend refused to "waste" money to buy her a rose. In this excerpt, Ann frames Bao's reporting (lines 1-7, 9, 11-13, and 15-17) as the ground for her own opinion, and *suoyi* is used to link Anne's turn in line 18 to Bao's prior talk.

In summary, the two excerpts in Section 4.1 have shown that turn-initial *suoyi* is used as a device to link the subsequent talk to the immediately prior speaker's talk to explicate the current speaker's epistemic stance.

#### **4.2 *Suoyi* Prefacing the Display of Understanding**

This section analyzes how *suoyi* is used to preface the display of understanding. A display of understanding includes both claiming and demonstrating understanding (Sacks, 1992: II: 140-141). However, Sacks (1992) argues that claiming and demonstrating understanding are different

in that claiming understanding can be seen in the form of repeating the prior talk of the other speaker, while demonstrating understanding can be seen in the act of reformulating the prior talk. The data in this study show that *suoyi* can be used to preface either a claim or demonstration of understanding.

Excerpt 4.3 demonstrates how a speaker uses *suoyi* to preface the display of understanding of a prior explanation, specifically through claiming his or her understanding. In this excerpt, Fan (female) and Min (male) are graduate students who are studying in different programs at the same university. Fan is trying to explain her work to Min.

Excerpt 4.3 (Audio 1:05:50, 3950, Video05\_09:55)

- 1            Fan: 就是 一种:.  
*jiushi yizhong:*.  
just be a CL:.  
'(It's) a type of...'
- 2            phospholipase 就是 磷:酸酶 吧.  
*phospholipase jiushi lin:suanmei ba.*  
phospholipase just be phosphatase SA.  
'Phospholipase is phosphatase, I think.'
- 3            磷脂酶        啊        磷脂酶;  
*linzhimei        a        linzhimei;*  
phospholipase PRT Phospholipase;  
'Phospholipase, phospholipase.'

- 4           对     磷脂酶。  
*dui   linzhimei.*  
right Phospholipase.  
'Right, phospholipase.'
- 5           然后 它   磷脂酶   就 能 把:。  
*ránhòu tā   linzhimei   jiù néng bǎ:*  
then 3sg phospholipase just can BA:。  
'Then, phospholipase is able to...'
- 6           (0.8)
- 7           这么   专业   你 能   明白 吗;  
*zhème zhuānyè nǐ néng míngbái ma;*  
this professional you can understand Q;  
'Can you understand such a professional (description)?'
- 8           Min: 不     懂。  
*bù   dǒng.*  
NEG understand.  
'(I) don't understand.'
- 9           Fan: hehehehe[he
- 10          Min:                [一 讲 (就) 英文 我 就 更加  
*[yī jiǎng (jiù) yīngwén wǒ jiù gèngjiā*

[once talk (just) English I just more  
不 懂 了.

*bu dong le.*

NEG understand CRS.

‘The English term makes it even more difficult to understand.’

11 Fan: ((laughter))

12 Min: 你 讲 中文 原 [能 (明) 那个 啥.

*ni jiang zhongwen yuan [neng (ming) neige sha.*

you speak Chinese original [can (understand) that CL PRT.

‘I should be able to understand it if you use Chinese.’

13 Fan: [它 就是;;

*[ta jiushi;;*

[3sg just be;;

‘It is...’

14 Min: 那个 什么 [磷脂酶.

*nage shenme [linzhimei.*

That CL what [phospholipase.

‘That phospholipase likes...’

15 Fan: [它 就是:.

*[ta jiushi:.*

[3sg just be:.

‘It is...’

16           它 就是;  
*ta jiushi;*  
3sg just be;  
‘It is...’

((28 lines are omitted where Fan explains how to use phospholipase, a kind of enzyme, to transfer the phospholipid into a plant.))

45           就是 某 某 种 植 物 它 的 这 个 基 因;  
*jiushi mou mou zhong zhiwu ta de zheige jiyin;*  
just be some some CL plant 3sg ASSOC this CL gene;  
‘The gene of some types of plants...’

46           它 这 这 个 酶 活 性 很 强;  
*ta zhei zheige mei huoxing hen qiang;*  
3sg this this CL enzyme active very strong;  
‘This enzyme is very active.’

47           你 就 把 它 这 个 基 因 给 转 到;  
*ni jiu ba ta zheige jiyin gei zhuandao;*  
you just BA 3sg this CL gene to transfer to;  
‘You transfer its gene into...’

48           Min: [嗯.

[*en.*

[Umm.

‘Umm.’

49 Fan: [我们 要 的 植物 里面 去;  
[*women yao de zhiwu limian qu;*  
[we need NOM plant inside to;  
‘(to transfer it) into the plant we want,’

50 然后 让 它 在 里面 表达.  
*ranhou rang ta zai limian biaoda.*  
then let 3sg in inside express.  
‘and make it work inside.’

51 (0.4)

52 -> Min: 所以 你们 在 弄 转基因 [吗-  
*suoyi nimen zainong zhuan jiyin [ma-*  
so you PL doing transgenesis [Q-  
‘So you are doing transgenesis?’

53 Fan: [对 我们 在 弄 转基因.  
[*dui women zainong zhuan jiyin.*  
[yes we doing transgenesis.  
‘Yes, we are doing transgenesis.’

From lines 1 to 5, Fan informs what she does in the lab by introducing a term, phospholipase. She checks Min's understanding of the term in line 7 and receives a negative response *budong* '(I) do not understand' in line 8. After knowing that an explanation in Chinese would be helpful (line 12), Fan produces an extensive explanation (lines 15-44). In lines 45 to 47, 49, and 50, Fan explains that her work is to carry out transgenesis research by transferring the active enzymes into a plant.

Fan's turn comes to a possible completion at the end of line 50. After a 0.4-second pause (line 51), Min initiates a *suoyi*-prefaced turn (line 52). In line 52, Min uses *nimen* 'you' to refer to Fan and provides an upshot of what Fan does in the lab by using the phrase of *zhuanjiyi* 'transgenesis.' An upshot of the main point of a talk has been documented as a practice to display understanding (Heritage & Watson, 1979). *Zhuanjiyi* 'transgenesis' in line 52 is a reformulation of Fan's talk in lines 47 and 49, which is *jiyin...zhuandao...* 'to transfer the gene into...'. Reformulation of the previous information can be used to display understanding (Svennevig, 2003). The question particle *ma* (line 52) indicates that Min is seeking confirmation from Fan. Fan produces the confirmation token *dui* 'yes' in line 53. The *suoyi*-prefaced turn is a display of Min's understanding of Fan's preceding extended explanation.

Excerpt 4.4 provides another example in which *suoyi* is used to preface a display of understanding, specifically by demonstrating understanding. Excerpt 4.4 is from a conversation among three friends: Fei (female), Wai (male), and Lan (male). Before this excerpt, Fei commented on Lan's hair style saying that it looked pretty good and asked him the price of his haircut. Lan told her that it cost twenty-two dollars. In the excerpt shown below, they are discussing how much Lan has tipped the hair stylist.

Excerpt 4.4 (025 Haircuts, Audio 47:40, 2860'', Video04\_05:40)

- 1 Fei: 小费 你 给 多少.  
*xiaofei ni gei duoshao.*  
tip you give how much.  
'How much do you tip?'
- 2 十 块 吗;  
*shi kuai ma;*  
ten dollars Q;  
'Ten dollars?'
- 3 (0.8)
- 4 Lan: 干嘛 要 那么 高 啊.  
*ganma yao name gao a.*  
why will that high PRT.  
'Why (pay) that much (money).'
- 5 Wai: 不 不 [不 啊.  
*bu bu [bu a.*  
NEG NEG [NEG PRT.  
'No, no, no.'
- 6 Fei: [我 我 这?  
*[wo wo zhe?*  
[I I here?



[*chabuduo*.  
[more or less.  
'About that.'

12           对.  
*dui*.  
yes.  
'Yes.'

13    Fei:   这 样 子  嗯;;  
*zhe yangzi en*;;  
this like PRT;;  
'It's like this.'

14           (0.4)

15    Lan:   <<p>对 我 [觉得;>  
<<p>*dui wo [juede*;>  
<<p>yes I [feel;>  
'Yes, I think.'

16 -> Fei:               [所以 也 跟  吃饭  一样;  
*[suoyi ye gen chifan yiyang*;  
[so   too with eat meal same;  
'So it is the same as having a meal...'

17            百分之 十 百分之 十五 这 样子;  
*baifenzhi shi baifenzhi shiwu zhe yangzi;*  
percent ten percent fifteen this like;  
'(pay) ten percent or fifteen percent (for tip).'

18        Lan: <<pp>嗯.>  
             <<pp>en.>  
             <<pp>yeah.>  
             'Yeah.'

19        Wai: 学校 附近 剪 得:: 我 觉得 一?  
*xuexiao fujin jian de::wo jue de yi?*  
campus near cut CSC:: I feel?  
'I feel that the haircuts around campus...'

20            水平 都 比较 一般.  
*shuiping dou bijiao yiban.*  
level all kinda average.  
'(their) skills are relatively average.'

The excerpt begins with Fei's seek for information about how much Lan tipped for the haircut (line 1) and seek for confirmation about her candidate understanding (line 2). Lan and Wai disconfirm Fei's candidate understanding in lines 4 and 5. Fei explicates her lack of epistemic access to the reference event (the cost for a haircut/tip) (lines 6 and 8). After receiving Lan's response about the tip he paid (line 7), Fei demonstrates her understanding by offering the total

price of the haircut (line 9). Fei's understanding is confirmed by both Lan and Wai in lines 10 to 11. Then, Fei displays her epistemic state with the receipt *zheyangzi* '(it's) like this' (line 13).

Lan gives up his talk (line 15) when it overlaps with Fei's talk (line 16). Fei begins her talk by using *suoyi*, and produces an analogy to display her understanding of the amount of the tip (lines 16-17). She compares the tip for a haircut with that for a meal, by using the comparison construction...*gen...yiyang* '...and...are same' (Li & Thompson, 1981: 565). Here, the comparison between a haircut and a meal with regard to the percentage of tip is an alternative formulation to the amount of tip discussed in lines 1 to 5, and 8 to 11. To use an alternative formulation is a practice to demonstrate understanding (Sacks, 1992:II; Bolden, 2010).

In summary, the two excerpts in Section 4.2 have shown that the turn-initial *suoyi* is used to preface the display of understanding of the prior talk, either through claiming or demonstrating understanding.

### **4.3 *Suoyi* Used to Continue the Pre-Prior Talk or Activity**

This section discusses the interactional function of turn-initial *suoyi* to continue the pre-prior talk or activity. According to Jefferson (1972), continuation refers to the practice that after a side sequence, the speaker ties the utterance immediately after the side sequence back to the on-going sequence. *Suoyi* in my data is used to continue a pre-prior talk or activity, which will be demonstrated in Excerpt 4.5 and Excerpt 4.6.

Excerpt 4.5 is extracted from a conversation between two female friends, Zuo and Yao. Prior to this excerpt, Zuo mentions that she must maintain a healthy life because she is becoming older and might be an expectant mother. This excerpt begins with Yao asking Zuo whether she has a boyfriend right now.

Excerpt 4.5 (138 Audio 548, Video01\_09:25)

- 1 Yao: 你 现在;  
*ni xianzai;*  
you now;  
'Now you...'
- 2 有 对象 啦.  
*you duixiang la.*  
have partner PRT.  
'(you) have a boyfriend?'
- 3 Zuo: 没有:..  
*meiyou:..*  
NEG have:..  
'No.'
- 4 Yao: ((laughter))
- 5 Zuo: 三十 三十五 以后 就是 高龄 产妇 了.  
*sanshi sanshiwu yihou jiushi gaoling chanfu le.*  
thirty thirty five after just be elderly pregnancy PRT.  
'Getting pregnant after 35 is really late.'
- 6 最好 在 三十 三 之前 生 孩子.  
*zuihao zai sanshi san zhiqian sheng haizi.*  
best at thirty three before born baby.

‘It’s best that (women) have babies before the age of thirty-three.’

7 Yao: [ɿ]<sup>2</sup>

8 唉<sup>3</sup> 我 现在 就 想 赶紧 毕业.  
*ai wo xianzai jiu xiang ganjin biye.*  
(sigh) I now just want quickly graduate.  
‘Well, right now I just want to quickly graduate.’

9 (2.8)

10 -> Zuo: 所以 我 还有 三 年 的 时间.  
*suoyi wo haiyou san nian de shijian.*  
so I still have three year NOM time.  
‘So I still have three years...’

11 找 对象;  
*zhao duixiang;*  
find partner;  
‘to find a boyfriend,’

12 结婚;  
*jiehun;*  
get married;

---

<sup>2</sup> In line 7, Yao produces a dental-alveolar click. To accurately transcribe the phonetic feature of this click, the IPA symbol for click [ɿ] is used here.

<sup>3</sup> 唉 is a lexicalized form of sigh in Mandarin.

‘get married,’

13            生    孩子;  
                  *sheng haizi*;  
                  born    baby;  
                  ‘and have a baby.’

After being asked by Yao about whether she has a boyfriend at the moment (lines 1-2), Zuo produces a negative response (line 3) and then expresses the opinion that becoming pregnant at the age of thirty-three would be too late (line 5). Then, Zuo suggests that it is best to give birth to a baby before the age of thirty-three (line 6). Instead of accepting or rejection Zuo’s suggestion, Yao produces a click (line 7) and a sigh (line 8) which are commonly used to project a dispreferred response (Hoey, 2014; Pomerantz, 1984). Then, Yao talks about her wish to graduate quickly in line 8. To talk about Yao’s own wish is not a conditionally-relevant response to Zuo’s suggestion in line 6. After line 8, Zuo immediately gazes away from the beginning of the silence (line 9) (see Figure 1). By avoiding mutual gaze during the 2.8-second of silence in line 9, Zuo shows disengagement with Yao’s talk that was presented in line 8 (Goodwin, 1981).



Figure 1 (Left to right: Zuo and Yao) Gaze directions of Zuo and Yao in line 9.



- 4 (1.2)
- 5 Hui: 没 啦;  
*mei la;*  
 NEG PRT;  
 ‘(You) can’t have (them).’
- 6 [牌 已 落地.  
*[pai yi luodi.*  
 [cards have played.  
 ‘The cards have been played out.’
- 7 Don: [((laughter))  
  
 ((6 lines are omitted where Don and Hui produce laughter.))
- 14 Hui: ((laughter))
- 15 你 这个 时候 不笑 别人 会 觉得  
*ni zhege shihou buxiao bieren hui juede*  
 you this CL time NEG laugh other will feel  
 中国人 的 幽默感 有 问题.  
*zhongguoren de youmogan you wenti.*  
 Chinese ASSOC sense of humor have problem.  
 ‘People will think that Chinese people have no sense of humor if  
 you don’t laugh at this time.’

- 16 Don: 没事儿 他俩;  
*meishier talia;*  
 NEG thing they two;  
 ‘It’s Ok, those two...’
- 17 他 他 不笑 是 对的 因为;  
*ta ta buxiao shi duide yinwei;*  
 3sg 3sg NEG laugh be right PRT because;  
 ‘He shouldn’t laugh, because...’
- 18 他 是 他 跟 她 是 同伙 啊.  
*ta shi ta gen ta shi tonghuo a.*  
 3sg be 3sg with 3sg be ally PRT.  
 ‘they are allies.’
- 19 他是 [ 他 能 笑得 出来 么.  
*ta shi [ ta neng xiaode chulai me.*  
 3sg be [ 3sg can laugh CSC out Q.  
 ‘How can he laugh?’
- 20 Hui: [hehehe
- 21 中国人 讲义气.  
*zhongguoren jiangyiqi.*  
 Chinese loyal to friends.

‘Chinese people are loyal to their friends.’

22 Don: hehehe

23 Wen: 算了.  
*suanle.*  
forget it.  
‘Forget it.’

24 Hui [hehehe [hehehehe

25 Don: [hehehe [hehe

26 -> Fan: [<<f> 所以 这 时候> 是: 谁::;  
[<<f> *suoyi zhe shihou>shi:shei::;*  
[<<f> so this time> be: who::;  
‘So at this time who...’

27 归 谁 收分;=  
*gui shui shoufen;=*  
be who get point;=  
‘Who will get the points?’

28 Don: =就是 说;  
=*jiushi shuo;*  
=just be say;

'I mean...'

29 Hui: 我们 啊-  
*women a-*  
we PRT-  
'It's us.'

30 Fan: 还?  
*hai?*  
still?  
'Still...'

31 哦::  
*ou::*  
oh::  
'Oh.'

The sequence begins with Fan's seek for confirmation about if diamond cards are the trump suit that can get points (line 1). After receiving the confirmation (line 2), Fan becomes aware that she played the wrong cards. She produces a loud inbreath (line 3) to display her surprise (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006). In lines 5 to 6, Hui announces that Fan's cards have been played out. The joking frame is initiated with Don's laughter (line 7). In line 15, Hui says that people may think Chinese people lack a sense of humor because Wen has not laughed at Fan. Don explains that Wen should not laugh at Fan because Wen and Fan are on the same team in this game (lines 16-19). In line 21, Hui describes Wen's not laughing at Fan as *jiang yiqi* '(being) loyal' to his teammate. This description (line 21) is an idiomatic expression. The idiomatic expression is a

common device to bring a topic to the possible closure (Drew & Holt, 1998; Holt & Drew, 2005). In line 23, Wen shows that he aligns with the closing of the topic by not adding new content and saying *suangle* ‘forget it’. Hui and Don display that they understand the topic has come to a possible completion by laughing together in lines 24 and 25 (Holt, 2010).

Partly overlapped with Hui and Don’s laughter (lines 24-25), Fan deploys a *suoyi*-prefaced interrogative to seek information about who will get the points (lines 26-27). The phrase *shoufen* ‘get points’ shows that Fan’s question is about the card game, rather than the immediately prior joking. Returning to a pre-prior activity is recurrently observed in a continuation of the previous talk (Stefani & Horlacher, 2005). Also, Fan deploys the lexical items that she and Hui used in their turns prior to the joking frame. That is, *zhu* ‘trump’ (lines 1 and 2) and *pai* ‘card’ (line 6) refer to the cards that will be used to *shoufen* ‘get point’ (line 27). Immediately prior to the use of *suoyi*, the activity is shifted from playing cards (lines 1-6) to conversational joking (lines 7 to 25). In line 26, Fan uses a *suoyi*-prefaced interrogative to return to the temporarily derailed activity of the card game.

The two excerpts in this section have shown that the speaker uses *suoyi* to continue a pre-prior talk (Excerpt 4.5) or temporarily derailed activity (Excerpt 4.6).

#### **4.4 Summary**

Chapter 4 reports on the interactional functions of *suoyi* when it occurs at the turn-initial position. Three interactional functions of *suoyi* have been examined in this chapter. First, turn-initial *suoyis* link the subsequent talk to the prior speaker’s talk and explicate the current speaker’s epistemic stance. Second, they preface a display of understanding. Third, they continue a pre-prior talk or activity.

When *suoyi* is used to link the subsequent talk to the prior speaker's talk and explicate the current speaker's epistemic stance, the speaker frames the immediate prior speaker's talk as a ground of his (or her) opinion. In the *suoyi*-prefaced turn, the speaker usually produces a subjective opinion or comment. When *suoyi* is used to preface a display of understanding, the speaker usually designs the *suoyi*-prefaced talk as seek for confirmation. When *suoyi* is used to continue a pre-prior talk or activity, it occurs at the possible topic or sequence closure.

## Chapter 5 Interactional Functions of *Suoyi* at Mid-Turn Position

This chapter reports on the interactional functions of mid-turn *suoyis* in the data. An examination of the data shows that 80 *suoyi* tokens occur at the mid-turn position, accounting for 61.1% of all *suoyi* tokens present in the data (see Table 3).

Table 3 Interactional functions of mid-turn *suoyis* in the data

Interactional functions of <i>suoyi</i>	Occurrences	Percentage
Introducing a result or conclusion	60	75%
Occurring at the possible completion of a topic	7	8.7%
Others	13	16.3%
<b>Total</b>	80	100%

The mid-turn *suoyis* perform two main functions: to introduce a result or conclusion, and to be used at the possible completion of a topic. Section 5.1 demonstrates how *suoyi* is used to introduce a result or conclusion, and Section 5.2 illustrates how *suoyi* is used at the possible completion of a topic.

There are 13 tokens of *suoyi* categorized as “others”. In most cases, a turn is incomplete and ends immediately after *suoyi* due to overlaps. Due to their heterogeneity and limited number, they will not be discussed in this chapter.

### 5.1 *Suoyi* Used to Introduce a Result or Conclusion

This section demonstrates how speakers use *suoyi* to introduce a result or conclusion. Specifically, Section 5.1.1 shows how *suoyi* is used to introduce a result, and Section 5.1.2 focuses on *suoyi* being used to introduce a conclusion.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, research on Chinese grammar describes that *suoyi* is a conjunction indicating results and conclusions that must be used after a reason-clause (Lü, 1980; Zhu, 1982). Scholars of Chinese spoken discourse have pointed out that *suoyi* can indicate a result of an event that has already happened (Yao, 2009). *Suoyi* can also be used to express the speaker's subjective inference or conclusion (Fang 2000, 2012). In my data, *suoyis* are often used to introduce results or conclusions. Among the 131 total occurrences of *suoyi*, 45.8% (N=60) are used to perform this function. These *suoyi* tokens take 75% of the mid-turn *suoyis*. Among them, 26 tokens are used to introduce a result, and 34 tokens are used to introduce a conclusion. The two uses will be discussed in Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

### **5.1.1 *Suoyi* Used to Introduce a Result**

This section illustrates how *suoyi* is used to introduce a result. Result is defined as an “effect or consequence” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2016: 619) or “a thing that caused or produced because of something else” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 2000: 1083). These definitions are similar to that proposed by Schiffrin who argues that result indicates a “fact-based causal relation” between events and states (Schiffrin, 1987: 202). An analysis of the data collected in this study shows that *suoyi* is used to introduce a result when both the cause and the result are events that have usually already happened. When *suoyi* functions to introduce a result, it occurs in the middle of a speaker’s turn, at the beginning of a result-clause.



[ou:::]

[oh:::]

‘Oh.’

6           因为 我 那天 下午       刚好       去 蒙特利尔.  
*yinwei wo natian xiawu ganghao qu mengtelier.*  
because I that day afternoon just happened to go Montreal.  
‘Because I just happened to go to Montreal that afternoon,’

7       --> 所以 (我) 不能 去.  
*suoyi (wo) buneng qu.*  
so (I) NEG can go.  
‘so I couldn’t go.’

8       Fan: 啊:::  
*a:::*  
Uh:::  
‘Uh.’

The sequence begins with Min’s question about who has given Fan permission to take a day off to attend a gathering (line 1). Fan responds to Min’s question and tells that it was the lab manager who told the supervisor that they should give them a day off so that they could attend the gathering (lines 2-4). After receiving Fan’s response with a change-of-state token *ou* ‘oh’ (Heritage, 1984) (line 5), Min explains why he did not attend the event by using reason- + *suoyi*-clauses (lines 6-7). Min reports that his absence from the gathering was due to his trip to Montreal that afternoon (lines 6-7). The reason for his absence that he went to Montreal (line 6),

is something that has already happened. Here, *suoyi* is used to introduce the result based on that factual event.

Excerpt 5.2 is another case in point. This excerpt is from a conversation among three friends who are talking about their taste preferences. In this excerpt, Rui (male) tells Nan (male) that Tai (female) does not eat spicy food. The third personal pronoun *ta* ‘she’ in line 1 refers to Tai.

Excerpt 5.2 (109 Lunch 63’)

1 Rui: 她 一般 也 不吃 辣的。  
*ta yiban ye buchi lade.*  
3sg usually also NEG eat spicy NOM.  
‘She doesn’t eat spicy, usually.’

2 Nan: 嗯哼—  
*enheng-*  
mm hm-  
‘Mm hm.’

3 Rui: 极少 出去 <<pp> 吃辣.>  
*jishao chuqu <<pp> chila.>*  
rarely go out <<pp> eat spicy.>  
‘(She) rarely goes out for spicy food.’

4 Tai: 不是 但是 我 其实 很 喜欢 吃 辣的。

*bushi danshi wo qishi hen xihuan chi lade.*

NEG be but I actually very like eat spicy NOM.

‘No. Actually, I love spicy.’

5 只是 你们 都 不吃:;

*zhishi nimen dou buchii;*

just be you PL all NEG eat:;

‘Just (because) you don’t eat (spicy),’

6 -> 所以 我 就<<creaky> 不做 嘛.>

*suoyi wo jiu <<creaky> buzuo ma.>*

so I then <<creaky>NEG cook PRT.>

‘so I don’t cook (spicy food).’

7 Nan: 嗯哼-

*enheng-*

mm hm-

‘Mm hm.’

In line 1, Rui tells Nan that Tai usually does not eat spicy food. After Nan’s continuer *enheng* ‘mm hm’ (line 2) (Gardner, 2002), Rui further states that Tai rarely goes out for spicy food (line 3). In line 4, Tai produces a disagreement with Nan’s statement by using negation *bushi* ‘no’ and the contrast conjunction *danshi* ‘but’. The negation and contrast conjunction project that the following utterance may oppose to the prior statement. In line 4, Tai indicates her own taste

preference through using *qishi* ‘actually’. *Qishi* ‘actually’ is used in disagreement to display the following statement is a fact (Lü, 1980). Then, in lines 5 and 6, Tai gives an account to explain why it seems that she does not eat spicy food. In line 6, Tai produces *suoyi* to introduce the result of the fact that Nan and Rui do not eat spicy food. That is, she does not cook spicy food because Nan and Rui do not eat spicy food (line 5). *Jiu* ‘then’ in the result clause (line 6) can be used as a connection between two clauses to introduce a result (Lü, 1980). Here, the reason (i.e., Nan and Rui do not eat spicy food) is a fact event. That Tai does not cook spicy food is the result. Thus, in this excerpt, *suoyi* is used to introduce the result of a fact-based event.

Excerpts 5.1 and 5.2 in this section demonstrate how *suoyi* is used to introduce a result of a fact-based event. The next section reports on the use of *suoyi* to introduce a conclusion.

### **5.1.2 *Suoyi* Used to Introduce a Conclusion**

This section examines how *suoyi* is used to introduce a conclusion. Conclusion is defined as “a logical consequence of a reasoning process” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2016: 149). The data show that the speaker tends to use *suoyi* to introduce a conclusion after offering background information. This observation is in accordance with what Schiffrin (1987) argues, that is, in a reasoning process, the background information is provided first and the conclusion is then warranted by the background information.

The next excerpt shows how *suoyi* is used by the speaker to introduce a conclusion. In this excerpt, four participants Wen (male), Mei (female), Don (male), and Hui (female) are playing a Chinese card game called *Shuang Sheng* ‘double upgrade’, a point-based Chinese card game. In the game, players need to use diamond cards to prevent others from winning points.

Excerpt 5.3 (096 Cards audio 1165’’ video\_2\_5:30)

- 1     Wen:     你 你 [两 副 牌 方片 只 只 只有 一个 尖 呐;  
           *ni ni [liangfu pai fangpian zhi zhi zhiyou yige jian na;*  
           you you [two CL card diamond only only only one CL ace PRT;  
           ‘The only diamond you have out of two decks of cards is an ace?’
- 2     Don:             [方片儿 的 绝 了。  
                       *[fangpianer de jue le.*  
                       [diamond NOM extinct CRS.  
                       ‘No diamonds anymore,’
- 3     -->     [所以她 这个 牌 很难 很难 打。  
                       *[suoyi ta zhege pai henan hennan da.*  
                       [so 3sg this CL card very hard very hard play.  
                       ‘so her cards are very hard to play.’
- 4     Hui:     [等于 去?  
                       *[dengyu qu?*  
                       [equal to?  
                       ‘That’s to ...’
- 5             跟 你 这种 不会 打 的 人 在一起 真是 烦。  
                       *gen ni zhezhong buhui da de ren zaiyiqi zhenshi fan.*  
                       with you this CL NEG can play NOM people together really annoy.  
                       ‘It’s really annoying to play cards with someone like you who  
                       doesn’t know the rules.’

In line 1, Wen seeks confirmation from Mei about whether the only diamond she has is an ace. Don's turn (line 2) almost completely overlaps with Wen's question in line 1, which may cancel the relevance of the response to Wen's question from Mei. Don reports that the diamond cards have all been played (line 2). Then he adopts *suoyi* to present his conclusion that Mei's cards are very difficult to play. Schiffrin (1987) suggests that the relationship between the background information and the conclusion is knowledge-based. Specifically, the speaker cannot make the conclusion without relevant background knowledge. In this excerpt, Don arrives at the *suoyi*-prefaced conclusion (line 3) based on the relevant background information; that is, the diamond cards have all been played (line 2). Through using *suoyi*, Don introduces the conclusion that is based on the relevant background information, which serves as the evidence to warrant the conclusion (line 3).

The following is another example of *suoyi* used to introduce a conclusion. In this excerpt, Bin (female) and Lei (female) are talking about a room that Lei wants to rent, which is referred to as "that room" in their conversation.

Excerpt 5.4 (038 Paper 9:45, 585)

1        Bin: 那 房间 跟 你 现在 房间 一样 大 啊-  
           *na fangjian gen ni xianzai fangjian yiyang da a-*  
           that room with you now room same big PRT-  
           ‘That room is as big as the room you are living in now.’

2        还 没 阳[台;  
           *hai mei yang[tai;*  
           even NEG [balcony;

‘(It) doesn’t even have a balcony.’

3      Lei:                    [大大大.  
                                  [*da da da*.  
                                  [big big big.  
                                  ‘(It is) big.’

4      Bin: 大个 [屁.  
                                  *da ge [pi*.  
                                  big CL [ass.  
                                  ‘Big my ass.’

5      Lei:                    [我去 别人家 看(.) 绝对 大.  
                                  [*wo qu bieren jia kan (.) juehui da*.  
                                  [I go other home look (.) absolutely big.  
                                  ‘I went to someone else’s home to see it. It is absolutely big.’

6      Bin: 大个 屁;  
                                  *da ge pi*;  
                                  big CL ass;  
                                  ‘Big my ass.’

7      它 没 橱:.  
                                  *ta mei chu*:.  
                                  3sg NEG cabinet:.  
                                  ‘It (has) no large cabinet.’

8 (1.0)

9 它 只是 个 柜子;  
*ta zhishi ge guizi;*  
3sg just be CL cabinet;  
'It is just a small cabinet.'

10 --> 所以 你 感觉 大.  
*suoyi ni ganjue da.*  
so you feel big.  
'so you thought (it is) big.'

11 房间 大小 是 一样 的.  
*fangjian daxiao shi yiyang de.*  
room size be same PRT.  
'The room size is the same.'

12 你 回来 可以 看 合同 的.  
*ni huilai keyi kan hetong de.*  
you return can look contract PRT.  
'You can check the contract later on.'

Bin considers the sizes of “that room<sup>4</sup>” and “the room Lei is living in now” as the same (lines 1-2). Lei disagrees with Bin’s prior assessment and maintains that “that room” is bigger than hers

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<sup>4</sup> “That room” in this conversation refers to a room in the apartment of Lei’s friend. Due to the speakers use of the phrase *na fangjian* “that room” to refer to this room, all the “that room” in this example refers to Lei’s friend’s

(line 3). This disagreement is a dispreferred response to Bin's assessment (Pomerantz, 1984). In response, Bin immediately deploys a curse *da ge pi* 'big my ass' (line 4) as a means of emphasizing her disagreement and disaffiliative stance with Lei (Stapleton, 2003). Lei continues to defend her stance by adopting the extreme case formulation *juedui* 'absolute' (line 5) (Pomerantz, 1986). Her talk (line 5) is also the evidence that she provides to support her opinion. Bin repeats the swear in line 6 and provides further evidence to support her opinion that "that room" has no large cabinet (line 7), but just a small one (line 9). Based on the evidence in lines 7 to 9, Bin deploys *suoyi* to introduce her conclusion: the cabinet in the room causes Lei to think that the room is big.

The two excerpts in this section demonstrate how *suoyi* is used to introduce a conclusion.

### 5.1.3 Interim Summary

Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 have shown how *suoyi* is used to introduce a result or conclusion. The speaker usually uses *suoyi* to introduce a result based on factual events. When *suoyi* is used to introduce a conclusion, the speaker usually provides background information before the *suoyi*-clause as the evidence for such a conclusion.

## 5.2 *Suoyi* at the Possible Closure of a Topic

This section outlines how *suoyi* is used at the possible closure of a topic. [*Suoyi* + word repeat] is the format that is observed to occur at the possible closure of a topic in the data. A topic of a conversation is seen as "the center of shared attention" (Riou, 2017: 2). Previous studies show that a variety of morphosyntactic practices are used for topic transition (Drew & Holt, 1998; Holt & Drew, 2005; Button, 1991; Button & Casey, 1984; Jefferson, 1993; Riou, 2017a, 2017b). The

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room, rather than the speakers own room.

closing of a topic-in-progress may bring the participants an opportunity to develop a new (or the next) topic (Button, 1991; Drew & Holt, 1998; Holt & Drew, 2005). An examination of the data shows that 5.3% of the total number of *suoyis* (N=7) in the data are used in the format of [*suoyi* + word repeat], followed by closure of a topic. These 7 *suoyi* tokens also account for 8.6% of the mid-turn *suoyis* in the data (Table 3).

Excerpt 5.5 illustrates how a speaker uses [*suoyi*+ word repeat] at the possible closure of a topic. Ava (female) and Bee (female) are friends, and members of a Student Union. This Student Union regularly organizes some events and sends invitations to members. In this conversation, Ava tells Bee that the president of the Student Union excludes her from events.

Excerpt 5.5 (087 juhui 14:20, 960)

1 Bee: 诶 我 告 诉 你 高 老 师 特 别 喜 欢 他<sup>5</sup>.  
*ai wo gaosu ni gaolaoshi tebie xihuan ta.*  
hey I tell you Prof. Gao very like 3sg.  
'Hey, you know, Prof. Gao really likes him.'

2 (1.0)

3 他 就 是 那 种 很 规 规 矩 矩 的.  
*ta jiushi nazhong hen guiguijuju de.*  
3sg just be that CL very behaved well NOM.  
'He is that kind of person which is very well behaved,'

---

<sup>5</sup> This third person pronoun refers to president of the Student Union. Ava and Bee mentioned this person before this excerpt. According to their conversation, the president is the organizer of students' events.

- 4            规矩            到   那个   极点   了   (的)   那 种   人.  
*guiju            dao nage jidian le (de) nazhong ren.*  
behaved well to that CL extreme PRT (NOM) that CL people.  
'(he is) extremely well behaved.'
- 5            (1.2)
- 6            [嗯:..  
              [en:..  
              [yeah:..  
              'Hmm.'
- 7            Ava: [嗯:..  
              [en:..  
              [yeah:..  
              'Hmm.'
- 8            反正        我是:;  
*fanzheng woshi:;*  
              anyway I be:;  
              'Anyway, I am...'
- 9            ->        我   无所谓;  
*wo wusuowei;*  
              I NEG care;  
              'I don't care.'

10           你    让  我  去  去  不  让    我  去  那  我.  
*ni rang wo qu qu burang wo qu na wo.*  
you allow I go go NEG allow I go that I.  
'(If) you allow me to go then I will, (if) not, I...'

11           没    办  法  ;  
*mei banfa;*  
NEG idea;  
'I can't do anything about it.'

12           反  正    我  那   (段  时  间)   生  病        生    很    严  重  ;  
*fanzheng wo na (duan shijian) shengbing sheng hen yanzhong;*  
anyway I that (time)           in sick very much;  
'I was very sick at that time.'

((17 lines are omitted. During these lines, Ava expresses that she preferred to stay at home while she was ill and Bee explains the reason for inviting Ava to attend the event.))

30       Ava:  没  有        人    通  知   我   具  体   几  点.  
*meiyou ren tongzhi wo juti jidian.*  
NEG have people notify I specific time.  
'No one let me know the time.'

31           没  有        人    通  知   我   在  哪   集  合  ;  
*meiyou ren tongzhi wo zainar jihe;*

NEG have people notify I at where meet;  
'No one let me know where to meet.'

32 还是 你 给我 打电话;  
*haishi ni geiwo dadianhua;*  
still be you give me call;  
'Until you called me.'

33 哎 我 告诉 你 我们 在 哪儿 碰头 吧;  
*ai wo gaosu ni women zai nar pengtou ba;*  
PRT I tell you we at where meet PRT;  
'How about I tell you where we will meet.'

34 我 不知道;  
*wo buzhidao;*  
I NEG know;  
'I don't know.'

35 他 没有 通知 我.  
*ta meiyou tongzhi wo.*  
3sg NEG have notify I.  
'He didn't inform me.'

36 Bee: ♪ ♪ ♪

37 --> Ava: 所以 我 真的 无所谓.  
*suoyi wo zhende wusuowei.*  
so I really NEG care.  
'So I don't care, really.'

38 Bee: ↘ ↘ ↘

39 Ava: 今天 我可 开心 了;  
*jintian wo ke kaixin le;*  
today I very happy PFV;  
'I am very happy today.'

40 Bee: ↘

41 Ava: 为啥 我 今天 去;  
*weisha wo jintian qu;*  
why I today go;  
'Why did I come today?'

42 Bee: ↘

43 Ava: 我 今天 去 欢送 你 为啥 我不 去.  
*wo jintian qu huansong ni weisha wo bu qu.*  
I today go send off you<sup>6</sup> why I NEG go.  
'I came to see you off, why wouldn't I?'

---

<sup>6</sup> The speaker uses the second person pronoun *ni* 'you' here, but the person she refers to is the president according to the context.

Bee tells Ava that the president of the Student Union is very well liked by his professor (lines 1-4). Ava begins her telling by showing her indifference to not being invited to attend the events with the phrase *wu wusuowei* ‘I don’t care’ (line 9). Ava then recounts what happened between her and the president last time by shifting the time frame to the past with the time reference *naduan shijian* ‘that time’ (line 12). Ava recounts how the president excluded her from an event (lines 30-35). At the end of Ava’s extended telling, Bee produces three prolonged head nods for a duration of 1.1-second to display her affiliation with Ava’s stance (line 36) (Stivers, 2008).

At this point, Ava produces a *suoyi*-prefaced TCU in line 37, which is a partial repeat of her talk in line 9. In line 9, Ava says *wu wusuowei* ‘I don’t care’, and in line 37, after *suoyi*, Ava says *wu zhende wusuowei* ‘(I) really don’t care’. The partial word repeat *wusuowei* ‘(I) don’t care’ in line 37 shows Ava’s current stance towards the event she just reported, which shifts the time frame from the past to the present moment and concludes the telling (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Repetition is a closure component, and often occurs at the possible closure of a topic (Butten & Casey, 1984). In addition, the phrase *jintian wo ke kaixin le* ‘I am very happy today’ in line 39 announces a next topic: that is, something happy happened “today”. The time reference *jintian* ‘today’ (line 39) marks the shift of time frame from the past to the present. The time frame shifting in Ava’s telling signals the speaker’s disengagement from the topic (Li, forthcoming; Labov, 1972). The disengagement of a topic has the potential to initiate an independent topic (Holt & Drew, 2005). In line 41, Ava begins to talk about “what happened today”, which retrospectively shows that the topic changes from “not being invited to attend the events by the president” to “what happened today”. The initiation of a new telling shows that the



*woshuo zhongwen you bei zhengshi jinzhi le.*

I say Chinese again BEI officially forbidden CRS.

‘I’d say that Chinese is officially banned again.’

5 Rui: 好 贱 啊.

*hao jian a.*

very dirty PRT.

‘He’s playing dirty.’

6 Wan: .h

7 Rui: 不会 是 老板 提出来 的吧.

*buhui shi laoban tichulai de ba.*

NEG can be boss propose out PRT SA.

‘Couldn’t it be your supervisor who proposed this?’

8 Wan: 肯定 啊 我 觉得 这种;

*kending a wo juede zhezhong;*

definitely PRT I think this CL;

‘Of course, I think.’

9 就是 我们 老板 跟 program manager 都是 就是

*jiushi women laoban gen program manager doushi jiushi*

just be our boss with program manager all be just be

[一唱一和 的.

*[yichangyihe de.*

[same PRT.

‘Our supervisor and the program manager are on the same page.’

10 Min: [其他 组 都 没有 这种 规模.

*[qita zu dou meiyou zhezhong guimo.*

[other group all NEG have this CL scale.

‘The other groups are not on a (large) scale like this.’

11 Rui: Program manager 是谁 啊.

*program manager shi shei a.*

program manager be who PRT.

‘Who’s the program manager?’

12 就是 不是 年纪 多大;

*jiushi bushi nianji duoda;*

just NEG be age how old;

‘How old is the program manager?’

13 是 你 之前 讲的 那个 什么 姐姐 吗.

*shi ni zhiqian jiangde nage shenme jiejie ma.*

be you before talk PRT that CL what sister Q.

‘Is she the lady you mentioned before?’

14 Wan: 不是 不是.

*bushi bushi.*

NEG be NEG be.

‘No, no.’

((24 lines are omitted. In these lines, Rui asks 4 questions with regards to Wan’s program manager’s university, research, and degrees.))

39 Rui: 他 跟 老板 一唱一和 是 什么 情况,  
*ta gen laoban yichangyihe shi shenme qingkuang,*  
3sg with boss same be what situation,  
‘What do you mean by the program manager and your supervisor are on the same page?’

40 Wan: 哎呀 他们 合作 了 好多 年 了.  
*aiya tamen hezuo le haoduo nian le.*  
PRT they cooperate PFV many year PFV.  
‘Aha, they have worked together for many years.’

41 Rui: 哦 哦 哦 [我 懂 了].  
*ou ou ou [wo dong le.*  
oh oh oh [I understand CRS.  
‘Oh, I see.’

42 Wan: [对:: 呀.  
[*dui:: ya.*  
[yeah:: PRT.  
‘Yeah.’

43 (1.0)

- 44 <<creaky>对 呀.>  
<<creaky>*dui ya.*>  
<<creaky>Yeah PRT.>  
'Yeah.'
- 45 (1.0)
- 46 ((sigh))
- 47 --> 所以 中文 又 被 禁止 了.  
*suoyi zhongwen you bei jinzhi le.*  
so Chinese again BEI forbidden CRS.  
'So Chinese is banned (to be used) again.'
- 48 (0.9)
- 49 昨天 一开始 有个 师姐 就 过来  
*zuotian yikaishi youge shijie jiu guolai*  
yesterday beginning have CL senior female colleague just come  
跟 我 讲 英文;  
*gen wo jiang yingwen;*  
to I speak English;  
'There was a senior female colleague who talked to me in English  
yesterday.'
- 50 就是 她 是 中国人 嘛.

*jiushi ta shi zhongguoren ma.*

just be 3sg be Chinese PRT.

‘She is Chinese.’

51 讲 了 没 几 句 她 就 (说) 觉 得 说 不

*jiang le mei jiju taji (shuo) juede shuo bu*

speak PFV NEG few sentence 3sg just (speak) think speak NEG

下 去 了 .

*xiaqu le.*

continue CRS.

‘She felt she couldn’t keep going after a few sentences.’

In line 2, Wan confirms Rui’s understanding in line 1 that the program manager insinuates that the Chinese language is banned in the lab. Wan displays her negative stance by sighing (line 3). Then, Wan makes an announcement that *zhongwen youbei jinzhile* ‘Chinese is officially banned again’ (line 4). Rui’s assessment of the program manager’s indirect accusation, *hao jian a* ‘very dirty’ (line 5), displays his affiliative stance with Wan. The sequential position of Rui’s assessment (line 5) shows that Rui treats Wan’s telling as something having reached a possible completion. Then, the conversation goes on with the series of Q-A chains (lines 7-40) in which Rui asks 8 questions about the program manager.

After receiving the details about the program manager and the supervisor (lines 40), Rui produces three change-of-status tokens *ou ou ou* ‘oh oh oh’ (line 41) followed by a claim of his understanding, *wo dongle* ‘I understand’, at the sequence-closing third position of the Q-A sequence (Schegloff, 2007). The change-of-status tokens and claim of understanding show that Rui’s epistemic state has changed (Heritage, 1984). In line 42, Wan produces an

acknowledgement token, *duiya* ‘yeah’, followed by a 1.0-second silence, which may be used to close the current topic (Grivičić & Nilep, 2004). After the lapse in line 43, Wan repeats her *duiya* ‘yeah’ to display that she orients to the previous sequence as something that can be finished or that is finishing (Hoey, 2017). During the lapse in lines 43 and 45, Rui collaboratively moves the current topic towards closure by refraining from self-selecting as the next speaker (Schegloff, 2007). Wan ends the lapse with a sigh (line 46), which can be used as a practice to close the prior sequence (Hoey, 2014).

Wan produces the turn format of [*suoyi* + word repeat] in line 47. In line 47, the phrase *zhongwen you bei jinzhi le* “Chinese is banned again”, is a partial repeat of her talk in line 4 *zhongwen you bei zhengshi jinzhi le* ‘Chinese is officially banned again’. This *suoyi*-prefaced TCU is a repetition of the announcement in line 4. Not adding to the details of a topic displays the speaker’s disengagement from the current topic (Holt & Drew, 2005). After the *suoyi*-prefaced TCU, Wan begins a report about what happened in her lab yesterday (line 48). The time reference *zuotian* ‘yesterday’ in line 25 indicates the shift of time frame. By reporting *youge shijie* ‘there is a senior female colleague’, as a new person who has not been mentioned in their conversation, Wan nominates the next topic (Button & Casey, 1984). The initiation of the next topic shows that the topic of the conversation has changed from the program manager (such as the program manager’s university, degrees, research, and job responsibility) to Wan’s colleague’s visit to Wan in the lab “yesterday”. Thus, the format of [*suoyi* + word repeat] in this example is used at the possible closure of a topic.

The excerpts in this section have demonstrated how the format of [*suoyi* + word repeat] occurs at the possible closure of a topic.

### 5.3 Summary

Chapter 5 reports on the interactional functions of *suoyi* when it occurs at the mid-turn position. Two interactional functions of mid-turn *suoyi* have been identified in this chapter. First, *suoyi*s introduce a result or conclusion. Second, they occur at the possible completion of a topic.

It has been shown that *suoyi* is used to introduce a result when both the cause and the result are events that have usually already happened. The speaker can use *suoyi* to introduce a result of a fact-based event. *Suoyi* can also be used to introduce a conclusion. When *suoyi* performs this function, the speaker usually provides background information as the evidence to support the *suoyi*-clause. When *suoyi* occurs at the possible completion of a topic, it is usually in the form of [*suoyi* + word repeat].

## Chapter 6 The Interactional Function of *Suoyi* at the Turn-Final Position

This chapter examines the interactional function of turn-final *suoyi* in the data. There are 12 *suoyi* tokens at the turn-final position, accounting for 9.2% of all *suoyi* tokens in the data. The turn-final *suoyi* function to mark the possible completion of a turn, which is discussed in Section 6.1 below.

### 6.1 Marking the Possible Completion of a Turn

This section examines how *suoyi* is designed to mark the possible completion of a turn. A substantial body of literature has documented that conjunctions can occur after a syntactically possibly complete utterance to signal the possible completion of the turn (Jefferson, 1980; Local & Kelly, 1986; Mulder & Thompson, 2008; Local & Walker, 2005; Walker, 2012). Jefferson (1980) defines “trail-off” conjunctions as the conjunctions used by speakers to close the current turn. Trail-off conjunctions have particular prosodic features in English such as low pitch level and reduced loudness (Local & Kelly, 1986; Walker, 2012). The analysis of the data shows that *suoyi* can be designed as a “trail-off” conjunction to mark the possible completion of a turn. Excerpt 6.1 and Excerpt 6.2 demonstrate how a turn-final *suoyi* is designed to close a turn.

Excerpt 6.1 is taken from a conversation among five friends, Bei (female), Chu (male), Lan (female), Wai (male), and Pin (male). In this interaction, Chu (male) and Lan (female) are talking about Chu’s dance class schedule.

Excerpt 6.1 (071 Sufour 1:03:40, 3817)

1 Lan: 你 报的 是 哪个 班的-  
*ni baode shi nage bande-*

you apply NOM be which class NOM-

‘Which class did you register for?’

2 Chu: 我 报的 周日的 就 今天的.

*wo baode zhouride jiu jintiande.*

I apply NOM Sunday NOM just today NOM.

‘I registered for the class on Sunday, just today.’

3 因为 我 周一 到 周五 都 有事儿.

*yinwei wo zhouyi dao zhouwu dou youshier.*

because I Monday to Friday all busy.

‘Because I’m busy from Monday to Friday.’

((13 lines are omitted where Lan mentions two teachers’ names and asks whether Chu registered for their classes. Chu says no. Lan comments that these teachers are very nice.))

17 Chu: 但是 他 那个 广告 上 那个 词 上 说是;;

*danshi ta neige guanggao shang nage ci shang shuo shi;;*

but 3sg that CL advertisement on that CL message on speak be;;

‘But the advertisement said,’

18 除了 周日;

*chule zhour;*

except Sunday;

‘except Sunday,’

- 19           都是 (Cubani) 还是 什么.  
*doushi (Cubani)haishi shenme.*  
 all be (Cubani) or what.  
 ‘they are all Cubani or something,’
- 20           所以 我 还 担心 今天 的 可能 不是 古巴式 的-  
*suoyi wo hai danxin jintian de keneng bushi gubashi de-*  
 so I still worry today NOM maybe NEG be Cuban NOM-  
 ‘so I worry that today’s (dance class) doesn’t (teach) Cuban (dance).’
- 21           (还是)  
*(haishi)*  
 (or)  
 ‘Or...’
- 22           我 不知道-  
*wo buzhidao-*  
 I NEG know-  
 ‘I don’t know,’
- 23           所以 我 今天 我 得 去 问 清楚.  
*suoyi wo jintian wo dai qu wen qingchu.*  
 so I today I must go ask clear.  
 ‘so I must go and ask today.’
- 24           但是 我 也 只有 今天 有 时间.

*danshi wo ye zhiyou jintian you shijian.*

but I also only have today have time.

‘But I’m only available today (Sunday).’

25 平时 我 都 没有 时间;

*pingshi wo dou meiyou shijian;*

usually I all NEG have time;

‘Usually I have no time.’

26 (0.6)

27 --> 他 那 时间 都 跟 我的 撞 了 所以:.

*ta nei shijian dou gen wode ZHUANG le suoyi:.*

3sg that time all with my conflict CRS so:.

‘All the (class) schedules conflict with mine, so...’

28 Lan: 哦:..

*ou:..*

oh:..

‘Oh.’

29 Chu: 嗯.

*en.*

Yeah.

‘Yeah.’

30        无所谓     啦;  
              *wusuowei    la*;  
              NEG matter PRT;  
              ‘It doesn’t matter.’

The excerpt begins with Lan’s request for information about the class Chu registered for (line 1). In lines 2 and 3, Chu responds that he registered for the Sunday class and explains that he has no time on weekdays. In lines 17 to 19, Chu informs Lan about the class content and schedule, and the reason why he will visit the class today (lines 20-23). In line 25, Chu paraphrases his prior talk in line 3. That is, the content of his talk in line 25 is the same as in line 3. The phrase he used *meiyou shijian* ‘not have time’ (line 25) is synonymous to *youshi’er* ‘have something to attend to (I’m busy)’ (line 3). After a 0.6-second silence (line 26), Chu continues his turn with a reiteration of the time conflict (line 27). In line 27, the referring expression *ta nei shijian* ‘his/its (that) time’ refers to the time of the dancing class mentioned on the advertisement. The phrase *ta nei* ‘his/its that’ in line 27 is a partial repeat of the phrase *ta neige* ‘his/its that’ in line 17. Moreover, Chu’s paraphrase of the time conflict in line 27 summarizes and concludes his extended turn. The summative concluding statement shows that Chu has nothing new to contribute, and he is doing the closing of the sequence (Schegloff, 2007). The turn-final *suoyi* at the end of Chu’s turn in line 27 signals the possible completion of his multi-unit turn.

Immediately upon the completion of Chu’s *suoyi*, Lan produces a “change-of-status” token *ou* ‘oh’ (line 28). Producing a free-standing *ou* ‘oh’ at the possible completion of an informing sequence shows that Lan treats the prior informing as complete (Heritage, 1984).

Moreover, the prosodic features of *suoyi* seem to indicate possible turn completion. The pitch of *suoyi* is as low as 126 Hz to 115 Hz, which has the lowest pitch compared to other syllables in the turn (Figure 2). The lower intensity (about 65 dB) of *suoyi* shows its loudness is noticeably reduced compared with the earlier part of the turn. In addition, the syllables of *suoyi* are lengthened. The duration of *suoyi* is longer than its previous syllables (520 ms). When occurring after a phonetically prominent syllable *zhuang* ‘conflict’ (Figure 2), these phonetic features show that *suoyi* in line 27 is designed to mark the possible completion of a turn (Li, 2014).

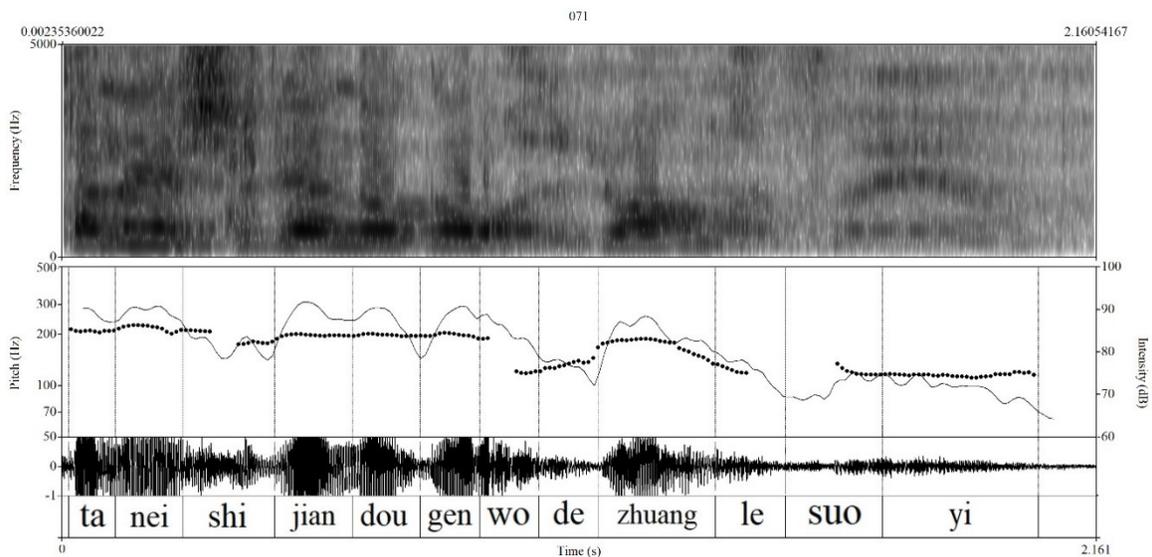


Figure 2 The spectrogram, pitch trace (dotted line), intensity trace (solid line), and waveform of line 14 in Excerpt 6.1<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Figures like this in this thesis are made by using Praat which was designed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink (<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>).

Excerpt 6.1 shows how a turn-final *suoyi* is orientated to by participants to mark the possible completion of a turn. When occurring at turn-final position, *suoyi* is produced with low pitch level, reduced loudness, and lengthening.

Excerpt 6.2 provides another case in point. This excerpt is from the same conversation as Excerpt 6.1. In this interaction, participants are talking about the interview for Lan's fellowship. Chu explains how he knows Lan's interview result.

Excerpt 6.2 (075 Sufour 1:16:03, 4572)

1       Bei:   那 你 怎 么 知 道 的 呢;  
          *na ni zenme zhidao de ne;*  
          so you how know PRT PRT;  
          ‘So how do you know that?’

2       Chu:   我 认 识   评 委    啊;  
          *wo renshi pingwei a;*  
          I acquaint committee PRT;  
          ‘I’m acquainted with the interviewer,’

3       所以 评 委 跟 我 [ 说 啊 ::  
          *suoyi pingwei gen wo [shuo a ::*  
          so committee with I [say PRT ::  
          ‘so the interviewer told me.’

4       Lan:                           [看 他 老 是    记  我 好 多 ?  
                                      *[kan ta laoshi ji wo haoduo?*

[look 3sg always take note I many?

‘See, he always takes note me many things about...’

5            不对      你    老师    是    主    提问者。  
*budui      ni    laoshi    shi zhu tiwenzhe.*  
NEG right you supervisor be chief questioner.  
‘No, your supervisor is the chief interviewer.’

6            [(三十一    个?)  
*[(sanshiyi    ge?)*  
[(thirty-one CL?)  
‘(Thirty-one)’

7            Wai:    [那    是            张三            是    吧;  
*[na    shi            ZhangSan            shi    ba;*  
[that be <NAME: Zhang San> be SA;  
‘That was Zhang San, right?’

8    -->    Chu:    对    啊    [张三                            这:            主审            啊:: 所以:.  
*dui    a    [ZhangSan                            ZHE:    zhushen    a :: suoyi:.*  
right PRT[<NAME: Zhang San> here:    chief umpire PRT:: so:.  
‘Right, Zhang San was here to evaluate...’

9            Pin:                            [嗯            张三。  
*[en            ZhangSan.*  
[PRT <NAME: Zhang San>.

‘Hmm, Zhang San.’

10      Bei:  嗯..  
              *en.*  
              yeah.  
              ‘Yeah.’

11      Wai:  嗯..  
              *en.*  
              yeah.  
              ‘Yeah.’

12                不过 她是;  
                    *buguo ta shi;*  
                    but  3sg be;  
                    ‘But she is...’

13                那 是 肯定.  
                    *na shi kending.*  
                    that be certain.  
                    ‘That’s certain...’

The excerpt begins with Bei’s request for information about how (or why) Chu knows Lan’s interview result (line 1). Chu explains that his acquaintance told him (lines 2-3). Lan deploys the negative *budui* ‘not right’ to express her change of subjectivity and tells that Chu’s supervisor was the chief interviewer (line 5). In line 7, through using the question tag *shiba* ‘right’, Wai

seeks confirmation from Chu about whether Chu's supervisor is Zhang San. Chu produces the confirmation token *dui a* 'right' (line 8).

Chu produces *suoyi* after the final particle *a* in line 8. Chu closes his multi-unit turn by using *suoyi* which displays that he designs the turn-final *suoyi* as the possible completion of his turn. The smooth turn transition occurs immediately after *suoyi* in line 8. That is, Bei initiates her turn in line 10 immediately after Chu's turn-final *suoyi*.

Moreover, the prosodic features of *suoyi* (line 8) shows that it is designed as the possible turn completion. First, *suoyi* is produced with a low pitch. The pitch level of *suoyi* is around 130 Hz, which is lower than the previous syllable *a* (around 145 Hz), and the other syllables in the turn (Figure 3). The falling pitch contour of the syllable *yi* is also clearly visible in Figure 3. The lexical tone of the syllable *yi* is falling-rising (Tone 3), but produced with a falling contour in line 8. Additionally, the syllable *yi* is produced with a noticeable lengthening up to around 205 ms (Figure 3). Further, *suoyi* is produced with low intensity (around 72 dB) (Figure 3). All of these prosodic features of *suoyi* show that it is designed to mark the possible completion of the turn (Li, 2014).

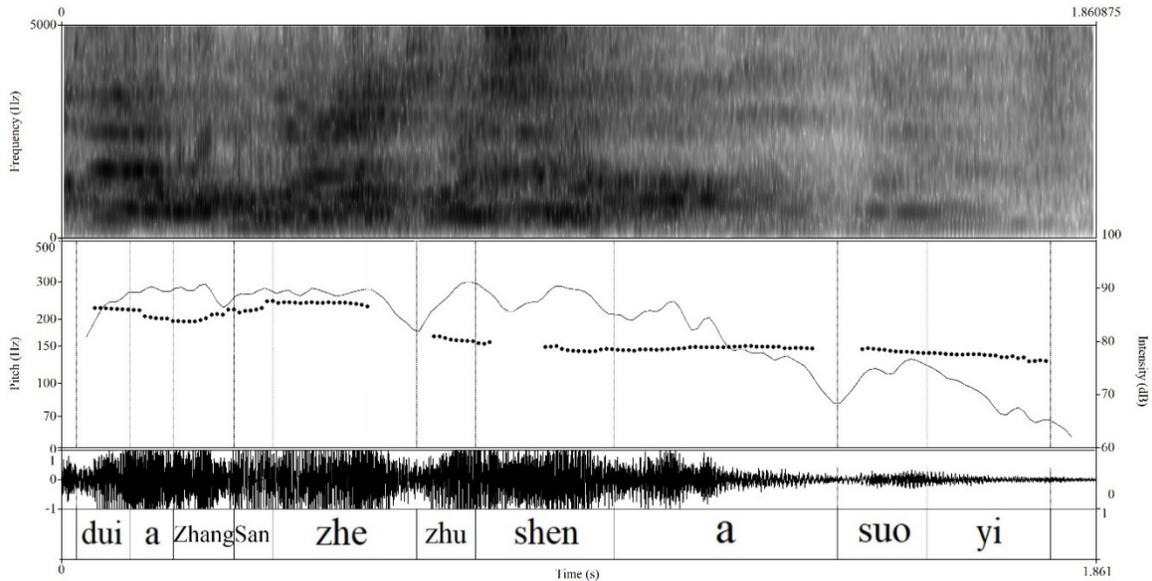


Figure 3 The spectrogram, pitch trace (dotted line), intensity trace (solid line), and waveform of line 8 in Excerpt 6.2.

Excerpt 6.1 and 6.2 demonstrate how the turn-final *suoyi* is designed to signal the possible completion of a turn. When *suoyi* performs this function, it is usually produced with a noticeably low pitch level, reduced loudness, and lengthening.

## 6.2 Summary

This chapter examined the interactional function of *suoyi* when it occurs at the turn-final position. Excerpt 6.1 and 6.2 demonstrate that the turn-final *suoyi* can be designed to mark the possible completion of a turn. It has been observed that the turn-final *suoyi* tends to be produced with a low pitch, low intensity, and long duration.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the findings and discusses the implications and limitations of this study. The findings of this study will be summarized in Section 7.1, the implications and limitations will be discussed in Section 7.2.

### 7.1 Summary

This study has examined the interactional functions of *suoyi* in naturalistic Mandarin conversation by adopting the frameworks of conversation analysis and interactional linguistics.

This study has explored the interactional functions of *suoyi* based on different sequential positions in a turn. Specifically, this study has examined the uses of turn-initial, mid-turn, and turn-final *suoyis* in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. It has been shown that turn-initial *suoyis* can be seen as exhibiting the following three main interactional functions. First, turn-initial *suoyi* can be used to link the subsequent talk to the immediate prior speaker's talk and explicate the current speaker's epistemic stance. When *suoyi* performs this function, the speaker frames the immediate prior speaker's talk as the ground for his or her own opinion and uses *suoyi* to introduce his or her own opinion. Second, turn-initial *suoyi* can preface a display of understanding. In this type of usage, the *suoyi*-prefaced turn can be presented in the form of a declarative assertion or interrogative to seek confirmation about an event on which the speaker lacks epistemic grounds. *Suoyi* can preface either a claim or demonstration of understanding. Third, a speaker can use turn-initial *suoyi* to continue a pre-prior talk or a temporarily derailed activity

This study has also explored the interactional functions of mid-turn *suoyis*. An analysis of the data shows that mid-turn *suoyis* perform the following two main functions: first, to introduce a result or conclusion, and second, to mark the possible completion of turn. The speaker uses

mid-turn *suoyi* to introduce a result based on previous factual events. When *suoyi* is used to introduce a conclusion, the speaker usually provides background information before the *suoyi*-clause as the evidence for his or her conclusion. These findings are consistent with the previous research on *suoyi* as a conjunction indicating result and conclusion in Mandarin (Fang, 2012; Yao, 2009; Xing, 2001). When *suoyi* is used to indicate a possible closure of a topic, the *suoyi*-prefaced TCU is in the form of [*suoyi* + word repeat].

Moreover, an examination of the data shows that turn-final *suoyis* can be used to mark the possible completion of a turn. When *suoyi* performs this function, it is produced with a noticeably low pitch level, reduced loudness, and lengthening. Some similar prosodic features of “trail-off” conjunctions have been reported in other languages, such as English and Finnish (see Local & Walker, 2012; Ogden, 2001, 2004). The prosodic features of turn-final *suoyi* have not been documented in previous Mandarin research.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how speakers design their turn or topics as completion, what devices they can adopt to continue a per-prior talk, how they explicate their epistemic stance or understanding to prior information, and how they introduce a result or conclusion in Mandarin.

## **7.2 Implications and Limitations**

This study is a description of the interactional function of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation. The findings of this study have implications for research on Mandarin conjunctions from an interactional approach. Also, this study has implications for teaching Mandarin as a second or foreign language.

The current study is the first research that focuses on the interactional functions of the conjunction *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation. Previous studies investigate *suoyi* as a causal conjunction or a discourse marker mostly in scripted TV talk show programs (Fang 2000, 2012; Yao, 2009, 2015; Xie & Fang, 2016). None of these studies are based on naturalistic Mandarin conversational data. They neither adopt the methodology of CA, nor examine the data from the participant's perspective. In this study, all the data come from naturalistic Mandarin conversation. All the findings of this study are drawn using the framework of CA. Applying the CA methodology, this study explores the interactional functions of *suoyi* in relation to its sequential position, for example, in turn-initial, mid-turn, and turn-final positions. By examining the functions of *suoyi* in relation to its sequential position, this study provides new insights into Mandarin conjunctions.

Furthermore, this study shows how interactional linguistics and CA can be applied to the study of Mandarin conjunctions. By reporting on the previously undocumented interactional uses of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation, this study shows how grammar can be shaped by and shapes interaction (Schegloff, 1996; Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2001).

The results of this study also have implications in second/foreign language pedagogy. It has been recognized that second language learning involves both learning the form and meaning of a structure and using the structure in context (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983). The previous general linguistic studies explore the grammar of our language based on the sentence-level; however, we still lack information about how we use this language in a real context. By showing the difference between our assumption about how *suoyi should* be used and how it *is actually* used in native speakers' conversation, this study demonstrates the importance and necessity to teach Chinese grammar as it is used in real-life interaction.

Moreover, through the synchronic analysis of *suoyi* in Mandarin conversation, this study sheds some light on the language change of Mandarin conjunctions. Previous studies on the grammaticalization processes of *suoyi* have traced the historical development of *suoyi* (Wang, 2002). Wang (2002) argues that *suoyi* has evolved from a pronoun to a conjunction. Conjunction is the typical use of *suoyi* that has been documented in the grammar research of contemporary Chinese (Lü, 1982; Xing, 2001; Chao, 1968; Shen 2003; Li & Thompson, 1981). As the data of this study have shown, *suoyi* can perform some interactional functions other than those described in previous research (e.g. Shen, 2003; Fang, 2012). By documenting the interactional functions of *suoyi* in current data, the findings of this study suggest that *suoyi* seems to have the function of organizing interaction as a discourse marker, among others. According to Fang (2000), becoming a discourse marker is the evidence that a conjunction is in the progress of grammaticalization.

Finally, this study is not without its limitations. The interactional functions described in this study are based on 12 hours of naturalistic Mandarin conversational data which are mostly everyday conversation between friends. There may be other functions in other types of interaction such as parent-child interaction and institutional interaction that will be found in future studies. Furthermore, due to the fact that all the data analyzed in this study were collected outside mainland China, and all the participants can use at least one second language proficiently, it is possible that the speakers' first language is affected by their second language use. Since the data of this study were collected at different times (2009 and 2014), it is possible that the usage of *suoyi* underwent change. Language change is not the focus of this study, so this study does not analysis the similarities (or differences) among the different time periods of data. However, a broader theoretical study about grammaticalization/pragmaticalization could be

explored in the future. For instance, by comparing the data from different times, a future study may explore the grammaticalization/pragmaticalization trajectories of *suoyi*. Moreover, due to the scope of this study, the analysis does not address the bodily-visual behavior that may co-occur with *suoyi*. The bodily-visual behavior concurrent with *suoyi* is an area for further study.

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## Appendix A

### Transcript symbols

The transcription system in this study is mainly based on GAT-2 (Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2) (Selting et al. 2009), and modified by Li (2014).

Symbol	Meaning
[ ]	Overlap
(0.4)	Pause duration in seconds and tenth seconds
(.)	Micro-pause
(( ))	Transcriber's description of events
(word)	Transcriber's unsure hearings
↘	A downward head movement
XXX	Unintelligible passage with each "X" representing one syllable
:	Segment lengthening
,	Rising pitch movement of intonation unit
-	Level pitch movement of intonation unit
;	Falling pitch movement of intonation unit

.	Low falling pitch movement of intonation unit
.hh	Breathing in, according to its duration
hh	Breathing out, according to its duration
ʔ	Cut-off by glottal closure
<<f>>	Forte, loud
<<p>>	Piano, soft
<u>重音</u>	Primary or main accent
ACcent	Primary or main accent

## Appendix B

### Glossing conventions

ASSOC	Associative ( <i>-de</i> )
BA	<i>ba</i>
BEI	<i>bei</i>
CL	Classifier
CRS	Currently relevant state ( <i>le</i> )
CSC	Complex stative construction ( <i>de</i> )
DUR	Durative aspect ( <i>-zhe, zai</i> )
EXP	Experiential aspect ( <i>-guo</i> )
NOM	Nominalizer ( <i>de</i> )
PFV	Perfective aspect ( <i>-le</i> )
PL	Plural ( <i>-men, -xie</i> )
Q	Question ( <i>ma</i> )
PRT	Particle
SA	Solicit agreement ( <i>ba</i> )
3sg	Third person singular pronoun