The influence of causal vs. concessive conjunctions on discourse coherence in Chinese: Evidence from on-line recording of brain activities

Xiaodong Xu
Nanjing Normal University

Many psycholinguistic studies have been conducted to deal with the question of how causal conjunctions influence discourse coherence; it is not clear, however, how other types of conjunctions exert their influence on discourse coherence. The purpose of this study is to address the effects of different coherent relations on discourse coherence in a Chinese context by using the Event Related Brain Potential (ERP) technique, specifically investigating the modulation of two types of coherent relations (causal conjunction vs. concessive conjunction) on the process of establishing a coherence situation model. In our experiment, we adopted the sentential structure “NP

Samples:

a. **because-coherent** 外婆从哈尔滨迁到了海南，因为/她/喜欢/那里/冬天/暖和/舒服。
   Waipo cong Harbin qiandaole Hainan, yinwei ta xihuan nali dongtian nuanhuo shufu.
   Grandma has moved from Harbin to Hainan, because she liked the winter there being warm and comfortable.

b. **because-incoherent** 外婆从海南迁到了哈尔滨，因为/她/喜欢/那里/冬天/暖和/舒服。
   Waipo cong Hainan qiandaole Harbin, yinwei ta xihuan nali dongtian nuanhuo shufu.
   Grandma has moved from Hainan to Harbin, because she liked the winter there being warm and comfortable.

c. **although-coherent** 外婆从海南迁到了哈尔滨，尽管/她/喜欢/那里/冬天/暖和/舒服。
   Waipo cong Hainan qiandaole Harbin, jinguan ta xihuan nali dongtian nuanhuo shufu.
   Grandma has moved from Hainan to Harbin, although she liked the winter there being warm and comfortable.

d. **although-incoherent** 外婆从哈尔滨迁到了海南，尽管/她/喜欢/那里/冬天/暖和/舒服。
   Waipo cong Harbin qiandaole Hainan, jinguan ta xihuan nali dongtian nuanhuo shufu.
   Grandma has moved from Harbin to Hainan, although she liked the winter there being warm and comfortable.

Key words: causal conjunction; concessive conjunction; discourse coherence; world knowledge; N400; P600