

# A Study on Chinese Topic Chains Based on Narrative Texts of Primary School Students and Its Pedagogical Implications

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Topic chains serve as a vital textual organizational structure in Chinese discourse, typically comprising a topic and a sequence of subsequent comment clauses. Research indicates that the textual functions of topic chains in Chinese narrative texts are influenced by the relationships among their comment clauses. Topic chains can be categorized into four types based on the combinational relations of the comment clauses, with their textual functions ranked from strong to weak as follows: temporal topic chains > additive topic chains > causal topic chains > adversative topic chains. The classification of topic chains into distinct structural types and the analysis of their textual functions not only broaden the theoretical framework of Chinese topic chain research but also offer valuable insights for teaching Chinese as a second language, particularly in the context of text instruction.

*Keywords:* topic chain, topic, comment clause, textual function, Chinese text teaching

## Introduction

Topic chain is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon in Chinese discourse and is considered one of the defining features of the Chinese language. It typically appears as a sequential structure comprising multiple explanatory clauses controlled by a single topic. The term “topic chain” was first proposed by the Australian linguist Dixon (1972). Tsao (1979) later incorporated this concept into Chinese linguistic research to tackle the issue of sentence boundary ambiguity in Chinese. Subsequent to that, scholarly discourse concerning the Chinese topic chain has progressively expanded. Scholars have examined this linguistic phenomenon from various angles, such as syntactic structure, functional traits, language instruction, cross-linguistic analysis, and similar aspects. Examples of pertinent research are outlined below. Shi (1989) argued that the topic chain in Chinese functions as a syntactic unit equivalent to a sentence. Chu (1998) viewed the topic chain as a cohesive device and established the definition of the textual sentence in Chinese within this framework. Wang (2004; 2006a) delved into the internal structure of topic chains, investigating the combinational rules of comment clauses in static and dynamic topic chains<sup>1</sup>, respectively. Yang and Li (2009) classified topic chains at the discourse level, emphasizing their importance in discourse analysis and text teaching. In reviewing and summarizing existing research on Chinese topic chains, Wang (2012) suggested addressing the boundary problem of topic chains by initially identifying

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<sup>1</sup> Static topic chains and dynamic topic chains are the definitions and classifications of topic chains made by Wang Jing (2004; 2006a) based on her studies. For more details, please refer to the relevant articles.

and defining the topic. Sun (2014) examined the characteristics of topic chains through the lens of form-meaning integration, proposing new definitions and classifications. Wang and He (2016) analyzed English translations of Chinese topic chains, highlighting cross-linguistic differences in discourse anaphora between Chinese and English. Wang (2019) conducted a study on how variations in the animacy hierarchies of topics within topic chains affect their overall textual functions. Weng and Cheng (2023) explained the mechanisms and realization strategies of discourse coherence in Chinese run-on sentences through a systematic analysis of topic chains.

Research on Chinese topic chains from a functional perspective is extensive. However, scholarly focus on the relationship between the internal structure and external function of the topic chain is limited. As an integrated structural unit, both the “topic” and “comment” components are crucial for the realization of the textual function. Sun (2015) emphasized the necessity of investigating the internal structural characteristics of topic chains to conduct a comprehensive analysis of their textual functions. In this context, this study initiates by analyzing the combination patterns of comment clauses within topic chains to investigate the impact of their structural variations on overall textual functions.

### Discussion on the Definition of Topic Chain

Currently, there is no unanimous agreement within the field of Chinese discourse studies regarding the definition of the topic chain. Several representative viewpoints are noteworthy. Tsao (1979) argued that the topic should be positioned at the beginning of a topic chain, without specifying any requirements for its form (zero form, pronoun form, or noun form) in the subsequent comment clauses. Li and Thomson (1989) similarly asserted that the topic must appear at the start of a topic chain, emphasizing that the topics in the subsequent comment clauses should consistently utilize zero anaphora. Chu (1998) suggested that the topic does not always occupy the initial position within a topic chain, while also asserting that each subsequent comment clause must be connected through zero anaphora. Additionally, Wang (2004) contended that topic chains in particular discourse contexts could be classified into two types: independent topic chains and non-independent topic chains. Example (1)<sup>2</sup> is taken from Wang Jing’s article.

Example (1)

**a** 这位革命先驱, **i**<sub>0</sub>坐在太师椅上, **i**<sub>0</sub>身穿长袍, **i**<sub>0</sub>手握书卷; **b** 他**j**似乎在想兴国安邦的策略, **j**<sub>0</sub>又似乎在描绘九百六十万平方公里神州大地的宏伟蓝图。

**a** zhè wèi gémìng xiān qū i, i<sub>0</sub> zuò zài tài shī yǐ shàng, i<sub>0</sub> shēn chuān cháng páo, i<sub>0</sub> shǒu wò shū juǎn; **b** tā j sì hū zài xiǎng xīng guó ān bāng de cè lǜ, j<sub>0</sub> yòu sì hū zài miáo huì jū bǎi liù shí wàn píníng fāng gōng lǐ shén zhōu dà dì de hóng wěi lán tú.

*This revolutionary pioneer, sitting on a large armchair, dressed in a long gown and holding a scroll, seems to be contemplating strategies for the prosperity and stability of the country, or perhaps sketching a grand blueprint for the 9.6 million square kilometers of the Chinese land.*

Wang Jing’s analysis (2004) identifies two topic chains in Example (1), labeled as “a” and “b”. Topic chain “a” appears unfinished, exhibiting both semantic incompleteness and grammatical inadequacy. In contrast, the

<sup>2</sup> All examples related to topic chains in this article are accompanied by their corresponding Hanyu Pinyin transcriptions and English translations.

<sup>3</sup> In Example (1)a, “这位革命先驱 zhè wèi gémìng xiān qū (this revolutionary pioneer)” serves as the topic of the topic chain, marked with ‘i’, and ‘i<sub>0</sub>’ in each subsequent comment clause represents the zero anaphoric form of the topic. The following examples uniformly employ this marking convention.

topic chain “b” is grammatically independent and semantically self-sufficient, achieving a complete closure at this juncture. Wang (2004) distinguishes between two types of topic chains: non-independent topic chains, such as “a”, and independent topic chains, such as “b”.

Chinese discourse anaphora can be roughly divided into three types: noun anaphora, pronoun anaphora, and zero anaphora (You, 2024). Among these forms, zero anaphora serves as a significant mechanism of textual cohesion (You, 2024) and is essential for the establishment of a topic chain. Integrating the preceding analysis and in accordance with the objectives of this study, we define a topic chain as an independent, semantically self-sufficient discourse segment comprising multiple clauses (no fewer than two) that share a common explicit topic. The explicit topic must occupy the initial position of the chain, with zero anaphora serving as its referential form in all subsequent clauses. Moreover, the topic chain exhibits textual properties and may extend across sentences or paragraphs. Example (2)<sup>4</sup> offers a concrete illustration.

Example (2)

谢志峰看到这一情形,  $i_{\emptyset}$ 来到他眼前,  $i_{\emptyset}$ 把书郑重地交给了他,  $i_{\emptyset}$ 深深地看了他一眼,  $i_{\emptyset}$ 悄然离去。  
(Excerpted from Book A, p. 154)

*Xi èzhī fēng i kàn dào zhè yī qíng xíng, i<sub>∅</sub> lái dào tā yǎn qián, i<sub>∅</sub> bǎ shū zhòng zhòng de jiāo gěi le tā, i<sub>∅</sub> shēn shēn de kàn le tā yī yǎn, i<sub>∅</sub> qiǎo rán lí qù。*

*Seeing this, Xie Zhifeng came up to him, solemnly handed him the book, gave him a deep look, and then quietly left.*

### The Classification of Topic Chains in This Study

From the perspective of internal structure, the combinational relationships among comment clauses within topic chains are not homogeneous; rather, they display multiple patterns. Halliday and Hasan (1976) categorized the logical semantic relations between clauses into four distinct types based on cohesion and coherence: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Drawing on the classification mentioned above, this study categorizes Chinese topic chains into four types: additive topic chains, adversative topic chains, causal topic chains, and temporal topic chains. Subsequently, specific examples will be used to demonstrate the inherent logical semantic features of these four types of topic chains.

The term “additive” refers to a linguistic phenomenon that permits the addition of supplementary information after completing a clause or statement. See Example (3).

Example (3)

那颗牙好可怜啊,  $i_{\emptyset}$ 连站的地方都没有了。(Excerpted from Book C, p. 3)

*nà kē yá hǎo kě lián a, i<sub>∅</sub> lián zhàn de dì fāng dōu méi yǒu le。*

*That tooth is so pitiful. It doesn't even have a place to stand.*

The term “adversative” signifies the contrastive relationship between the events or states described in the two clauses before and after. These two clauses share certain similarities yet diverge in particular aspects. See Example (4).

<sup>4</sup> The corpora selected for this study are all from the following three books, which are respectively referred to as Book A, Book B, and Book C for convenience. Book A, titled *A Collection of Classified Essays for Primary School Students* (《小学生分类作文一本全》), was published by Yanbian University Press in 2016 (延边大学出版社, 2016); Book B, titled *A Comprehensive Collection of Classified Essays for Primary School Students —Narrative Essays* (《小学生分类作文大全——叙事作文》), was published by Yanbian Education Press in 2019 (延边教育出版社, 2019); Book C, titled *Narrative Essays for Primary School Students* (《小学生叙事作文》), was published by Cultural Development Press in 2021 (文化发展出版社, 2021).

## Example (4)

每年“三八”妇女节, 我都会送您一份礼物, i<sub>o</sub>没想到今年会以这种方式给您送礼物。(Excerpted from Book B, p. 81)

*měi ni ǎn* “Sān bā” fū nǚ ji é wǒ i dōu hu ài sòng n ǚ yī fèn lǐ wù, i<sub>o</sub> m á xiǎng dào jīn ni ǎn hu ài yǐ zh è zhǒng fāng sh ì gěi n ǚ sòng lǐ wù.

*Every March 8th, on International Women’s Day, I would always give you a gift. This year, however, I never expected that I would give you a gift in this way.*

The term “causal” denotes the cause-and-effect relationship manifested between clauses. See Example (5).

## Example (5)

“美女”妈妈曾是一名军人, 所以i<sub>o</sub>养成了风风火火、雷厉风行的作风。(Excerpted from Book A, p. 31)  
“měi nǚ” mā mā i céng shì yī míng jūn rén, suǒ yǐ i<sub>o</sub> yǎng chéng le fēng fēng huǒ huǒ, léi lì fēng xíng de zuò fēng.

*My beautiful mother previously served in the military, a background that fostered her dynamic and decisive demeanor.*

The term “temporal” denotes the sequential order of event occurrence. Altering the positions of the clauses results in a change in the sequence of objective events. See Example (6).

## Example (6)

一天晚上, 我进了卫生间, i<sub>o</sub>突然听到垃圾桶里发出“噼噼”的声音。(Excerpted from Book C, p. 60)  
*yī tiān wǎn shang, wǒ* i j ǐn le w èi shēng jiān, i<sub>o</sub> tū r án tīng dào lā jī tǒng lǐ fā chū “chā chā” de shēng yīn.  
*One night, I went into the bathroom and suddenly heard a sizzling sound coming from the trash can.*

To clearly delineate the logical semantic relations among clauses, the topic chains illustrated in the four preceding examples consist solely of two comment clauses. Nevertheless, in many instances, the number of comment clauses within a topic chain frequently exceeds two. Consequently, the combinational relationships among these clauses may not be unitary. To address this issue, this study employs the textual segmentation approach developed by Mann and Thompson (1988), guided by Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST). RST posits that the arrangement of clauses within a text is hierarchical. Two fundamental components merge to create a larger unit, which subsequently integrates with another component to form an even larger unit. This concept is exemplified through the analysis of Chinese topic chains, as demonstrated in Example (7).

## Example (7)

a 爸爸虽然工作较忙, b但是i<sub>o</sub>只要有空儿便看书, c而且i<sub>o</sub>一看就没完没了。(Excerpted from Book A, p. 46)

*a* bà ba i suī r án gōng zuò jì ào máng, b dàn sh i<sub>o</sub> zhǐ yào yǒu kòngr bi àn kàn shū, c ěr qiě i<sub>o</sub> yī kàn jì wú m á w án m á liǎo.

*Although my father is quite busy with work, whenever he has free time, he reads books, and once he starts, he just can’t stop.*

We will now examine the combinational relationships between comment clauses in the topic chain of Example (7) through the lens of RST. In this example, the primary relationship among the comment clauses is adversative, where “a” functions as the core clause, while “b” and “c” serve as satellite clauses. “b” and “c” establish a lower-level, additive relationship, with “b” as the core clause and “c” as the satellite clause. This study primarily categorizes topic chains based on the highest-level relationship present within a textual segment. As a result, Example (7) is classified as an adversative topic chain.

## **The Influence of the Internal Structural Differences of Chinese Topic Chains on Their Textual Functions**

In the preceding section, we classified topic chains into four categories: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal topic chains. To explore the textual functions of these categories, a quantitative statistical method based on a corpus analysis is predominantly utilized. The analysis is guided by two key factors: the “textual distribution ratio” and the “topic persistence value”.

Previous studies have shown that discourse organizational patterns and syntactic structures vary significantly across different types of discourses (Wang, 2006b). In general, longer texts are more likely to exhibit mixed genres, which complicates the analysis of their syntactic structural features (Wang, 2006b). To address this issue, this study opts for narrative compositions written by primary school students as the corpus source. While the complexity and volume of information in these writings may not match those of more sophisticated works, they exhibit semantic completeness, coherent expression, and focused content, embodying fundamental traits of a proficient text.

### **Statistics and Analysis of the Textual Distribution Ratios of Different Types of Topic Chains**

In this section, we first elucidate the concept of the textual distribution ratio and subsequently perform a statistical analysis of the textual distribution ratios across different types of topic chains.

**Explanation of the textual distribution ratio of topic chains.** The utilization of syntactic structure in discourse is not random but rather influenced by communicative intentions and discourse genres. In specific texts, the distribution ratios of topic chains featuring different internal structures exhibit significant variations: some demonstrate a high distribution ratio, whereas others show a low one. Generally, topic chains with a high distribution ratio tend to have relatively strong textual functions, while those with a low distribution ratio tend to have relatively weak textual functions.

**A comparison of the textual distribution ratios of different types of topic chains.** This study collected 806 topic chains meeting the research criteria from a corpus of 640 narrative essays authored by primary school students. Of these, 350 are classified as temporal topic chains, 301 as additive topic chains, 89 as causal topic chains, and 66 as adversative topic chains. The formula for calculating the textual distribution ratio is defined as follows: Textual Distribution Ratio = (the Number of Each Type of Topic Chains ÷ Total Number of Topic Chains) × 100%. The textual distribution ratios of different types of topic chains are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*The Textual Distribution Ratios of Different Types of Topic Chains*

Types of topic chains	Number of topic chains	Textual distribution ratio
Temporal	350	43.42%
Additive	301	37.34%
Causal	89	11.04%
Adversative	66	8.19%
Total	806	100%

Table 1 indicates that temporal topic chains and additive topic chains constitute a significant portion of Chinese narrative texts, with their combined share totaling 80.76%. In contrast, causal topic chains and adversative topic chains represent a smaller fraction, with their combined share amounting to only 19.23%. This

phenomenon can be explained through the lens of text genre. Labov (1972) proposed that a narrative text generally consists of six structural elements: abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. However, in practice, not all narrative texts include all six of these components. Nevertheless, the sections on “orientation” and “complication” are essential. The “orientation” section usually provides contextual information about the text, offering an unrestricted portrayal of the narrative’s time and place, characters, and events, among other aspects. This contextual information generally displays a static semantic extension, serving to establish the conceptual foundation for the narrative’s subsequent development. As previously noted, the term “additive” denotes the capacity to append or augment information based on a completed clause. This implies that the structural characteristics of additive topic chains can be used for presenting and elaborating on contextual details. Consequently, the “orientation” segments establish circumstances conducive to utilizing additive topic chains. In narrative texts, “complication” denotes the progression of the story and the evolution of events, constituting the central element of the narrative framework. This segment typically comprises a sequence of events mirroring the external reality and is predominantly conveyed through narrative clauses within the text. “Temporality” constitutes a significant characteristic of this phenomenon. It refers to the requirement that events unfold chronologically, aligning closely with the inherent characteristics of the temporal topic chain. Consequently, the “complication” sections facilitate the utilization of temporal topic chains. Due to the essential roles of “orientation” and “complication” in narrative texts, along with their significant presence in textual content, the distribution ratios of temporal topic chains and additive topic chains are consequently found to be high. Causal topic chains and adversative topic chains are commonly utilized in the “evaluation” section of narrative texts, which serves as a comprehensive assessment of the reasons, key points, and significance of the narrative. It reflects the narrator’s perspective and can convey attitudes or generate suspense, thereby augmenting the emotional impact of the narrative. However, “evaluation” is not integral to a narrative text and occupies a small portion of the text. This circumstance has led to a comparatively low distribution rate of causal topic chains and adversative topic chains.

In conclusion, after analyzing textual distribution ratios, the textual functions of the four types of topic chains in Chinese narrative texts can be ranked in the following descending order: temporal topic chains > additive topic chains > causal topic chains > adversative topic chains.

### **Statistics and Analysis of the Topic Persistence Values of Different Types of Topic Chains**

In this section, we first elucidate the concept of topic persistence value, followed by a statistical analysis of the topic persistence values associated with different types of topic chains.

**The calculation method of the topic persistence value in the topic chain.** From the perspective of internal composition, a topic chain consists of two parts: the “topic” and the “comment”. The two parts interact with and influence each other. The intrinsic properties of the topic, such as animacy, definiteness, or indefiniteness, impose certain restrictions on the combinational patterns of the comment clauses. On the other hand, the combinational patterns of comment clauses influence the continuity of the topic. Certain combinational patterns of comment clauses promote the continuation of a topic, while others tend to interrupt or terminate it. Zhong (2015) introduced a method for calculating the persistence value of a noun entity in the text, tailored to meet specific research requirements. That is, the persistence value of a noun entity refers to the frequency of its recurrence within the following ten clauses after its initial mention in the text. Based on this framework, we establish the calculation procedure for determining the topic persistence value of a topic chain. The persistence value of a topic, defined

as the number of comment clauses linked through zero anaphora following its initial introduction into the topic chain, can be illustrated in Example (8).

Example (8)

只见她取适量面粉，少量且多次地加入温水反复地揉压；接着准备饺子馅，把调味品倒入各种切好的食材中搅匀；然后把揉好的面团拿出来，用擀面杖擀成薄饼。(Excerpted from Book C, pp. 77-78)

zhǐ jiàn tā qǔ shì liàng miàn fěn, i<sub>0</sub> shǎo liàng qiě duō cì de jiā rù wēn shuǐ fǎn fù de rǒu yā; i<sub>0</sub> jiē zhe zhǔn bǎ jiǎo zǐ xiàn, i<sub>0</sub> bǎ tiáo wǎ pǐn dào rù gè zhǒng qiē hǎo de shí cǎi zhōng jiǎo yún; rán hòu i<sub>0</sub> bǎ rǒu hǎo de miàn tuán ná chū lái, i<sub>0</sub> yòng gǎn miàn zhàng gǎn chéng báo bǐng。

She took an appropriate amount of flour and added warm water in small amounts several times, kneading and pressing it repeatedly. Then she prepared the filling, pouring the seasonings into the various chopped ingredients and stirring them well. After that, she took out the kneaded dough and rolled it into thin wrappers with a rolling pin.

In the aforementioned topic chain, there are a total of 6 comment clauses. Following the initial introduction of the topic “她 tā (she)” into the chain, it carries five zero anaphoric clauses. Hence, the “topic persistence value” of Example (8) is 5.

**A comparison of the average topic persistence values of different types of topic chains.** The “topic persistence value” is defined with respect to an individual topic chain. When considering a category of topic chains, one should calculate the “average topic persistence value”. The formula for computing the average topic persistence value is as follows: Average Topic Persistence Value = The Sum of Topic Persistence Values ÷ Total Number of Topic Chains.

Table 2 presents the statistical results of the average topic persistence values for 350 temporal topic chains, 301 additive topic chains, 89 causal topic chains, and 66 adversative topic chains in 640 Chinese narrative texts.

Table 2

*The Average Topic Persistence Values of Different Types of Topic Chains*

Types of topic chains	Sum of topic persistence values	Total number of topic chains	Average topic persistence value
Temporal	889	350	2.54
Additive	623	301	2.07
Causal	165	89	1.85
Adversative	115	66	1.74

Table 2 data reveals variations in average topic persistence values among different types of topic chains. The average topic persistence values are significantly high for temporal topic chains (2.54) and additive topic chains (2.07), whereas they are relatively lower for causal topic chains (1.85) and adversative topic chains (1.74).

This phenomenon is explicable by analyzing the information transmission characteristics across different types of topic chains. Chen (1987) suggested that by connecting the surface forms of discourse, a continuous stream of information is transmitted from the speaker to the listener. In terms of information combination modes, Guo (2004) provided insightful perspectives that serve as valuable references for future research. The overall structure of discourse information aligns with human cognitive principles, and the composition of discourse information often mirrors people’s cognitive habits (Guo, 2004). Building on this premise, we examine how information is conveyed across different types of topic chains. In a topic chain, the likelihood of topic

continuation increases when the information transmission mode of the comment clauses adheres to human cognitive laws and habits. Temporal topic chains serve to illustrate the chronological sequence of events or actions, and additive topic chains are used to contextualize a specific object or event by offering background information. The modes of information transmission in these two types of topic chains typically align with the inherent characteristics and developmental trends of the subjects they address. In most cases, they are predictable and consistent with human cognitive habits. Consequently, topics within temporal and additive topic chains typically demonstrate high persistence. The causal topic chain emphasizes the logical causal relationships among events and phenomena, and the adversative topic chain primarily conveys situations in which the meanings preceding and following are relatively or entirely opposite. Information transmission within these two types of topic chains is often disrupted by situational variations, which renders it unpredictable and conflicts with human cognitive habits. As a result, these conditions are prone to causing the interruption or cessation of topics.

In conclusion, after analyzing topic persistence values, the textual functions of the four types of topic chains in Chinese narrative texts can be ranked in descending order as follows: temporal topic chains > additive topic chains > causal topic chains > adversative topic chains. This result is consistent with the conclusion derived from our analysis of the textual distribution ratios.

### **Conclusion and Teaching Implications**

This study examines the textual functions of four types of topic chains in Chinese narrative texts, analyzing them through two dimensions: textual distribution ratio and topic persistence value. The results demonstrate that internal structural variations among topic chains significantly influence their textual functions. The textual functions of the four types of topic chains can be ranked in descending order as follows: temporal topic chains > additive topic chains > causal topic chains > adversative topic chains. Nevertheless, our study primarily focuses on analyzing narrative essays authored by elementary school students, and the corpus size is relatively small. Due to primary school students' limited expressive abilities, the transmission of information within topic chains may be affected. Furthermore, the aforementioned conclusion is based on corpus statistics and should be viewed as a trend rather than an absolute, unchanging formula. It suggests that, in particular contexts, the hierarchical arrangement of textual functions linked to different types of topic chains demonstrates a degree of flexibility. This study not only broadens the research perspectives on Chinese topic chains and enhances the existing corpus of findings in this area, but it also provides valuable insights for teaching Chinese as a second language. A brief discussion follows.

Since the 1980s, with the development of discourse linguistics, people have gradually realized the importance of text teaching for learners of Chinese as a second language. The primary aim of Chinese text teaching is to enhance students' ability to express themselves coherently at the paragraph level. Topic chains, as an important unit of Chinese texts, naturally fall within the scope of key teaching points. Based on the insights from this study, we believe that when teaching about Chinese topic chains, the following points should be taken into consideration. First of all, in the early stage of teaching Chinese as a second language, emphasis should be placed on topic chain teaching in order to cultivate students' awareness of the textual structure. Analysis of the textual corpus in this study reveals that topic chains account for a non-negligible proportion of the narrative essays written by primary school students. Narrative writing is a key focus in the teaching of basic-level Chinese composition. Teachers should consciously expose students to topic chains and highlight the specific elements, such as "topic", "zero anaphora", "comment clause", etc. By engaging in focused and structured exercises,

students can develop proficiency in constructing Chinese topic chains, enhancing their expressive skills. Secondly, when teaching Chinese topic chains, it is essential to guide students in recognizing the combinational relationships among the comment clauses. A topic chain consists of a topic followed by several comment clauses. However, second language Chinese learners often encounter challenges in accurately positioning comment clauses within the topic chain. In teaching, educators should help students elucidate the logical connections among comment clauses in different types of topic chains to enhance students' proficiency in employing topic chains. In this way, students will gradually improve their accuracy in using topic chains. For instance, when students understand that comment clauses within a temporal topic chain are organized chronologically, they can more effectively discern the logical sequence of events in their application of temporal topic chains. Finally, make use of the textual function characteristics of different types of topic chains to improve teaching effectiveness. Li (2016) conducted an empirical study and demonstrated that learners of Chinese as a second language have difficulty continuing the topic within a topic chain when writing narrative texts. Topic chains produced by Chinese learners that incorporate two comment clauses are significantly more common, whereas those containing three or more comment clauses occur considerably less frequently. The findings of this study show that the topic persistence value varies across different types of topic chains in Chinese narrative texts. Among them, the temporal and additive topic chains exhibit relatively high persistence values because the combinations of the comment clauses in these two types of topic chains are more in line with human cognitive processing. Accordingly, in order to help students develop their ability to continue the topic, teachers should start by focusing on the temporal topic chains and the additive topic chains. In addition, it is necessary to explain the reasons and methods for the continuation of topics in these two types of topic chains, thereby enhancing students' understanding and usage of topic chains.

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