Participial Constructions as Discourse Markers in Hindi

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the use of participial constructions in Hindi as discourse strategies for cohesion in speech. The data from the "Analyzing Narratives" project indicates that participial constructions are used fairly extensively as discourse connectors. The conjunctive participle is used more extensively than the others. Some of the major functions of the participial forms in Hindi are discussed.

An utterance is usually generated and interpreted in a context. When we study the grammatical structure of a language we examine how meaning is generated by the relationship that linguistic units hold with each other within a sentence. When we place an utterance or a sentence/clause in a larger context – say, of a narrative, we are talking about "discourse." "In connected natural discourse, the total independence of any clause, be it most loosely connected, from its environment, is a mirage, an artifice created by the linguist" (Givon 1993: 317). Sentences/clauses relate to each other and together constitute a "text" that is bound together with the help of certain "cohesive ties" or "discourse strategies/devices." These devices can operate to link clauses at different levels of grammar – grammatical (e.g. subordination and coordination) and, semantic (e.g. anaphora, pronominal substitution) and, lexical (such as "because," "thus," "but").

Existing literature on the cohesive ties in English (Schiffrin 1987, Levinson 1983, Givon 1993 etc.) often deal with the devices suggested above. Halliday & Hasan (1976) have suggested the taxonomy of types of explicit markers of conjunctive relations in English. These are:

a. Additive – "and," "or," "furthermore," "similarly," "in addition" etc.
b. Adversative – "but," "however," "on the other hand," "nevertheless" etc.