

## **Implications of the theory of coherence for the practice of language teaching**

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Károly, Krisztina (2011). *Szöveg, koherencia, kohézió. [Text, coherence, cohesion]*.  
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### **Theoretical issues of cohesion and coherence**

The volume is a collection of nine papers tackling issues of cohesion and coherence in several genres and text types. It presents an overview of the theories and methods applied in the study of text focusing on topics relevant in language pedagogy. The explicitly stated purpose of the volume is to encourage further research in the field, especially, in the Hungarian language pedagogy context. Furthermore, the author states that a better understanding of what makes texts coherent for the reader in English or other languages can serve as a firm basis for developing learners' discourse competence and intercultural competence. To this end, the volume covers several aspects of coherence and cohesion by outlining the various approaches and theoretical, methodological and practical considerations relating to text quality and text organization. The papers are organized by their main focus into four chapters:

- Chapter 1 Coherence and cohesion
- Chapter 2 Cohesion analysis
- Chapter 3 Topical structure analysis
- Chapter 4 Rhetorical structure analysis

In addition to the papers, the volume also contains an author and a subject index helping the reader navigate in the book and find parts of relevance and interest easily.

Three out of the nine papers in the volume focus primarily on the theories of the study of coherence and cohesion as principles of textuality (de Beaugrande, 1997). One of the papers proposes a descriptive model of coherence based on a review of theories and empirical research investigating lexical cohesion, the role of lexical repetition in cohesion, and coherence of English texts. The novelty of the model is that it does not only summarize the main elements of coherence, but it also highlights the interconnectedness of these elements, thus providing a firmer theoretical grounding for future research. Lexical repetition as a form of lexical cohesion is the topic of another paper. It outlines and critically analyzes Hoey's (1991) taxonomy of lexical repetition. Based on the identified deficiencies of the original taxonomy a refined model is proposed whose advantages include a more precise definition of repetition and its main categories, and the extension of the unit of analysis to the lexical unit, which is non-compositional (Moon, 2000). The third theoretical paper builds a link between text linguistic research and the practice of language teaching. By reviewing the main findings of text-oriented (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Hasan, 1984; Swales, 1990) and psychologically-

oriented (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978; Mann and Thompson, 1986; 1988; Kaplan, 1966) approaches to text and coherence, Károly highlights their implications to the practice of developing foreign language learners' writing skills. She emphasizes that, in addition to the linguistic aspects of coherence, learners' attention should be drawn to logical-structural, genre-specific and cultural aspects of text organization.

The volume includes two empirical studies that concentrate on methodological issues by testing text analysis tools. The tested tools include Lautamatti's topical structure analysis (1987; 1990) and Swales's rhetorical analysis model (1990), both of which are research instruments widely used in the study of text. Earlier studies applying the first tool, that is, Lautamatti's topical structure analysis (1987; 1990), investigated exclusively written texts. Károly, however, successfully applied the instrument to analyze several text types. Furthermore, she found that with the help of topical structure analysis spoken and written, monologue and dialogue, and narrative and argumentative texts can be reliably distinguished. The second tool, that is, Swales's CARS model (1990) was used to compare the introductions of research articles and theses of Hungarian students. On the basis of the analysis, a modified version of the CARS model is proposed, which includes the additional Steps that can be found in the introductions of Hungarian students' theses, thus providing a more reliable tool for further studies on this particular genre.

### **Pedagogical implications of empirical findings**

The volume includes four papers reporting on studies that apply the taxonomies and methods (Hoey, 1991; Lautamatti, 1987) reviewed and revised in the more theoretically-oriented papers. These studies provide insights into issues relating to lexical repetition in student essays, topical structure of argumentative essays and oral narrative texts, differences between high and low-rated student essays and author identity in academic texts. As regards lexical repetition, Károly concludes that its systematic analysis can help predict perceived text quality based on the types and combinations of repetition. Károly's findings concerning the topical structure of the introduction of argumentative essays suggest that high-rated essays tend to have a greater number of extended parallel topic progressions and sequential topic progressions than low-rated essays. Furthermore, based on the analysis of students' performance in written and spoken tasks over a five-year period, Károly draws the conclusion that specific training in argumentation and other text organization patterns of the foreign language is needed in order to effectively develop students' discourse competence. Finally, the study on the comparison of author identity in published English research articles and Hungarian students' theses finds that students employ a higher number of author pronouns (*I, me, my, we, our, us*) and use them for different discourse functions. This, according to Károly, implies that students need guidance in mastering the appropriate use of personal pronouns in English academic discourse. In addition, Károly argues that academic writing courses should pay special attention not only to linguistic, but also to cultural factors. Overall, the pedagogical implications formulated in the volume are valid in several contexts as the empirical studies discuss some of the most important text types and genres relevant in higher and secondary educational settings and examine texts produced by intermediate and advanced learners of English.

## Conclusion

The volume is published in Hungarian comprising papers most of which were published earlier in English or in less accessible conference proceedings. Thus, it makes established models and empirical studies of cohesion and coherence available to the wider language teaching and learning audience in Hungary. Furthermore, the volume offers great insights to instructors and students who are interested in understanding more about the complexities of text organization patterns, in general, and lexical repetition, topical structure or rhetorical structure analysis in particular.

This volume provides a fertile source for finding ways to describe discourse competence in terms of theories of cohesion and coherence and culturally defined conventions of text organization. Moreover, it gives insights into the application of specific research tools and taxonomies for the Hungarian context. As regards the language of the papers, they are fairly easy to read and have a logical sequence of ideas. A clear logic is also apparent in the sequence of the individual papers, presenting the more general theoretical issues at the beginning and focusing on the more practical and specific aspects in later chapters. The volume is recommended to a wider audience including language learners, language teachers and teacher trainees, however, readers new to the areas would be advised to familiarize themselves with the basic concepts of text linguistics and discourse analysis.

Future work investigating texts, cohesion and coherence for language pedagogy in Hungary could benefit from studies focusing on some more genres and text types. It is especially important to examine professional and spoken genres, for example, business presentations, reports and e-mails<sup>1</sup>, relevant to graduates of particular professional fields.

On the whole, this volume is a welcome addition to the Hungarian literature on text analysis and to the attempts to define the elements of discourse competence relevant for Hungarian students. All the more so, as Károly very aptly formulates the implications of her research for the theory and methodology of text linguistics and for language pedagogy in the foreword (p. 11-13), thus setting the direction of future research. The volume will undoubtedly inspire doctoral students and researchers in applied linguistics to conduct further research in the field.

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<sup>1</sup> see Zsubrinszky (2009) for a comparison of the rhetorical structure of business e-mails written by Hungarians and by English native speakers

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