

**4<sup>th</sup> Postgraduate Student Conference: Assessing and Analyzing Discourses**

Faculty of English Language and Literature  
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
Athens, 26 June 2014

**A comparative study of cohesion in L2 candidates' texts**

*Virginia-Maria Blani*

This paper aims to explore the application of cohesion analysis in the investigation of text grammar. Cohesion is considered an integral part of text grammar, defined as grammar above the sentence level, since it contributes to the creation of a text that can be easily comprehended (Cox et al. 1990:49) by enhancing its unity. Whereas there has been research exploring cohesion and coherence in L2 academic writing (i.e. Liu and Qi, 2010; Hamid Ahmed, 2010; Jin, 2001) and in studies comparing L1 and L2 writing (i.e. Hinkel, 2002; Kafes, 2011; Leo, 2012), research focusing exclusively on L2 candidates' output is rather limited. The importance of Text Grammar as a writing criterion lies on the fact that it analyzes aspects of a text not covered by sentence grammar, formulating the conditions for cohesion and coherence between sentences in a more consistent way describing the larger structures which unify a text (van Dijk, 1972). Cohesion in this paper is defined as the connectedness manifested when the interpretation of an element of a text depends on the interpretation of another element creating “semantic ties” within the text thus leading to a meaningful whole (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Being part of a larger project, this paper aims to explore how candidates of the State Certificate of Language Proficiency in English (known as the KPG exam battery) use cohesive devices in their texts. Using as empirical data texts produced in exam conditions, the findings of this paper are expected to provide an insight into what differentiates candidates' texts in terms of cohesion. In other words, this analysis explores how candidates link their ideas and whether their choices affect the quality of their texts. The analysed texts were chosen on the basis of the marks they had officially received by expert raters and they were divided into three categories: Excellent, Medium and Borderline.

The conducted analysis adheres to the model of cohesion analysis proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). All cohesive devices used in candidates' texts were first recorded and then statistically analysed in order to investigate their frequency and variety in candidates' texts. An additional step was the comparison of the findings for each cohesion type in order to examine whether specific cohesion types correlate with text quality. In agreement with previous research findings according to which writing quality can correlate with specific linguistic features of a text and especially cohesion (Crossley and McNamara, 2010), the results of this study show that specific lexical and grammatical cohesion devices correlate with the quality of L2 candidates' texts.

**References**

Ahmed, A. H. (2010). Students' problems with cohesion and coherence in EFL essay writing in Egypt: Different perspectives. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 1, 211-221.

4th Postgraduate student conference, Language and Linguistics Colloquium  
"Assessing language & analysing discourse"

Cox, B. E., Shanahan, T. and Sulzby, E. (1990). Good and poor elementary readers' use of cohesion in writing. *Research Quarterly*, 25, 47-65.

Crossley, S. A. and McNamara, D. S. (2010). Predicting second language writing proficiency: The roles of cohesion and linguistic sophistication. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 35, 115-135.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London, England: Longman.

Hinkel, E. (2002). *Second language writers' text: Linguistic and rhetorical features*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Jin, W. (2001). A quantitative study of cohesion in Chinese graduate students' writing: Variations across genres and proficiency levels. Paper presented at the Symposium on Second Language Writing at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Kafes, H. (2011). Lexical cohesion: An issue only in the foreign language? *English Language Teaching*, 5, 83-94.

Liu, L. and Qi, X. (2010). A contrastive study of textual cohesion and coherence errors in Chinese EFL Abstract writing Engineering discourse. *Intercultural Communication Studies* 19 (3), 176-187.

van Dijk, T. A. (1972). *Some aspects of text grammars: A study in theoretical poetics and linguistics*. The Hague: Mouton.