

Discourse Analysis for EFL Academic Writing: University Students' Problems with Cohesion and Coherence

Anna Wing-bo TSO,
The Open University of Hong Kong

Abstract:

This paper aims to highlight the common cohesion and coherence mistakes made in Hong Kong students' English academic writing. According to research, one of the biggest challenges that most Chinese university students face is the difficulty in mastering coherence and cohesion in English written texts. Constructing fluent, effective and meaningful English written texts that hang together appropriately is a hard task for them. The main reason of the difficulty, as Ren (2013) suggests, is due to the widely varied thought patterns in English and Chinese, which are "rooted in different culture, or different philosophy, word system, and history in specific" (523). Influenced by the Chinese norm of social interaction, Chinese students learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) tend to convey their arguments in an indirect and circular pattern. Out of courtesy, the real intention of writing is often held back, and the thesis statement is inferred implicitly towards the end of the essay, rather than stated straightforwardly right at the beginning in the introduction. To improve Chinese students' English academic writing ability, it is imperative that ESL/EFL teachers raise their students' awareness towards the different understanding of coherence and cohesion in Chinese and English rhetorical patterns respectively.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, coherence, cohesion, academic writing, EFL