TEXTUAL COHERENCE IN ENGLISH AND KOREAN:
AN ANALYSIS OF ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING
BY AMERICAN AND KOREAN STUDENTS

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Since linguistic analysis has now been extended to whole texts, many studies have attempted to provide descriptions of different types of texts; they have also been concerned with proposing methods of description (Beaugrande, 1980; van Dijk, 1977 and 1980; Grimes, 1975; Hoey, 1979 and 1983; Longacre, 1983). In discourse analysis, two of the major concerns have been with text-type research (Biber, 1984 and 1986; Grabe, 1984 and 1987) and socio-cultural/ethnographic factors in text structure (Tannen, 1982a and 1984). The second concern comes from a wider question related to cognition and culture (Quinn and Holland, 1987) on the one hand, and ethnic styles of socialization on the other hand (Heath, 1982 and 1983; Ocha, 1982). Both of these have implications for the structure of language and language use in texts. Furthermore, some text analysts have conducted contrastive discourse studies in an attempt to characterize different types of texts within a language, and a single type of text across languages (Kaplan, 1966; Clyne, 1981; Hinds, 1983; Y.Kachru, 1982; Kobayashi, 1984; Connor, 1984 and 1987).

Most of the studies of written texts have investigated narrative and expository texts. Until recently, argumentative texts have not attracted much attention. Although there are a few studies of such texts in English (Aston, 1977; Connor, 1984 and 1987; Connor and Lauer, 1985; Tirkkonen-Condit, 1985), not much research is available on non-Western languages, including Korean. Argumentative writing is very important in Korean colleges as well as in American colleges because argumentative tasks are very frequently given to students as one part of a means of evaluation. Thus, a great deal of research on argumentative texts in both Korean and English is needed. An absence of such research has motivated the present study on college students' argumentative writing in English and Korean. The study focuses on textual coherence and how it is created by certain factors such as text structure. The ultimate goal of the study is to examine the relationship between coherence and culture and to provide some pedagogical suggestions.
which would help Korean students write effective argumentative texts in English.

In discourse analysis there has been much concern with text coherence. The concept of coherence varies with scholars. However, since no solid principle exists to distinguish coherent discourse from incoherent discourse, the determination of coherence often relies on the intuitive judgements of the reader. As a result, not many analytical studies on textual coherence have been conducted. In the present research I attempt to conduct an analysis of textual coherence in argumentative texts in English and Korean. I do not aim to suggest a principle for determining whether or not a text is coherent; rather, I am concerned with the features affecting the judgement of coherence (e.g., text structure, topic-structuring, cohesion, etc.).

As mentioned above, several definitions of coherence are available in the literature. Some discourse analysts distinguish coherence from cohesion, while some do not. For example, Beaugrande (1980) defines the term 'coherence' as conceptual connectivity and the term 'cohesion' as sequential connectivity of surface elements (p.10). On the other hand, Halliday and Hasan (1976) use only the term 'cohesion' to refer to semantic relations: "relations of meaning that exist within the text" (p.4). The diversity in definitions of the term 'coherence' often causes confusion for researchers who adopt the concept in their discourse analyses. In this study, following Beaugrande, cohesion and coherence are distinguished. 'Cohesion' is defined as a means for signaling a semantic relationship between linguistic units on the surface. On the other hand, 'coherence' is used to refer to the semantic relations of text beyond the surface form. It is a function both of the text (e.g., cohesive ties) and of the hearer/reader's ability to interpret the text or to interpret the speaker's/writer's intention; the latter depends upon various factors such as knowledge of the subject, inferencing ability, purpose, etc. (Lindeberg, 1985). Whether or not a text is coherent is thus determined by the fact that a text is produced by a writer following the Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (1975):
When adopting the interactive approach to coherence in which the determination of coherence involves not only linguistic knowledge but also pragmatic knowledge based on the reader/writer's experience of a cultural context, a question arises: Is the notion of coherence culture-specific? The possible answers to this question are investigated in this study by examining argumentative writing in English and Korean. The investigation deals mainly with text structure, coherence breaks (features which make it difficult for the reader to understand a given text) and the reader's holistic and analytic evaluation of coherence of the text.

One of the goals of this research is to compare and contrast types of text structure frequently occurring in English and Korean argumentative texts written by four groups of writers: American students writing in English, Korean ESL students in the United States writing in English, Korean EFL students in Korea writing in English, and Korean students in Korea writing in Korean. This contrastive analysis is based on the contrastive rhetoric approach developed by Kaplan (1966) which suggests that rhetorical patterns are culture-bound. Besides attempting to answer whether there are distinct organizational patterns that are culturally preferred in English and Korean argumentative texts, this analysis of text structure investigates Korean students' acquisition of text structure in English argumentative writing by comparing the two groups of Korean speakers writing in English.

Like coherence, the concept of text structure is not consistent in discourse studies. There are several approaches to text structure, ranging from less strictly linguistic approaches to more linguistically-oriented approaches. Attempting to apply the methods of structural linguistics to discourse analysis, Harris (1952), who was one of the pioneers of discourse analysis, viewed text structure as the production of recurrent patterns of
morphemes independent of either their semantic meaning or their relationship with non-
textual factors. Similarly, text grammarians have extended sentence grammar approaches
to include the determination of the acceptability of a text as part of the object of study.
On the other hand, some discourse analysts use information or semantic structure to
classify the structure of a specific discourse unit (van Dijk, 1977 and 1980). Finally,
conversational analysts focus on the micro-organization of conversation in the analysis of
text structure (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974).

The present study adopts the interactive approach to the analysis of text structure.
In interactive text models, the main concern is not only with mechanisms of text
production but also with human interaction. The text is viewed as an interaction between
the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader. The major topics of the investigation are
Gricean maxims, speech-act theory, theories of face and politeness, and turn-taking
(Enkvist, 1987:41). The examination of text structure in this research uses specifically a
method of the interactive text model analysis which is proposed for describing the
structure of argumentative texts by Tirkkonen-Condit (1985), relying upon Aston's
(1977) study. This method is developed on the basis of five groups of studies: Searls's
ethnomethodological research on conversations, Labov and Fanshel's (1977)
sociolinguistically-oriented discourse analysis, Edmondson's (1981) research on spoken
discourse analysis, and Gray's (1977) research on written monologues. It focuses on the
communicative purpose of sentences and their interational relationships. In the present
study, text structure is defined as the hierarchical and functional relations of propositions
in discourse.

The first step in the analysis of text structure is the identification of Interactive
acts of linguistic units such as sentences: interactive acts refer to the function of a
linguistic unit with respect to other units. This identification of interactive acts with
linguistic units has been criticized because there are many cases where the relationship is
not direct between surface linguistic items and speech acts (Levinson, 1983). No single analytical study has investigated the degree to which surface forms and communicative functions overlap and diverge in texts. In order to explore this question, the present study used a computer analysis. The computer analysis identified linguistic features which are associated with common interactive acts in argumentative writing.

Text analysts have investigated what makes a text coherent and what are reliable and valid indicators of coherence; however, the nature of coherence breaks has not been specifically examined except in Wikborg's (1985) research. Another goal of this study is to examine what makes it difficult for the reader to reconstruct the writer's meaning in English and Korean argumentative texts. The analysis is based on the taxonomy of problems proposed by Wikborg in her study (1985) of Swedish student writing (e.g., topic-structuring and cohesion problems) and types of problems identified in Choi (1986) (e.g., lack of background information and justification problems). It includes a qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative part includes the description of types of problems found by two groups of readers, Korean and American, in the writing of the four groups of writers, and the quantitative part involves a statistical comparison and contrast of the frequency distribution of problems with respect to language, writers, and also readers (across language and within a language).

The last goal of the research is to examine to what degree each analytic component (e.g., content, organization, topic unity, etc.) affects the overall impression of the coherence of a text. This is a part of the investigation of features affecting the judgement of coherence which ultimately aims at examining the relationship between coherence and culture.

The terms used in the study need to be defined before proceeding further in order to rule out the confusion which otherwise may occur. First, the terms 'discourse' and 'text' in existing literature have been used differently depending on researchers. Some researchers make a distinction between the two terms while others do not. For example,