



Differences that exist between Polish and English conceptualizations of coherence and cohesion in text

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The aim of this paper is to illustrate the differences that exist between Polish and English conceptualizations of coherence and cohesion in text and how teachers can mediate this situation. The organization of thought, and consequently text, is unconsciously influenced by one's culture (Kaplan 2005) which can present a problem for both teachers and students when communicating on an international level. Writing instruction in Polish schools is minimal when compared to writing instruction in Anglo-Saxon cultures (Duszak 1998). I believe that more work must be done in the Polish classroom to teach students the Anglo-Saxon approach of creating a coherent and cohesive piece. Because of the growing use of English as an international language (Mausch 2005), knowledge of discourse structures and how to apply this knowledge in international contexts is imperative for Polish students. Contrastive rhetoric can be utilized in the classroom as a way to show students the differences between their own writing and that of the Anglo-Saxon culture (Kaplan 2005). I suggest that Polish teachers implement Action Research (AR) in their own classrooms as a way to target specific problems in students' work and use this process as a basis for instruction in discourse structure. While AR does not focus on producing hard statistics, it does empower teachers and provide insight into individual classroom contexts (Wallace 2007). To demonstrate the value of Action Research, I conduct my own AR project with a Polish university class of ethnolinguistic students. In the area of cohesion and coherence, specific attention is paid to the topics of theme/rheme, reference pronouns, and conjunctions. The results indicate that students began to reconstruct their writing in attempts to create a more cohesive and coherent piece. At the end of the project, the level of improvement in terms of cohesion and coherence varied among students.

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