Analysis of the Relationship between Coherence Relations and Pisa Reading Skill Results: Examples from Korean, Turkish and American Textbooks

By

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between coherence relations introduced in the texts of textbooks and PISA reading skill results. In line with this aim textbooks of three countries (Korea, USA and Turkey) are selected that would be qualified as "successful", "somewhat successful" and "unsuccessful" according to PISA results. Five texts chosen randomly from each of the textbooks of these three countries, fifteen texts in total are compiled. A database of 1032 propositions is formed from the texts and these propositions are analyzed in light of a coherence classification so that 1152 coherence relations are determined. According to the findings, there are 464 cause effect relationships, 386 resemblance relationships and 302 contiguity relations. The types of coherence relations obtained are described in comparison with PISA reading skill results of the mentioned countries. According to this, cause effect relationships are attained greatest in Korean textbooks (202) though this relationship is determined fewest in Turkish textbooks (109). Resemblance relationships are greatest in Turkish textbooks (144) while fewest in Korean textbooks. And the contiguity relation is greatest in American textbooks (112) and fewest in Korean textbooks (92).

Keywords: *coherence, coherence relations, textbooks, PISA*

1. Introduction

Coherence is a text centered criteria of textuality along with cohesion (de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1984). During the text and/or textualization process it can be stated that the rules indicated/determined in textuality obtain a universal quality as a whole. However, it is discussed whether or not the measures that take place in textuality obtain the same universality in its own rules and differ according to the typological properties of the language.

When coherence is considered to be formed as a result of a cognitive process and to be mostly related with semantic platform of the text (van Dijk, 1980; Campbell, 1995; Keçik andUzun 2005; Kurtul, 2011) and when the main duty of the language is to symbolize this semantic fiction, it is required to analyze the text creation aim of text producer more than the language structure in coherence relations especially in education process. In this respect, texts used in language education are expected to show the same coherence structures in same age levels but in different education systems. Otherwise differences shall be observed in the ways of thinking of the individuals whose native languages are different. Because texts and semantic fiction that forms the text indirectly are interrogatory of reader's background knowledge (Spilichvd., 1979; cited: Foltz, 1996) and prompt in individuals' way of thinking. The effect level of this prompt is all by itself a field of research and discussion.

Considering the coherence studies observed during the education process, frequently the existence/nonexistence of this concept in texts or factors in providing coherence (Onursal, 2003; Taşıgüzel, 1971; Ülper, 2011; Aydın, 2012)are emphasized. While some studies (van Silfhout et al., 2014) analyzed the reflections of factors in textbooks that provide coherence, some analyzed it as a factor that affects the reading comprehension in foreign language (Zhang andKoda, 2013). It is observed that

texts are not analyzed on the basis of "coherence relations" as a different field within coherence. However, when the coherence concept is considered, coherence relations studies[1] that resemble each other in basis are highly attained.

Coherence relations classifications are especially grounded with Hume (1748) and current modern approaches are developed with Mann and Thompson (1986, 1987) up to the computer supported analyses. While Mann and Thompson (1986, 1987) mention in their studies about approximately twenty four types of coherence relation, this number differs in studies about coherence relations. However especially in individual and applied studies and particularly when the description of coherence relations is in question, frequently, a necessity to head for more practical classifications came out. In the basis of this necessity, regarding applicability, coherence classification (explained in 1.1) that takes place in Kehler (2002) is considered to be appropriate for many applied studies.

When coherence relations are considered as "conceptual relations revealed by the reader/writer in the text processing period" (Knott and Sanders 1988, p.136), it is expected that the conceptual relations used by individuals to be the same within the framework of universal grammar rules of human semantic and without differentiating between languages.

In light of this expectation in the international examinations (such as PISA[2]) it is quite natural to expect that the students obtain similar scores. Observing the PISA report of Korea, USA and Turkey, we come across with scores that could be qualified as "successful", "somewhat successful" and "unsuccessful" respectively. If the age levels (age group of 15) of the students that take PISA are the same, the success of these students is expected to be the same as well. Otherwise, and there is a situation as such, it is required to observe the education programs of the related students and/or the outputs/outcomes of the programs. As is known, textbooks is the most basic and functional means of the student and naturally the program (İşeri, 2007; Özbay, 2003). In this respect textbook is one of the most important instruments that shall affect/direct student success. Besides it should be maintained that the students in related age level frequently read narrative texts (Kolaç, 2009; Canlı, 2015).

Coherence Classification:
According to Kehler (2002) every clause carries a proposition[3] value and every text is a whole that provides a sequence relation between these propositions. Human semantic basically forms three main coherence relations. Kehler states by using Hume (1748) as base that the individual reveals his expressions with three different ways of thinking (Kehler 2002, p. 1-14). These ways of thinking are sorted as resemblance relations, cause-effect relations and contiguity relations:

Resemblance relations: In the resemblance relation there is a requirement for commonalities and (or) contrasts between relations and sets of entities revealed by the individual. This requirement and resemblance relation are discussed in six intermediate sections:

a. *Parallel*: Both propositions have the same value and these propositions are frequently connected to each other with the conjunction "and":
Dick Gephardt organized rallis for Gore, and Tom Daschle distributed pamphlets for him (Kehler 2002, p. 16).

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[1]See Kehler, 2002, Mann and Thompson 1987 and 1988, Sanders, 1992 for a synopsis of the studies about coherence relations classifications

[2]PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) It is a program developed to determine at what level the students at the age group of 15 in OECD countries are taught at the end of obligatory education against the situations they might encounter in our current information society (Çelen, Çelik and Seferoğlu 2011, p.2)

[3]In this study phrase/statement unity is analyzed only when it has a proposition value. For example: the phrases that take place in the 1st text of American textbook "In the April night, more than once, blossoms fell from the orchard trees and lit with rustling taps on the drum skin. a peach stone left miraculously on a branch through winter, flicked by bird, fell swift and unseen, struck once, like panic, which jerked the boy upright" may be explained with only two relations among the type of relations below regarding the proposition: a "result" relation and elaboration. In this regard the sample phrase order is accepted to be comprised by two propositions and the numerical data presented in Table 2 is an outcome of this acceptance.

b. *Contrast*: We can fictionalize the sample proposition above again according to contrast relation, in this case noun phrase and verb phrase in the second proposition (sequent proposition) shall change:

Gephardt supported Gore, but Armey opposed him.

c. *Exemplification*: In this relation sequent proposition is within the scope of antecedent proposition. This type of relation is observed frequently with words "for example, such as":

Young aspiring politicians often support their party's presidential candidate. For instance, Bayh campaigned hard for Gore in 2000. (Kehler 2002, p.17)

d. *Generalization*: There is comprehensiveness similar to exemplification however in this relation there is a syntagmatic difference. When the place of the propositions exampled in the exemplification relation are changed, the relation shall turn into generalization relation:

Bayh campaigned hard for Gore in 2000. Young aspiring politicians often support their party's presidential candidate.

e. *Exception*: While the antecedent proposition displays a presentation, sequent proposition manifests itself with a semantic presentation apart from this proposition. And this type of relation is observed with "however, nonetheless" structures. In this type of relation in which syntagmatic differences could be observed, one of these two propositions definitely reveal a semantic presentation apart from the other:

(i) Young aspiring politicians often support their party's presidential candidate. However, Rudy Guilliani supported Mario Cuomo in 1994.

or;

(ii) Rudy Guilliani supported Mario Cuomo in 1994. Nonetheless, young aspiring politicians often support their party's presidential candidate.

f. *Elaboration*: Noun phrase that takes place in antecedent proposition is presented in the sequent proposition more specifically:

A young aspiring politician was arrested in Texas today. John Smith, 34, was nabbed in a Houston law firm while attempting to embezzle funds for his campaign.

Cause-Effect relations: Analyzed in four intermediate sections:

a. *Result*: It is a type of relation established with sequent proposition that is deduced by depending on the antecedent proposition (Kehler 2002, p. 18-19):

"George is a politician, and therefore he's dishonest"

In the example above, there is an inseparable relation between being a politician and being dishonest and this type of relations are called "if and only if relations" in propositional context.

b. *Explanation:* Explanation relation manifests itself by the change of place of antecedent proposition of the result relation with its annex

"George is dishonest, because he's a politician."

or

" George is dishonest. He's a politician" (Kehler 2002, p.19)

c. *Violated Expectation:* similar to the result relation, in this coherence relation expected sequent proposition is formed with semantic deduction of the antecedent proposition or sequent proposition is formed with an opposite situation of "Result".

"George is a politician, but he's honest".

d. Denial of Preventer: Similar to Violated Expectation but antecedent proposition and sequent proposition are reversed:

"George is honest, even though he's a politician." (Kehler 2002, p.19-20)

Contiguity relations: Discussed with two different forms of occasion relation (Occasion$_1$ *and* Occasion$_2$)[4]. Contiguity relation is in the same form with occasion that is discussed in Hobbs (1900) in basis. In both propositions, there is a time wise rank between propositions:

George picked up the speech. He began to read. (Kehler 2002, p. 22-23).

2. Method

Establishing the Database

The database of this study is formed by the texts selected randomly from the books used as textbook material in native language lessons in Turkey, South Korea and United States of America. As is known (see Table 1) while Korea obtained scores that could be evaluated as quite "successful" in PISA[5]reading skills exams, USA as "somewhat successful" and Turkey as "unsuccessful". In this regard, in the sense of being base for the study, it is rather significant to analyze the texts in textbooks of the countries that could be qualified "successful", "somewhat successful" and "unsuccessful".

Table 1.

PISA 2000		PISA 2003		PISA 2006		PISA 2009		PISA 2012	
Country	*Avr. Score*	*Country*	*Avr. Score*	*Country*	*Avr. Score*	*Country*	*Avr. Score*	*Country*	*Avr. Score*
S.Korea	525	S.Korea	534	S.Korea	556	S.Korea	539	S.Korea	536
USA	504	USA	495	USA	-	USA	494	USA	498
Turkey	-	Turkey	441	Turkey	447	Turkey	464	Turkey	475

Because students in the age group of 15 can take PISA examinations, five texts are selected randomly from the textbooks[6] that are used in education of students in the age group of 13-14 of each of these three mentioned countries. Database of the study is established by 15 texts and the propositions (statement/phrase) that form these texts. Texts selected for the database comprise 352 propositions regarding Korean textbooks, 345 propositions regarding American textbooks and 339 propositions regarding Turkish textbooks and in total 1036 propositions. In order to observe the coherence classification relations that are introduced in the Introduction section, texts are paid attention to be in prosaism, but the type of text (at least for this study) is ignored.

Texts and number of propositions in the database are tabulated below:

Table 2.

		Number of Propositions	Total$_1$Number of Propositions	Total$_2$Number of Propositions
Korean Textbook	1. Text (K1)	62	352	1036
	2. Text (K2)	71		
	3. Text (K3)	76		
	4. Text (K4)	78		
	5. Text (K5)	65		
American Textbook	1. Text (A1)	74	345	
	2. Text (A2)	68		
	3. Text (A3)	63		
	4. Text (A4)	81		
	5. Text (A5)	59		
Turkish Textbook	1. Text (T1)	89	339	
	2. Text (T2)	64		
	3. Text (T3)	70		
	4. Text (T4)	61		
	5. Text (T5)	55		

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[4]Propositions discussed in two occasions in Kehler are classified in the upper title, in contiguity relation.

[6]The tag about the selected textbooks can be found in "Resources".

Analysis of the Data
The database with 1036 propositions is evaluated by three field experts[7]in light of Kehler's coherence relations and the type of coherence relation in the propositions is concluded. Sample propositions from each textbooks are shown below:
Sample 1. Korean Textbook 4th Text (K4) 12th, 13th Propositions

> **12**. 왼손잡이는통계학적으로오른손잡이보다희소하지만이것은놀랄만한일이아니다
> Left handed ones are numerically less than right handed ones however this is not a surprising situation. (type of relation: violated expectation)
> **13.** 그럼에도불구하고역사적으로왼손잡이는부정적인인식이많았다
> However, throughout history a negative meaning is laid on the word "left handed". (type of relation: violated expectation)
> In the examples in the 12th proposition two noun phrases (left handed ones and right handed ones) are placed on the reader's semantic and by comparing two noun phrases a state is presented to the reader as an expectation. As a follow up of the proposition "however" conjunction relieves the coherence relation and the expectation introduced to the reader semantic is removed. In this case, 12th proposition presents a violated expectation in itself. With 13th proposition reader expectations are increased but this time the expectation presented is connected with 12th proposition and there is an adverse sequence of the violated expectation presentation. And in this case there is denial of preventer between 12th and 13th propositions.

Sample 2. American Textbook 3rd Text (A2) 52ndand 53rd Propositions

> **52.** Then he caught sight of the lieutenant's arm,
> **53.** and his face at once changed.
> In the 52nd proposition that takes place in A2 of American textbook, there is a generalization of proposition set that is formed with sampling propositions in the text before. 53rd Proposition delivered a result dependent directly to the generalization relation (52nd Proposition) and indirectly to the other sampling relations.

Sample 3. Turkish Textbook 1st Text (T1) 16th Proposition

> **16**. Atatürk, askerîliseninardındanİstanbul'da Harp Okulunuve Harp Akademisinibitirerek 1905 yılındaaskerlikgörevinebaşladı. İlk olarakŞam'atayinedildi.
>
> Atatürk graduated from Military College and Military Academy in Istanbul after military high school, and started his military duty in 1905. Firstly he was appointed to Damascus.
> **17**.
> OsmanlıDevleti'niparçalayaraktoprakeldeetmekisteyenİtalyanlarınLibya'yasaldırmasıüzerineora davatanıkahramancasavundu.
>
> As a result of Italians attacking Libya in order to conquer land by disintegrating Ottoman Empire, he defended his homeland there heroically.

There are two phrases in the 16th proposition in T1 of Turkish textbook. The phrases in this proposition are connected to each other with timewise rank and this connection (relation) is formed with "first of all" structure. As a result of timewise rank there is a contiguity relation in 16th proposition. In the text continuing with 16th proposition, another timewise rank and contiguity relation is introduced with 17th proposition.

As could be understood from the sample propositions above, sometimes there are more than one coherence relation within a proposition or while two propositions are analyzed both a coherence relation within the propositions themselves and another coherence relation that connects two different propositions can be observed. Besides sometimes three or four propositions are connected to each other

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[7]Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamil İŞERİ, Asst. Prof. Dr.TugbaÇelik andAsst. Prof. Dr. Sercan Demirgüneş (researcher).

with only one coherence relation (for example explanation or contiguity). When this and similar situations are considered, a correspondence between the number of propositions and coherence relations should not be expected. In the Korean sample 413 coherence relations correspond to 352 propositions, in the American sample 388 coherence relations correspond to 345 propositions and in the Turkish sample 351 coherence relations correspond to 339 propositions. Therefore 1036 propositions are introduced with 1152 coherence relations.

3. Findings

Findings About Korean Textbook

As a result of the analysis of 352 propositions regarding the Korean textbook that form a part of the database according to Kehler's coherence classification 413 coherence relations in total are determined. The most dominant of these relation types is cause-effect (202 - %48,9) relations. This relation type is followed by resemblance relations (119 - %28,8) and contiguity relations (92 - %22,3).

Observing the distribution of cause-effect relations in Korean texts within themselves, the mostly used relation types are violated expectation (64 - %31,7) and denial of preventer (58 - %28,7). In these texts result (42 - %20,8) and explanation (38 - %18,8) types are also used.

In the usage of resemblance relations (119 - %28,8) while contrast relation (39 - %32,8) is the mostly used relation type, the distribution among other types is as elaboration (19 - %15,9), exception (18 - %15,1), exemplification and generalization (16 - %13,5). Parallel relation (11 - %9,2) is the least used relation type among resemblance relations.

In Korean texts contiguity relation is encountered 92 (%22,3) times. Results related with the Korean textbook could be tabulated as in below:

Table 3.

Type of Relation	Type of Relation	Korean Textbook
Cause-Effect Relations (202 - %48,9)	Result	42 (%20,8)
	Explanation	38 (18,8)
	Violated expectation	64 (%31,7)
	Denial of preventer	58 (%28,7)
Resemblance (119 - %28,8)	Parallel	11 (%9,2)
	Contrast	39 (%32,8)
	Exemplification	16 (%13,5)
	Generalization	16 (%13,5)
	Exception	18 (%15,1)
	Elaboration	19 (%15,9)
Contiguity (92 - %22,3)		92 (%22,3)

Findings About American Textbook

345 propositions regarding the American textbook 388 coherence relations are determined. The distribution of these coherence relations is as cause-effect relations 153 (% 39,4), resemblance relations 123 (% 31,7) and contiguity relations 112 (%28,9).

In the distribution of cause-effect relations within themselves among all the relations mentioned, the mostly used relation types are result (44 - %%28,8) and explanation (41 - %26,8) relations. These relations are followed by violated expectation (38 - %24,8) and denial of preventer (30 - %19,6).

In the usage of resemblance relations in American texts while parallel relation is the mostly used relation type (26 - %21,2), this relation type is followed by exemplification (23 - %18,7) and generalization and contrast relations (22 - %17,9). The least used relation types in resemblance relations are exception (13- %10,9) and elaboration (17 - %13,8) relations.

Table 4.

Type of Relation		Type of Relation	American Textbook
Cause-Effect Relations (153 - %39,4)		Result	44 (%28,8)
		Explanation	41 (%26,8)
		Violated expectation	38 (%24,8)
		Denial of preventer	30 (%19,6)
Resemblance (123 - %31,7)		Parallel	26 (%21,1)
		Contrast	22 (% 17,9)
		Exemplification	23 (%18,7)
		Generalization	22 (% 17,9)
		Exception	13 (%10,6)
		Elaboration	17 (%13,8)
Contiguity (112 - %28,9)			112 (%28,9)

Findings About Turkish Textbook

In those five texts in the textbooks used in Turkey, 352 coherence relations that correspond to 339 propositions are determined. The mostly used relation type among three main relation types is resemblance (144 - %41) relations and this is followed by cause-effect (109 - %31) and contiguity (98 - %28) relations.

Observing the distribution of coherence relations within themselves, the mostly used relation type in cause-effect relations is explanation relation (59 - %54,1). Explanation relation is followed by result (27 - %24,8), violated expectation (13 - %12) and denial of preventer (10 (%9,1) respectively.

The mostly used relation in resemblance relation that is mostly used in Turkish textbooks in general is dominantly the parallel relation (74 - %51,4). The relation closest to parallel relation is elaboration relation (22 - %15,3). Generalization (15 - %10,4), exemplification (13 - %9,1) and contrast (11 - %7,6) are the other resemblance relations used.

And the contiguity relation revealed itself 98 times (%28).

Table 5.

Type of Relation	Type of Relation	Turkish Textbook
Cause-Effect Relations (109 - %31)	Result	27 (%24,8)
	Explanation	59 (%54,1)
	Violated expectation	13 (%12)
	Denial of preventer	10 (%9,1)
Resemblance (144 - %41)	Parallel	74 (%51,4)
	Contrast	11 (%7,6)
	Exemplification	13 (%9,1)
	Generalization	15 (%10,4)
	Exception	9 (%6,2)
	Elaboration	22 (%15,3)
Contiguity (98 - %28)		98 (% 28)

Overall Picture

Considering generally the textbooks related with the database the mostly used relation type in 1152 coherence relations that take place in 1036 propositions is cause-effect relations. This relation type is followed by resemblance (386) and contiguity (302).

In the distribution within cause-effect relations, explanation stands out dominantly (138). Violated expectation (115), result (113) and denial of preventer (98) are other used relation types.

Parallel relation reveals itself in resemblance relations dominantly (111) and this relation type is followed by contrast (72), elaboration (58), generalization (53), exemplification (52) and exception (40):

Table 6.

Type of Relation		Korean Textbook	American Textbook	Turkish Textbook	TOTAL	
Cause-Effect Relations	Result	42	44	27	113	
	Explanation	38	41	59	138	464
	Violated expectation	64	38	13	115	
	Denial of preventer	58	30	10	98	
Resemblance	Parallel	11	26	74	111	
	Contrast	39	22	11	72	
	Exemplification	16	23	13	52	386
	Generalization	16	22	15	53	
	Exception	18	13	9	40	
	Elaboration	19	17	22	58	
Contiguity		92	112	98	302	

4. Discussions

Texts presented to the students at the age group of 15 are supposed to be mostly narrative. The most known characteristic of the narrative texts is that they present a timewise rank (primacy-recency). In this respect in the texts in the database the relations that introduce timewise primacy-recency (for example; parallel and elaboration structures in contiguity and somewhat resemblance relations) are supposed to be many more. However this situation in general picture is almost the other way around. More usage of cause-effect relations can be seen as a factor that directs the students to think in this way. Dominantly usage of explanation relation within cause-effect can be explained in accordance with the type of texts and cognitive level of student. Student cognition expects details about the relevant knowledge in the subsequent propositions in order to give meaning to the knowledge presented with an antecedent proposition. In a presentation as such student shall intensify the knowledge transferred. Usage of parallel relations in resemblance relation may again be related with text type and cognitive suitability.

In Korean textbooks cause-effect relations take place dominantly. Considering PISA success of Korea we can state that students are required to be introduced to texts provided with cause-effect relations. Moreover, Korean students are encountered with highly violated expectation in texts. Expectation introduced to the student with the primary proposition is removed with secondary (sequent) proposition. With the violated expectation the student is directed towards always thinking the different instead of being directed to situations that may realize more possibly against an existing situation. With a very simple example, even though the expectation formed in the proposition (sequent proposition) "Kıvanç is sick" is expected to continue as "He could not goto school.", "He could not do his homework."; in Korean texts with the violated expectation the sequent proposition after the antecedent proposition (Kıvanç is sick) is fictionalized as "Nonetheless he did his homework.", "However he went to school.". The student that often encounters with this type of relations can internalize different ways of thinking besides expectations. And this difference comes out in PISA reading skill scores. Corroboratively, contrast usage in resemblance relations is also dominant. Students are encountered even in resemblance relations with the different with contrast relation. Relations (contiguity) that are expected to be suitable to the age, that provide narration and natural timewise rank are used much less in Korean texts. In this case we can state that the texts in Korean textbooks, at least in the basis of coherence relations, do not look for suitability for age level but are fictionalized in order to raise upper semantic thinking skills.

In American textbooks cause-effect relations are used much more than the other types as in Korean textbooks. However, this excess is not dominant as in Korean textbooks. Besides, different from the Korean textbooks, the mostly used relations are result and explanation relations. The frequent usage of explanation relations with parallel, exemplification and generalization structures within resemblance relations can be explained with age level suitability. Because as stated before, as in strengthening the knowledge provided, the knowledge introduced with antecedent proposition is required to be explained, exemplified, etc. In American textbooks contiguity relations have the most usage compared to other country textbooks. And this situation is corroborative of the previous situation in terms ofthe age level suitability. In this regard, in terms of coherence relations, the age level suitability of the texts in American textbooks can be mentioned. Even in this situation, for USA, although a high level of success is expected from PISA reading skill scores, it is "somewhat successful" in the related examination.

As for the Turkey sample, it is possible to mention that the texts are prepared in the basis of coherence relations and according to the age level suitability principle completely. Because explanation relation within cause-effect relations, parallel relations within resemblance relations are used quite dominantly.

Generally, relations that give details on timewise rank (contiguity, parallel) and sequent proposition (explanation, exemplification, etc…) depending on the narration in the texts in light of age level suitability are expected to be frequent. However, from the findings and results of this study, according to PISA reading skill results, it can be stated that cause-effect relations and especially within this type the

dominantly usage of violated expectation, denial of preventer relations affect reading-understanding positively.

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