

Abstracts

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to investigate how pre-task and online planning could have impact on the three dimensions of language production. Language performance and proficiency are believed to be multi-dimensional in nature, and that their principal dimensions can be examined through the notions of complexity, accuracy and fluency (Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 2008; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). To conduct the study, forty intermediate EFL learners from a language center in Iran were selected to participate in this study. They were homogenized in terms of gender, age, nationality, L1, and English proficiency. They were randomly assigned to either the pre-planning or the online planning conditions and were required to complete a written narrative based on a series of pictures. Ten of the participants in the pre-task planning condition were randomly selected to participate in a retrospective interview following the task to see what they did during the 10 minute planning time. Independent samples t-tests were run in order to see if any significant difference existed in the writing performance of the participants under the two planning conditions in relation to complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The findings of this study showed that the pre-task planning group produced more complex and fluent writings, whereas the online planning group produced more error free clauses indicating a more accurate writing performance.

- Department of Modern Languages (MLD) Testing Committee uses two computer tools, Coh-Metrix version 3.0 and Lexical Tutor version 8 VocabProfile when assessing the difficulty of the reading texts in the midterm and final exams. In order to be able to make valid comparisons, consistency is essential when using these tools (Ürkün, 2014). In addition to the data provided by these tools, test writers evaluate the texts intuitively considering certain text characteristics that are not likely to be evaluated accurately by the available computer systems. Currently, the difficulty level of the texts in the coursebook is used to set the baseline in the evaluation and selection of the texts to be used in the exams (See Appendix A for the Coh-Metrix version 3.0 Indices for the reading texts in the coursebook, Compass 1). It is also assumed that students are at B2 level and above since they passed ODTU English Proficiency Exam (EPE) or a similar proficiency exam recognized by ODTU.

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- Coh-Metrix is a computer program that analyzes various text
- features relevant to text comprehension by incorporating
- techniques informed by theories of text processing, cognitive
- psychology, and computational linguistics. Three key classes of
- cohesion indices (i.e., coreference, conceptual relations,
- connectivity) measured by Coh-Metrix are evaluated with texts
- used in published studies of cohesion effects on reading
- comprehension. The results confirmed that Coh-Metrix
- successfully detects levels of cohesion in texts.
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- Coh-Metrix analyzes texts on multiple measures of language and discourse that are aligned with multilevel theoretical frameworks of comprehension. Dozens of measures funnel into five major factors that systematically vary as a function of types of texts (e.g., narrative vs. informational) and grade level: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep (causal) cohesion. Texts are automatically scaled on these five factors with Coh-Metrix-TEA (Text Easability Assessor). This article reviews how these five factors account for text variations and reports analyses that augment Coh-Metrix in two ways. First, there is a composite measure called formality, which increases with low narrativity, syntactic complexity, word abstractness, and high cohesion. Second, the words are analyzed with Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count, an automated system that measures words in texts on dozens of psychological attributes. One next step in automated text analyses is a topics analysis that scales the difficulty of conceptual topics.

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- The proposed multilevel framework of discourse comprehension includes the surface code, the textbase, the situation model, the genre and rhetorical structure, and the pragmatic communication level. We describe these five levels when comprehension succeeds and also when there are communication misalignments and comprehension breakdowns. A computer tool has been developed, called Coh-Metrix, that scales discourse (oral or print) on dozens of measures associated with the first four discourse levels. The measurement of these levels with an automated tool helps researchers track and better understand multilevel discourse comprehension. Two sets of analyses illustrate the utility of Coh-Metrix in discourse theory and educational practice. First, Coh-Metrix was used to measure the cohesion of the text base and situation model, as well as potential extraneous variables, in a sample of published studies that manipulated text cohesion. This analysis helped us better understand what was precisely manipulated in these studies and the implications for discourse comprehension mechanisms. Second, Coh-Metrix analyses are reported for samples of narrative and science texts in order to advance the argument that traditional text difficulty measures are limited because they fail to accommodate most of the levels of the multilevel discourse comprehension framework.

- The present paper outlines a theoretical framework for the application of dynamic assessment procedures to second language assessment and pedagogy. Dynamic assessment (DA) is grounded in Vygotsky's writings on the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and has been widely researched in psychology and education. DA distinguishes itself from other approaches to assessment by insisting that mediation of the examinee's performance prompts, hints, leading questions etc. – during the assessment procedure is crucial to understanding his/her abilities and for promoting development during the assessment process itself. In this paper, the major approaches to DA are reviewed and some key studies are reported on. A few language-acquisition DA studies that have been carried out to date are then considered. The paper concludes with a discussion of some of the criticisms leveled against DA and recommendations for further research into DA's potential contributions to applied linguistics.

- The intent of this chapter is to familiarize readers with the principles and constructs of an approach to learning and mental development known as Sociocultural Theory. Sociocultural Theory (SCT) has its origins in the writings of the Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky and his colleagues. SCT argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts (Ratner, 2002). Within this framework, humans are understood to utilize existing cultural artifacts and to create new ones that allow them to regulate their biological and behavioral activity. Language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. Practically speaking, developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sports activities, and work places, to name only a few. SCT argues that while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop