

## SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AS A DESIRABLE APPROACH TO L2 WRITING EVALUATION: A CASE STUDY

Katia Silene Ferreira de Mello Paiva & Edna de Freitas Lima- Iowa State University

**ABSTRACT:** *This article reports part of a case study research that examines and proposes the effectiveness of Halliday's (1973) textual metafunction as a pedagogical tool for evaluating cohesion and coherence in L2 writing. The data for analysis involve a comparison between a student's and a professional movie critic writer's writing sample. The results indicate that emphasizing the application of the principles of textual analysis will help teachers visualize students' text organization, avoid a nonproductive focus on students' sentence-level errors, and encourage them to assess students' writing from a discourse-level perspective.*

**RESUMO:** *Este artigo é um recorte de um estudo de caso que examina e propõe o uso da metafunção textual de Halliday (1973) como instrumento pedagógico para avaliar coesão e coerência na produção escrita em L2. Os dados coletados envolveram uma revisão de um filme escrita por um aluno e outra escrita por um escritor profissional. Os resultados indicam que a ênfase em aplicar os princípios da análise textual sugerida por Halliday ajudará professores de L2 a visualizar a organização textual nos textos dos alunos, evitar o foco improdutivo nos erros gramaticais a nível frasal bem como encorajá-los a avaliar a produção escrita sob um perspectiva discursiva.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Systemic Functional Linguistics; textual metafunction; cohesion; coherence.*

### Introduction

When given a hypothetical situation of having been told by the school supervisor that grammar correction in learners' writings would no longer be an acceptable approach to writing assessment at the institution, an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Brazil expressed the following reaction:

I'll ask what will be done instead. Will there be some type of approach which will aim at guiding learners on dealing with their mistakes or errors? Will teachers have support to develop another grammar correction strategy?

(extracted from a graduate project survey conducted in 2009)

It is not unusual to come across such a reaction about L2 writing feedback or assessment<sup>1</sup> among language teachers all over the world. Studies have revealed that although language teachers recognize the value of rhetorical aspects in learners' discourse, their final decision on grading learners' texts ends up based on students' proof of evidence for grammar accuracy (see Blagojeva, 2002; Borg & Burns, 2008; Low, 2010; Mohan & Slater, 2004; Polat, 2009).

The prominence that grammatical errors have had in L2 writings, both as daily classroom feedback and as an assessment criterion, has been thoroughly debated (Chandler, 2003, 2004; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2007, 2009). While some scholars suggest that grammar feedback on L2 writing should be abandoned (Truscott, 1996, 1999), others insist on the benefits of embracing this approach in L2 class

---

<sup>1</sup> By feedback, the author means classroom feedback on students' writing which is not necessarily graded; by assessment, on the other hand, the author means learners' written productions that are actually graded.

instruction (Ferris, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

One critical issue in this ongoing debate lies in the fact that on one side Truscott (1996, 1999) claims that corrective feedback may help with subsequent drafts but does not promote language acquisition; Ferris (1999), on the other hand, insists that careful and consistent feedback is a potential tool for language acquisition.

Another key issue in this debate relates to the supposition that by placing too much emphasis on learners' grammar-based errors, instructors may send L2 learners the message that it is on their sentence-level errors that they have, indeed, to focus most of their attention (Truscott, 1996). Accordingly, it has been argued that such pedagogical practice, that of highlighting learners' grammatical errors on their written production, may add force to the misconception that by enhancing grammatical competence, they will certainly produce well-written texts (Truscott, 1996, 1999; Ferris, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Such belief (or "misbelief") has certainly worried these and other language writing researchers. Several are the scholars who encourage language teachers to use a discourse rather than a sentence-level approach when they evaluate English language learners' (ELL) texts (Low, 2010; McCarthy, 1991; Mohan, Leung, & Slater, 2010).

At a discourse-level evaluation, ELLs' writing can be examined from different viewpoints in the field of applied linguistics. One of the possible approaches is discourse analysis (DA) which "focuses on knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence" (Paltridge, 2006, p. 2); thus, "[it] views language at the level of text" (p. 6). DA helps language teachers focus on the relationship between sentences in discourse rather than treating them as isolated pieces. Discourse analysts have embraced the current linguistic perspective which interprets "language as a strategic, meaning-making resource" (Eggins, 1994, p.i). In other words, "language is seen as a resource for meaning rather than a system of rules (Mohan & Slater, 2004, p.255). This is the *Systemic Functional Linguistic* (SFL) interpretation of language developed by Halliday (1973, 1985). According to Halliday's framework, a text (oral or written) comprises three central meanings (or metafunctions): experiential/ideational, interpersonal, and textual. It is within the third metafunction that coherence and cohesion are constituents although all three are constantly intertwined. Therefore, Halliday's framework of textual metafunction will be the theoretical basis for the present case study.

The understanding that SFL taxonomy of metafunctions can help L2 teachers look at ELLs' texts as a discourse rather than isolated sentences present the motivation for this study. Therefore, this case study examines and proposes the efficacy of using Halliday's textual metafunctional framework as a tool for observing coherence and cohesion in L2 written texts; it also proposes that language teachers' awareness of this approach can help them provide fair assessment and qualified feedback on learners' written production.

## Literature Review

One implication related to written corrective feedback is that the assessment approach tends to be based on whether language rules are violated or not. This perspective relates to the traditional grammar concept of language as a set of rules and language learning as acquiring correct forms (Mohan & Slater, 2004). Contrary to this perspective is Halliday's view of linguistics which sees language as a resource for making meaning in context and language learning as extending resources for making meaning. Thus, the latter entails a discourse-based perspective which "shifts from what learners cannot do to what learners can do" (Mohan & Slater, 2004 p. 258).

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics has major implications for the assessment of discourse, particularly in the area of second language learning as it suggests that learners' discourse is assessed by looking at their capacity for using their linguistic resources for constructing and interpreting meanings rather than being assessed with explanation of correctness and error in the language code.

### *Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics*

For SFL, a language is a system of meaning. That is, when people use language, they construct meaning. In this sense, the study of grammar entails the attempt to understand how

“meanings are constructed through the choices of words and grammatical resources in language use” (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p.2). This perspective adds force to the assumption that meaning and use are central features of language; hence, “grammar is semantic (concerned with meaning) and functional (concerned with how the language is used)” (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p.2) The difference between SFL and the traditional grammar is well described by Mohan & Slater (2004):

Where Halliday deals with discourse, considers functions of language and how they evolve in our culture, and explores how discourse varies in context, traditional grammar deals with sentence, considers the form and structure of language, and offers a general description of language. Where Halliday sees language as resource for making meaning in context and language learning as extending resources for making meaning, traditional grammar sees language as a set of rules and language learning as acquiring correct forms. In Halliday’s view meaning and form are intrinsically related. In the traditional view meaning and form in language are typically not seen as related under a conduit metaphor: language is a conduit through which meaning flows rather than being inherently associated with meaning. (p.257)

Embedded in Halliday’s (1973, 1985) systemic functional approach is the notion of the *textual metafunction*: the combination of patterns of grammar and vocabulary that ties meanings in the text and connects the text to the social context in which it occurs; that is, items that combine together to make the text cohesive and give it a *unit of texture* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The creation of texture in discourse is a result of the combination of cohesive resources, which will be discussed in consecutive papers, and structural resources. The latter include thematic structure (or progression), *theme and rheme*, and information structure and focus, *given and new* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

#### *Thematic Progression*

Thematic progression is defined as the structure which carries the line of meaning in a clause. It consists of theme and rheme. In English, the theme is indicated by its position in the clause, which always comes first. Thus, the theme is the element which serves as the point of departure for the message, whereas the remainder of the message is the rheme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp.64-65). See table 1 below:

Table 1

Theme	Rheme
Text	can be used for both spoken and written language.

(Extracted from Paltridge, 2006, p. 148)

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) point out that there is a close relationship between the thematic progression and the information structure. In some unmarked cases, the *theme* falls within the *given*, and the *rheme* falls within the *new*. However, Halliday explains that the *theme* is what the speaker/writer chooses to take as point of departure. The *given* is what the listener/reader already knows. Therefore, *theme-rheme* is speaker/writer-oriented, whereas *given –new* is listener/reader-oriented (p.95).

The notion of *theme* can be categorized as three types: topical theme (usually a participant<sup>2</sup>); textual theme (usually conjunctions), and interpersonal theme (usually adverbs which express a point of view).

Table 2

Textual theme	Interpersonal theme	Topical theme	Rheme
However...	it seems unlikely that	Descartes	would deliberately challenge the Church.

(Paltridge, 2006, p.147)

<sup>2</sup> Participants are those who perform the action in Halliday’s metafunctional framework.

Fries (2002) employs the framework of thematic progression as one form of visualizing the flow of information in a discourse (coherence) from the perspective of *theme* and *rheme*. Paltridge (2006) defines thematic progression as “the way in which the theme of a clause may pick up, or repeat, a meaning from the preceding theme or rheme” (p. 148). He illustrates the three types of thematic progression: constant theme, linear theme, and multiple theme or split-rheme.

The first, constant theme, occurs when Theme 1 is picked up and repeated at the beginning of the next clause as in the example below:

Table 3

Theme	Rheme
Text	can be used for both spoken and written language
It	usually refers to a stretch, an extract or complete piece of writing or speech

The arrows below help with the visualization

Figure 1

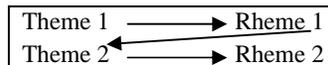


The second, linear *theme*, illustrates when the subject matter on the *rheme* of one clause is taken up in the theme of a following clause; for example:

Table 4

Theme	Rheme
The term “modality”	describes a range of grammatical resources used to express probability or obligation.
Generally, obligation	is used in speech, especially when wanting to get things done such as “You should keep your room tidy”.

Figure 2

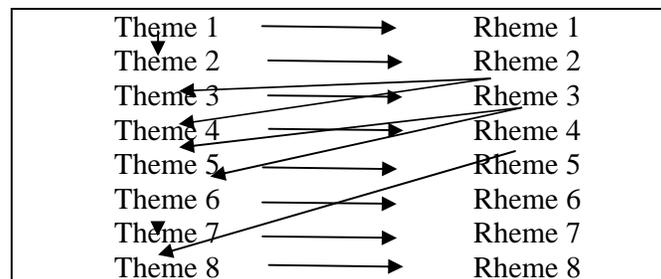


Finally, multiple-theme, or split rheme, occurs when a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses. See for example:

Table 5

Theme	Rheme
When Japanese people	write their language.
They	use a combination of two separate alphabets as well as ideograms borrowed from Chinese.
The two alphabets	are called hiragana and katakana.
The Chinese ideograms	are called kanji.
Hiragana	represents the 46 basic sounds that are made in Japanese Language.
Katakana	represents the same sounds as hiragana.
But (Katakana)	is used mainly for words borrowed from foreign language and for sound effects.
Kanji	are used to communicate an idea rather than a sound.

Figure 3



Definitions and examples were extracted from Paltridge, 2006 pp.148-151

Therefore, one way of looking at learners' written production from Halliday's framework view is through the thematic progression. Empirical study results seem to corroborate discourse analysis's recommendations of using Halliday's framework to explore cohesion and coherence in language writing classrooms.

Numerous empirical studies have been conducted in the area of cohesion and coherence. One particular focus has been on the use of theme and rheme (structural and information textual resources) and cohesive ties (grammatical and lexical resources) as pedagogical tools in L2 writing instruction. See table 6 below:

Table 6

Researcher	Study object	Findings	Discussion
Alonso (2003)	Theme & rheme	Thematic progression helps learners rewrite their texts	Challenges writing materials for giving little attention to the progression of information
Blagoeva (2002)	Demonstrative reference	Differences between native and non-native use of cohesive devices	The differences in the use of cohesive ties might not directly obstruct communication but is an indication that there is still much to be done in the development of language skills.
Chen (2002)	Personal pronoun as anaphoric reference	Inappropriate use of cohesive devices	Misuse of cohesive devices might have limited their chance to convey message in their texts
Liu (2000)	Lexical ties	Inappropriate use of lexical ties	Criticizes textbooks for neglecting lexical ties instruction
Wang (2007)	Theme & rheme	By analyzing theme and rheme in a text, students can learn to perform the same analysis in their own writings	Both students and teachers benefit from being aware of the notion of thematic progression

Considering the facts that linguists have addressed the SFL view of language as a resource for meaning as a theoretical basis for writing assessment, that DA scholars have encouraged Halliday's metafunctional framework which focuses on discourse-level approach as an attempt to understand ELLs' text more successfully, that empirical research has addressed textual cohesion as an issue in language learners' texts, and that study results have suggested that this taxonomy can be used as a successful tool for writing instruction and revision, the current study aims at conducting a comparative analysis between an ELLs' text and a professional writer's discourse to investigate the efficacy of this approach as a tool to L2 writing instruction and assessment. For such, the present project aimed at addressing the following questions (however, only question 2 will be discussed in this paper):

1. How do teachers perceive corrective feedback on L2 writing? How do they provide feedback on L2 writing? Why?
2. **What can a textual analysis offer to language teachers in terms of understanding ELLs' writing difficulties in conveying a message in the written form?**
3. What can a textual analysis offer to language learners in terms of understanding their writing skill strengths and challenges?

## Methods

This study examines and proposes the efficacy of using Halliday's (1973, 1985) textual metafunction framework as a tool for identifying English language learners' use of cohesive devices in their written production. It also posits that English language teachers' awareness of this approach may help them provide more effective feedback and fair assessment of students' writing. This study focuses on a specific language institute in Midwest Brazil; first, it investigates the type of L2 writing feedback currently employed at the chosen institution and then suggests Halliday's (1973, 1985) textual metafunction as a desirable approach. Therefore, the research method chosen for this study is case study as this method provides a "description of language learning or use within a specific population and setting" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.

171); it also provides “insights into the complexities of particular cases in their particular context” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 172). It is important to point out that this study is more theoretical in nature than it is empirical given that its main purpose is to examine and suggest an alternative approach to L2 writing assessment.

Although this case study is mainly qualitative, it also draws on quantitative methods of data collection. As for qualitative aspects, this study involves a semi-structured interview with EFL teachers from Brazil on their current practices and approaches to L2 writing assessment. The current article particularly reports the qualitative analysis of the thematic structure that each writer uses; other parts of the project will be addressed in consecutive papers. Following is a description of the methodology employed in this project:

#### *Participants*

##### *Interviewees*

Interviews were conducted with three EFL teachers as an attempt to answer question 1. Two of them are Brazilian females. One of these teachers is the owner of the language institute and has taught EFL for 32 years; the other has been an EFL instructor at the institute for 16 years. The third teacher is an American male who has been teaching at the institute for seven years. All three instructors defined their language classes as General English (e.g. integrated skills). Only the male instructor claimed having prior experience teaching English for specific purpose (ESP).

##### *Writers and writing pieces*

This study involves two writers, a student writer and a professional movie critic, and two reviews of the movie *Twilight*, one from each writer. The student writer is a 13-year-old Brazilian female who has been studying at the English institute for two years but had EFL instruction prior to coming to this specific institute. Her proficiency level in English was determined by the English institute as upper-intermediate based on proficiency tests administered by the institute. The professional writer is a female native speaker of English and Social Media Editor at *E! Online*. It is noteworthy that the intent is not to compare one writer to the other. The objective is to conduct a textual analysis comparing their writing samples with the intent to show the efficacy of Halliday’s (1973, 1985) textual metafunction in terms of L2 writing production and evaluation.

#### *Procedures*

Two movie reviews were analyzed and compared in terms of *theme and rheme* and *cohesive resources*. The ELL’s text was provided by a Brazilian English Institute located in a mid-western state of Brazil under the student and parents’ consent. It contains the teacher’s feedback to the student. The professional writer’s review was selected from a website of movie reviews (*E! Online*).

#### *Analysis*

Cohesive ties and thematic progression were used to code and analyze the data given that Halliday (1973, 1985) suggests that these two aspects be taken into account. The purpose of the comparative analysis is twofold: first, it aims at verifying the frequency and efficacy of the use of the grammatical and lexical resources suggested by Halliday as an attempt to answer research questions 2 and 3. Second, the purpose is to illustrate ways that show differences between a learner and an “expert” writer in English with regards to the textual resources that they use, and to suggest that even though this study is focusing on just two texts, the hope is that the analysis shows how this focus can help teachers approach students’ texts with a discourse-based rather than a sentence-based perspective. It is noteworthy that the researchers are not trying to make generalizations about the data, but use the data to show what is possible through this type of approach.

The rationale that underlies the comparison of a student’s and a professional writer’s text lies in the fact that the researchers need a parameter for comparison. This choice does NOT intend to indicate that this upper-intermediate student should be expected to write on the same standard as the professional writer at this point of her learning process. It should be understood that to become a professional writer one would need to consider various other aspects of writing that are not addressed in this paper because they go beyond the scope of this project.

## Results and discussion

The results of the comparative analysis conducted in this study will be presented as follows. First, the analysis of theme and rheme of both texts will be discussed. Arrows will be provided to help the reader visualize the differences, and instances of critical parts will be discussed thoroughly. Then, the research question 2 will be addressed. As mentioned elsewhere, differences in the use of cohesive devices including their frequency and correct use in the texts were also analyzed; however, the findings will be addressed in a future paper.

### *Theme and rheme*

The first impression of the student's writing could mislead the teacher's assessment if she concentrated only on sentence-level errors. This is because the student's sentence errors most of the time do not seem to disrupt her communication. The main purpose of this comparative analysis is to offer a deeper basis for assessment as an attempt to minimize these misleading writing assessments as well as wrong judgments of learners' texts that are sometimes based on intuition alone.

Firstly, a comparative analysis between the thematic progression of the students' and the professional writer's movie review can be visualized through the arrows between theme and rheme. Even though the complete text of each writer was analyzed, only the third paragraph analysis is displayed in this article.

The difference between the student's and the professional's text is more evident in their third paragraphs. The thematic progression shows that while the professional writer recurs to the first rheme (their relationship) throughout the paragraph several times, the student introduces a number of new messages (rhemes)

Figure 4. Thematic progression of student's third paragraph

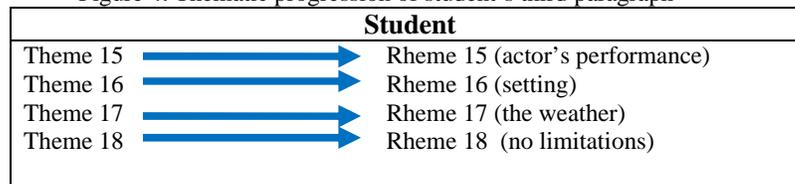


Table 7: Student's third paragraph

	Textual	Topical Theme		Rheme
	<b>Theme</b>			
<b>15</b>		The good perform of Robert Pattinson(the vampire Edward) and Kristen Steward (Bella)	<b>15</b>	are good points of the movie
<b>16</b>		The setting of the movie	<b>16</b>	is well-done
<b>17</b>	And	the cold and the rainy weather	<b>17</b>	became strong characteristics of the film
<b>18</b>	Besides of	having spent a milion dollars on the movie, a low-budget film, it	<b>18</b>	hadn't any perception limitations

Figure 4 and Table 7 show that the student did not connect old and new information in this paragraph. Four different topics are pointed out: the actors' performance, the movie setting, the weather in the movie, and the film budget. Neither the rhemes (new information) nor the themes (old information) are brought up in the subsequent clauses; this fact can be visualized by the lack of either linear or constant arrow patterns. This is evidence that new informations not developed in the paragraph. That is, there is not supporting details to elaborate these topics.

On the other hand, the professional's third paragraph is displayed very differently. Figure 5 and Table 8 show the writer's organization.

Figure 5.

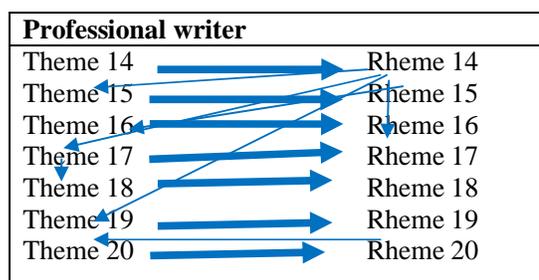


Table 8. Professional's third paragraph

	Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		Rheme
14			They	14	spend much of the movie toying with each other, trying to figure out how this whole vampire-human thing could work;
15		most of the time	that means that he	15	's saving her life
16	And		She	16	's bugging him with questions
17			Everything's fine until a group of heathen vampires who	17	Still prefer human blood(they don't even wear shoes, they're so uncultured!) crash the party.
18	And		One	18	decides to make Bella his prey.
19			This	19	all goes down under a rainy, cloudy sky in Forks, Washington,
20	That			20	perfectly reflects the characters' moodiness.

The thematic progression visualized in Figure 5 shows a split-theme pattern along with constant and linear theme recurrence. This indicates that the professional writer connects new information (rhemes) with subsequent clauses and creates texture (coherence) in her paragraph. Table 8 provides more details about the writer's choices of organization. The split-theme type occurs between rheme 14 and themes 15 and 17. This is because rheme 14 presents more than one piece of new information. It mentions that the couple "toy with each other", "try to figure out their relationship", and introduces their relationship as a "vampire-human thing". These rhemes are taken up in subsequent themes and rhemes. For instance, "figuring out their relationship" can be related to theme 15 when "that" suggests that one way of figuring out their relationship includes Edward saving Bella's life. The "human-vampire thing" seems to relate to "everything" in theme 17 as this word refers to their relationship. Finally, the "toying with each other" rheme is brought up in rheme 17 when the writer mentions that other vampires "crash the party"; by party she means their happy relationship. One example of constant-theme pattern occurs between themes 17 and 18 where "vampires" (theme 7) is taken up as "one" (theme 18). Finally, the paragraph organization shows two examples of linear-theme patterns; one occurs between rheme 18 and theme 19 where "this" (theme 19) seems to refer to the vampires' choice of having Bella as their prey (rheme 18); the other occurs between rheme 19 and theme 20 where Washington (in rheme 19) is taken up as "that" (in textual theme 20).

Therefore, the thematic progression analysis of this paragraph helps visualize the extent to which the old and new information introduced by the professional writer flows within the text and gives a unit of texture to the paragraph. In comparison to the student's third paragraph, we can notice that the latter needs a lot of work. For example, the student would have created a unit of texture had she elaborated clauses that would support all the new information

(rhemes) that she pointed out. Had the teacher been aware of this thematic progression framework, she could have indicated these gaps in her student's writing using thematic progression as a visual aid.

#### *Research Questions*

The findings that emerged from the analysis were addressed and a thorough discussion was presented in the midst of the findings. Still, research question 2 needs to be explicitly addressed.

The second research question proposed to investigate differences that a textual analysis can offer to language teachers in terms of understanding an ELL's writer difficulties in conveying the intended message. The textual analysis provided in this study is being proposed as a tool to enhance teachers' feedback on L2 writings. This is because the results of the textual analysis, the thematic progression in particular, show evidence that language teachers can visualize students' texts organization and focus on their cohesion and coherence rather than placing too much emphasis on students' grammar-based errors. Therefore, the comparative analysis conducted in this study may help teachers in a number of ways. First, it helps teachers visualize students' text organization and tackle more problematic areas. For instance, while identifying the themes and rhemes in the student's text, the analysis showed that the student did not refer to previous themes often enough to support and elaborate her "new" ideas. Thus, in this specific case, the theme and rheme distinction would have helped this teacher show the student the extent to which her new ideas needed to be elaborated.

Second, the proposed textual analysis helps teachers to avoid a nonproductive focus on sentence-level errors and shifts their attention to learners' strengths rather than to their limitations. It is true that cohesion is not the only tool to promote coherence (Halliday, 1973); however, it is also true that it is one important textual resource tool. Hence, the textual analysis in this paper has the potential to make a huge difference in teachers' perception of students' strengths and limitations when it comes to written production. Finally, Halliday's framework encourages teachers to assess students' writing from a discourse-level perspective. These textual analyses may be food for thought to those language teachers who still choose to focus on word-, phrase-, or sentence-level issues when providing L2 writing feedback. By focusing on the learner's text (discourse) rather than on their sentences, language teachers may pay less attention to the learners' errors and help them with textual development instead.

## **Conclusion**

### *Limitations and future research*

One limitation of this study regards generalizability. The result of a comparative analysis between one student's text and one professional writer's text cannot be generalized to different contexts. There are many other variables that could influence the results, such as genre, the gender of participants, the number of participants, and so on. Had this study been conducted with larger data samples, different results would probably emerge. However, it is important to note that the objective of this study is not to generalize findings but to provide a sound rationale for the suggestion of an alternative approach to L2 writing assessment at the Brazilian institute under investigation in this study. Future studies could, however, involve a larger amount of data, which could yield results that may be generalizable to extended contexts.

Another limitation of the current study is the fact that no cross-cultural reflection was addressed. It would be interesting to learn about the student's native language textual resources to understand her lexical and structural choices. A cross-cultural analysis of learners' texts is also recommended by scholars. Kaplan (1966) was a pioneer in comparing cross-cultural discourses. Therefore, such textual analysis can certainly reveal interesting and relevant results once it is conducted with nonnative speakers from different native language backgrounds.

In conclusion, the current study compared and analyzed two reviews of the same movie written by authors of different ages, different language backgrounds, and different professional experiences. Even though the differences between the writers were numerous, the textual analysis conducted in this study may offer relevant insights to language educators in terms of writing instruction and evaluation. The results show that emphasizing the application of the principles of textual analysis may serve three purposes. First, it can help teachers provide more

productive and effective feedback on students' written production. Second, it allows teachers to visualize student's text organization. Last but not least, it may encourage teachers to evaluate student's writing from a discourse-level perspective rather than from a sentence-level perspective alone.

The results yielded in this study may lead language teachers to re-think their teaching approach if they still have discrete grammar as the protagonist in their lesson plans. However, as McCarthy (1991) points out:

Teachers will make up their own minds as to whether their methods and techniques need rethinking in the light of what discourse analysts say, but, as with all new trends in linguistic theory and description, it is important that discourse analysis be subjected not only to scrutiny of applied linguistics but also to the testing grounds of practical materials and classroom activities. (p.171)

Therefore, it is the teachers who are the best suited to make appropriate choices for their teaching context.

## References

- ALONSO, I. *Improving text flow in ESL learner compositions*. The Internet TESL Journal IX,v.2. 2003. Retrieved October 20, 2010, from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Alonso-ImprovingFlow.html>.
- BLAGOEVA, R. *Demonstrative reference as a cohesive device in advanced learner writing: a corpus-based study*. Language and computers, advances in corpus linguistics. Paper from the 23rd International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora (ICAME 23). Göteborg 22-26 May 2002. Rodopi.
- BLOOR, T., & BLOOR, M. *The functional analysis of English: A Hallidayan approach*, 2<sup>o</sup> Ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- CHANDLER, J. *The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing*. Journal of Second Language Writing, v. 12, p. 267-296, 2003.
- CHANDLER, J. *A response to Truscott*. Journal of Second Language Writing, V. 13, P. 345-348, 2004.
- CHEN, C. *Cohesion: A study of personal pronouns in EFL writings*. Journal of Foreign Language Instruction, 2002.
- EGGINS, S. *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. London: Pinter Publishers Ltd.; 1994.
- ELLIS, R., SHEEN, Y., MURAKAMI, M., & TAKASHIMA, H. *The effects of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback in an English as a foreign language context*. System, 36, 353-371, 2008.
- FERRIS, D. *The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott (1996)*. Journal of Second Language Writing, 8, 1-11, 1999.
- FERRIS, D. Teaching writing for academic purposes. In: FLOWERDEW, J.; PEACOCK, M.; Eds.; *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes*, pp. 298-314., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

FERRIS, D. *The “grammar correction” debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (And what do we do in the meantime...?)*. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, v. 13, p. 49-62, 2004.

FERRIS, D.; ROBERTS, B. *Error feedback in L2 writing classes*. How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, v. 10, p. 16-184, 2001.

FRIES, P. H. The flow of information in a written text. In: FRIES, P. H.; CUMMINGS, M.; LOCKWOOD, D.; SPRUIDELL, W.; Eds.; *Relations and functions within and across language*, pp. 117-155, London: Continuum, 2002.

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. *Explorations in the functions of language*. London: Longman, 1973.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K. *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold, 1985.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K.; HASAN, R. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman, 1976.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K.; MATTHIESSEN, M. *An introduction to functional grammar*, 3<sup>o</sup> ed.; London: Hodder Arnold, 2004.

KAPLAN, R. *Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education*. *Language Learning* v.16, n.1, p. 1-20, 1966.

LOW, M. (2010). Teachers and texts: Judging what English language learners know from what they say. In: PARAN, A.; SERCU, L. Eds.; *Testing the untestable in foreign language education*, pp. 243-258, Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2010.

LIU, D. *Writing cohesion: using content lexical ties in ESOL*. *English Teaching Forum*, v.38, n.1, p. 28-25, 2000.

MACKEY, A., & GASS, S. *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2005.

MCCARTHY, M. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

MOHAN, B., & SLATER, T. The evaluation of causal discourse and language as a resource for meaning. In: FOLEY, J. A.; Ed., *Language, education, and discourse: Functional approaches*, pp. 255-269. New York, NY: Continuum, 2004.

MOHAN, B., LEUNG, C., & SLATER, T. Assessing language and content: A functional perspective. In: PARAN, A.; SERCU, L.; Eds., *Testing the untestable in foreign language education*, pp. 219-242. Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2010.

PALTRIDGE, B. *Discourse analysis*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2006.

POLAT, N. *Matches in beliefs between teachers and students, and success in L2 attainment: The Georgian example*. *Foreign Language Annals*, v.42, n. 2, p. 229-249, 2009.

TRUSCOTT, J. The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, v.46, n.2, p. 327-369, 1996.

TRUSCOTT, J. *The case for “the case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Ferris*. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, v.8, n.2, p. 111-122, 1999.

TRUSCOTT, J. *Evidence and conjecture on the effects of correction: A response to Chandler*. Journal of Second Language Writing, v. 13, p. 337-343, 2004.

TRUSCOTT, J. *The effect of error correction on students' ability to write accurately*. Journal of Second Language Writing, v.16, p.255-272, 2007.

TRUSCOTT, J. *Arguments and appearances: A response to Chandler*. Journal of Second Language Writing, v.18, p. 59-60, 2009.

WANG, L. *Theme and rheme in the thematic organization of text: Implications for teaching academic writing*. The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly, v.9 n.1 p.1164-76, 2007.