

## **The whole is a lot more than the sum of its components – how beneficially coreference may work in understanding a text**

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My presentation is a pre-study to a book on ECL language exam of Hungarian as a foreign language (*How to pass the ECL exam of Hungarian as a foreign language?*). In this book an analysis of correct and wrong answers given by examinees in former tests is aimed at helping would-be candidates to pass the ECL exam (Wéber 2012) successfully (Szabó-Papp 2013).

In my presentations I will focus on reading comprehension tasks of level B2 in which examinees' understanding of the text is assessed by their brief answers to the subsequent questions on the text provided.

Examinees share the belief that understanding a text, its accessibility heavily depends upon their background knowledge about the theme and the text's vocabulary in terms of familiarity. However, far less is spoken about that the informational network of a text, the way the pieces of information are related might be itself a clue to explore the meaning of unknown items. That is, it is the text – and not necessarily a dictionary – that often may help to a limited extent in disclosing the contextually applicable meanings. I would like to show that the recognition of cohesive devices – both grammatical and lexical – might enable a good reader to handle unfamiliar vocabulary items and understand the text more thoroughly.

A good text is never a random string of disparate sentences but a progress to describe or tell about a topic (Williams 1983, Tolcsvai Nagy 2001). The author in order to elaborate the topic in detail and avoid the repetition of lexical items uses a variety of linguistic forms many of which are equivalent in their meaning or have the same referent (Halliday-Hasan 1976):

- repetitions (identical lexical items) (H. Varga 2008)
- anaphoric or cataphoric pronouns as substitutes
- synonyms

- superordinate or general nouns
- verbal or clausal substitutions
- personal suffixes referring to subject and objects
- elliptical clauses

While these devices built up intra-sentence and inter-sentence cohesive ties between the information pieces, they are also might serve for the reader of Hungarian as recurring, stable and thus helpful indicators about what is said. As opposed to them conjunctions and discourse markers might be rather conceived as clues, prompts to the procedure along which the author builds up and arranges the informational network within the text. They rather contribute to the linear progress of the content that is being elaborated.

We have sparse knowledge about what learners know about these cohesive devices but we may find transparent evidences in wrong answers how coreference otherwise crucial in the text is overlooked mistakenly by the learner leading him/her to misconceptions.

In my presentation I will cite concrete samples and their brief analysis from real answers from real tests to support the claim that in the reading comprehension task types the proper identification or the improper the skipping of coreferent text elements might result in the learner's giving correct or wrong answers respectively.

[www.ecl.hu](http://www.ecl.hu)

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