

Referential cohesion and textual variation in Bunun

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1. Abstract

This talk discusses the relationship between referential cohesion and text genres in Bunun, an Austronesian language of Taiwan.

The concept of cohesion relates to the non-structural relationships expressed in a stretch of discourse that help to establish its propositional integrity as a text. Halliday & Hasan (1976) primarily saw it as a semantic phenomenon expressed through a collection of linguistic mechanisms that establish chains of meaningful relationships between text elements of various size and are not bound by clause boundaries. They distinguish reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesive relations. Martin (2001:35) defines cohesion as “the set of resources for constructing relations in discourse which transcend grammatical structure” and considers it a text-structuring device. We will here concentrate on the subset of cohesive relationships pertaining to referential expressions, which De Busser (under review) calls referential cohesion.

Since cohesion is involved in creating textual structure, it has been generally assumed that variations in cohesive strategies across texts correlate to textual variations, such as genre, register, and individual or collective style. This talk is a preliminary comparison of the cohesive structure of Bunun oral storytelling and Biblical narrative. Discussing two short text segments, we will investigate the similarities and differences between referential elements, cohesive relationships, and cohesive density.

References

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