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USING COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT THEORY  
TO SELECT TEXTBOOKS TO AID THE  
TEACHING OF COHERENT WRITING  
TO EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS  
OF ENGLISH

AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
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The purpose of this library study was to describe how certain aspects of cognitive development theory might be used to select textbooks to aid the teaching of expository coherence skills to grade eight students of average or above average ability.

The researcher stipulated definitions of teaching and expository coherence. The teacher, the communicator of fundamental knowledge, knows the structure of his subject and the cognitive level of his student, and he can match the subject and the student so that the student progresses. This matching is an art. Expository coherence was an intellectual form of writing achieved through logical order, transitional words and phrases.

The researcher further stipulated a graded situation wherein coherent exposition is taught on an individual basis. This would mean that the student would use a teacher-selected textbook independently.

Using selected works by Piaget and Inhelder, the investigator drew a typical cognitive model of the eighth grade student. This model was one of intense and individual transition between the concrete operations subperiod and the formal operations period. This model was complemented by an exploitation of the linguistic distinction between syntax and semantics so that the writing process of coherence would

have concrete aspects (the syntactical level) and formal aspects (the semantic level).

Then, concentrating upon what a textbook said directly to a student without teacher mediation, the researcher contrasted three classes of textbooks. This was done as an example of how cognitive development theory might be used to select textbooks. The three classes of textbooks contrasted were: Those suited for learners in the formal period, those suited for learners in the concrete subperiod, and those that were intra-sequential; that is, tended to progress from concrete aspects to the formal aspects of a given coherence device. The classifications were distinct, but not absolute.

The writer concluded that a textbook's approach to coherent exposition cannot be predicted on the basis of its grammatical explanations of the sentence or on the basis of whether or not it uses reading exercises to precede actual writing by the student. Further, to expect a textbook to be fully suited to a student in the concrete operations subperiod is unfair; teacher mediation is very necessary. Finally, the matter of revision seemed to become clearer. Although the revision (syntactically and semantically) of exercise sentences was a key factor when choosing a textbook through the use of cognitive development theory, a student's revision of his own papers was more important. For, his paper is his level and cognitive needs. Using the student's own writing, the teacher can map revision schemes or

pre-writing exercises that are as concrete or formal as need be. This can generate a homemade textbook, or it can guide the teacher's selection of a textbook.