

COHESION STRATEGIES AND GENRE IN EXPOSITORY PROSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE WRITING OF CHILDREN OF ETHNOLINGUISTIC CULTURAL GROUPS¹

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In most societies, the ability to write has become a significant criterion in judging one's "success" or "failure" in becoming literate. This paper focuses on the classroom literacy practice called "writing," inasmuch as learning to write in a specific kind of way is part and parcel of children's literacy learning expectations. It is based on a study which examined cohesion patterns found in expository writing samples of sixth grade urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream culture children attending a middle school in a large midwestern urban school system in the United States. This paper challenges the prevailing notion that ethnicity, social class and language variation influence the quality of writing these children produce.

1. Introduction

A very "mainstream culture" literacy practice in the United States that has become a significant research focus among educators is "writing." This is because communicative activities as social activities go beyond oral interaction; they also exist as written texts as well. However, there are clearly key distinctions between speaking and writing (Akinlaso 1985; Britton 1970; Dyson 1991; Halliday and Hasan 1985; Kantor and Rubin 1981), each having its own set of conventions (Smith 1982). We shift dimensions when we shift from the oral medium to the graphic medium. This can make the task of writing a text in an appropriate register quite demanding. A statement released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1986: 9) claims that American students suffer from serious writing problems. To quote:

In general, American students can write at a minimum level, but cannot express themselves well enough to ensure that their writing will accomplish the intended purpose.

Further, the report states that students are weak in writing specific forms that require argumentative support or persuasive style. This is particularly true of fourth-, eighth-, and eleventh-graders (Applebee et al. 1986). The report might not be surprising since writing is often difficult for any writer but perhaps especially so

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for children since it involves conscious linguistic-cognitive behaviors (Durst 1989; Flower 1989). A writer shapes, structures, refines, and evaluates thought. In the process of composing, the writer plans and rehearses, organizes and structures according to various formal conventions (Ackerman 1991; Dipardo 1990; Higgins 1990; McGinley 1992; Spivey 1991).

Writing difficulty can become even more exacerbated among the children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups, those such as urban African Americans and urban Appalachians who are considered to be nonmainstream minorities because they must not only be able to negotiate oral conventions within a mainstream context, but the written conventions as well. Further, it is possible that children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups suffer from writing difficulty because their writing literacy experience in the classroom does not allow for a smooth transition from their "oral discourse schemata" to the appropriate "written discourse schemata" (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1982: 63). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982: 63) posit that young children fall back on their oral discourse schemata for any writing task. This was demonstrated in Cronnell's (1991) study which found that a significant portion of third and sixth grade urban African American children's writing errors could be attributed to Black English influence, either directly or through hypercorrections. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) further contend that young children experience more difficulty with the more sophisticated writing tasks because they have not yet developed their appropriate written discourse schemata. Usually, they find persuasive or argumentative forms of writing more difficult to produce than the narrative or descriptive forms (Chall and Jacobs 1983; Kameenui and Carnine 1982; Prater and Padia 1983), particularly (as in the case of urban Appalachian children) if these forms of presentation are not within their oral literacy experience. Moreover, children's inability to learn to write or to write appropriately on a given writing task is partly blamed on weak and/or inadequate writing instruction. Kantor (1987) cites Moffett's (1985) claim that despite the proliferation of research and theory on the process of developmental writing, writing instruction is still wanting. Moffett (1985: 174) suggests that perhaps literacy scholars have not sufficiently taken into account "the social and cultural contexts in which literacy instruction can take place" and that they have not worked enough in building a "pluralistic curriculum" that will include the varied experiences of ethnolinguistic cultural groups. As a consequence, among these ethnolinguistic cultural group children, their writing proficiency level can be very low inasmuch as they are not able to produce the kinds of writing that are expected of them within their literacy learning context (Bryan 1989).

In this section, I have just described the difficult demands writing present to children, in general, and to children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups such as the urban African Americans and urban Appalachians, in particular. I have also offered some explanations as to why these ethnolinguistic cultural group children may experience more difficulty in writing than other children.

To recapitulate, research studies have suggested that children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups such as the urban African Americans and urban Appalachians experience difficulty in writing for reasons that may directly relate to their ethnicity, social class, and/or language. Further, among the factors that have been cited influencing these children's ability to write are the mismatch between their oral and written discourse schemata, underdeveloped written discourse

schemata, weak and/or inadequate literacy support, and lack and/or absence of meaningful and relevant social and cultural contexts for literacy learning. Clearly, these considerations have tremendous implications to the plight of our ethnolinguistic cultural group children as they participate in various writing processes within their mainstream oriented classrooms. If writing literacy practices tend to fit better with the experiences and expectations of children from mainstream backgrounds, it would seem a logical consequence for children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups to find themselves at a disadvantage as they are immersed in these practices adopted in the classrooms. On the other hand, it would also seem logical to propose that as these children progress through their elementary grades, consistently immersed in similar literacy learning environment, and exposed to adequate writing instruction as their mainstream counterparts, they, too, can develop a wealth of knowledge about written language and the relationships among language processes that will allow them to engage in more sophisticated writing activities such as expository writing. This proposition suggests that the notion of ethnicity, social class, and/or language as deterrent to these children's successful writing can be challenged. It also suggests the importance of understanding the extent to which children of ethnolinguistic cultural groups such as the urban African Americans and urban Appalachians have an ability and flexibility to switch registers in their writing tasks. Viewed from the literacy perspective, this knowledge will have significant pedagogical implications for these nonmainstream children.

2. The study

In this paper, I will argue that children, regardless of their ethnicity, social class, and/or language variation, can learn to write the kinds of writing expected of them as they advance in their academic grades. I will further argue that, given the same frequency and quality of exposure to writing literacy experiences and instruction within classroom contexts, our ethnolinguistic cultural group children's writing strategies can be comparable to the writing strategies of our mainstream culture children. To develop these arguments, I will present a study that was designed to investigate sixth grade urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream culture children's ability to use cohesive relations that would reflect their knowledge of text structures identifiable with the expository genre.

In this study, cohesion analysis (Halliday and Hasan 1976) was used to identify these children's use of cohesive devices to tie their text's ideas together into a meaningful whole. Similarities and dissimilarities in the use of cohesive relations were then established across all ethnolinguistic cultural groups, and their mainstream counterparts. Further, measures of density of cohesive ties and cohesion index were applied.

Hasan (1984) suggests that by using cohesion analysis, the system of cohesive ties which operate within the texts can be established. These ties serve as linguistic linking mechanisms, and build up text unity by relating elements within the text to each other. Thus, cohesion, applied as a text analysis system, can offer an explanation of why and how a text means what it does, and how and why it is written in a certain way.

2.1. Background

2.1.1. *The ethnolinguistic cultural groups*

Throughout this paper, the term *ethnolinguistic cultural groups* will be used to refer to the urban African Americans and urban Appalachians. It must be noted that African Americans and Appalachians are members of the subordinated minority groups in the United States. According to Ogbu (1990), African Americans are an example of a subordinated group because they were originally brought to the United States as slaves, relegated to menial positions, and denied true assimilation into the mainstream culture. The African Americans have always borne the burden of both class and racial stratification (Haskins 1980). As a result, they have developed cultural ways of coping, perceiving, and feeling, to oppose the cultural frame of reference of the mainstream culture (Ogbu 1990; Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Over many generations, these survival strategies have become institutionalized and integrated into their black culture, and have contributed to shaping the norms, values, and competencies of black Americans (Ogbu 1990). A significant part of this evolution is their use of "Black English" that demonstrates the most vivid and crucial key to their identity.

The Appalachians, while to many an unlikely subordinated culture (because they are white), constitute an "invisible" yet substantial minority group in at least 30 major eastern, northern, midwestern and southern cities in the United States (McCoy *et al.* 1981). Cunningham (1987) contends that this group continues to struggle for a valid identity, resulting in their not being themselves but instead a negative version of the dominant group. This search for identity is complicated by a clash in the "structures of meaning" between their mountain culture and the dominant American culture. Just like "Black English," Appalachian English (AE) or South Midland is considered a nonmainstream variety of English but one which is "a legitimate, systematic variety of American English" (Wolfram and Christian 1976).

The urban African Americans and urban Appalachians are considered ethnolinguistic cultural groups in the United States because they belong to the indigenous ethnic composition of American culture, although they are linguistically, culturally and socially different in many ways from the mainstream majority.

2.1.2. *Cohesion and cohesion analysis as conceptual framework*

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) concepts of cohesion and cohesion analysis have been offered as a conceptual and analytic framework in looking at the "internal unity of texts" (Chapman and Louw 1986). The concept of cohesion is a semantic one which refers to relations of meaning which exist within a text, and that define it as a text. Cohesion exists when the interpretation of one textual element depends upon the interpretation of another element within the same text. The linkages which establish cohesion are called cohesive ties to include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion; and require the presence of both a referring item and its referent (Moe 1979). The types of cohesion can be recognized in the lexicogrammatical system. **Reference** is a semantic relation involving continuity of identity; that is, an item that has been introduced into the text serves as a referent

for a personal pronoun, demonstrative, or comparative adverb or adjective. **Substitution and ellipsis** are both grammatical relations rather than meaning. A substitute is a replacement of a linguistic element in a text instead of a repetition of a particular item; it carries the same structural function as that for which it substitutes. On the other hand, ellipsis is a form of substitution in which the item is replaced by nothing. Halliday and Hasan (1976) defines it as substitution by zero in which the structural element is left out and must be recovered from a different part of the text. **Conjunction** is a type of semantic relation which allows parts of the text to be systematically connected to one another in meaning. Some common conjunctive elements include the *and* relation, *but*, *yet*, *so* and *then*. **Lexical cohesion** is achieved by the selection of vocabulary. It involves identity of reference which can take place through an exact repetition of an identical lexical item; it can also be any kind of reiteration - synonym, superordinate, or general word. Referential relation is not necessary for a lexical item to be systematically related to a different item within a text. A semantic relationship is established between lexical items when these vocabulary items share the same lexical environment, to occur in collocation with one another.

The central hypothesis is that cohesion is an abstract feature of a text which, when perceived, enables the reader to integrate parts of the text so as to "remake" the author's meaning or the writer to produce his or her own text in a "coherent" manner. By using cohesion analysis the linguistic means whereby a text is enable to function as a single meaningful unit can be investigated. Thus, textual cohesion is also offered as a framework for looking at the notion of coherence - or at a part of what goes into coherence (DeStefano 1990).

Research on writing has suggested a direct correlation between appropriate use of cohesive devices and writing quality (e.g., Cox and Tinzmann 1987; Hasan 1984; Pappas 1985); also, that cohesive devices vary according to genre (e.g., Cox *et al.* 1990 and 1991; Crowhurst 1987; Martin and Peters 1985); style (e.g., Gutwinski 1976); content domain (e.g., Binkley 1983); and voice (e.g., Cox *et al.* 1991; Neuner 1987).

Other significant points established by research on cohesion include: (1) children even at an early age, i.e., at least five years old, use all 5 groups of cohesive ties in their oral language production (e.g., Garber 1980); (2) children further develop cohesion strategies as they mature (e.g., King and Rentel 1979; Rutter and Raban 1982); and (3) children apply their knowledge of cohesion strategies in comprehending text (e.g., Chapman 1981).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggest that cohesive devices appear to be critical in determining the clarity, appropriateness, and comprehensibility in writing.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Data Collection

The major institutional setting for this study was a middle school in a large midwestern urban school system. The school has a predominantly African American and Appalachian culture student population. From two sixth grade classes (a total of 45 students) with the same teacher, 4 males and 4 females for each group (a total

of 8 children per group) of the urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream culture children were selected, for a total of 24 children who satisfied the following criteria: (1) The children were in grade 6 at the start of the study. (2) They were classed as somewhat below-average or somewhat above-average students, as measured by records of their academic performance, standardized tests, and teachers' recommendations. (3) They were eligible for the free-lunch program at school (except for the mainstream culture children), based on the family's per capita income. (4) Their ethnolinguistic cultural group membership had been verified via sentence repetition tasks for the South Midland dialect (commonly known as Appalachian English) (developed by Rentel) and Black English (developed by DeStefano) (cf DeStefano *et al.* 1982), except for the mainstream participants who used no "marked" dialect forms in their speech.

Sixth graders were chosen because they can provide some measure of the structural knowledge students possess at the point just prior to entering a junior high curriculum that focuses almost exclusively on expository materials. Their writing samples can serve as a rich source for identifying the distinct characteristics and developmental changes in children's expository writing. Further, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1986) reports that the difference in levels of literacy as defined by grade level norms between middle- and working-class children becomes more glaring at a higher level (e.g., grade 4-up) when more complex skills in reading and writing become crucial to school success.

Children from low-income families were also focused upon because, as a group, children from these families tend not to achieve as well in reading and writing as their mainstream counterparts (Baugh 1987; Gee 1986). Unfortunately, class and caste tend to be synonymous. In the United States, ethnolinguistic cultural group families are also identified with the low-income families.

After the first list of potential participants were drawn, the teacher was consulted for further information on the children's background. She was also asked to nominate children whom she perceived as either "successful" or "not successful" in literacy learning. The teacher was also asked for her suggestions regarding the choices made to ensure that all the participants selected were staying for the completion of the academic year. Two children - a boy and a girl - were selected from each of the two ends of the "success in literacy learning" continuum for each of the two ethnolinguistic cultural groups and from the mainstream group. Identifying the similarities and dissimilarities in the use of cohesive relations between children perceived as academically "successful" or "not successful" can provide some insight into validating the use of children's ability to choose appropriate cohesion devices as a measure of their ability to write. Gender was also considered in the selection of participants to ensure that it does not serve as an influencing factor in the results of the study. The remainder of the children in the two sixth grade classes served as a backdrop for a descriptive analysis of the kinds of literacy learning experiences participants were involved in (e.g., teacher's prewriting activities, peer evaluation of students' writing, group sharing/report) that may have had direct or indirect bearing on their expository writing performance. Table 1 shows the distribution by culture group, gender, and perceived academic status of the 24 sixth grade children who participated in this study.

Table 1.
DISTRIBUTION OF 24 SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN PARTICIPATING
IN THE STUDY, BY CULTURE GROUP, GENDER,
AND PERCEIVED ACADEMIC STATUS

Participating GROUPS	n	Distribution by					
		Gender		Perceived Academic Status			
		Male	Female	Successful		Unsuccessful	
				Male	Female	Male	Female
Urban African American	8	4	4	1	1	1	1
Urban Appalachian	8	4	4	1	1	1	1
MainStream Group	8	4	4	1	1	1	1

Samples of participants' expository writing were collected with the help of the classroom teacher. A total of four written products - two written products at the beginning and two written products at the end of the academic year - were collected from each of the 24 participants, for a total of 96 writing samples. Preference was given to written materials of comparable word lengths on the same topic to ensure that the results of the analysis of children's writing are not influenced by the differences in the lengths of these essays. Essays within the 100-300 word length, and no less than 50-word length were strongly considered to allow a more in-depth analysis of each child's use of cohesive devices in his[her] writing.

2.2.2. Data analysis

The first step in scoring was to parse texts into modified T-units (smallest terminal unit in a sentence: Hunt 1965), with dependent clauses attached (Cox and Tinzmann 1987). To determine the types of cohesive relations present in the children's expository writing, each T-unit within the texts was coded using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) coding scheme to determine instances of the following factors: (1) type of cohesive relations - **reference** (pronominal, demonstrative, comparative), **substitution** and **ellipsis** (nominal, verbal, clausal), **conjunction** (additive, adversative, causal, temporal), and **lexical cohesion** - reiteration (repetition, synonym/near synonym, superordinate, general word) and collocation; (2) number of ties per T-unit; (3) cohesive item within the text; and (4) presupposed item. After the coding, a descriptive data on the percentages of references ties, substitution ties, elliptical ties, conjunctive ties, and lexical ties were collected from each expository

text.

To examine the density of cohesive ties within the expository text, the total number of ties and total number of words were collected from each text. Then, cohesive density was computed by dividing the number of words by the number of ties (Witte 1980).

Descriptive data concerning the percentage of occurrence among cohesive relations within the same category were also computed for each text using the (1) total number of occurrences for each category, and (2) number of occurrences for each subcategory. Results were obtained by dividing the number of occurrences of a cohesive item for each subcategory by the total number of occurrence of cohesive items for each category. Coreferential cohesive devices (i.e., pronouns, comparatives, and ellipsis) were coded either as (1) unambiguously used devices or appropriate cohesive tie set (both members were clearly referenced within the text so that an adult reader can easily retrieve the meaning), or (2) ambiguously or unclearly referenced devices (one member was so distant from the other that the reader finds difficulty in retrieving meaning even as a conscious task, or the meaning is not explicit in the writing). The coreferential cohesion scores for each text were transformed to indices by dividing the total number of coreferential cohesion devices by the total number of T-units in each text. This provided a Cohesion Index (proportion of unambiguous use of cohesion devices) and an Inappropriate Cohesion Index (proportion of ambiguous or poorly referenced cohesion devices for which meaning was difficult to retrieve (Cox, Shanahan and Tinzmann 1991).

To determine whether ethnolinguistic cultural group membership, gender, and/or perceived academic status would yield different mean proportion of occurrence for each type of cohesion devices, various repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed.

2.2.3. Results

All the participating sixth grade urban African American and urban Appalachian children demonstrated a certain degree of familiarity with cohesion devices to allow them to be in "register" when writing an expository genre for a particular purpose. In most of their expository writing, such as on topics that required them to explain or to reason, the conjunctive causal *because* had a high frequency of occurrence within the text. In some instances, they demonstrated appropriate use of conjunction of comparison or contrast such as *on the other hand* or *instead* to emphasize ideas. Expository signals such as *I mean* and *for example*, *in other words*, as well as temporal sequential such as *first*, *second*, *then*, *next*, or *finally* to explain a procedure were also evident in their writing. These children made frequent use of a variety of lexical ties, particularly repetition, synonyms, near synonyms, superordinates, and collocation; general words, such as *those stuff* referring to anything or everything that has to do with *drugs - marijuana and cocaine and tobacco and cigarettes*, were very rarely used.

The results of this study did not show much significant difference in the similarities and dissimilarities in the use of cohesion devices between the two ethnolinguistic cultural group of urban African American and urban Appalachian children's expository writing. Moreover, there was not much significant difference

in the similarities and dissimilarities in the use of cohesion devices between these ethnolinguistic cultural group children's essays and the exposition of their mainstream counterparts. The expository writings of all these children showed practically the same rank order of frequency of occurrence of each major cohesion device. (See Table 2).

Table 2.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
OF COHESIVE TIES ACROSS EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES
OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN, BY ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS
(STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESIS)

ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS	n	Type of Cohesion			
		Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion
Urban Appalachian	8	0.1171 (0.0451)	0.0525 (0.0266)	0.0804 (0.0320)	0.2208 (0.0849)
Urban African American	8	0.1039 (0.0319)	0.0384 (0.0176)	0.0935 (0.0249)	0.2541 (0.0755)
Mainstream	8	0.1195 (0.0510)	0.0485 (0.0314)	0.0961 (0.0530)	0.2602 (0.0950)

The results of the study show that the most frequently used cohesive devices in all of the children's expository writing were lexical cohesion, particularly repetition, and reference and conjunction. Substitution and ellipsis were hardly ever used. However, the mainstream group children used more lexical cohesion in their expository texts (26.02%) than did the urban Appalachian (22.08%) and urban African American children (25.41%). Further, all subtypes of lexical cohesion which are forms of reiteration - repetition, synonym or near synonym, superordinate, or general word - occurred in all text samples, as shown in Table 3 below.

The following extracts from the children's expository writing demonstrate the use of reiteration (1-2):

- (1) Same identity: (hero, Dr. King, and the man = Martin Luther King, Jr.) *Martin Luther King, Jr.* was an American *hero*. He believed in having peace for everyone. We are free now partly because of what he did. He fought to bring Blacks and Whites together and when he did that we had more freedom and justice in this country. *Dr. King* emphasized freedom. He tried to tell us that we should not be prejudiced toward each other. *The man* wanted to make sure we all have the freedom to say what we feel and what we think is right.

Table 3.

MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
OF COHESIVE TIES = LEXICAL COHESION, ACROSS EXPOSITORY
WRITING SAMPLES OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN, BY ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS
(STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESIS)

ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS	n	Type of Cohesion: Lexical Cohesion				
		Reiteration			Collocation	
		Repetition	Superordinate	Synonym or Near Synonym	General Word	
Urban Appalachian	8	0.1361 (0.0560)	0.0540 (0.0354)	0.0159 (0.0141)	0.0092 (0.0147)	0.0056 (0.0119)
Urban African American	8	0.1434 (0.0507)	0.0583 (0.0337)	0.0332 (0.0244)	0.0176 (0.0188)	0.0015 (0.0085)
Mainstream	8	0.1461 (0.0578)	0.0585 (0.0368)	0.0278 (0.0228)	0.0145 (0.0250)	0.0133 (0.0293)

- (2) Opposites: (to vandalize - to preserve; peace and nonviolence - war; love - hate; nonviolence - violence; separate - together; racism, poverty, and prejudice - justice and opportunity)

- a. We should tell our friends not *to vandalize*. It is the "uncoolest" thing to do.
We should tell them instead *to preserve* what we have.
- b. He had a dream that the whole world unite and we all be as one. His message was for *peace and nonviolence*, not *war*. He wanted a day for *love*, not *hate*. A day for all races to join together.
- c. We don't have to drink from *separate* water fountains or play in *separate* parks. We are now free to live and learn *together*.
- d. Martin Luther King encouraged *nonviolence* and taught that *violence* was wrong. He wanted to wipe out *racism*, *poverty*, and *prejudice*. Instead, he wanted *justice and opportunity* for all people, whether you're black, white, yellow, or red. He believed that all races have to be free.

The use of repetition had the highest percentage of occurrence among all cohesive ties in children's texts. For example, the word *drug* was repeated nineteen times in an African American child's 176-word essay on drugs, and in a mainstream group child's 94-word essay on *freedom*, freedom was repeated thirteen times.

To illustrate, below (3) is an excerpt from an essay on vandalism by an African American child. The word *vandalism* is used at least once in every sentence, twice in the second sentence.

- (3) I can stop *vandalism* by telling my friends to stop vandalizing. *Vandalism* only hurts you and your state even when you think *vandalism* is fun. *Vandalism* wouldn't be fun if you come home and found your house destroyed. *Vandalism* hurts worse when you blame it on your friends and then they get mad at you.

Another example (4) is the following excerpt from an Appalachian child's essay on *freedom* that has the word *freedom* repeated in every sentence of the two paragraphs.

- (4) a. I have *freedom* to go where I want to go. I have *freedom* to read what I want to read. We should never forget the symbols of our *freedom*: The Statue of Liberty and the flag. When we talk about *freedom* we should never forget the Declaration of Independence which brought everybody to *freedom*. Now, people have *freedom* to own their houses and mow their lawn. People have *freedom* to vote for their own president.
- b. Martin Luther King fought for *freedom* - *freedom* for Blacks. Even when they bombed his home he still fought for *freedom*. He even was threatened to be put in jail but he still fought for *freedom*.

Table 4 shows that all written exposition contained examples of each of the three subtypes of reference ties - pronominal, demonstrative, and comparative.

Table 4.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
OF COHESIVE TIES = REFERENCE, ACROSS EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES
OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN, BY ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS
(STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESIS)

ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS	n	Type of Cohesion: Reference		
		Pronominal	Demonstrative	Comparative
Urban Appalachian	8	0.0350 (0.0301)	0.0546 (0.0269)	0.0275 (0.0196)
Urban African American	8	0.0237 (0.0229)	0.0564 (0.0275)	0.0238 (0.0208)
Mainstream	8	0.0369 (0.0308)	0.0586 (0.0139)	0.0241 (0.0253)

To illustrate, children's expository texts on the significance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have a Dream*, demonstrated appropriate use of pronominalization as in examples (5a-d) *he* and *his* referring to Martin Luther King, Jr.; *they* and *their* referring to Blacks, Whites, people; and *it* referring to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech. Their texts also provided evidence of use of demonstrative reference as in examples (5e-h) *the speech* = *a speech*, *the time* = *a time*, and *the dream* = *a dream*.

- (5) a. *Martin Luther King* fought for freedom - freedom for Blacks. Even when *they* bombed *his* home *he* still fought for freedom. *He* even was threatened to be put in jail but *he* still fought for freedom.
- b. In *Martin Luther King's* speech, *he* said *he* wanted all four of *his* little black kids to join hands with little white girls and boys and *his* dream came true. If *he* was alive today, *he* would be very, very happy.
- c. The message that Dr. King tried to send was that *Blacks* get *their* freedom just like the Whites.
- d. Martin Luther King will be remembered for his *speech*. *It* will stay in everyone's heart.
- e. Dr. King gave *a speech* about two months before he died. *The speech* was called "I Have a Dream."
- f. Martin Luther King had *a speech*. *The speech* said, "Life is to live, love is to love, and your heart is your dreams."
- g. Dr. King said there's *a time* to be free. And when *the time* comes Blacks and Whites no longer have to be separated.
- h. Martin Luther King, Jr. had *a dream*. He was killed after his "I Have a Dream" speech. He believed in peace and freedom. He gave very good reasons to be free in his speech. It will stay in everyone's heart. We all remember Martin Luther King, Jr., and we carry *the dream*.

Demonstrative reference had the highest percentage of occurrence in the mainstream group children's samples (.0586), followed by the urban African American children's texts (.0564), and finally, in the urban Appalachian children's exposition (.0269). Both the urban Appalachian and mainstream group children's expository writing had pronominal reference as the second highest percentage of occurrence. On the other hand, the urban African American children's text samples had comparative reference second, and pronominal reference, third. Comparative reference occurred mostly in the subcategories of *quality* and *numerative*, both under particular comparisons expressing comparability between things in respect to a particular property which may be a matter of quantity or quality as in the following extract (6):

- (6) Martin Luther King, Jr. was an American hero telling us about the American ideas of freedom, justice and opportunity. ... We are free now partly because of what he did that we had more freedom and justice in this country. An example is that there are more opportunities for Blacks in the government now.

Table 5 shows that all subtypes of conjunctive ties - additive, adversative, causal, and temporal - were used extensively in all the writing samples.

Table 5.

MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF COHESIVE TIES=CONJUNCTION, ACROSS EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN, BY ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS (STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESIS)

ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS	n	Type of Cohesion: Conjunction			
		Additive	Adversative	Causal	Temporal
Urban Appalachian	8	0.0528 (0.0251)	0.0076 (0.0085)	0.0079 (0.0081)	0.0121 (0.0115)
Urban African American	8	0.0651 (0.0223)	0.0026 (0.0037)	0.0103 (0.0106)	0.0154 (0.0131)
Mainstream	8	0.0611 (0.0351)	0.0038 (0.0079)	0.0123 (0.0122)	0.0188 (0.0192)

Urban African American children relied mostly on conjunctive additive cohesion (06.51%), followed by causal conjunctions (01.03%), with very little temporal conjunctions (01.54%) and conjunctive adversative (00.26%). Similarly, the mainstream group and urban Appalachian children's expository writing demonstrated a high percentage of occurrence for conjunctive additive (06.11% and 05.28%, respectively), followed by temporal conjunctions (01.88% and 01.21%, respectively), then, causal conjunctions (01.23% and 00.79%, respectively), and finally, conjunctive adversative (00.38% and 00.76%, respectively). Children relied mostly on the conjunctive additives *and* and *or*, and the causal relations *because* and *so*.

Examples of use of conjunctive additive *and* and *or* (7a-b); causal relation *because* and *so* (7c-d); adversative relation *but* (7e-f); and temporal sequential *then*, *first*, *second*, and so on, as well as temporal simultaneous *at the same time* or *another thing* (7g-i) are found in the following children's texts:

- (7) a. The Supreme Court banned segregation. *And* the Blacks have more freedom. *And* all races and ethnic groups can get a good education.
- b. Vandalism is not fun if you come home *and* you found your house spraypainted *and* your windows busted *or* things stolen.

- c. Running keeps you fit and it's safe. I like the sport *because* all my friends like it and I do too.
- d. Countries like Africa, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have dictators. *So* they do not have freedom. I feel sorry for those people. Some children do not even have homes *because* of dictatorship and madness in the world.
- e. The first amendment is freedom of the press, which means you can say what you want to *but* you can't. Sometimes you have to say what you're told to say.
- f. When Martin Luther King, Jr. died everyone thought the dream was dead too, *but* he still lives on in each and everyone's heart singing, "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, I am free at last!"
- g. About 366 years ago, 20 Black Africans came to America. *Then*, our country was segregated.
- h. All races have the right to learn and get a good education. *At the same time*, by using school busses students from different neighborhoods can go to school.
- i. I thought of several things that you and I could do to stop vandalism. *First*, we could make posters against vandalism and hang them up all over our neighborhood. *Secondly*, we could report to the police when we see someone vandalizing other people's property. If they run, try to get a good description of what they look like. *Another thing* is, we could start a watch patrol in our neighborhood.

Table 6.

MEASURE OF DENSITY OF TIES ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES
OF SIXTH GRADE URBAN APPALACHIAN, URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN,
AND MAINSTREAM GROUP CHILDREN

Children	Appalachian	African American	Mainstream
1	1.92	1.65	1.84
2	2.35	1.89	1.75
3	2.22	1.91	1.67
4	2.16	2.16	1.79
5	1.76	2.11	2.11
6	1.65	1.85	1.82
7	2.21	3.26	2.02
8	1.93	2.03	2.87
n	8	8	8
Average Group Density	2.03	2.11	1.98

Table 7.

MEASURE OF COHESION INDEX ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES OF SIXTH GRADE URBAN APPALACHIAN, URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND MAINSTREAM GROUP CHILDREN

Children	Urban Appalachian	Urban African American	Mainstream
1	1.89	1.91	1.41
2	1.84	2.05	3.48
3	2.12	3.01	2.41
4	1.92	1.28	1.79
5	1.90	1.97	2.45
6	1.98	1.64	1.60
7	2.43	1.68	1.54
8	2.17	1.41	2.11
n	8	8	8
Group Mean Index	2.03	1.87	2.10

Table 8.

MEAN INAPPROPRIATE COHESION INDEX ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES OF SIXTH GRADE URBAN APPALACHIAN, URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND MAINSTREAM GROUP CHILDREN

Children	Urban Appalachian	Urban African American	Mainstream
n	8	8	8
Group Mean Index	0.06	0.09	0.05

A measure of density of ties (as shown in Table 6) across the four writing samples of each sixth grade urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream group children showed that the greatest density of ties is found in the expository writing of the mainstream group children, followed by the urban Appalachian, and then the urban African Americans. Tables 7 and 8 show that ambiguously used coreferential cohesion devices were a rarity as was confirmed by the results of computing the cohesion index.

The results also showed that while all major cohesion devices were found in the ethnolinguistic cultural group children's expository writing, as well as in the expository writing of their mainstream counterparts, the mean percentage of occurrence of each cohesion device varied from child to child. This is demonstrated by the urban Appalachian children's writing in Table 9 below.

Table 9.
 MEAN PERCENTAGE OF COHESIVE TIES
 ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES
 OF SIXTH GRADE URBAN APPALACHIAN CHILDREN

Urban Appalachian Children	Type of Cohesion				
	Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion	
				Repetition	Collocation
1	9.14	6.16	8.34	28.03	0.39
2	10.93	5.15	6.72	18.08	1.68
3	13.23	6.70	5.52	18.25	1.34
4	9.14	6.00	6.95	23.19	0.95
5	13.05	5.19	8.22	30.10	0.24
6	12.16	17.29	8.37	0.11	0.00
7	1.02	4.70	10.53	0.16	0.00
8	9.26	16.95	10.83	14.86	0.00
n	8	8	8	8	8
Total Mean	10.99	8.51	8.00	16.59	0.57

The mean percentage of occurrence of each cohesion device also varied from piece to piece written by the same child, and group to group (as shown earlier in Table 2). Further, a significant difference in the types of cohesion devices used across the four children's expository writing was found between those perceived as academically "successful" and "unsuccessful." (See Tables 10 and 11).

Statistical analyses using various repeated measures of analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed basically no significant difference ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$ as significance level) in the mean proportion of occurrence of the use of major cohesion devices across children's expository writing, between the two ethnolinguistic cultural groups, between gender differences (as shown in Table 12), and between those perceived as academically "successful" and "unsuccessful" (as shown in Table 13).

However, in the subcategories of cohesive relations, statistical results showed significance below .05. For example, between groups of those perceived as "successful" and "unsuccessful" the mean proportion of occurrence of the use of reference across texts varied [$F(3,17)=3.2776$, $p\text{-value}=0.0466$], particularly with the use of pronominalization [$F(3,17)=5.0497$, $p\text{-value}=0.0111$]. The mean proportion of occurrence of the use of comparatives varied across these children's expository writing [$F(3,17)=3.4221$, $p\text{-value}=0.0411$]. Across ethnolinguistic cultural groups the mean proportion of occurrence of the use of conjunctive adversative differed [$F(2,19)=4.54$, $p\text{-value}=0.0245$]; these groups also differed in the mean proportion of occurrence of the use of reiterative synonyms and/or near synonyms [$F(2,19)=4.74$, $p\text{-value}=0.0214$]. At $p\text{-value} > 0.05$, the urban Appalachian children's expository writing had significantly higher mean of proportion of occurrence of conjunctive adversative than the urban African American and mainstream group children's writing. The urban African American and urban Appalachian children's

expository writing differed significantly in the mean proportion of occurrence of reiterative synonyms and/or near synonyms. The mainstream group children's expository writing had significantly higher mean proportion of occurrence of substitution+ellipsis than the urban Appalachian and urban African American children's expository writing.

Table 10.
MEAN PERCENTAGE OF COHESIVE TIES ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING
SAMPLE OF EACH GROUP OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN
PERCEIVED TO BE ACADEMICALLY "SUCCESSFUL"

Ethnolinguistic Groups	n	Type of Cohesion				
		Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion	
					Repetition	Collocation
Appalachian Female 1	1	9.14	6.16	8.34	28.03	0.39
Appalachian Female 2	1	10.93	5.15	6.72	18.08	1.68
Appalachian Male 1	1	13.05	5.19	8.22	30.10	0.24
Appalachian Male 2	1	12.16	17.29	8.37	0.11	0.00
Group Mean	4	11.32	8.44	7.91	19.30	0.57
African American Female 1	1	13.88	3.22	14.00	29.55	0.00
African American Female 2	1	10.13	4.18	10.39	27.24	0.88
African American Male 1	1	10.21	3.75	8.25	25.22	0.00
African American Male 2	1	10.98	5.65	7.59	29.88	0.00
Group Mean	4	11.30	4.20	10.05	27.97	0.22
Mainstream Female 1	1	12.09	4.73	8.82	20.58	7.84
Mainstream Female 2	1	11.78	2.67	9.37	32.53	0.26
Mainstream Male 1	1	12.31	0.25	9.79	21.82	1.00
Mainstream Male 2	1	13.95	13.84	12.21	19.52	0.00
Group Mean	4	12.53	5.37	10.04	23.62	2.27
Total Mean	12	11.71	6.00	9.33	23.63	1.02

Table 11.

MEAN PERCENTAGE OF COHESIVE TIES ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING
SAMPLES OF EACH GROUP OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN
PERCEIVED TO BE ACADEMICALLY "UNSUCCESSFUL"

Ethnolinguistic Groups	n	Type of Cohesion				
		Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion	
					Repetition	Collocation
Appalachian Female 1	1	13.23	6.70	5.52	18.25	1.34
Appalachian Female 2	1	9.14	6.00	6.95	23.19	0.95
Appalachian Male 1	1	11.02	4.70	10.53	0.16	0.00
Appalachian Male 2	1	9.26	16.25	10.83	14.86	0.00
Group Mean	4	10.66	8.41	8.45	14.11	0.57
African American Female 1	1	11.11	6.25	11.42	23.47	0.00
African American Female 2	1	8.56	3.79	11.09	22.89	0.00
African American Male 1	1	6.64	2.28	6.02	15.68	0.00
African American Male 2	1	11.82	2.44	11.41	23.64	0.00
Group Mean	4	9.53	3.69	9.98	21.42	0.14
Mainstream Female 1	1	16.04	3.07	5.71	34.94	0.00
Mainstream Female 2	1	0.24	7.10	11.51	25.49	0.00
Mainstream Male 1	1	12.59	7.34	9.97	24.14	1.83
Mainstream Male 2	1	10.03	6.47	7.13	22.45	1.18
Group Mean	4	9.72	5.99	8.58	26.75	0.75
Total Mean	12	9.97	6.03	9.00	20.76	0.48

Table 12.

MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
OF COHESIVE TIES ACROSS FOUR EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES
OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN, BY GENDER
(STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESES)

Gender	n	Type of Cohesion			
		Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion
Male	12	0.1156 (0.0438)	0.0475 (0.0268)	0.0867 (0.0460)	0.2630 (0.0832)
Female	12	0.1114 (0.0436)	0.0454 (0.0259)	0.0933 (0.0300)	0.2271 (0.0866)

Table 13.

MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
OF COHESIVE TIES ACROSS EXPOSITORY WRITING SAMPLES OF
SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN PERCEIVED TO BE ACADEMICALLY
"SUCCESSFUL" AND "UNSUCCESSFUL"
(STANDARD DEVIATION IN PARENTHESIS)

Perceived Academic Status	n	Type of Cohesion			
		Reference	Substitution + Ellipsis	Conjunction	Lexical Cohesion
Successful	12	0.1144 (0.0408)	0.0452 (0.0206)	0.0887 (0.0320)	0.2619 (0.0910)
Unsuccessful	12	0.1126 (0.0465)	0.0478 (0.0311)	0.0913 (0.0448)	0.2282 (0.0789)

To summarize, the results of the cohesion analysis of the expository writing of the sixth grade participants in this study demonstrated the following: (1) Urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream group children used all 5 major cohesion devices in their expository writing; (2) The most frequently used cohesion devices in these children's writing were lexical cohesion, particularly repetition, and reference and conjunction; (3) All of the children's expository writing showed the same rank order of frequency of occurrence of each major cohesion device; (4) The mean percentage of occurrence of each major cohesion device across children's writing samples varied from child to child, piece to piece written by the same child, and group to group; (5) There was no significant difference in the use of cohesion devices and their frequency of occurrence between the expository writing of urban African American and urban Appalachian children; our ethnolinguistic cultural group children and their mainstream counterparts; and male and female participants; and (6) A significant difference in the types of cohesion devices used in children's expository writing was found between those perceived as academically "successful" and "unsuccessful."

3. Discussion

Littlefair (1991) discusses expository writing as a genre characterized by registers that are different from those used by writers of a literary genre. This is because an expository genre is purpose related, as in to explain, persuade, describe, or argue. Perera (1984) describes expository writing as one that focuses more on abstraction - processes and concepts. A good deal of the writing in an expository genre is non-chronological, structured by linguistic features such as the use of passive voice in science textbooks, and a number of reiterations in an effort to explain quite

complex new ideas in few words (Perera 1986; Christie 1991). The use of appropriate linguistic features that characterize an expository genre can be measured by using cohesion analysis. Thus, cohesion analysis was used in looking at the two ethnolinguistic cultural groups, and mainstream children's expository writing.

Research (e.g., Chapman 1983, 1987; Cox *et al.* 1990; DeStefano 1990; DeStefano and Kantor 1988) that looked into children's writing from a cohesion analysis perspective suggests that indeed, cohesion helps create text by providing "texture" through its variety of cohesion linking mechanisms and semantic devices. It can be said that to a certain degree, all the sixth grade children, who participated in this study, were able to put together texts into a meaningful whole by using cohesion devices, mostly repetition-reiteration, followed by references and conjunctions. While their expository prose may be described as a bit contrived, the attempt to employ major text-forming strategies in keeping with the characteristics of the expository genre was found among all groups of sixth grade children with the difference lying more in the frequency of occurrence of the type of cohesive ties in each piece of writing. These results support the notion presented in the earlier section of this paper that ethnolinguistic cultural group children can overcome their culture-language barrier when writing, and that the quality of their writing can be comparable to that of their mainstream counterparts. The urban African American and urban Appalachian children made use of all principal types of cohesive ties in their written expository prose as did the mainstream group children.

The urban African American, urban Appalachian, and mainstream group children revealed important similarities and differences in the use of cohesion devices in their expository writing. Most children's expository writing demonstrated use of all cohesion devices at varying mean proportions of frequency of occurrence within a text, but the rank order of cohesive ties from highest to lowest frequency of occurrence remained constant across cultural groups. For instance, all groups had lexical cohesion as the highest frequency of occurrence and substitution + ellipsis with the lowest, or hardly any occurrence. Further, an interesting difference was observed between those perceived as academically "successful" and "unsuccessful." It must be recalled that during the selection of participants in this study, two children - a boy and a girl - were chosen from each of the two ends of the "success in literacy learning" continuum from each of the ethnolinguistic cultural groups and the mainstream group in order to ascertain whether children's ability to use appropriate cohesion devices in their writing can serve as a valid indicator of their ability to write. The results of the comparison of the use of cohesion devices between the "successful" and "unsuccessful" groups agree with the notion that texts high in use of cohesive ties are not necessarily better written and more comprehensible by adult readers than those with fewer cohesive ties (Carrell 1982; Tierney and Mosenthal 1981). However, texts that may have fewer but appropriately chosen cohesion devices for a given type of writing can be considered as better written and more comprehensible by adult readers than those texts that may be high in the use of cohesion devices, but which choices are inappropriate. In this case, the types of cohesive ties found to be frequently occurring within a given text of the "successful" group were consistent with the content and purpose for writing that text. On the other hand, the "unsuccessful" group had practically used the same types of cohesion devices in their writing regardless of the nature of the writing task. For example, pronominalization had a higher frequency of occurrence in the "successful"

group children's expository writing on *Martin Luther King, Jr.* than their use of demonstrative or comparative references. Also, the use of conjunctive adversative and causal was more frequent in their expository writing on *vandalism*, than their use of conjunctive additive; and their use of lexical cohesion, particularly repetition, was more often found in their expository writing on *freedom*. Meanwhile, the "unsuccessful" group did not have varying types of cohesion devices across their four expository writing samples. For example, repetition was the most frequently used cohesion device regardless of whether the topic was on *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, *vandalism*, or *freedom*. The essays of the "unsuccessful" group reveal that expository writing which show high frequency of occurrence of cohesion devices, e.g., use of repetition, do not necessarily demonstrate more comprehensible writing than the essays of the "successful" group that have lower frequency of occurrence of selected types of cohesion devices but which are appropriately chosen for a particular expository genre.

The cohesion patterns demonstrated by those perceived as academically "successful" suggest some notions about the use of cohesion and coherence. It is possible that the "successful" group exercised selectivity in their choice of the types of cohesion devices for certain kinds of expository writing, and their choices reflected an understanding of the genre they are writing, in this case, expository prose. On the other hand, the "unsuccessful" group did not have an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the use of appropriate cohesion devices because they had very little understanding of the expository genre to begin with, and/or they lacked sufficient information to write about (such as to provide supporting details for an argument) to enable them to use the appropriate cohesion devices. This section suggests that children's choices in the use of appropriate cohesion devices in their writing (as demonstrated by the "successful" group) can serve as a more valid condition for judging "quality" writing than simply the amount and frequency of occurrence of any or all cohesion devices in these children's writing.

In general, the participants' expository writing showed that they have been introduced to expository genre and are familiar with the expectations related to writing in that genre. Most of their expository texts showed an attempt at providing interpretation and speculation of results. To a certain degree, these children used opposing arguments and a response to the opposition in their expository writing. However, these components of argument still needed supportive details. While they were able to offer a series of claims, usually they did not follow them up with sufficient supporting data. The results support Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1982) analysis of immature writer's failure to provide the needed elaboration in their writing. The results also relate to research which suggests that awareness of register of written texts is developmental. As such, it can not be said that because a writer displays awareness of the register of one type of writing, he[*she*] is capable of the same level of awareness when writing in a different genre. Children expand their written registers as they are exposed to a variety of genres and a rich writing environment. The results of this study further suggest that as children progress through school and are increasingly expected to produce "appropriate" forms of writing for different purposes, those who have a clear understanding of how meaning is created, e.g., argumentatively, descriptively, persuasively, are advantaged; those who do not have a good knowledge of the meaning linking mechanism that produces "appropriate" forms of writing will be limited by their own inadequacy and

will not be able to express their "meanings" in effective communication manner. Thus, as in the case of all the children in this study, it is possible that they were weakest in offering and interpreting data and in recognizing and responding to opposition, partly because they are still in their developmental writing stages as far as genres and registers are concerned. Also, the literacy instruction and support in writing given to them need to be further enriched for them to be able to learn how to communicate effectively in expository writing.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a study which investigated the written cohesion patterns found in the expository writing of our ethnolinguistic cultural group of sixth grade urban African American and urban Appalachian children. I identified the cohesion patterns in the expository writing of these two groups which were similar and dissimilar. Then, I compared the cohesion patterns found in their expository writing with those found in the mainstream culture children's essays.

To summarize, the results of this study suggest that ethnicity, social class, and language variation do not present a major influence in the writing of our sixth grade ethnolinguistic cultural group children's writing. These children were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the use of cohesion devices in their expository writing in much the same way as did their mainstream counterparts. There were more similarities than dissimilarities in the types of cohesion devices used and their frequency of occurrence between the urban African American and urban Appalachian children's writing. The same was true between the writing of these children and the mainstream group. The types of cohesion devices and their frequency of occurrence in all these children's expository writing were comparable. However, a significant difference in the "choice" of cohesion devices was noted between the children who were perceived as academically "successful" and "unsuccessful." Such findings suggest the need for children to be exposed to all the different types of cohesion devices through a variety of texts, and the many ways by which these types of cohesion can be used for different writing purposes.

In conclusion, I have argued that as our urban African American, urban Appalachian and mainstream group children progress through their early elementary grades, and provided with sufficient literacy learning experiences, they develop a wealth of knowledge about written language, and relationships among language processes that are necessary for them to produce more sophisticated writing genres, such as the expository genre. In addition, I argued that, given a shared literacy learning environment, our ethnolinguistic cultural group children can gain insight into and knowledge about expository texts in much the same manner as their mainstream counterparts. While it is true that relationships between writing and speaking are complex, and the task of writing in an appropriate register can be quite demanding, particularly for our ethnolinguistic cultural group children because they bring with them a language variety different from what is used and expected of them in their classroom literacy learning context, it is also true that these children do "learn" the appropriate registers for specific genres. Finally, I suggest that rather than falling back on the notion of ethnicity, social class, and/or language variation as limiting our ethnolinguistic cultural group children's ability to write, we should

instead look for pedagogical alternatives that can fully address these children's literacy needs.

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