Understanding writing and reading competences
What can a neo-Gricean perspective contribute?

Research Project: Competences of written language learners solving coordination problems towards coherence

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Motivation
From the perspective of language teaching and learning writing and reading are both-sided influencing factors on the process of written language acquisition. However, empirical studies look at partly writing or reading processes, whereas studies considering the two constituents are still a desideratum.

The research project “Competences of written language learners solving coordination problems towards coherence” aims to respect this requirement. The project is contextualized in the current research project “Subcomponents of writing literacy: Diagnosis and didactical support” (directors: M. Becker-Mrotzek, J. Grabowski) which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF/FKZ 01GJ0980).

Initial situation und research question
How well do written language learners at 5th grade and at 9th grade in different school types realize signalizing/recognizing coherence by appropriate language use, and, how do they recognize this intentional endeavour. This is - with regard to coherence - the leading research question. The question from theory and methodology is about what a neo-Gricean perspective can contribute to this field.

Objective
Main theoretical objective of the study:
• Understanding coherence as a result of a coordination process. (Clark 1996/2004; Tanskanen 2006)

Main empirical objective of the study:
Total sample: n= 240, i.e. 120: class level 5, 120: class level 9
Total range of texts = 720
• Studying both the coding and the decoding skills that are essential for learners when acting in coordination towards coherence.
• Measuring the competences for acting in coordination towards coherence of class level 5 learners, and of class level 9 learners in different school types.
• Asking for corresponding factors influencing the competence of acting in coordination towards coherence.

Main Hypotheses
• Signalizing coherence (writer) and recognizing coherence (reader) are complementary capacities.
• There is a connection between learners abilities of acting in coordination towards coherence and their abilities of solving other coordination problems.

Testing competencies in coordinating towards coherence

Fig. 1: MC + statement „recognizing coherence“ & justifying

Fig. 2: Cloze test (detail) „signalising coherence“

Fig. 3: Writing a cooking recipe „signalising coherence“

Selected References
Becker-Mrotzek, Michael/Grabowski, Joachim (ongoing) Subcomponents of writing literacy: Diagnosis and didactical support, BMBF research project FKZ 01GJ0980.