An Analysis of Referential Use in Korean EFL Learners’ Argumentative Essays*

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This study aims to investigate how Korean EFL college students’ argumentative essays are similar to or different from those of native English speakers (NES) in the use of reference, with the consideration of Korean students’ level of English proficiency. It employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine referential use for establishing textual cohesion of written discourse. The participants were 30 native English speakers and 61 Korean EFL college students, with 31 high proficiency students and 30 low proficiency students. Detailed examination on the use of referential devices revealed important findings. For example, the syntactic role of the reference influenced the relative difficulty for the Korean EFL students. When referring to nominal items, whereas the Korean EFL students did as well as the NES in referential choices in subject positions, they underused references in other syntactic roles, such as object and possessive positions. They also made different referential choices in one of the major functions of demonstratives. That is, whereas the NES mostly used demonstrative this when referring to extended text in the preceding discourse, both levels of the Korean EFL students preferred pronoun it for such function. The present study holds important pedagogical implications with regard to L2 writing pedagogy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communicative competence has been one of the important key words of second language (L2) teaching for many years. Since communication is actually done in series of related words and sentences, one way of improving communicative competence is regarding how words, sentences and ideas are connected coherently within the whole

* The present study is based in part upon a doctoral dissertation, Kim (2012), completed at Korean University.
text. Therefore, when investigating L2 learners' communicative competence, it would be necessary to look at their production at a discourse level beyond their sentence level, looking at their ability to achieve unity and continuity of a text.

L2 learners' composition can be a useful means that reflects their competence in the target language at a discourse level. One measure of a writer's competence can be examining the textual cohesion of their discourse production, which involves appropriate use of cohesive devices (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Each cohesive device links an element of language with what has gone before or what follows in a text, thus creating connections between parts and thus contributes to the overall textual cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Therefore, examining the use of cohesive devices can be a very useful way of investigating L2 learners' ability to create coherent text that is crucial to communicative competence.

One of the important cohesive devices in achieving textual cohesion is reference. Appropriate use of reference of L2 learners is the ability that they need to create connectedness of the parts of a text. However, studies on referencing have shown that appropriate use of reference is a difficult task for L2 learners (Clancy, 1992; Daigle et al., 2007; Kang, 2003, 2004, 2005). As referential ability can be a good index of L2 learners' competence to construct a unified cohesive discourse, there is a need for attention on how Korean students manage this special cohesive device, i.e., reference, in their compositions.

The use of reference has been compared between L1 and L2 writings in English to examine how L2 writers differ from native English writers (Connor, 1984, Reid, 1992, Kang, 2005). However, many comparative studies were conducted using rather broad categories of referential cohesive devices for analysis, such as pronouns, definite articles, and demonstrative reference, within a bigger framework of cohesive devices. Analysis using more detailed coding schemes focusing on the referential devices may provide a more comprehensive exploration of their uses in L2 writing. Therefore, this study further categorizes the referential cohesive devices into detailed subcategories, considering many aspects that may affect the management of the reference for EFL students. That is, several aspects are taken into consideration for analysis, such as the role of the reference in a sentence (i.e., head or modifier / subject or object), the syntactic forms of the reference (i.e., singular or plural), and the referents being referred to (i.e., nominal items or extended text). These aspects are taken into account in this study as they are assumed to be related to the writers' ability in managing their L2 referential knowledge to connect clauses, sentences and ideas in writing. This detailed examination of referential cohesive features will provide important pedagogical implications that can be incorporated in L2 teaching. In addition, comparatively few studies have taken English learners' proficiency level into consideration when
examining how Korean EFL writers employ referential cohesive devices differently from native English speakers in their argumentative essays. Therefore, there is a need for a study that investigates the role of L2 learners’ language proficiency.

The present study was designed to investigate specifically how Korean EFL writers employ referential cohesive devices differently from native English speakers in their argumentative writings, with the consideration of Korean students’ level of English proficiency. It employed comprehensive coding schemes with detailed subcategories of referential cohesive devices considering many aspects of the devices.

The following research questions guided this study: (1) How does Korean speakers’ use of reference in argumentative essays in EFL (English as a foreign language) differ from that of native English speakers’ argumentative essays? (2) How are they different depending on the Korean learners’ English proficiency levels?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of second language teaching for the last few decades, huge attention has been paid to communicative competence. Communicative competence is the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. When people actually communicate, they do in stretches of discourse, which is not a collection of unrelated sentences but a coherent unified whole (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Therefore, in order to build communicative competence in L2, not only grammatical competence that is concerned with words and syntactic forms in sentence-level, but also discourse competence is important that goes beyond the sentence-level and deals with inter-sentential relationship, thereby making up a coherent whole.

Therefore, when investigating L2 learners’ communicative competence, it is essential to look at their production at a discourse level, and L2 learners’ composition can be an effective means to reveal their competence at a discourse level in the target language. Thus, one measure of a writer’s competence can be examining the textual cohesion of their discourse production, which involves appropriate use of cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical devices (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

These cohesive ties allow text to flow to maintain consistency and connectedness throughout a passage, thereby constructing a unified and meaningful text (Bae, 2001; Cameron et al., 1995; Cooper, 1983; Crowhurst, 1987; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Halliday, 1994). As a writer’s effective cohesive tie use can contribute to the text as a whole, examining this language feature can be a useful way of investigating L2 learners’ ability to create coherent text that is an important component of communicative
competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Swain, 1983).

One of the important devices for achieving textual cohesion is reference. Appropriate referential use is the ability that one needs to create connectedness and cohesiveness of the sentences and a text. Therefore, referential ability can be a good index of L2 learners’ competence to construct a cohesive discourse. Studies on referencing have shown the challenges L2 learners have (Clancy, 1992; Daigle et al., 2007; Kang, 2003, 2004, 2005). The findings from the studies suggest that appropriate use of reference is a difficult task for L2 learners. There is a great need to examine how L2 students’ referential use in their language production is similar to or different from that of native English speakers, especially focusing on anaphoric types of reference that contribute overall textual cohesion.

Reference is a semantic relation and it can be further divided into exophora and endophora. Exophora does not contribute to the cohesion of the text as it refers to the relation beyond the text and the referent is understood from the environment or the situation of the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). On the other hand, endophora refers to the relation within the text and the identity supposed by this reference is recoverable from within the text itself. Endophora can be subdivided into anaphora and cataphora, depending on whether the antecedent occurs before or after the reference. Anaphora refers back to a previous portion of a text that has already been introduced. On the other hand, cataphora points forwards to what follows it. Among the different types of reference, therefore, “it is only the anaphoric type of reference that is relevant to cohesion, since it provides a link with a preceding portion of the text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 51). Thus, only anaphoric type of reference is analyzed in this study.

An important feature of English reference is regarding extended reference and text reference as they are “one of the major cohesive devices of the English language” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.67). Extended reference applies only to the singular form of it, this and that used without a following noun. These references differ from usual instances of reference in that the referent is more than just a person or object; instead, it is a piece of text. Extended reference is when it refers back to the whole of the first sentence.1 Text reference is when the referent is transmuted into a fact or report. The distinction between extended reference and text reference is sometimes ambiguous (therefore, hereinafter the word ‘extended reference’ represents both extended and text reference); however, what is important is that extended reference and text reference are

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1 An example of extended reference would be it in the following sentence from Alice Through the Looking Glass, “Curtsy while you’re thinking what to say. It saves time”. In this sentence, it refers back to the whole of the first sentence; this is called extended reference. An example of text reference would be it in the following sentence, “… Alice wondered a little at this, but she was too much in awe of the Queen to disbelieve it.” In this case, referent is transmuted into a fact or report; which is called text reference. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 60)
major cohesive devices in English (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Also, they are known for “the majority of all instances of demonstratives” (p. 66), referring “anaphorically to something that has been said before” (p. 60). Therefore, there is a need of research on referential use of L2 learners that includes this specific feature of extended reference.

Many comparative studies have compared L1 and L2 writings in terms of their use of cohesive devices that include the use of reference, which is further subcategorized into pronouns, definite articles, and demonstratives (Connor, 1984, Kang, 2005; Reid, 1992). In Reid’s (1992) study, cohesive devices in a corpus of 768 essays written in English by L1 and L2 writers were analyzed. The findings on referential cohesion including personal and demonstrative pronouns showed significant differences between L1 and L2 writers. Specifically, the native speakers used far fewer pronouns than the L2 group.

However, this rather broad category of referential cohesive devices for analysis, such as pronouns, definite articles, and demonstrative reference, within a bigger framework of cohesive devices, may not be informative enough to give comprehensive explanation on how L1 and L2 writers’ referential uses and strategies are different from each other. For example, in case of demonstrative reference, comparison of the frequencies of their occurrences between L1 and L2 writings may not be sufficient to show information on what types of demonstratives are favored by L1 writers or L2 writers, such as whether the demonstrative was used to refer to something near or something far in terms of its proximity and distance, and whether the demonstrative was used to refer to a nominal item or to an extended text mentioned before. The syntactic role of the reference in a sentence may also affect the use of the reference such as whether the reference was used in the subject position or in the object position. However, not many studies have investigated L1 and L2 corpora in the use of referential cohesive devices by employing detailed coding categories of them, considering many possible aspects of their use such as forms and functions. Therefore, there is a great need for such studies to gain thorough insights into interlanguage development of referential cohesion for L2 learners.

The present study was designed to investigate the use of reference in Korean EFL learners’ compositions and native English speakers’ compositions to see how Korean students’ writing is similar to or different from that of native English speakers in the use of referential cohesive devices using detailed coding categories of reference.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of students: 61 Korean college
students learning English as a foreign language (with two sub-groups of 31 English proficiency and 30 low proficiency level of learners), and 30 native English speakers. The EFL participants were 61 female college students with mixed majors at a university located in Seoul, Korea. Their ages ranged between 19 and 23. All participants are native speakers of Korean and all of them studied English as a compulsory subject for at least ten years starting from third grade of elementary school until graduating from high school. They were taking General English classes offered at the college, three hours a week at the time of research.

For the purpose of this study, the Korean participants were divided into two groups: higher and lower English proficiency groups depending on their scores on a TOEIC mock test and the English section on the Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT). The TOEIC mock test was administered as one of the course requirements. The average score of the higher proficiency group of students (HEFL) was 838, ranging from 755 to 960, and it was 646 with the lower proficiency group of students (LEFL), ranging from 540 to 730. As for the English section on the Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test, which was taken as part of the university entrance process, the higher level students were in the top 11th national percentile and the lower level students were in the top 23th percentile nationally. Therefore, the participants in the both levels of the students were estimated to be of above intermediate level. The participants who demonstrated above intermediate level of English proficiency were assumed to have acquired language skills required in writing, and be able to produce written data that can be analyzed in terms of their textual cohesion. In other words, EFL students who demonstrate the low level of English proficiency may not be appropriate for cohesion analysis as they may have difficulty even in generating an appropriate sentence let alone making a sequence of sentences in a connected way.

As for the native English-speaking participants, 30 male and female native English speakers participated in this study: 18 Americans, 5 Canadians, 3 British, 2 Australians, and 2 New Zealanders. They were educated native speakers of English with college level of education and above, one third of them holding a master’s degree. They were mostly teaching English at colleges or language institutes in Korea at the time of research. The educated native English teachers and instructors were chosen as participants under the assumption that they would produce sound representation of good English written data that can be used as models to be compared with the Korean students’ essays written on the same topic.

2. Instrument and Procedure

To obtain writing samples for this study, all the participants were asked to write an
argumentative essay in English, which may provide a useful means to examine cohesion beyond the sentence level. The following topic was given to all the participants.

Some people say that computers have made life easier and more convenient. Other people say that computers have made life more complex and stressful. What is your opinion? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

This prompt was selected from a list of writing topics of TOEFL on the premise that the topic could be thought about in everyday life as computers have now become a necessity for almost everyone, and the participants are likely to use them a lot in everyday life in various ways, such as using email, surfing on the Internet, searching information they need, online shopping, doing work with word processors, social networking, and so on. Therefore, the topic is relevant and engaging to the participants, which helps them write a productive essay. In addition, the topic is general enough not to require any special background knowledge to write about or technical vocabulary. In actual essay, their opinions about the topic were broadly similar for the three groups of the participants; the two-thirds of the participants in each group arguing that computers have made life easier and more convenient, and the other one third arguing that computers have made life more complex and stressful.

The Korean participants were asked to compose an essay during class time, as they were taking General English classes at the time of research. The time allotted to the actual writing was up to 50 minutes, with most students finishing the writing in 40 to 50 minutes. As for the essay length, the participants were asked to write a composition of about 300 words, just as they would do for the writing section of TOEFL.

As the classroom was equipped with personal computers for each student, the Korean participants did their writing using word processors with computer, which is similar to real-life writing process rather than traditional paper-and-pencil composition. Internet search for any words or information was not allowed while writing. The participants sent their compositions through email to the researcher upon completing on the spot in the presence of the researcher. In case of the native English speakers, as it was feasibly impossible to gather them in one place at a specific time, they were individually contacted by the researcher and asked to write an essay within the same amount of time and with the same number of words given to the Korean students, and send it to the researcher through email.

3. Data Analysis

Using QSR NVivo\textsuperscript{2}, a qualitative data analysis software, each reference used in the

\textsuperscript{2} QSR NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software package designed for qualitative
participants' compositions was coded into three types of reference based upon Halliday and Hasan's (1976) description: pronominal reference, definite article, and demonstrative reference. For the purpose of this study, references used in anaphoric function were coded and analyzed as "it is only the anaphoric type of reference that is relevant to cohesion, since it provides a link with a preceding portion of the text". (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 51). Therefore, exophoric and cataphoric use of references were not included for analysis as they make "no contribution to the cohesion of a text". (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 53). See Appendix for coding categories.

Each pronominal and demonstrative referential cohesive device was counted and further analyzed for the following dimensions: 1) whether it was singular or plural; 2) whether each reference was used as either head or modifier 3) in case of a head, the position each pronominal reference took within a clause (i.e., a subject or an object) in order to see whether syntactic role of the reference was related to the participants' referential use as cohesive devices; and 4) whether each reference was used to refer to a specific nominal referent, or to extended text mentioned in the preceding discourse. The use of the references to refer to extended text applies only to the singular forms of this, that and it, used without a following noun (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). For demonstrative reference, in addition, it was also coded depending on whether it was used to refer to something near or something far in terms of its proximity and distance.

When it comes to pronominal reference, its cohesive function is particularly the third person forms (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Therefore, the first and second person forms of pronouns were precluded for analysis. As for third person singular pronouns, only the use of it was counted and coded for analysis. Since the compositions were argumentative essays written on the topic of computer technology, the other types of the third person singular pronouns, such as he and she, were rarely used. Among the third person plural pronouns, only the anaphoric use of they, referring to specific nominal referents in the preceding text, was counted and coded for analysis. They, used to mean persons unspecified, was not included for analysis because such use is exophoric as in the case of I as writer, you as audience, and impersonal we.

As for the definite article the, among the various functions of the in English, the used only in anaphoric function to refer back to the specific nouns in the preceding text was coded and analyzed for the purpose of this study regarding the cohesion relations in the text.

After occurrences of each of the referential types were coded, the frequencies of each type of them in each participant's essay were converted to a percentage of that

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data research. It allows researchers to organize and analyze rich text data. For further detail, check http://www.qsrinternational.com
participant’s total number of words in the essay in order to account for the differences in text length (Hinkel, 2001). With the data obtained by conducting NVivo, Microsoft Excel was used to save and store the data. Then, using SPSS, the ANOVA was conducted to test whether there were group differences in the use of cohesive reference.

In order to test the inter-rater reliability of the coding system, a trained native English speaker and the researcher independently coded 10 randomly selected writing samples from the data (just over 10% of the data). Cohen’s kappa (Bakeman & Gottman, 1997), a measure of inter-coder agreement that corrects for chance, was 0.87 between the researcher and the native English speaker.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Pronominal Reference

1) Third Person Singular Pronoun

Table 1 shows quite different patterns of using the third person singular pronouns between the NES and the Korean students. The two most frequent uses of it in the NES’ compositions were when it referred to a nominal item in the preceding discourse regardless of its syntactic roles: either as a subject (M=.2764) or an object within a sentence (M=.2376). Below are some examples.

[Example 1 from N6: it in subject position referring to computer or the Internet]
Overall, the invention of the computer and subsequently, the Internet, has made the daily lives of everyone much easier. It is the key to opening new doors and horizons where one would have never even thought of.

[Example 2 from N3: it in object position referring to life]
I believe that while computers have made life easier and more convenient in several ways, they have also caused it to become more complex and stressful.

For both levels of Korean students, however, the two most frequent uses of it were related to its syntactic roles in a sentence; they most frequently used it as a subject in a sentence either referring to a nominal item (M=.3634 for HEFL and .2841 for LEFL) or referring to an extended text (M=.2841 for HEFL and .3010 for LEFL.).

The ANOVA and Duncan’s post hoc test revealed that the Korean EFL students used significantly greater number of it as a subject referring to an extended text in the preceding discourse than the NES did in their compositions. (F=4.82, p<0.01). There
was no group difference found between the HEFL and LEFL in this regard. Below are some examples in the Korean students’ compositions.

[Example 3 from H31: It in subject position referring to a nominal item, Internet]
With computer, we do internet, Internet is the one of the most important thing in this world. It made the world smaller and global.
[Example 4 from L7: It in subject position referring to extended text (i.e., the preceding sentences)]
Just I want to say that computers have an effect on my eyes that went wrong. This case is applied not only me but also other children. It is my first reason why I think computer is a pretty bad thing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison of the Use of Third Person Singular Pronoun (it)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Head</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifier (its)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the use of the third person singular possessive determiner its, interestingly, the Korean students rarely used its in their compositions (M=.0215 for HEFL and M=.0000 for LEFL) whereas the NES used its quite frequently (M=.1170). Surprisingly, none of the low proficiency Korean EFL students used its in their compositions. The ANOVA results revealed significant group differences for use of its; both levels of Korean EFL students used its much less frequently than the NES did in their compositions (F=5.213, p<0.01). There was no group difference found between the high and low proficiency Korean EFL learners. That is, regardless of the language proficiency, the Korean students were fairly unskillful at using the third person singular determiner its in their writing to achieve text cohesion, indicating the use of inanimate determiner its is quite unfamiliar to the Korean EFL learners. Below are examples in the NES’s compositions.
An Analysis of Referential Use in Korean EFL Learners’ Argumentative Essays

[Example 5 from N10]
However, this technology has both its upsides and down.

[Example 6 from N22]
The modern-day computer has indeed changed the way we live our lives on a day to day basis. Through its ability as a tool for bringing to life books, music, art, and technology through mathematical and scientific calculation, computers have made a tremendous impact in the world.

2) Third Person Plural Pronoun

Table 2 displays the use of third person plural pronominal reference in the participants’ compositions. Unlike the third person singular pronominal reference, the NES and Korean EFL learners showed the similar patterns of using the third person plural pronouns. Each group of the participants most frequently used the third person plural pronoun form in the subject position (i.e., they), followed by their, the possessive determiner form of the third person plural pronoun (See Table 2). The form of them, the third person plural pronoun in the object position, was least frequently used in each group of the participants’ compositions, and Korean EFL students used a lot less them in their compositions compared to the NES (M=.3026 for NES; M=.1877 for HEFL; and M=.1239 for LEFL). Below are some examples.

[Example 7 from N25: They in subject position referring to Teachers and their in possessive position]
Teachers are able to make presentations on a computer, which can make class more interesting for students. They can use the Internet as a form of communication with other teachers in order to get ideas and inspiration for their own classroom.

[Example 8 from N25: them in object position referring to students]
Finally, computers have changed education. Instead of hand writing an essay, students are able to use word processing programs. This allows them to add or remove details where and when they see fit.
### TABLE 2

The Use of Third Person Plural Pronoun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NES (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>HEFL (N=31), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>LEFL (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Head</td>
<td>.3722 (.4410)</td>
<td>.4212 (.5065)</td>
<td>.4361 (.4699)</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object head</td>
<td>.3026 (.3654)</td>
<td>.1877 (.2894)</td>
<td>.1239 (.2408)</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifier</td>
<td>.3614 (.3573)</td>
<td>.4236 (.6660)</td>
<td>.2703 (.4694)</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA and Duncan’s post hoc test results (See Table 2) revealed that there was a group difference in the use of *them*, the third person plural pronoun in the object position ($F=2.69, p<0.10$); the low proficiency Korean students used significantly fewer of them than the NES did in their compositions. This may suggest that the syntactic role of the reference in the sentence was related to the low proficiency Korean EFL students’ referential use of the third person plural pronouns. In other words, the low proficiency students are less skillful at using the third person plural pronouns in the object position compared to using the pronouns in the subject position.

### 2. Definite Article

Table 3 displays the anaphoric use of the definite article *the* in the participants’ compositions. Among the three groups of the participants, the NES used the definite article *the* the most, followed by the high proficiency Korean EFL students and low proficiency students (M=.4495 for NES; .3497 for HEFL; and .2146 for LEFL, respectively). Below is an example in the NES’ compositions.

[Example 9 from N8]

For example, if I made a mistake while writing this essay in paper, I would have to either cross out *the* error and rewrite *the* word, or I would have to use correction tape to erase *the* word then write over it.
There were significant group differences in the use of anaphoric definite article ‘the’ \((F=2.58, p<0.10)\); The NES used more anaphoric definite article ‘the’ than both levels of Korean EFL students. This means the Korean students did not seem to utilize the definite article the appropriately when it was necessary to use the in front of a noun to refer back to something mentioned in the preceding discourse, by omitting it or using an indefinite article a instead of the.

3. Demonstrative Reference

1) Singular Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Near

Table 4 displays the referential uses of this, the singular form of demonstrative references referring to something near, preferred by each group of participants in this study. For both the NES and the Korean EFL students, this was most frequently used as a determiner in front of nouns (M=.2722 for NES’ M=.1847 for HEFL and M=.1817 for LEFL). Below is an example from the NES’ compositions.

[Example 10 from N9]
Therefore, like virtually all natural and man-made material on earth, computers can have both a positive and negative effect on our lives. The deciding factor is not only how we choose to use this technology, but how much we allow “it” to rule us.

In case of the NES, the second most frequent use of this was observed when this was used as a subject referring to an extended text of the preceding discourse (M=.2431). Other than these two usages, this was rarely used in the NES’ compositions (M=.0099 for referring to a nominal as a subject; and .0164 for referring to an extended text as an object). In case of the Korean EFL students, however, except for the use of this as a determiner, other uses of this were not evident. In other words, whereas the NES used this quite frequently as a subject referring to an extended text of the preceding discourse, this was not the case with the Korean EFL students (M=.2431 for NES; M=.0707 for

### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NES (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>HEFL (N=31), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>LEFL (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definite article ‘the’</td>
<td>.4495 (.4124)</td>
<td>.3497 (.4597)</td>
<td>.2146 (.3183)</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEFL and .0312 for LEFL). The ANOVA and Duncan’s post hoc test results showed that the NES used significantly greater number of this as a subject referring to an extended text of the preceding discourse than both the high and low proficiency Korean students. \((F=11.92, \ p<0.001)\). There was no group difference between the high and low proficiency Korean EFL students. Below is an example of This from the NES’ compositions, which was used as a subject referring to an extended text of the previous sentences.

[Example 11 from N8]

Rather, they believe that because computers have allowed us to finish work faster and more efficiently, we are expected to do more than we were able to do before. This leads to a faster paced life with higher expectations which some people find particularly stressful.

Interestingly, the NES used this referring to a preceding nominal referent as a subject, but never as an object. This is an opposite pattern to that of the Koreans who used this referring to a preceding nominal item as an object, but never as a subject. However, the differences were not statistically proven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4</th>
<th></th>
<th>NES (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>HEFL (N=31), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>LEFL (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Nominal</td>
<td>.0099 (.0543)</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.2431 (.2374)</td>
<td>.0707 (.1569)</td>
<td>.0312 (.1242)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extended Nominal</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.0099 (.0553)</td>
<td>.0328 (.1002)</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0164 (.0626)</td>
<td>.0415 (.1394)</td>
<td>.0657 (.2176)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifier Determiner (this)</td>
<td>.2722 (.2803)</td>
<td>.1847 (.3129)</td>
<td>.1817 (.2924)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Plural Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Near

As for the use of plural demonstrative reference these referring to something near, Table 5 displays that the NES and the Korean EFL students showed a quite similar pattern of using these. Both the NES and the Korean EFL students used these as
determiners most frequently and almost exclusively (M=.1066 for NES; M=.2030 for HEFL and .1436 for LEFL). Below are the examples in the NES and the Korean students’ compositions.

[Example 12 from N4]
The Internet is now portable with multiple computer-like products. Because of these new gadgets, I have been able to find my way around a new country and even find a place to eat in the area.

[Example 13 from H12]
In the evening, I sometimes watch a movie, or download MP3 files by using computer. And I chat with my friends on the net every night. Judging by these things, it is an undeniable fact that computers give us many benefits.

Actually, the NES used these as determiners only (M=.1066); none of the NES used these for other functions, either as a subject or an object within a sentence. However, the Korean students used these for a nominal reference as a subject or an object although they were not quite evident.

There was a group difference in the use of these as an object (F=3.05, p<0.10. See Table 5). The ANOVA and Duncan’s post hoc test results showed that the high proficiency Korean EFL students used these as an object more than the NES in this data who actually never used these as an object.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plural Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Near (these)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Subject (these)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(these) Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifier (these)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Singular Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Far

Table 6 shows the referential uses of that, a singular form of demonstratives referring to something far, preferred by each group of the participants in this study. As in the case with this, the use of that as a determiner in front of nouns was most frequent and evident by both the NES and the Korean EFL students (M=.1119 for NES; M=.1733 for HEFL;
and .1766 for LEFL). Below is an example.

[Example 14 from N6]
This past winter I took a trip to Thailand, and stayed on a very rural beach for a couple of weeks. I met a nice group of friends although I was traveling alone, and we had a great time chatting, laughing, and exchanging travel stories. There was no internet on that beach, and after a week or so I went to town to check my email and drop my parents a line.

None of the NES in this data used that to refer to the specific nouns stated previously in the text either as a subject or an object, whereas such use was observed in the Korean EFL students' compositions. The NES used that to refer to an extended text in the preceding discourse in subject position, but not in object position. However, with the Korean EFL students, such use of that, referring to an extended text in object position as shown in the example below, was the second most frequent use.

[Example 15 from L19]
Many People think computers are very harmful. My parents think and talk to me that, and many people near me talk me not to use computer...For example, people who enjoy violent game kill many people similarly he did at the game. I know and understand about that very much.

### TABLE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>NES (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>HEFL (N=31), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>LEFL (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.0203 (.1130)</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.3844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>.0258 (.0698)</td>
<td>.0312 (.0971)</td>
<td>.0336 (.1025)</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.9444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.0092 (.0515)</td>
<td>.0000 (.0000)</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.3844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>.0000 (.0300)</td>
<td>.0346 (.1087)</td>
<td>.0784 (.1704)</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Modifier:** .1119 (.2574) .1733 (.2794) .1766 (.2675) .56 .576

There was a significant group difference in the use of that as an object to refer to extended text ($F=3.41, p<0.05$); the low proficiency Korean students used significantly more that as an object to refer to extended text than the NES and the high proficiency Korean EFL students.
4) Plural Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Far

Table 7 shows the referential uses of *those*, a plural form of demonstratives referring to something far, preferred by each group of the participants in this study. Overall, the use of *those* was not frequent with the NES. As in the case with *these*, the NES used *those* as a determiner only (M=0.0076). Below is an example.

[Example 16 from N7]

The alarm clock can get us up for work on time, but also shatter much needed sleep on the weekend if left on accidentally. The advent of computer technology is also rife with contradictions. One major factor contributing to *those* contradictions is us – humans.

None of the NES used *those* for other functions. That is, the NES did not use *those* to refer to the specific nouns in the preceding text either in subject or in object position. The Korean students also used *those* as a determiner most frequently (M=0.0602 for HEFL, and 0.0111 for LEFL). No other uses of *those* were found in their compositions, either, except for some high proficiency Korean students’ uses of *those* as a subject referring to the specific nouns in the preceding text. On the whole, the use of *those* did not seem to be a preferred referential choice in achieving textual cohesion by both the NES and Korean students. As Table 7 indicates, there were no significant group differences in the use of *those* between the Korean students and the NES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plural Demonstrative Reference Referring to Something Far (<em>those</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifier Determiner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) assertion that the main uses of demonstratives are found in the use of extended reference, which is “one of the major cohesive devices of the English language” (1976, p. 67), the percentage of the use of extended reference out of the total number of demonstratives in the participants’ compositions was analyzed. The NES used a significantly higher percentage of demonstratives as extended reference than both the high and low proficiency Korean
EFL students ($F=3.84$, $p<0.05$). In fact, the low proficiency Korean EFL students showed a higher percentage of demonstratives as extended reference than the high proficiency students (See Table 8). However, this is due to the low proficiency students’ unusually higher incidence of *that* as extended reference in the object position than that of high proficiency students. Actually, such use of *that* was not found in the NES’s compositions at all (See Table 6).

**TABLE 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NES (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>HEFL (N=31), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>LEFL (N=30), [mean (%), (S.D.)]</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of extended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference</td>
<td>36.04 (32.29)</td>
<td>14.49 (24.11)</td>
<td>22.93 (32.39)</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The present study was carried out in order to examine how Korean EFL college students’ use of reference in argumentative essays in EFL Korean argumentative essays differ from that of native English speakers, with the consideration of Korean students’ level of English proficiency. In-depth analysis of referential cohesive devices, employing detailed categories of them considering many aspects, such as their types, forms, syntactic roles, functions, meanings, and positions, revealed some compelling findings as follows. With respect to the use of reference to refer to nominal referents in the preceding text, the syntactic role of nominal reference influenced the relative difficulty for the Korean EFL students. When references were used in the subject position in a sentence, the Korean EFL students did not show significant differences from the NES in referential choices, regardless of their types and forms. However, the Korean students showed differences from the NES regarding references used for other syntactic roles, such as an object in the sentence and a determiner in front of nouns (in possessive positions). For example, both levels of Korean students used significantly less number of the third person singular form of reference as a determiner (i.e., *its* in possessive position) than the NES who actually used *its* quite frequently. In fact, none of the low proficiency Korean students employed *its* in their compositions. In addition, the low proficiency Korean students used significantly less number of the third person plural form in object positions, *them*, to refer back to nominal referents in the preceding
text than the NES did in their compositions. Also, both levels of the Korean EFL students used *these* as an object in the sentence to refer to nominal referents in the preceding text, whereas none of the NES used *these* for such function. That is, although the Korean students showed ability in managing reference in subject positions, they showed less control of using nominal references in object and possessive positions in the sentence.

When it came to reference referring to non-nominal referents in the preceding discourse (i.e., extended text), the Korean EFL students showed quite different referential choices from the NES. Such use of reference, which applies only to the singular form of *it, this, and that* used without a following noun, was evident when it was used as a subject in the sentence for both the NES and Korean students. However, the NES mainly used demonstrative *this* as extended reference whereas both levels of the Korean EFL students mainly used pronoun *it* for such function. This means that Korean students showed a very different pattern of using extended reference. Actually, extended reference is "one of the major cohesive devices of the English language," (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 67), and such use "accounts for the majority of all instances of demonstratives" (p. 66). This suggests that Korean students used one of the major functions of demonstratives quite differently from the NES, which is actually a very important cohesive device in English language. Therefore, careful attention should be paid to the use of extended reference to enhance L2 learners' awareness and more control of it to build textual cohesion in their compositions.

As for the definite article, The NES used significantly more anaphoric definite article *the*, which indicates its noun is a particular one mentioned in the preceding text, than both levels of the Korean EFL students. This means the Korean students did not seem to manage the definite article *the* appropriately to define nouns. In short, the Korean students showed a lack of control over using anaphoric definite article *the*.

Based on the findings of the study, important pedagogical implications can be drawn. Most of all, the use of reference in English writing should be presented in relation to the concept of textual cohesion. Although it is undoubtful that cohesion is an essential asset of good writing, EFL students are not familiar with this notion (Park, 2004). In writing classes, therefore, students should be explicitly taught what referential cohesive devices are, why they are important, and how they contribute to textual cohesion. This implies that even grammar instruction for the use of reference should include discourse perspective that goes beyond the sentence-level that contributes overall textual cohesion.

Some of the important findings that should get more specific attention in L2 writing and grammar classes follow. First, L2 teachers can be informed that the syntactic role of reference influenced the relative difficulty for Korean EFL students when referring to nominal referents in the preceding text. More attention and pedagogical exercises should
be given to Korean students dealing with reference in object and possessive positions where students showed more difficulty than in subject positions.

Second, L2 teachers can be noted that Korean students used one of the major functions of demonstratives quite differently from the NES, which is actually a very important cohesive device in English language. Whereas the NES mainly used demonstrative *this* as extended reference in subject position, both levels of the Korean EFL students mostly used pronoun *it* for such function. Therefore, careful attention and more exercises should be given to the use of extended reference to enhance L2 learners’ awareness and more control of it to build textual cohesion in their writing.

Third, L2 teachers can be informed that the use of the definite articles in anaphoric function was shown to be problematic for many Korean. Students need to be provided with and exposed to sample discourse that includes articles in context beyond sentence-level in order to learn them well and internalize them, instead of being merely explained the rules regarding the use of the definite articles with some isolated sentence-level examples. Presenting the rule without context may not be very helpful at all.

The present study has some limitations that need to be addressed and considered for future research. The first limitation concerns the number of sample size. The corpus size used in this study is not large enough to claim that the participants in the present study can be absolute representative of Korean university students and native English speakers.

In addition, the level of English proficiency of the Korean participants may not be substantially diverse, as all of them were from the same university. If the study were conducted with subjects from a wider range of English proficiency levels from different tiers of university, the results might have been different and even been able to yield more information on level effects. Therefore, if the availability of data permits, it will be ideal to include subjects from more diverse levels of English proficiency, ideally with more number of participants, in order to increase the generalizability of the research findings. Demographic characteristics of the male to female ratio of the participants in this study may also have the possibility to limit the generalization of the results. While the native English speaking participants in this study consisted of an almost equal number of both genders, the Korean EFL participants were all female students with the assumption that there would be no significant gender effect on EFL writing. However, if the availability of data permits, it will be desirable to include participants with an even number of both genders in order to minimize any possible gender effect. Finally, the native English speaking participants in this study were more educated than the Korean EFL counterparts. Although the native corpora were used as model essays to be compared with Korean EFL students, it would be more desirable to match the native English speaking participants and Korean EFL learners regarding their cognitive and education level.
This study calls for more research that may show the use of other types of cohesive devices such as conjunctions and lexical cohesive devices, using detailed coding categories of them, in order to complete the whole picture of the use of cohesive devices in Korean EFL writing. Also, further research is called for in other written genres, such as expository, narrative, and descriptive writing. Such research may answer whether the findings obtained from the argumentative essays in this study can be generalized to other genres in EFL writing. In addition, it would be interesting to see how the use of referential cohesive devices is similar or different in various genres of native English speakers’ and EFL learners’ writing.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX
Coding Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Head subject position</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>nominal item (<em>it</em>)</th>
<th>extended text (<em>it</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>nominal item (<em>they</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>object position</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>nominal item (<em>it</em>)</td>
<td>extended text (<em>it</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>nominal item (<em>them</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Modifier: determinant | singular (*its*) |                           |          |                       |                     |
|                      |                 |                           |          |                       |                     |
|                       |                 |                           |          |                       |                     |
|                       |                 |                           |          |                       |                     |

| Demonstrative | Head subject position | near | singular | nominal item (*this*) | extended text (*this*) |
|               |                        |      | plural    | nominal item (*these*) |                     |
|               |                        |      | nominal item (*that*) | extended text (*that*) |                     |
|               |                        |      | nominal item (*those*) |                     |                     |

| Modifier: determinant | near | singular | nominal item (*this*) |          | extended text (*this*) |          |
|                      |      | plural    | nominal item (*these*) |          |                         |          |
|                      |      | nominal item (*that*) | extended text (*that*) |          |                         |          |
|                      |      | nominal item (*those*) |                     |          |                         |          |

| Definite Article | near | singular | (*this*) |          |                         |          |
|                  |      | plural    | (*these*) |          |                         |          |
|                  |      | singular | (*that*)  |          |                         |          |
|                  |      | plural    | (*those*) |          |                         |          |
Applicable levels: college level of EFL learners
Key words: cohesion, reference, pronouns, definite articles, demonstratives

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Received in June, 2012
Reviewed in July, 2012
Revised version received in August, 2012