Syntactic and Referential Markers Ensuring Objectivity in EFL Essay Writing

Seon-Yoo Hwang (Woosong University)*
Myong-Kwan Lee (Anyang University)


The purpose of the study is to describe differences between writing of NNS and NS and explain them from the cross-cultural perspective. As a contrastive study, this study compared the use of objectivity markers, particularly syntactic and referential, in persuasive essays of NNSs and NSs. It examined sixty-nine essays, of which forty-six came from Korean EFL students and twenty-three essays from a group of native English speakers as a baseline data for comparison. The measure used to represent differences between NS and NNS data was the Mann-Whitney U Test. The results of the study demonstrate that NNS writing is different from that of NSs in the use of objectivity markers: amplifiers, 1st person both singular and plural, and 2nd personal pronouns. These results are possibly caused not only by linguistic features themselves including linguistic complexity or L2 learnability but also by different conventions accepted in different writing traditions. Consequently, the study suggests that the finding helps EFL teachers and researchers identify the influence of the L2 learners' first language on learning a second or foreign language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Identifying and analyzing linguistic structures in writing products has been a focus of interest in SLA to describe and evaluate L2 writings. The linguistic structure analysis is able to provide us what the sentences in the L2 writing look like and show us how NNS writing is different from NS. Some of research work has demonstrated that writing of NNSs does not present balanced argumentation and can be generalization-prone and

* Seon-Yoo Hwang and Myong-Kwan Lee are coauthors.
subjective to a greater extent than that of NS (Scarcella, 1984; Scarcella & Lee, 1989). Hvitlefeldt (1992) indicated that NNS writing had a tendency to give a one-sided presentation rather than a balanced argument. Compared with NS, Carlson (1988) stated that L2 writing of Chinese students contained fewer justification, credibility, persuasion, and reasoning devices, which lead to be scored significantly lower than those of NSs. If a number of research claim that the writings of NNSs have some different and distinctive characteristics that result in unbalanced argumentation and subjectivity, it is important to find answers to why their writings are regarded as being less objective and less balanced.

Enkvist (1985) pointed out that linguistic structure analysis can not show us why writers use particular structures and rhetorical devices even though it contributes to explaining and understanding L2 writing to some extent. To answer the 'why' question, the analysis needs to be expanded towards cross-cultural dimension. Contrastive rhetoric as an area of SLA research, which claims that language and writing are cultural phenomena, has identified problems in L2 composition and attempted to explain them from the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural point.

As a contrastive study, this study compared the use of objectivity markers, particularly syntactic and referential, in the persuasive essays of Korean students with that in essays of NSs. Therefore, the study aimed at identifying the Korean specific discourse features reflected on their English writings. Also, it examined the effect of cross-cultural influences on the each marker by referring to rhetoric conventions of writer's L1, Korean.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Objectivity in English writing

Writing skill is the ability to use language to communicate effectively when a writer intends to convey his or her views or claims to the target reader community. Writings are functionally based on communicative competence that includes four different subcategories (Canale, 1983). The first two subcategories (grammatical and discourse competence) reflect the use of linguistic system itself and the last two (socio-linguistic and strategic competence) have the functional aspects of communication. Swales (1990) stated that a writing is a "sociorhetorical" discourse which takes place in a community of writers and readers who function within a framework of communicative goals, conventions, socialization processes, and solidarity moves.

In a composition class, students are usually instructed and expected to present their ideas or viewpoints objectively. It means students are to develop a topic from a balanced approach and offer a sound argumentation in a logical way and to give their views
credibility by supporting them with sufficient information. For instance, Raimes (1992) and Smoke (1992) encourage writers to use facts, analogies, statistics, references to valid sources when they convince the reader and establish their objectivity. Similarly, Leki (1995) states that a writer must show how a generalization applies to a typical case by providing analogies to explain ideas, facts or references to authoritative sources that bring objective evidence to prove his or her point, when he or she induces the reader into the validity of his or her claims.

Also, writers should use effective communication strategies and skills to convey their statements and successfully persuade their audience. For giving good reasons of believing to the target audience, it is important to make an attempt to approach a topic from a balanced perspective. Writers can provide their claims with validity and credibility as long as they can keep their writing objective. For scientific objectivity, Atkinson (1991) suggested the superordinate notion of scientific objectivity at least partly conventional in origin, which can be displayed in followings; first, how the writer approaches and develops a topic, second, how he or she conforms to written discourse paradigms, and finally how he or she employs syntactic and referential markers.

2. Syntactic and Referential Markers for Objectivity

A writing including argumentative and persuasive discourse has been analyzed to identify specific characteristics of objective written discourse that conforms to the discourse community norms. In fact, a lot of linguists have studied structures of writing at the syntactic and discourse levels as well as at speech-act sequences in persuasion (Aston, 1977; Kummer, 1972).

Arnaudet and Barrett (1984) stated that syntactic structures serve to advance the writer's objective and balanced position in argumentation; the use of passive constructions, citations of relevant sources, hedging devices, and concessive clauses. Carlson (1988) also stated that the writer must convey his or her credibility with the use of such rhetorical strategies as justified claims, generalizations, and qualifications and structural markers such as the passive voice and existential constructions in writings. Moreover, Swales and Feak (1994) mentioned that NNS writers need to use the appropriate pronouns, impersonal passive, and hedged claims to promote objectivity of their writing.

Atkinson (1991) analyzed rhetorical and syntactic features related to objectivity in writings and then found that at the rhetorical level academic norms prescribe establishing the territory and employing scientific passive and appropriate pronouns. For example 'we and us' rather than 'I and me' are commonly used in academic writing. Moreover, Hinkel (1999) emphasized the importance of use of syntactic and referential markers in
argumentative writing and identified the markers to ensure writing objectivity: concessives, the passive voice, slot fillers, amplifiers and emphatics, pronouns, and modal verbs.

3. Previous Constrative Studies on L2 Writing

Contrastive text linguistics research on students' writing has started in the 1980s and expanded the genres, including essays written for narrative, reflective, and persuasive purposes. Some text studies have examined language use, coherence and discourse patterns in different languages while others have studied a different order and emphasis derived from the cultural backgrounds.

As for writing style, Bickner and Peyasantiwong (1988) compared reflective essays, which make students think deeply and express one’s own perspectives on topics, written by Thai and American students. They found out that there were differences in language use. For example, the Thai students used less colloquial languages and less personal in style than did the Americans. Also, some text studies have contrasted coherence and discourse patterns of various kinds in different languages. For instance, Hinds (1990) has shown that certain text structures are used to achieve coherence, which guides the reader in making the right inference and that textual patterns used to express coherence vary among languages and cultures.

Söter (1988) examined narratives written by native English-, Arabic-, and Vietnamese-speaking school children in Australia. She found differences in the structures of their stories that depend on the cultural backgrounds. It means that there was a different order of the elements of story structures and emphasis on action even though the three groups of students used same story structures including setting, character, and action. The Vietnamese students were more concerned about context than the other two, while the Arabic students showed a preference for more detailed description.

With regard to objectivity markers, Carlson (1988) compared the L2 writing of Chinese students with NS writing with similar educational levels and training. He found that Chinese students used fewer objectivity devices in their writings than NSs. His finding appears in the same line with the claim of Connor and Lauer (1988) that additional divergencies in the use of objectivity strategies may come from different cross-cultural views on the writer's objectivity and credibility. Connor and Lauer derived the claim from their work that compared the use of objectivity and credibility devices in the persuasive writing of American, British, and New Zealand students.

For the purpose of identifying objectivity devices, Hinkel (1999) examined and compared the compositions of NSs and advanced and training NNSs who were from China, Japan, Indonesia and Korea. The devices for the study contain rhetorical objectivity and syntactic and referential markers. According to his study, although both groups used
analogies, third person singular pronouns, and predictive modals at similar rates, NNS writing showed differences from that of NSs in the use of the other 17 devices and markers of rhetorical objectivity such as concessives, passive, slot fillers, pronouns (1st, 2nd pronouns, & 3rd plural), and possibility and necessity modal verbs. Hinkel drew a conclusion that NNS had difficulty in accessing to American notions of objectivity writing even though they had relatively high linguistic proficiency. As seen in previous studies above, the students’ writing has been examined from various perspectives through contrastive text linguistics research. These studies may help teachers to understand students’ composition and try to find effective teaching and learning methods.

III. METHOD

In the same line with Henkel (1999), the study compared persuasive essays of Korean university students with those of native English speakers who are teaching English and reside in Korea. This section consisted of an analysis of the syntactic and referential markers written by Korean EFL students and native English instructors, in contrast with Hinkel study focusing on NSs and NNS ESL students including Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indonesian speakers who had resided for 1.5 to 3.1 years.

1. Participants

In the study, sixty-nine persuasive essays were examined. Of these essays, forty-six came from Korean EFL students who were taking a TOEFL writing course offered by a university language institute in Seoul. They are at intermediate level that is between 680 and 750 on the TOEIC. They are undergraduates or graduates with a variety of majors including economics, education, geology, computer science, mechanical engineering, and so on. For twelve weeks, they had taken a 2-hour writing course twice a week that dealt with TOEFL writing topics.

As baseline data for comparison, twenty-three essays came from a group of native English speakers who are teaching English at college level in Korea. All native English speakers come from America or Canada and they’ve been teaching here in Korea for a period from 1 year to 12 years. They’ve taken master degrees with various majors in their countries. Most of them have no experience in teaching writing courses and they are teaching mainly English conversation and listening. Only two of them have been teaching some writing courses.
2. Data Collection Procedure

For this research, the students were asked to write an essay within fifty minutes when they were instructed to brainstorm, or generate ideas on the topic, and then organize these ideas for their essays. Then they were asked to make a rough draft and receive feedback from their peer and revise and complete their writing. On the other hand, the native speakers were sent an email asking background information and an one-page persuading essay on the same topics as were the Korean students.

The essay was written in response to questions that were modeled on the TOEFL. These are independent TOEFL essay questions stating personal preference. The students and native instructors were free to choose one of four topics as they feel comfortable to write about. These questions were selected because they were not presented in their writing class but students are familiar with the type of the questions. The questions in details were as follows:

① Some movies are serious, designed to make the audience think. Other movies are designed primarily to amuse and entertain. Which type of movie do you prefer?

② Some people believe that money spent on space research benefits all of humanity. Others take the opposite view and say that money for this type of research is wasted. Discuss these two positions using example. Tell which view you agree with and explain why.

③ Students at universities often have a choice of places to live. They may choose to live in university dormitories, or they may choose to live in university housing with the advantages of living in an apartment in the community. Where would you prefer to live? Give reasons for your preference.

④ Some people choose friends who are different from themselves. Others choose friends who are similar to themselves. Compare the advantages of having friends who are different from you with the advantages of having friends who are similar to you. Which kind of friend do you prefer for yourself? Why?

3. Data Analysis

The objectivity markers analyzed for the study were the same with Hinkel's (1999) objectivity markers except modal verbs; concessives, the passive voice, slot fillers,
amplifiers and emphatics, and pronouns. Unlike the Hinkel study, modal verbs are excluded in this analysis since they have more than one meaning of use despite conveying the strength of speakers’ attitudes or feelings. For this reason, they need to be examined in depth in another study.

In this study, the number of words in the 69 essays was counted and also the occurrences of the syntactic and referential markers were counted. A computation was performed for the percentage of use of these markers respectively for each of the markers. For example, if an essay consists of 200 words and has 5 occurrences of a target marker, the percentage of the use of the marker is 2.5 (5/200=2.5%) for the essay.

To represent the data, this study used the median, which corresponds to the point at or below 50% when the data are arranged in numerical order, in that the median is not affected by extreme scores that occasionally occur but have no particular significance. No parametric statistical comparisons of NS and NNS data were used because the majority of percentage rates did not show a normal distribution because a large number of essays did not contain all types of the devices and markers. The range displayed in TABLE 1 is a measure of distance from the lowest to the highest score. Also, this study made use of boxplot which gives greater prominence to the dispersion of the data. The measure used to evaluate whether medians between NS and NNS data differ significantly was the Mann-Whitney U Test.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of the study, the following syntactic and referential markers were identified and analyzed; concessives, the passive voice, slot fillers, amplifiers, and personal pronouns. The medians and ranges of the occurrences are presented in TABLE 1 along with only Koreans and NS data from the Hinkel study (1999). Concerning the number of words in 69 essays, NNS writings ranged from 184 to 331, while NSs from 243 to 527.
TABLE 1

Syntactic and referential markers in Korean and NS essays (median %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>Native Speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessives</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>1.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>2.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slot fillers</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>2.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amplifiers</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>1.188*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>4.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (1st sg)</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>1.140*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>13.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we (1st pl)</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>1.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (2nd sg/pl)</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>10.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she (3rd sg)</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>1.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they (3rd pl)</td>
<td>median %</td>
<td>1.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>6.618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2-tailed \( p \leq .05 \). Note: All comparisons are relative to English speakers.

1. Syntactic Markers

Each example for each marker was selected from the data and shown in this section and data analysis is described compared with that of the Hinkel study.

1) Concessives

For example: *Although independent life is important, students have more advantages living in university dormitories.*

Concessive clauses can be used to present a balanced argument, which contains opposite ideas or introduce background information in a persuasive essay (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Sartvik, 1985; Biber, 1988). Jacobs (1995) stated that concessive clauses are used to contrast ideas and that the information included in the subordinate structures is usually less crucial than that in the independent clause. Therefore, concessive could be an effective and logical marker to express writers' ideas more smoothly in that concessive helps make their argument reasonable and convincing.
The raw data of this study displayed that the Koreans’ writings contained merely low level of occurrences overall as did those of NSs. The Korean students seemed to avoid using concessive clauses and phrases, which have complex sentence structures. The result showed that there was no significant difference between Korean (0.00 median%) and NS essay writings (0.00 median%) since both groups used few concessive clauses over a variety of topics. It is contradictory to Hinkel’s data, which displayed higher rate of concessives of NNSs.

In case of NSs, it is interesting that in presenting a balanced argument they seemed to prefer two separate sentence structures using ‘however’ instead of one sentence. For example, we found the sentences like this ‘You know each other so well that you even know what each other need to cheer each other up. However, having friends who are different is an advantage.....’ The example demonstrated that NSs used two separate sentences in developing their viewpoint for building a balanced argument without a subordinate concessive clause. Therefore, it may not be clear cut to conclude that less frequent use of concessives results in less balanced argument. In case of concessives, the syntactic marker seems to restrictive in deciding whether the writers include the opposite side of their arguments.

2) Passive

For example: There are fewer friends around them in the community, so their individual lives are protected.

In general, passive voice is used to convey objectivity and uninvolvement (Biber, 1988; Chafe, 1985; Myers, 1989) and works for topic-and subject matter-dependent style as one of the more typical markers of academic writing. The data indicated that there was no significant difference in using passive constructions between two groups, in that the data showed .71 median % of Korean and .59% of natives though the Koreans used more passive sentences than the NSs.

The result is not compatible with Carlson study (1988), which the more frequent use of passive in NNS reveals to be topic and subject matter dependent, and Hinkel data (1999). A more plausible explanation of the finding would seem to be that the student essay examined for the research is more personal and less formal in style than academic writings such as a journal article and a research proposal, considering that passive voice functions as a typical marker of academic writing.
3) Slot Fillers

For example: It is critical for students to decide where to live.

Huebler (1983) classified nonreferential 'it' as a complex syntactic hedging device that removes the main proposition to the secondary clausal position. Myers (1989) explained that the filler 'it' serves to depersonalize text and create a sense of hedged objectivity when accompanied with private and perception verbs like 'seem' and 'appear'. According to Quirk et al. (1985), function of 'there' can be similar to that of 'it' in that it contributes to the depersonalization of text and increase the overall impression of textual objectivity.

The NNSs were of fewer occurrences (.56%) of nonreferential 'it' and existential 'there' than did NSs (.94%), but there wasn't any significant difference in the median %. If slot fillers function as building a sense of objectivity, it is meaningful that the NNSs employed slot fillers as frequently as NSs. Moreover, from the fact that the median % of NNSs was more than Hinkel study (1999), it indicates that the Korean writing is approaching to objectivity level accepted in academic writing.

4) Amplifiers

Amplifiers (very, many, perfectly, almost, much, lots of, a lot of, just, even, too, really, positively, more and more, a little, rather, a great amount of, a number of, completely, absolutely, truly)

For example: First, I enjoy our shared taste without spending a lot of time.

Amplifiers indicate certainty and a high degree of conviction and function as a device for the reliability of propositions and claims (Biber, 1988), while diminishing the writer's objectivity (Quirk et al., 1985). Since amplifiers tend to make text more colloquial and less academic (Smoke, 1992), they are rarely found in written published texts or academic genre (Huebler, 1983; Myers, 1989) and may not be appropriate in propositional contexts (Homes, 1984).

In the study, the writings of NNSs contained a significantly higher rate of amplifiers than did NSs as seen in FIGURE 1, and the difference was statistically significant. It is a similar finding to the Hinkel study (1999) that the essays of NNS contained significantly more amplifiers than those of NS. It is obvious that even though ESL composition texts (Smoke, 1992; Raimes, 1992) advise against use of amplifiers that cause to decrease the writer's objectivity and credibility, EFL writings has not improved in the way as expected.
2. Referential Markers (Personal Pronouns)

1) First person singular

First person singular (I, me, my, myself)

For example: Whenever I'm in trouble and want to get out of the world, I usually go to a movie theater.

Myers (1989) stated that first person singular pronouns work for presenting statements that the writers assume that everyone can potentially share. The data of this study showed that the Koreans employed noticeably less first person singular pronouns in their essay writings than the NSs. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the median % between Korean (1.14%) and NS (3.56%) as shown in FIGURE 2. The finding of the study supports the result of Ohta (1991), Scollon (1991), Myers (1989), which demonstrated that NS made more frequent use of first person singular pronouns than NNS. Concerning writing conventions, they interpreted that Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writing traditions would seem to avoid using first person singular pronouns since the pronouns are associated with the individual rather than the group belonging. The Koreans seem to hesitate to express their individual perspectives and they are more likely to associate individuals' claim with groups' one on the given topic.
2) First person plural

First person plural (we, us, our, ourselves)

For example: If we make friends who are different from us, first, we share various experiences.

Contrary to 1st person singular pronouns, use of first person plural pronouns (we and its other forms) is associated with the collective identity as Atkinson (1991) stated that 'we' and 'us' mark formal, interactive and conventionalized forms in academic writing.

The data of this study showed that Koreans employed more first person plural pronouns in their essay writings than NSs. The FIGURE 3 showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the median % between Korean (1.03%) and NSs (0.00%). This result is in accordance with the findings of Hinkel (1999), in which the occurrences of the pronouns in the essays of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indonesian were significantly more than those in the NS writings. According to Ohta (1991), Scollon (1991), Myers (1989), the finding can be related with Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writing traditions that prevent writers from using first person singular pronouns. Consequently, the Koreans showed a tendency to create group belonging and group boundaries. It means they are willing to involve their audience in whole one group with using 'we' or 'our'. From the point of writing objectivity, the data make us believe that the Koreans created more formal writing based on Atkinson (1991) claim, which suggests that at the rhetorical level
academic norms prescribe employing appropriate pronouns, 'we and us' rather than 'I and me'.

3) Second person singular and plural

Second person singular and plural (you, your, yourself, yourselves)

For example: If you are an American, making a Korean friend would give you a big change in understanding others' lives.

According to the result of this study, both groups employed few 2nd person pronouns appropriate to developing their arguments in their writings. The median of Koreans is 0.00% and that of NSs is 0.23% (Fig 4), yet this result showed a statistically significant difference. It supports the Smoke's claim (1992) that we, Koreans rarely use 2nd person for essay writing. In view of the ideas of Swales and Feak (1994) that writers should not address the reader as 'you', it is more acceptable for the Koreans to use fewer 2nd person pronouns in academic writing.

However, this result is contradictory to claims of Hwang and Ohta. Hwang (1987) and Ohta (1991) claim that 'you' be used to involve the reader and create group belonging in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist rhetoric. Contrary to Korean rhetoric tradition, the data represented that the Korean used second person less frequently than the NNSs. Our data did not agree with Hinkel (1999) result, which NNS used significantly more 2nd person pronouns. Based on his explanation that use of 2nd person pronouns possibly makes writing more personal, NS of this study created more personal essay writing. It is true that NSs employed 'you' more, so that they might try to elicit the reader's involvement in their
writing products as well as making their writing more personal. On the other hand, the Koreans might be more likely to use ‘we’ or ‘us’ rather than ‘you’, when creating group belonging and group solidarity. It is likely to be interpreted that the Koreans extend and form their group belonging embracing writers and readers as a whole and that they produce more formal writing.

FIGURE 4

Second person singular and plural

4) Third person singular and plural

Third person singular (he, she, him, her, his, her[s]), and plural (they, them, their[s], themselves)

For example:

His life and peace can be easily destroyed by outer hazard.
They can decorate their rooms in their own ways.

Third person pronouns are markers of inexact reference to persons and objects that are not accessible immediately in scope of the writer's view (Biber, 1988). According to Smoke (1992), 3rd person pronouns are viewed as imparting formality and objectivity to composition writing. Therefore, use of 3rd person pronouns can be effective in increasing objectivity in essay writings. Scollon (1993) and Johnson (1995) showed the distinction between 3rd person singular and 3rd person plural pronouns. Since they explain that the former is outsider individual while the latter is the outsider group, the use of 3rd person pronouns represents the boundaries of group belonging as well as outsiders.

In the result of this study, there was no statistical difference between the Koreans and NSs in using 3rd person pronouns. Of course, Koreans used more 3rd person plural
pronouns than did NSs, but there was not any significant difference in the median %. The result designated that the Koreans prefer using plural pronouns to singular although this was not a statistically significant difference. It can be inferred that Koreans seem to feel more comfortable to mention group's idea than an individual's one. However, this finding of the study was not in accordance with the result of the Hinkel study (1999) in which NNSs used the 3rd person plural ‘they’ at a significantly higher rate than NSs did.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrated the Korean students' writing is different from that of NSs in the use of objectivity markers such as amplifiers, 1st and 2nd person singular and plural pronouns. It means that the Korean writers employed more amplifiers and 1st person plural, while they used less 1st person singular pronouns and 2nd person pronouns. In terms of Hinkel's objectivity marker regarded as credibility and objectivity devices, Korean EFL students employed some kinds of syntactic and referential markers in the persuasive essay writing to a certain extent. Since the occurrences of slot fillers were no significant difference in statistics, which is almost same level as NSs, the fact causes to make writing text depersonalized and create a sense of hedged objectivity. Moreover, the Koreans used fewer 2nd person pronouns and more 1st person plural pronouns that are considered as more formal and interactive context in academic writing in English (Atkinson, 1991). However, some objectivity markers, which are concessives, passive, and 1st person singular, were not demonstrated in the Koreans’ writing. The results demonstrated that NNSs avoided using concessives and passive voice. They appear to lead us to believe that the target structures are not easy to use considering NNs language proficiency level. However, that is not true in this study because NS showed as few as did NNS. Another possible explanation would fall into the fact that the linguistic construction a writer employs depends on what kind of writing topic it is. If a writer is given a different topic, there could be different use of linguistic structures in his or her writing. Additionally, we need to pay close attention to writers using amplifiers that diminish the writer’s objectivity and may not be appropriate in propositional contexts (Holmes, 1984). Considering the Korean students tend to rely on amplifiers more often to develop their ideas and persuade their audience, teachers should be more careful to instruct and encourage them to elicit more appropriate devices or context to improve their writing. Taken as a whole, the difference between NSs and Koreans’ writing seems to narrow down regarding some syntactic and referential markers. In other words, the Korean writing is becoming more accessible to objectivity of American writing convention.
The results are possibly caused not only by linguistic features like linguistic complexity and learnability but also by different conventions accepted in different writing traditions. It is not surprising that EFL writers use patterns of language and stylistic conventions that they have learned in their first languages and cultures. There is hardly any doubt that the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language influence on writing in a foreign language. Thus, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, we can infer differences and problems that foreign language writers may encounter. In Korean rhetorical tradition, Hwang (1987) and Yum (1987) showed that factual objectivity and persuasion have little value because the Korean writer is expected to achieve a mutual understanding with the reader and avoid overt persuasion. Rather, Koreans usually depend on historical allusions, references to common wisdom, direct personal appeals, and advice associated with objectivity in Korean rhetoric convention. As an example of L1 influence on EFL writing, this study showed the use of 1st person plural pronouns, which imply mutual understanding with the reader, was distinctive in Koreans' writing whereas NSs used 1st person singular pronoun more frequently. In the same context, the Korean students did not mention 2nd person as referring to their reader or the opposite side of their argument.

In teaching EFL writings, teaching discrete skills and techniques associated with American rhetorical conventions has been a main emphasis. Even though it helps explain the readers' expectations and the writer's responsibility, the purpose of the study was not to provide pedagogic method but rather to provide teachers and researchers with knowledge about how the links between writer's L1 writing convention and writing are reflected on written products to make a way to understand EFL writing. The current study, however, was conducted with a small number of participants at an intermediate level of college students. Therefore, the results are hard to generalize to entire EFL students. Especially, it leaves us questioning about what happens to advanced level of students. Also, the study analyzed occurrences of the target markers that have mix results on how much they contribute to text objectivity. Furthermore, we need to examine the context the markers are set in and to trace why the writers place some specific markers in the written contexts. It, thus, would be meaningful to to cover these areas for further research. There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master among four language skills and the skills involved in writing are highly complex. This work will make a step forward finding ways to help learners create more effective writing products and improving our practice as teachers and researchers.
REFERENCES


Swales, J., & Feak, C. (1994). *Academic writing for graduate students.* Ann Arbor, MI:
University of Michigan Press.

Applicable levels: university
Key words: essay writing, syntactic and referential markers

Seon-Yoo Hwang
Department of Culinary Arts-Study Abroad
Woosong University
17-2 Jayang-Dong Dong-Ku
Daejeon, 300-718, Korea.
Email: syoohw@hanmail.net

Myong-Kwan Lee
Division of Liberal Arts
Anyang University
708-113, Anyang 5-dong, Manan-gu,
Anyang-si, Gyeonggi-do, 430-714, Korea
Email: lmk12@hanmail.net

Received in August, 2008
Reviewed in September, 2008
Revised version received in November, 2008