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A Corpus Analysis of the Preposition *of* in Korean College Matriculants' Writing

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This paper investigated the use of *of*, the most frequently occurring preposition, in essays written by 416 matriculants at a Korean university. The learner corpus consisting of these essays contained 1,250 tokens of *of*, and these tokens were first analyzed according to their functions, i.e., integrative, separative, idiomatic, and others, adapted from Lindstromberg's (2010) categorization of the functions of *of*. To ascertain what types of errors were made regarding *of*, the 46 tokens of *of* identified as errors were further categorized as addition, misordering, misformation, or wrong position. Of these four categories, addition was found to be the most frequently occurring type of error (31 of the 46 tokens), while wrong preposition and misformation accounted for ten and three tokens, respectively. No tokens of misordering were found, however. Also noteworthy is the finding that, albeit occurring mostly in simple constructions and basic functions, *of* was used accurately in over 95% of all the tokens found in the learner corpus.

Key words: the preposition *of*, academic writing, corpus, error analysis, nominalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Prepositions function as relational indicators, mostly of space or time, between two items (Taylor, 2012). Unlike content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, prepositions mainly serve grammatical functions and thus are known as function words,

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along with articles, pronouns, and conjunctions. Understandably, function words occur more frequently than do content words: the definite article is the most commonly occurring word in any given text (Berry, 1993), and the preposition *of*, which belongs to the ten most frequent words, along with *to* and *in*, is the most commonly occurring preposition (Sinclair, 1991b).

A number of researchers have dealt with various ways to conceptualize prepositions (e.g., Dirven, 1993; Lee, 2012; Lindstromberg, 2010; Taylor, 1993), which can be used to help L2 learners of English acquire prepositions (Boers & Demecheleer, 1998). Dirven (1993), for example, points out that prepositions are subjective and language-specific, which motivates him to investigate prepositions in terms of physical space, and then proceeds to further analyze them in the frame of mental space.

Using corpus-based methods of analysis, some researchers have also explored naturally-occurring data to identify the patterns of preposition use by native speakers (e.g., Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Renouf & Sinclair, 1991; Seilhamer, 2011), to investigate the errors involving prepositions committed by second language learners (e.g., Ahn, 2013; Back, 2011; Yu & Yoo, 2010), and to ascertain whether learners of English possess the semantic knowledge of various prepositions (e.g., Gvarishvili, 2013; Mueller, 2011).

Prepositions, however, still remain extremely difficult for L2 learners of English to master (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Cowan, 2008). The difficulty of acquiring the complete usage of these prepositions has several possible explanations, one of which is that prepositions are polysemous (Taylor, 1993; Tyler & Evans, 2003). For example, combined with nouns, adjectives, or verbs, *of* has 22 different meanings (Sinclair, 1991b). In addition to the diversity of meanings of prepositions, replacing one preposition in a sentence with another may trigger a subtle meaning difference, as in (1), which the learners of English may not be able to distinguish (Lee, 2012, p. 25):

(1) I know *of* him but I do not know *about* him.

The only difference in example (1) is the prepositions used. “I know of him” indicates that I know of the existence of the man, but “I do not know about him” asserts that I do not know any details about matters concerning the man.

Despite its high frequency and its potential to cause various learning difficulties stemming from polysemy, the preposition *of* has been given short shrift as no research studies have been done on its use by learners of English. Thus, with data retrieved from a corpus containing essays written by Korean learners of English, this study will probe into how Korean learners of English at the university level use the preposition *of* in their writing by answering the following questions:

1. What functions of *of* do Korean learners of English use in their writing?
2. How accurately do Korean learners of English use the preposition *of* and what types of errors do they make concerning *of*?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kennedy (1998), about 100 prepositions, both single and complex, exist in English, but only a few of them are used frequently, "with one preposition, *of* typically accounting for almost 30% of all prepositional tokens" (p. 139). Although corpus-based studies can "reveal previously undescribed systemic and distributional information," there is a dearth of such studies on how the English prepositional system is used (ibid.). Moreover, the preposition *of* has rarely been the focal subject of any studies, not to mention its actual usage by Korean learners of English. There have been only a few attempts to ascertain how accurately Korean learners of English use prepositions— namely, Ahn (2013), Back (2011), and Yu and Yoo (2010).

Limiting their analysis of prepositions to the ones occurring with intransitive verbs, e.g., *at* in *I looked at him*, Yu and Yoo (2010) have analyzed all the 1,317 tokens of such prepositions occurring in essays written by Korean college students and found that over a third of all the tokens containing such prepositions were used erroneously. They then categorized all the errors into "(a) preposition omission, (b) wrong prepositions, (c) preposition addition, (d) misordering, and (d) others" (pp. 408-409) and subsequently found that preposition omission accounted for more than half of all the errors (54%, 240 of the 448 tokens), e.g., *If we fail dormitory, we may live *(in) one room, HaSuk or GoSiOne* (p. 410). Yu and Yoo attributed such omission errors to the students' inability to recognize the fact that, unlike transitive verbs, intransitive verbs require a preposition in order to take an object.

Having adopted Yu and Yoo's (2010) categories of preposition errors, Ahn (2013) analyzed the use of transitive phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, i.e., intransitive verbs occurring with prepositions to take an object, in six different writing assignments completed by 63 Korean college students. In her data of 188,466 words, prepositional verbs occurred four times more frequently than did transitive phrasal verbs (413 and 102 tokens, respectively). Ahn found that 40% of the 102 tokens of transitive phrasal verbs were used erroneously while 33% of the 413 tokens of prepositional verbs were instances of errors. As was found by Yu and Yoo (2010), omission was the most common type of error with both transitive phrasal verbs, e.g., *They pick *(up) the menu* (p. 216), and prepositional verbs, e.g., *There are other people waiting *(for) me* (p. 220).

Unlike Yu and Yoo (2010) and Ahn (2013), who limited their analyses of prepositions to

those that occur with verbs only, Back (2011) investigated all the instances of the prepositions occurring in a learner corpus consisting of both spoken and written texts produced by 134 Korean university students. The spoken data, which contained 33,140 words, were from a 10 minute face-to-face interview with each of the participants, and the written data, which contained 30,555 words, were from their in-class free composition. Having identified all the grammatical errors in his data, i.e., 1,357 tokens in the spoken data (4.1%) and 2,233 tokens in the written data (7.3%), Back then found that the errors involving prepositions accounted for 18% of all these errors, the other two most frequently occurring errors involving articles (7%) and the plural marker *-s* (22%), a finding which confirms "that mastering the correct usage of prepositions is one of the most difficult areas for Korean EFL learners" (p. 237).

As this brief summary of the existing literature on the use of prepositions by Korean learners of English suggests, there exists a need for more research studies dealing with how accurately Korean learners of English use prepositions in general, and the present study will serve as a step in the right direction by providing a detailed analysis of the preposition *of*, the most frequently occurring preposition in English.

3. METHOD

3.1. Data Collection

The data for this paper were collected from a learner corpus compiled from a placement test for 416 matriculants in the engineering and science departments at a Korean university in March 2010. The purpose of the test was to determine the students' levels of English so that they could be placed in a General English course appropriate for their proficiency. In a computer lab on campus, each student was given 50 minutes to write an essay on the following writing prompt, with any help from dictionaries or grammar references:

> If you could change one important thing in a school that you attended, what change would you make? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer. (No word limit)

Consisting of 98,351 words in total, all the essays were saved as 24 different text files in order to allow for a concordance program to be used to retrieve the data needed for the present paper. A commercially available concordancer called MonoConc Pro 2.2 was used to retrieve data, and to examine the data in a more systematic way, the concordance lines were sorted according to the words which appear to the left of the preposition *of.* The

reason for the left sorting is that *of* is more sensitive to what comes before than what comes after the preposition (Sinclair, 1991a). Each token was analyzed manually by the researchers to determine its function and error type.

3.2. Data Analysis

The functions of the preposition *of* will be analyzed by adapting Lindstromberg's (2010) function categories of *of*, i.e., (a) integrative, (b) separative, (c) idiomatic, and (d) others. Linstromberg (2010) asserts that *of* has a cardinal meaning of integration in that "the trajectory and the landmark[1] are integrated, as whole and part" (p. 206). This integrative aspect is illustrated in the following examples:

(2) a. the red roof *of* the house
b. the house with a red roof

(3) a. *the bowl of a crack
b. the crack in the bowl

Example (2a) indicates that the red roof and the house are integrated, which means the red roof is a part of the house in our knowledge of the world. On the other hand, *with* in example (2b) denotes that the red roof is an appurtenance of the house. However, example (3a) illustrates that the trajector and the subject are not integrative because a crack is not a part of a bowl, making (3a) ungrammatical but not (3b).

The preposition *of* originally had a locative meaning[2] like *away* or *from*, denoting a source (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002). Even though most usage of the preposition *of* does not denote a locative or separative meaning, it is not coincidental that the preposition *of* is used with the preposition *out* as in *out of* to indicate the change of location, which does not convey the integrative feature (Lindstromberg, 2010). For example, he explains that like *out of*, some usages of the preposition *of* that he introduces still have "traces of separation, privation, ridding, or emptying" in fossilized meaning, as in *be tired/ashamed/frightened of X, take care of somebody,* and *rob him of his money* (pp. 209-212). *Of* is also utilized in idiomatic expressions where "trajectory and landmark are highly integrative"

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[1] According to Langacker (1999), prepositions signal a relation between two entities, one of which is more prominent than the other. He termed this prominent, salient, and primary entity the trajectory and the secondary entity the landmark.

[2] Etymologically, the preposition *of* is considered to be spatial (Barnhart, 1988; Lindstromberg, 2010; O'Dowd, 1998; Pullum & Huddleston, 2002).

(Lindstromberg, 2010, p. 212) but they are different from integrative *of* discussed earlier in that the trajector in idiomatic expressions does not have a literal meaning but has an idiomatic one (e.g., *a giant of a man, a whale of a time, a hell of a fight*).

In order to ascertain the types of errors involving prepositions, the present paper will adapt Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982, pp. 150-162) surface strategy taxonomy, which "highlights the ways surface structures are altered" in the following ways: (a) omission, e.g., *Mary *(is) president new company*; (b) addition, e.g., *He doesn't *knows my name*; (c) misformation, e.g., *The dog *eated the chicken*; and (d) misordering, e.g., *I don't know what *is that*. As the present study examines only the occurrence of the preposition *of*, the following five categories will be used to classify errors involving *of*, with the exclusion of omission:

(a) **Addition:** the preposition *of* is incorrectly added
    e.g., *know much about *of the school*
(b) **Misformation:** *of* is incorrectly used instead of the possessive
    e.g., **creation of a student (a student's creation)*
(c) **Misordering**: *of* is incorrectly placed.
    e.g., **of destruction the environment (destruction of the environment)*
(d) **Wrong preposition:** *of* is incorrectly used instead of the right preposition
    e.g., *thankful *of (to) all the professors and staff*
(e) **Others**: uninterpretable or idiosyncratic errors
    e.g., *study for enjoy *of high quality*

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Functions of *of*

All in all, there were 1,250 tokens of the preposition *of* in the learner corpus. As Table 1 shows below, the integrative function accounted for the vast majority of all the tokens of *of* (1,003 tokens, over 80%), while the other two functional categories accounted for just a little over three percent of all the tokens of *of*—that is, 36 tokens of the separative function, examples (4), (5), and (6), and 3 tokens of the idiomatic function, examples (7):

(4) That means more captivating leisure activities available for students **tired of** studying all day.
(5) It's time for me to **take control of** my entire life which is overseen by someone else.
(6) Positive person **remind** other people **of** happy memories.

(7) That will help to break a **wall of** age between students.

Examples (4), (5), and (6) suggest that learners use a limited number of words or phrases that denote a separative function. For instance, in the "adjective + *of*" construction, most of the adjectives were basic words such as *proud*, *afraid,* and *scared*; with the "verb + noun phrase + *of*" construction, most of the verbs were also simple verbs such as *take*, while some examples contained slightly more complex structures such as "*remind* someone *of* something" and "*get rid of* something." The use of these more complex structures might have stemmed from students' knowledge of their collocational usages rather than of their semantic meanings (Mueller, 2011).

The remaining 208 belonged to the category called "Others," which consisted of the tokens of *of* used as part of transitional or complex-prepositional phrases (162 tokens), e.g., (8) and (9), and the 46 tokens of errors, which will further be analyzed in 4.2:

(8) **First of all,** I want to expand the campus size.
(9) I also attended my school **because of these reasons**.

TABLE 1
Functional Categories of *of*

Sub-Categories	Tokens	%
Integrative	1,003	80.24
Separative	36	2.88
Idiomatic	3	0.24
Others	208	16.64
Total	1,250	100.00

The 1,003 tokens of the integrative function can be further analyzed into the following three categories: (a) action-agent/patient, (b) partitives & quantifiers, and (c) miscellaneous. The construction of action-agent/patient by using *of* is referred to as *nominalization*, which is a form of a noun phrase including "pre and post modification, the use of embedded clauses, and lexical choices which are prestigious, technical and formal" (Ravelli, 1996, p. 380). Nominalization is one of the pervasive features in the academic written register (Bhatia, 1992; Hinkel, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2004) rather than spoken, informal and interactional ones due to the density of information per clause in academic text (Schleppegrell, 2004, pp. 67-74).

As shown in Table 2 below, the fact that only 26 of the 1,003 tokens of integrative *of* occurred as instances of nominalization (2.59%) indicates that students are not familiar with using complex nominalizations, which are shown to be used by more proficient writers (Kim, 2014). According to Hinkel (2002), nominal subjects often prevail in

academic written texts, whereas pronominal ones are more common in the spoken register. In the present data, however, there were only five tokens in which nominalization was used in subject position, e.g., (10) and (11):

(10) So **the change of the interior** could influence to people who attend to school or not.
(11) **The success of every school** depends largely on the quality of students in that school.

Moreover, as shown in (10) and (11), most of the tokens *of* used in nominalization were instances of the simple construction type "noun + *of* + noun," without any further postmodification such as adjective clauses, a finding which speaks volumes for the need to teach nominalization to students who need to learn academic writing. Novice writers tend to employ short subjects depending excessively on pronouns (Schleppegrell, 2004). Using a series of pronominal subjects is considered a conversational feature rather than that of academia, where nominalization is preferred in subject position (Hinkel, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2004, pp. 71-74). As college students will be asked to read academic papers and produce their own academic texts, students who might have written mostly non-academic papers before entering college can benefit from learning how to use nominalization.

TABLE 2

Types of Integrative *of*

Sub-categories	Tokens	%
Action-agent/patient	26	2.59
Partitives & Quantifiers	386	38.48
Miscellaneous	591	58.92
Total	1,003	100.00

Instances of partitives & quantifiers accounted for over a third of all the tokens of integrative *of* (386 of the 1,003 tokens). The most frequently used words preceding the preposition *of* were *lot* (80 tokens), e.g., (12), followed by *one* (51 tokens), e.g., (13):

(12) I'm also going to make a **lot of** new friends and enjoy my life.
(13) I am attending in Sogang University, which is **one of** the best schools in Korea.

It is worth noting that the six most frequent words, i.e., *lot, one, lots, all, some,* and *kind*, account for almost 60% of the total 386 tokens of partitives & quantifiers, a fact which means that the learners employ limited varieties when using partitives and quantifiers.

The other 591 tokens of integrative *of* were categorized as "miscellaneous," which includes such sub-categories of integrative *of* as "intrinsic, nearly intrinsic, part-whole, and product-source" in Linstromberg (2000). The subtle differences between these sub-categories are out of the scope of this paper; thus, anything that does not belong to the categories of action-agent/patient and partitives & quantifiers have been grouped under, for lack of a better term, "miscellaneous." The two most frequently occurring nouns preceding the preposition *of* were *image* (24 tokens), e.g., (14), and *number* (22 tokens), e.g., (15):

(14) When people use that equipments and notices it is old, it is not good for the **image of** school.
(15) If adding the number of junior and senior, the **number of** whole student is at least seven thousands.

The most ten frequent nouns preceding *of*, i.e., *image, number, size, students, student, life, change, name, way,* and *quality*, account for slightly more than one fifth of the 591 miscellaneous tokens. One explanation for the use of these nouns may be due the writing prompt the learners were given, asking them to describe one important change that they want to make in a school that they attended. In other words, the prompt may have affected the choice of particular words in their writing.

More importantly, however, the structures used for linking *of* were mostly limited to the simple construction "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun." Of the 128 tokens of the ten most common nouns preceding *of*, the number of the simple construction accounted for more than three times that of other complex structures such as "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun + relative clause," e.g., (16), "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun + prepositional phrase," e.g., (17), and "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun + infinitive clause," e.g., (18):

(16) **The image of school which other people think** is important.
(17) That makes **the number of the experts about subjects** going down.
(18) So solution of this problem, I think, is **the change of the way to assign**.

The high degree of utilization of simple structures suggests that the learners do not know how to use those complex structures. Hence, instructors should allocate time specifically to teaching advanced constructions containing of *of*.

4.2. Error Analysis of *of*

In order to ascertain how accurately Korean learners of English use the preposition *of*,

all the 1,250 tokens of *of* retrieved from the learner corpus were analyzed to determine whether there were mistakes in terms of using *of*. All in all, it was found that students were using *of* quite accurately as only about 4% (46 tokens) were determined to be instances of errors. These 46 tokens of errors were further analyzed into the following five categories: addition, misordering, misformation, wrong preposition, and others. As shown in Table 3 below, addition and wrong preposition account for more than three fourths of all the 46 tokens of errors involving *of* (31 and 10 tokens, respectively). Of the remaining five tokens, three were instances of misformation and the other two, which could not be interpreted, were categorized as "Others." No tokens of misordering were found, which is not surprising given the fact that Yu and Yoo (2010) also did not find any instances of misordering in their analysis of prepositional verbs.

TABLE 3

Types of Errors

Types of Errors	Tokens	%
Addition	31	67.39
Misordering	0	0.00
Misformation	3	6.52
Wrong preposition	10	21.74
Others	2	4.35
Total	46	100.00

Among the 31 tokens of addition errors, the most frequently observed examples were "*most* + *of* + indefinite noun" (10 tokens), e.g., (19), followed by "*many* + *of* + indefinite noun" (5 tokens), e.g., (20):

(19) a. If **most of** student do not attend in activity, our school level will be declining.
b. In fact, today in school **most of** teachers just teach intellectual things such as mathematics, science, and law

(20) a. The opinion of my school is festival makes students study poor, but **many of** famous schools have a festival and their students study very well.
b. Even though I think University's Power don't stem from campus's size, big campus is **many of** Korean students wants and small campus is bad point of the university.

Cowan (2008, p. 205) points out that quantifier errors like "*most* + *of* + indefinite noun" are indeed common in essays written by Koreans. *Most* and *most of* are different in that "*most* + noun" is used to talk about "the majority of something in general," whereas "*most of the* + noun" denotes "the majority of a specific set of something" (Carter, McCarthy, Mark, & O'Keeffe, 2011). Therefore, *most of* in (19) should be revised to *most*, as *most* in

these sentences refers to a majority of non-specific things. Likewise, *many of* in (20) should be changed to *many* as the meaning of generality is intended in those sentences.

The other 16 addition tokens included various instances of errors. A few of them were incorrectly added after another preposition, e.g., (21):

(21) a. Freshman like me don't know much **about of** the school.
b. Culture activity is all **around of** us.
c. Focusing more on reading and grammar is the way to be **behind of** other country.

The incorrect addition of *of* after another preposition, as seen in example (21), could be attributed to the fact that English does allow a complex preposition containing *of*, as in *out of*. Lending further support to this postulation is the fact that *of* was never added before another preposition (or particle) to yield phrases such as *of about* or *of around*.

Other interesting instances of the incorrect addition of *of* included adding *of* after transitional phrases such as *for example* and *as a result*, e.g., (22):

(22) a. **For example of** this problem are too big graduation ceremony, spring festival, many membership training, etc.
b. **As a result of**, my living bio rhythm has been break, study which I have to English is postpone later day.

It is understandable why *of* is added after *For example* in (22a) as *of this problem* modifies the noun *example*. It is, however, unclear as to why *of* might have been added after *As a result* in (22b). One last example of the incorrect addition of *of* worth discussing is *despite of* in (23), a mistake commonly made by learners of English because the complex preposition *in spite of* has the same meaning as the simple preposition *despite*, which of course occurs without *of*:

(23) So **despite of** Korean's crazy education on English, we are usually afraid of foreigner and are not proud of our English class.

The 10 tokens of wrong preposition included errors in which *of* was used instead of the correct prepositions such as *for*, *to*, *in*, and *by* as in (24), (25), (26), and (27), respectively:

(24) But our university is **famous of** bad quality of desks and chairs.
(25) I passed Sogang Univ. and very **thankful of** all the professors and staff of Sogang.
(26) Maybe most people think the student would **excellent people of** math, science.

(27) It can be **caused of** diseases.

The three tokens of misformation were all instances in which *of* was incorrectly used instead of the genitive (*'s*) to show possession, e.g., (28), in which *creation of student* should have been *student's creation* or *student's creativity*:

(28) *I think **creation of** student is the most important thing during the semester.

The difference between *of* and the *'s* genitive form—i.e., to show possession, *of* is used with inanimate head nouns and the genitive with animate head nouns—is not as simple as most introductory grammar references make out to be.

As Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, pp. 314-316) explain, inanimate head nouns can indeed occur with the genitive form and animate head nouns with *of*, e.g., (29) and (30):

(29) a. The train's arrival was delayed.
b. The arrival of the train was delayed.
(30) a. He's the son of the well-known politician.
b. He's the well-known politician's son.

Native speakers prefer (29a), although *train* is an inanimate head noun, because *train* is "viewed as performing an action" (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 315). Native speakers, on the other hand, prefer (30a), although *politician* is an animate head noun, because "the modifier noun is long" (ibid.). As the modifier noun in *creation of student* in (28) is not long, there is no reason why *of* should have been used instead of the *'s* genitive form.

Furthermore, unlike *creativity of student*, in which *of* clearly shows possession, it is not clear *of* in *creation of student* actually shows possession as it can also be a "dummy" preposition used only for case marking (Roberts, 1997, p. 88):

(31) the destruction of the city

Because *the destruction of the city* in (31) means "destructing the city," the preposition *of* does not show possession; rather, it licenses the use of the noun phrase *the city* as the object of *destruction*, which cannot take an object anymore because the word is in the noun form. Likewise, *creation of student* can be interpreted to mean "creating students," which is another reason why the *'s* genitive form should have been used in (28).

5. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study has investigated (a) how Korean learners of English at the university level use the preposition *of* in terms of its functions and (b) how accurately they use *of* and what types of errors they make concerning the preposition. Data were retrieved from a learner corpus consisting of 416 essays written by matriculants at a university in Korea. The corpus contained 1,250 tokens of the preposition *of*, and these tokens were first analyzed according to their functions, i.e., integrative, separative, idiomatic, and others, which were adapted from Lindstromberg's (2010) categorization of the functions of *of*.

Of the three major categories, the integrative function accounted for over 80% (1,003 tokens) of all the tokens of *of*, whereas the separative function and the idiomatic function were found in only 36 and 3 tokens, respectively (see Table 1). Of the 208 tokens categorized as "Others," 162 were instances of *of* used as part of transitional or complex-prepositional phrase, e.g., *first of all* and *because of*. The remaining 46 tokens were all instances of errors.

All the integrative tokens were subsequently analyzed either as (a) action-agent/patient (or nominalization), (b) partitives & quantifiers, and (c) miscellaneous. Of these three categories, nominalization plays the most important role in academic writing as it is a prevailing element that allows for a high density of information (Schleppegrell, 2004). Thus, it goes without saying that university students need to be able to construct sentences using nominalization. The learner corpus used for this study, however, contained only 26 instances of nominalization, constituting less than three percent of the tokens of *of*, a finding which reflects the instructional needs for teaching nominalization to students who are about to start their college career.

Unlike nominalization, partitives & quantifiers are constructions that occur frequently even in spoken English (Biber et al., 1999); thus, it is not surprising to find that over a third of the integrative tokens (386 of the 1,003 tokens) were instances of partitives & quantifiers (see Table 2). Interestingly, over half of all the tokens of partitives & quantifiers contained one of the following six words: *lot*, *one*, *lots, all*, *some*, and *kinds*. This finding could very well be interpreted as evidence for the students' inability to use a variety of partitives & quantifier; however, *lot* and *kind* have also been found to occur frequently in a corpus of native British English (Renouf & Sinclair, 1991).

For lack of a better term, "miscellaneous" was used to represent the category that encompassed over half of the integrative tokens (591 tokens). One noteworthy finding regarding the miscellaneous tokens is that the simple "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun" construction occurred much more frequently than all the complex constructions combined, i.e., "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun + relative clause," "(adjective) noun + *of* + (adjective) noun + prepositional phrase," and "(adjective) noun + *of* +

(adjective) noun + infinitive clause."

In order to ascertain what types of errors were made regarding the preposition *of*, the 46 tokens of *of* identified as errors were further analyzed into the following four categories, i.e., addition, misordering, misformation, and wrong position, which were adapted from Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy. As was also found by Yu and Yoo (2010) in their study on prepositional verbs, no tokens of misordering was found regarding *of*. Of the other three categories, addition was found to be the most frequently occurring type of error (31 of the 46 tokens), while wrong preposition and misformation accounted for ten and three tokens, respectively (see Table 3). The most noteworthy finding from the analysis of these errors seems to be the fact that students did make a number of errors regarding *most of* and *many of*, which should be followed only by definite noun phrases.

Also noteworthy is the finding that, albeit occurring mostly in simple constructions and basic functions, *of* was used accurately in over 95% of all the tokens found in the learner corpus. This finding should of course be taken with a grain of salt as it is well known that "the samples included within [corpora] do not always contain the full range of usages" (Meyer, 2002, p. 124). In fact, many of the verbs that Sinclair (1991b, p. 49) list as those generally followed by *of* were not found in the learner corpus, e.g., *approve*, *conceive*, *dispose*, and *disapprove* as intransitive verbs and *absolve, accuse, acquit, convince, deprive, purge,* and *warn* as transitive verbs.

All these findings point to the need of a more systematic approach to teaching the preposition *of* as its use, especially in academic writing, allows one to introduce abstract concepts and to present a high density of information. Thus, instructors should first teach college matriculants the differences between academic and non-academic writing, along with those of written and spoken registers. Instructors should then focus on teaching advanced constructions containing *of* as the ability to produce such complex constructions, as nominalizations in subject position, contributes to increasing one's proficiency in academic writing (Kim, 2014). Lastly, instructors should introduce a list of verbs that are frequently used with *of*, such as *approve, conceive, accuse,* and *deprive*, and provide students with a various activities to help them internalize the resulting constructions when those verbs are used with *of*.

Needless to say, there are a number of limitations to this study, one of which is that fact that the analyses of the data did not fully account for the various characteristics of the learners. It would have been interesting, for example, to ascertain whether the findings reported in this study can indeed be attributed to the learners' first language or to their field of study. Another limitation worth mentioning is the fact that Lindstromberg's (2010) categorization of *of* were used too broadly in the analyses of the data. Lindstromberg offers a variety of different subcategories of integrative *of*; however, the differences between

some of the subcategories, e.g., the intrinsic and the nearly intrinsic function, were too ambiguous to be used in the present study. One could argue, for example, that his example of the nearly intrinsic function such as *the name of* may fall into the intrinsic function. Despite these limitations, the present paper contributes to shedding light on how the preposition *of* is used by Korean learners of English in writing, an area of research hitherto largely ignored.

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Applicable levels: Tertiary

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