

An Analysis of Korean EFL Writers' Errors in the Use of Cohesive Devices*

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This study examines Korean EFL writers' errors in the use of cohesive devices. The participants were two groups of college students. One group consisted of 34 students, and the other group 23 students. The participants in each group were asked to write an opinion paper on a different issue. Analysis of data focused on the errors made in the use of five features of cohesive devices: use of junction words, transition between sentences/ideas, use of equivalent words/paraphrases, introduction of new information in appropriate places/manners, and use of accurate punctuation marks. According to the result, the participants showed weaknesses in dealing with the cohesive devices in English writing, making most errors in making a smooth transition without a junction word and least errors in using an equivalent word/phrase. Based on the result, the study concludes that Korean EFL writers need a systematic practice in the use of cohesive devices, especially in making a smooth transition between sentences/ideas either with or without the use of a junction word. Some pedagogical suggestions are made to improve the cohesive quality of Korean students' English writing.

[EFL writing/cohesive devices/quality of writing/writing instruction/
외국어로서 영어 작문/응집력을 위한 도구/작문의 질/작문 지도]

I. INTRODUCTION

People rely on two types of channel to express themselves: oral or written. Even though oral type is the main channel during their daily life, written type is also an important medium of communication (Nguyen, 2015). Especially in this modern society where

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communication through internet is prevalent, one's ability to skillfully deal with the written medium is highly valued. However, even for the native speakers such ability is not acquired naturally but must be learned through instruction, as evidenced by the native speakers who are illiterate or poor writers in their own language. In addition, unlike oral communication which admits other means of communication such as mimes and gestures, written communication must rely on the language itself and does not allow immediate correction of mistakes. In the sense that it does not allow the writer any way to go back, it can be said that written communication is permanent (Silva, 1993; Yetiş, 2017). This means that violating the principles and conventions of writing in the language leads to the incomprehensibility or ambiguity of the written product.

Given the importance of written communication in the modern society and given the claims that writing plays an important role in second/foreign language (L2) acquisition (e.g., Eskey, 2005; Harklau, 2002; Liu & Braine, 2005; Matsuda, 2013; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996; Williams, 2012; Zhang, 2013), it is expected that efforts to develop students' TL writing ability be made in L2 classes. Despite the recognition of the important role writing plays in L2 acquisition, however, developing target language (TL) writing ability tends to have been neglected in most EFL classes. As a result, even advanced level EFL students also have difficulty in English writing (Hyland, 2004; Snyder, Nielson, & Kurzer, 2016). This is probably due to the difficulties involved in writing instruction (Cumming, 1989; Davies & Pearse, 2000; Liu & Braine, 2005) as well as due to the limitations inherent in most EFL contexts such as time constraint and teachers' low confidence about writing instruction (S. A. Kim, 2016).

Understanding the difficulties and limitations in the EFL context, however, no one would deny that the goal of TL learning is to develop the communicative ability in the written form as well as in the spoken form. This suggests that the writing ability, just like the speaking ability, deserves more attention as a productive skill necessary for communication (Carduner, 2002; Cimasko, Reichelt, J. Im, & Arik, 2009; Hubert, 2010). Moreover, the fact that most EFL learners rarely have a face-to-face interaction with a native speaker in their daily life makes the written language ability more useful for communication (Eskey, 2005; Reichelt, Lefkowitz, Rinnert, & Schultz, 2012).

Despite the increasing research in the area of L2 writing and the claims on the need to provide the students with more practice in writing, many Korean English teachers in the secondary schools, due to the difficulties and constraints as mentioned above, tend to be reluctant about dealing with writing in their classes. The result is that their students have little opportunity to develop TL writing skills (Y. Y. Park, 2013). It is unfortunate that such lack of opportunity continues through their college life for most Korean students, as evidenced in quite a few studies on college students' English writing ability (e.g., J. Bae, 2017; J. S. Bae & H. Choe, 2013; J. Choi, 2013; E. Han, 2012; A. Kang, 2013; Y. Kim & J.

Kim, 2005; K. Lee, 2013; Y. Y. Park, 2013; J. A. Shin, 2011; H. J. Yoo, 2012; J. W. Yoon & I. W. H. Yoo, 2011).

Among the studies on Korean students' English writing, some studies deal with the quality of writing related with the use of cohesive devices (e.g., J. Y. Kang, 2005; E. Lee, 2004; K. Lee, 2013; Y. Y. Park, 2013; H. Yoon, 2006; J. W. Yoon & I. W. H. Yoo, 2011). According to these studies, Korean students behave differently from native writers in the use of cohesive devices in English writing. For instance, J. Y. Kang (2005), examined the use of connectors in English narrative writing by Korean adult EFL learners and by American native speakers in the U.S. and found that pronominal and demonstrative pronouns were heavily used by the former group as cohesive devices. H. Yoon (2006), in a study with Korean college students, mostly sophomore or junior students, also found that many Korean students misused or overused connectors in English essay writing. In a similar vein J. W. Yoon and I. W. H. Yoo (2011), in a study with Korean college EFL freshmen majoring humanities, found that Korean writers overused sentence-initial conjunctions, even when the connecting sentences were too short for those connectors. More recently, K. Lee (2013), in a study on Korean college students' use of connectors in English academic writing, also found that Korean writers behaved differently from native writers in the use of connectors; Korean writers either overused or underused various connectors. Another recent study by Y. Y. Park (2013) reported that in a comparison between native English speakers' writing corpus and Korean college EFL students it was found that the two groups differ in the frequency and kinds of the contrastive conjunctions used.

Despite the valuable findings thus far, studies on Korean EFL writers' use of cohesive devices have been quite limited in number and scope. As a result, our understanding of Korean students' control of English cohesive devices is far from being comprehensive. Further research with various proficiency levels of students and various types of text genres would be necessary in order to make any conclusive remarks. The purpose of this study is to examine Korean students' errors in the use of cohesive devices in English writing and see what kind of instruction is necessary to improve the cohesive quality of their writing. The specific research questions addressed are: 1) How frequently do the students make errors in the use of the cohesive devices focused in the study? 2) What type of error is most frequently or least frequently made among the five types of errors? 3) Are there any differences between the two groups who wrote on different topics in using the cohesive devices even when they do not have difficulty in the writing either cognitively or affectively? The answers to these questions are expected to reveal some useful information about what kind of help is necessary to improve the cohesive quality of Korean EFL students' writing.

II. BACKGROUND

1. Role of Cohesive Devices in Writing

Cohesion is defined as a semantic relation within a text by means of which “elements that are structurally unrelated to one another are linked together” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 27). According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 56), “it is the means available in the surface forms of the text to signal relationships that exist between sentences or clausal units in the text.” Similarly, Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara (2016, p. 1228) state that “cohesion generally refers to the presence or absence of explicit cues in the text that allow the reader to make connections between the ideas in the text.” These definitions suggest that cohesion is a principal component for text construction and any writing instruction should pay enough attention to the cohesive quality of the texts produced by the students.

Cohesive devices are words used to connect different parts of a text. They are important elements in writing since writers can achieve the cohesion of the text they produce through the use of diverse cohesive devices. Recognizing the importance of accurate uses of cohesive devices in writing, many studies (e.g., Chen, 2006; Chiang, 2003; Cox, Shanahan, & Sulzby, 1990; Green, Christopher, & Jacquelyn, 2000; Jafarpur, 1991; K. Lee, 2013; Liu & Braine, 2005; McCulley, 1985; Neuner, 1987; Y. Y. Park, 2013; Shakir, 1991; Yetiş, 2017; J. W. Yoon & I. W. H. Yoo, 2011) have argued, since the publication of *Cohesion in English* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), the close relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the quality of writing. According to Liu and Braine (2005), for instance, lack of ability to use cohesive devices correctly deteriorates the quality of writing. This is because, they argue, cohesion, which is achieved by the correct use of cohesive devices, is closely related to text coherence. They also add that mere coherence of content is insufficient to make a text coherent and there must be some additional linguistic property, such as cohesive ties, that contribute to achieve the coherence of a text.

Recognizing the important role of the cohesive devices in determining the quality of writing, a substantial body of research (e.g., Aktas & Cortes, 2008; Chiang, 1999, 2003; Connor, 1984; Crossley, et al, 2016; Geva, 1992; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Green, Christopher, & Jacquelyn, 2000; Jafarpur, 1991; Johnson, 1992; Khalil, 1989; Liu & Braine, 2005; Majdeddin, 2010; McCulley, 1985; Millis, Graesser, & Haberlandt, 1993; Mohammed, 2015; Yang & Sun, 2012; Yvette & Yip, 1992; Zhang, 2000) has been conducted with L2 writers and it was found that high-quality essays differ from low-quality ones in the use of cohesive devices. Introducing some of these, Khalil (1989), in a study with Arab students, found that the participants overused reiteration of the same lexical items as a cohesive device, whereas they underused other lexical and grammatical items. Yvette and Yip (1992) also found that Cantonese writers use a significantly higher

frequency of devices in their English writing than their native speaker counterparts. A similar finding was also reported by Palmer (1999) in a study with Spanish-speaking students and by Zhang (2000) in a study with Chinese undergraduate English majors. More recently, Yang and Sun (2012) compared differences between the argumentative writing of Chinese college EFL students and reported that more proficient learners used a greater number of cohesive devices and used them more accurately.

With the common admission of the relationship between the ability to use cohesive devices accurately and the quality of writing, there also exist somewhat contradictory findings. Some studies have reported that there is no difference between “good” and “weak” writing in the use of cohesive devices (e.g., Guo, Crossley, & McNamara, 2013; Johnson, 1992; McNamara, Crossley, & McCarthy, 2010; Todd, Khongput, & Darasawang, 2007; Zhang, 2000). For instance, McNamara, et al. (2010) found that none of the three most predictive indices of cohesion (i.e., syntactic complexity, lexical diversity, and word frequency) correlated with essay ratings. Guo, et al. (2013) also reported that local and text indices of cohesion (e.g., aspect repetition, content word overlap, and conditional connectives) were negatively correlated with judgments of essay quality.

Despite the contradictory findings, what seems evident is that L2 students need instruction in order to handle the cohesive devices of the TL skillfully since writing skills do not grow naturally. Also, given the claim that overt instruction is a predictor of success in the use of cohesive devices (Majdeddin, 2010), it will be the teacher's responsibility to provide the students with opportunities to practice accurate uses of cohesive devices.

2. Types of Cohesive Devices

Cohesion is considered to be an important factor to determine the quality of writing and writers are expected to be able to use cohesive devices correctly in order to create a cohesive text. With the common understanding of the role of cohesive devices in writing, however, scholars have proposed different categories regarding the types of cohesive devices. For instance, Halliday and Hasan (1976) long ago identified five general types of cohesive ties or relations that create coherence in texts. They include reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion, and conjunction. On the other hand, de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) taxonomy of cohesive ties includes four main types: (a) those expressing equivalence, (b) those constituting compactness and efficiency, (c) those signaling relationships among events or situations in the textual world, and (d) those showing importance or newness of content. Each of these main types again includes several subcategories.

Based on de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) taxonomy, Chiang (1999), in assessing the grammatical and textual features of L2 writing, measured cohesion using nine

subscales. However, in his later study (Chiang, 2003) he reduced these nine subscales into five: (a) whether junction words are used judiciously and accurately, (b) whether transition between sentences is smooth when junction words are not used, (c) whether equivalent words/paraphrases, when used, are used appropriately, (d) whether new information is introduced in an appropriate place or manner, and (e) whether punctuation is employed appropriately to separate ideas and sentences. According to him, these five items were found to correlate most highly with the overall rating in his earlier study and thus were retained in his new scale.

Another example of categorization is found in Liu and Braine's (2005) study, where the analysis was based on more detailed categories. In this study there are three major categories of cohesive devices: *reference devices*, *conjunction devices*, and *lexical devices*. *Reference devices* include pronominal devices, demonstrative devices and the definite article, and comparative devices. *Conjunction devices* include additive devices, adversative devices, causal devices, temporal devices, and continuative devices. *Lexical devices* include repetition, antonym, synonym, superordinate, and collocation. A very similar categorization was also used in a more recent study (Yang & Sun, 2012), where with appropriate revision and classification all cohesive devices totaled as variables were divided into four main categories: reference, conjunction, ellipsis/substitution and lexical cohesion. These four main categories were again divided into several subcategories.

As the different categorizations proposed by different studies suggest, there is no single categorization yet available that a majority of scholars choose to use for their study. Despite the diversity, however, it can be said that all the categorizations used in different studies also share similar features because they were all devised for the same quality: text cohesion. In the present study Chiang's (2003) categorization was adopted for the analysis of errors in EFL writers' use of cohesive devices in English writing. The reason why Chiang's scale was adopted was that his scale itself was established based on the well-known previous studies in the field (e.g., de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In addition, his participants share similar characteristics with the participants in this study in that they were also college EFL students whose English learning environment and way of learning English were considered to be similar. Even though the five features included in Chiang's (2003) rating scale may not be exhaustive to measure all the cohesive quality of writing, they are considered to be informative enough about the overall quality of the writing in terms of cohesion. Moreover, the fact that the five features were the common features examined in other studies on text cohesion and the fact that Chiang's finding that the five features among the nine features in his earlier scale correlate most highly with the overall rating of cohesion both contributed to the adoption of his rating scale for the analysis of the cohesive errors in the present study.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants in this study were two groups of college EFL students who were taking courses offered in the department of English education at a national university. By employing two groups of participants and having them read and write on different issues, the study intended to be more accurate in interpreting the result of the analysis. That is, if the same result can be obtained from two separate groups, the interpretation of the result would be more convincing than the result obtained from only one group. One group (i.e., Group A) consisted of 34 students, mostly juniors and the other group (i.e., Group B) consisted of 23 students, mostly sophomores. Even though the participants in the two groups were in different college years, they may not be necessarily from two different ability groups. That is, the participants in Group A may not necessarily be better than those in Group B in their English writing ability as well as in their overall English proficiency. No information concerning individual participant's English proficiency level was available, but there was no indication that the participants were atypical of the general college student population in Korea. Whether one group is better than the other was not considered to be important for the purpose of this study, which was to explore the common errors that Korean college students make in the use of cohesive devices.

2. Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from two groups in two different classes. The participants were not informed that their writings would be analyzed for the use of cohesive devices, but they were told that their writings would be evaluated for how good they were in terms of expressing their opinions in the written language.

Given the claim that topical knowledge can be an important factor in writing performance (He & Shi, 2012), it was decided to use general, familiar topics for the writing task so that the participants' lack of topical knowledge would not affect their writing. Thus, it was expected that the participants in either group would not have difficulty due to the topic itself.

Since the focus of data analysis was not on the amount of writing but on the errors made in the use of the cohesive devices, it was decided to use a source text before the writing task. The aim of the source text was to facilitate the participants' writing (Dovey, 2010) by ensuring that they had prior knowledge and minimum TL vocabulary and expressions necessary to express their own opinion about an issue. Reading the source text, as a prewriting activity, was considered to be necessary since many college EFL students, as

inexperienced English writers, may feel overwhelmed if there is no teacher guidance before writing. By having the participants exposed to the vocabulary and expressions minimally necessary for their writing through the source text, it was intended that they would not have difficulty in expressing their opinions. The source text read by Group A was on students' wearing the school uniform, and that read by Group B was on students' use of cell phone in school (see Appendices 1 and 2). The criteria used in selecting the source texts were familiarity and easiness. Since the participants themselves used to wear the school uniform in their secondary schools and all of them possessed a cell phone, what was described in the source texts must have been familiar to both groups.

The source text for Group A was selected from a textbook written for advanced level high school students and that for Group B was selected from an internet newspaper. Both of the source texts were judged easy enough for the participants, but the participants in both groups were allowed to use a bilingual dictionary during the reading in order to remove any possible language difficulty in comprehending the content of the source text. Despite the familiarity and easiness of the source text, however, it should not be regarded that the participants themselves also had the ability to produce such a text without difficulty.

After reading the source text the participants in Group A were asked to write an opinion paper regarding whether students should wear the school uniform or not, whereas those in Group B were asked to write one regarding whether students should be allowed to use their cell phones in school. The source text was collected before the writing task in order to prevent any participant from simply copying the source text instead of writing their own opinion paper. There was no time limit set for the writing, but all the participants in both groups finished their writing roughly within 25 minutes.

3. Data Analysis

The writing samples obtained from each group were analyzed in terms of three aspects: number of words used, number of sentences used, and frequency of errors made in the use of cohesive devices. The analyses on the first two aspects were to give the readers some general idea about the participants' writing in terms of quantity. The analysis on the rest aspect was to measure the participants' ability to use the cohesive devices. The analysis included the total frequency of errors made, the mean frequency (%) of errors made per sentence, and the mean frequency (%) of errors made in each type of cohesive devices. The results of these error analyses were expected to reveal, at least partially if not comprehensively, the quality of their writing in terms of cohesion. In addition, the frequency (%) of errors made in the use of each type of the cohesive devices was expected

to reveal the type of cohesive device that is most or least problematic to Korean EFL students.

For the coding of the errors Chiang's (2003) rating scale was adopted for the reasons given earlier. The coding was conducted by two raters: the researcher herself and a native English-speaking Ph. D. candidate who had been teaching English writing in a Korean university for more than six years. The raters coded each student's errors independently first. There were few differences between the two raters in the counting of the number of words and sentences in the writing samples. However, in the analysis of the errors there was some discrepancy in the results of the independent coding by the two raters. The inter-rater reliability as measured by the agreement in error counting at the first coding was 0.79. Thus, the results of the first scoring by each rater were compared and the discrepancy found was eliminated through discussion and an agreed score was finally given on each writing sample.

The criteria used for the five types of errors were based on Chiang's (2003) study but the specific definitions were established through discussion between the raters. The definition for each error was set as follows:

- (1) An inaccurate use of a junction word (JW) means that a used junction word does not connect the meaning of the previous sentence/idea and that of the following one smoothly enough.
- (2) A rough transition means that when a junction word is not used between two sentences/ideas (TR), there should not be a gap in meaning between the preceding and the following sentence/idea.
- (3) An error in the use of an equivalent word/paraphrase (EW/P) means that the same word/phrase is referred to by a non-equivalent word/paraphrase.
- (4) An introduction of new information in an inappropriate place/manner (NI) means that the introduction of new information is abrupt either in place or in manner.
- (5) An error in the use of punctuation (PN) means that the necessary punctuation mark is either omitted or inaccurately used.

Since the topics selected for the writing task were familiar enough, it was predicted that the writing topic would have little effect on the participants' writing behaviors. However, for the possible effects of the writing topic, the writing samples of the two groups (i.e., Group A and Group B) were also compared in terms of the number of words and sentences used, the mean number of words included in each sentence, and the errors made in the use of each cohesive device. The similarities in the writing products by both groups would be interpreted as the common characteristics of the students' use of cohesive devices in

English writing, whereas the differences would be interpreted as the effects of other variables including the writing topic. The significance of the difference between the two groups was measured using a *t*-test ($\alpha = .05$).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analyses generally seem to agree with previous studies in that Korean college students are weak in the use of English cohesive devices. It was not easy, however, to compare the results of this study with those of other studies directly in that the specific aspects focused in different studies were not the same. Presented in the following are what was found in this study.

1. Frequency of Errors Made in the Use of Cohesive Devices

The result of analysis of the participants' writings in terms of the mean number of words and sentences, the mean number of words per sentence, and the mean frequency of errors made in the use of cohesive devices is provided in Table 1. As shown in the table, the mean frequency of the total errors made by Group A and Group B in the use of cohesive devices was 3.38 and 4.57, respectively. These numbers themselves may not give a clear idea about whether the participants in both groups made seriously frequent errors or not.

TABLE 1
Frequency of Errors Made in the Use of Cohesive Devices

Group		Number of Words Used	Number of Sentences Used	Number of Words per Sentence	Total Frequency of Errors Made	Mean Frequency of Errors Made per Sentence
A (<i>n</i> = 34)	<i>M</i>	136.12	9.44	14.86	3.38	0.41
	<i>SD</i>	30.16	2.56	3.03	3.52	0.39
	<i>Min</i>	81	5	10.33	0	0
	<i>Max</i>	214	17	19.90	16	1.78
B (<i>n</i> = 23)	<i>M</i>	153.74	10.39	12.02	4.57	0.43
	<i>SD</i>	44.41	2.82	2.67	2.48	0.22
	<i>Min</i>	67	5	11.18	0	0
	<i>Max</i>	234	15	27.13	9	0.89

However, considering that the mean number of sentences used by each group was 9.44 and 10.39, the mean frequency of errors are hardly considered to be low. Rather, 3.38 errors in every 9.44 sentences in the writings by Group A and 4.57 errors in every 10.39 sentences by Group B are both considered to be serious enough to deteriorate the cohesive quality of writing. Given that the writing topics were familiar enough to the participants and that the source texts provided to facilitate the writing were easy enough, these frequent errors are hardly considered to have resulted from other sources than the participants' lack of skills in the use of cohesive devices itself. This result corresponds to the findings in previous studies (e.g., Geva, 1992; Liu & Braine, 2005; Mohammed, 2015) which argue that many L2 writers lack control over the use of cohesive devices. Despite such an interpretation, however, it is possible that using different texts in terms of text difficulty or topic might have produced a different result. Further research is necessary to be able to draw a more accurate picture of the effects of those variables.

One more thing that needs to be mentioned is that there were serious individual differences among the participants. In Group A, there were seven participants who did not make any errors, while there was one who made as many as 16 errors and there were two who made 10 errors. In Group B, there was one participant who did not make any errors, while there was one who made 9 errors and there were two who made 8 errors. These differences suggest that individual students may need instruction focusing on different aspects of writing in order to improve their writing.

2. Frequency (%) of Errors Made in Each Type of Cohesive Devices

Analysis of data shows that there are variations among the frequencies/percentages of the errors made in each of the five types of cohesive devices. As shown in Table 2, the participants made most errors in making a smooth transition when a junction word was not used (TR) and least errors in using equivalent word/paraphrases (EW/P). Given the claim that transition between sentences in the absence of junction words is the best predictor of writing quality (Chiang, 2003), the highest frequency of errors in the TR type may be interpreted as the low quality of writing.

It was also found that the errors in achieving the transition between sentences or ideas either with or without a junction word take the majority of the errors made in both groups. The mean frequency (%) of errors made by Group A and Group B in the use of junction words was 0.97 (28.70%) and 1.0 (21.90%), respectively and that made by each group in making a smooth transition between sentences/ideas without a junction word was 1.15 (36.52%) and 1.78 (39.05%), respectively. The errors made by Group A in using these two types (i.e., JW & TR) amount to 65.22%, while those by Group B amount to 60.95% of the total errors made. This result suggests that the writing instruction focusing on how to

achieve a smooth transition between sentences/ideas with or without a junction word alone can improve the quality of the students' writing to a large extent. In addition, the fact that even correct junction words used were limited mostly to some kinds only (e.g., *and*, *but*, *so*, and *therefore*) also reveals the students' weaknesses in the use of junction words.

TABLE 2
Frequency (%) of Errors Made in Each Type of Cohesive Devices

Group	Frequency of Errors Made	Type of Error					Total
		JW	TR	EW/P	NI	PN	
A (n = 34)	<i>Sum</i>	33	42	10	17	13	115
	<i>Min</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Max</i>	4	5	3	3	3	16
	<i>M</i>	0.97	1.24	0.29	0.50	0.38	3.39
	<i>SD</i>	1.17	1.46	0.63	0.83	0.70	3.52
	<i>%</i>	29.46	34.82	8.93	15.18	11.61	100
	<i>Sum</i>	23	41	8	18	15	105
B (n = 23)	<i>Min</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Max</i>	3	6	2	3	5	9
	<i>M</i>	1.0	1.78	0.35	0.78	0.65	4.57
	<i>SD</i>	0.95	1.54	0.57	0.95	1.19	2.48
	<i>%</i>	21.90	39.05	7.62	17.14	14.29	100

Note. JW: Wrong junction word; TR: Lack of smooth transition; EW/P: Lack of equivalent word/paraphrase; NI: New information in an inappropriate place/manner; PN: Lack/wrong use of punctuation.

The fact that the participants made the least errors in the use of equivalent word/paraphrase (EW/P) may reflect the participants' strength in the use of pronoun to refer to what has been mentioned in the preceding sentence. As shown in Table 2, the errors made by Group A in the use of EW/P amount to 8.70%, and those by Group B amount to 7.62% of the total errors made. One thing that needs to be mentioned here is that in most cases it was through the use of an equivalent word rather than through a paraphrase that the participants achieved cohesion in this type. That is, the participants rarely paraphrased the lexical items or ideas used in the previous sentences when they use them again in the following sentences. Instead, they mostly repeated the same words or pronouns to refer to the words. This is probably because for Korean college students,

whose previous English study mostly focused on grammar, the use of pronouns must have been easy enough. Even though the repetition of the same word was not counted as an error, it may reflect their weaknesses in paraphrasing.

One unexpected finding was that errors in the use of punctuation were not rare. It was quite surprising since few previous studies with college-level students have reported about such errors. Among the total errors made, 11.30% and 14.29% were errors in the use of punctuation made by Group A and Group B, respectively. The errors included in this type of error were the omission of a comma when necessary, the omission of a period at the end of a sentence, and the use of a wrong punctuation. Since it is commonly believed that the correct use of punctuation (PN) is taught in the basic level writing and that college level students know better than making such errors, it was quite unexpected that not a few participants made such an error in their writing. In Group A ten participants made 13 errors and in Group B nine participants made 15 errors in the use of a punctuation. It is not known whether these errors were from careless writing or from lack of knowledge about the use of punctuations itself. Regardless of the source, it seems evident that those errors are not expected in college level students' writing and they also deteriorate the quality of writing. Given that few studies, if any, on college level L2 students' use of cohesive devices have reported that their participants made such low-level errors, the rather frequent errors found in the participants' use of punctuations was quite surprising.

Provided below are examples of the five types of errors found in the writing samples:

(1) Wrong junction word (JW)

e.g., *I think wearing school uniforms help children focus more on learning and school life. It is important that students stay in the school. Next, school uniforms make students feel safe.*

e.g., *If they use their cell phones, they can't concentrate on their class. They are distracted from their cell phones. So they use their cell phones continuously in class.*

(2) Lack of smooth transition (TR)

e.g., *Frankly speaking, students don't need to be concerned about their appearance. (Ø) Especially Korean students are more stressed by their score than appearance.*

e.g., *Students should know that they do not need cell phones in school. (Ø) We do not need to regulate their use of phones legally.*

(3) Lack of equivalent word/paraphrase (EW/P)

e.g., *Students can wear mini-skirt and high-heels whenever they want after graduation. But you can't wear school uniforms any more.*

e.g., *The use of cell phone should be allowed to students if it does not interrupt the class. And in the break time, we can use cell phone to play games to rest our minds.*

(4) New information in an inappropriate place/manner (NI)

e.g., *The feelings they usually have by wearing school uniforms are important. They can feel cares and protections. In adolescent, they easily become out of control.*

e.g., *A cell phone doesn't help students study hard. After school the cell phone has many merits to people.*

(5) Lack/wrong use of punctuation (PN)

e.g., *Students have to wear it so I think wearing school uniform is one of the factors to make my school life boring.*

e.g., *Teachers thus make students understand the useless of phones when they are studying in school they need to know that it is better to study without phones.*

3. Result of Comparison Between the Two Groups

When the two groups were compared in the quantity of writing and in the errors made in the use of cohesive devices, there were no statistically significant differences found. The two groups showed no significant difference in the quantity of writing, in the total frequency of errors made, and in the frequency (%) of errors made in each of the cohesive devices examined. This similarity between the two groups may be interpreted as the common features of Korean EFL students' writings.

As shown in Table 3, both groups made the most errors (i.e., 36.52% by Group A and 39.05% by group B) in making a smooth transition when there was no junction word used (TR). The next frequently made errors by both groups (i.e., 28.70% by Group A and 21.90% by Group B) were in the use of a correct junction word (JW). Since the smooth transition between sentences/ideas is closely related to the use of a junction word, such a high percentage of errors in TR may have to do with the participants' lack of knowledge in the use of correct junction words. That is, at least partially, the participants may have omitted the junction word due to lack of knowledge about the accurate junction word to be used, and thus failing to achieve a smooth transition. Given Chiang's (2003) argument that transition between sentences in the absence of junction words is the best predictor of writing quality, this result may indicate that the writing quality of the samples obtained from the two groups leaves much room for improvement.

TABLE 3
Result of Comparison Between the Two Groups

Items Compared		Group A (<i>n</i> = 34)	Group B (<i>n</i> = 23)	<i>t</i> -Test <i>p</i>	Confidence Interval	
					<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Number of words used	<i>M</i>	136.12	153.74	.0795	-	
	<i>SD</i>	30.16	44.41			
Number of sentences used	<i>M</i>	9.44	10.39	.1928	-	
	<i>SD</i>	2.56	2.82			
Number of words used per sentence	<i>M</i>	14.86	12.02	.8390	-	
	<i>SD</i>	3.03	2.67			
Total frequency of errors made	<i>M</i>	3.38	4.57	.1698	-.2999	.3984
	<i>SD</i>	3.52	2.48			
Frequency of errors made per sentence	<i>M</i>	0.41	0.43	.6287	-.1836	.1398
	<i>SD</i>	0.39	0.22			
Frequency of JW	<i>M</i>	0.97	1.0	.9205	-.6175	.5586
	<i>SD</i>	1.17	0.95			
	%	28.70	21.90			
Frequency of TR	<i>M</i>	1.24	1.78	.1791	-1.4152	.14401
	<i>SD</i>	1.46	1.54			
	%	36.52	39.05			
Frequency of EW/P	<i>M</i>	0.29	0.35	.7444	-.3822	.2748
	<i>SD</i>	0.63	0.57			
	%	8.70	7.62			
Frequency of NI	<i>M</i>	0.50	0.78	.2384	-.7577	.1925
	<i>SD</i>	0.83	0.95			
	%	14.78	17.14			
Frequency of PN	<i>M</i>	0.38	0.65	.2856	-.7713	.2317
	<i>SD</i>	0.70	1.19			
	%	11.30	14.29			

Note. JW: Wrong junction word; TR: Lack of smooth transition; EW/P: Lack of equivalent word/paraphrase; NI: New information in an inappropriate place/manner; PN: Lack/wrong use of punctuation

* $p < .05$

Another similarity was that both groups made the least errors in the use of an equivalent word/paraphrase (i.e., 8.70% by Group A and 7.62% by Group B). In addition, both groups were similar in that they mostly used a pronoun or repeated the same word instead of a paraphrase to refer to the same person/thing mentioned earlier. Even though there is nothing wrong to repeat the same word or to use a pronoun, lack of paraphrasing may be the reflection of the participants' weaknesses in paraphrasing.

It is quite surprising that in the writing samples of both groups not a few errors were found in the use of punctuation. The mean frequency of errors made by the participants in Group A was 0.38 (11.30%) and that in Group B was 0.65 (14.29%), showing no statistically significant difference. Such errors are not the kinds of errors expected in the writings by college level students. It is not certain whether the PN type of errors have resulted simply from careless writing or not. In any case, it is evident that they also deteriorate the quality of writing and must be prevented in order to establish a good quality of writing.

The fact that the two groups, though they wrote on different topics, were similar in all the items compared may be interpreted as their similar abilities and characteristics in the use of cohesive devices as well as overall writing. That is, the result of the analysis can be regarded as the common characteristics of the writings by Korean college EFL students. However, this result may not necessarily mean that the two groups were also similar in the other kinds of writing abilities than the abilities focused in the study. Those abilities not examined in the present study are also crucial for the quality of writing and the result of the study would have been more informative if they had also been included. Further research is called for to gain more accurate information.

V. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of data analyses, this study concludes that Korean EFL students lack control of the English cohesive devices and the quality of their English writing can be improved with the necessary instruction. Writing ability develops through writing. Without providing the students with enough experience in writing itself, it will be unreasonable to expect them to develop appropriate writing skills including the correct use of cohesive devices. Considering the general lack of experience in writing during their earlier school years, it may be natural that college students make the kinds of errors that are expected to be found in the writings of academically lower level students. Basic writing skills may have to be taught to many college students. In addition, it would be necessary to incorporate different types of writing into the writing program in order to develop students' writing ability. The pedagogical implications drawn from the study are the following:

Firstly, in order to help Korean EFL students improve their TL writing ability through a better control of cohesive devices, it is necessary to provide a more systematic writing instruction from earlier learning stages. Such an instruction would have to include students' reading experience of diverse materials. This is considered to be an important instructional strategy since reading can provide EFL students in particular with written

English input of good quality which they can use as a source for their writing. The input provided by the non-native EFL teachers in the classroom, either in the spoken or written form, may not be enough in terms of quality as well as quantity (S. A. Kim, 2007). Currently, it is mostly when the students reach the college level that they are provided with opportunity to produce English written texts. Before that time, their writing experience is mostly on sentence level. Given that writing is the most difficult skill to develop and that it takes time to develop, it is necessary to start the instruction earlier in the learning process. College students' writing reflects the education they have received from earlier education. It should not be expected that students would develop any language ability that they are not taught.

Secondly, it is necessary to incorporate rules of cohesion into the syllabus in order to ensure that the English teachers in the secondary schools explicitly teach those rules to their students. Currently, it is the reality that the textbooks, though they surely include various writing materials and tasks, hardly deal with the use of cohesive devices in an intensive way and it is natural that the teachers do not pay enough attention to this part. In addition, the writing instruction should accompany the students' writing experience. Simply making students learn the rules through the lecture will hardly help them develop the necessary ability. It is believed that the syllabus designers need to pay more attention to this part.

Thirdly, even the accurate junction words used by the participants were quite limited in kinds. The most frequently used ones were *and*, *but*, *so*, and *therefore*, and it was not easy to find other kinds of junction words used. Such a limited use of junction words may reflect the participants' lack of skills in the use of junction words itself. More writing practice with a variety of junction words seems necessary.

Fourthly, there were serious individual differences among the students' use of cohesive devices. In order to help individual students improve their writing, therefore, it seems necessary for the teacher to deal with the students individually focusing on the aspects of text cohesion for which they show weaknesses.

Finally, it is the reality that most English teachers in Korea have difficulty in dealing with writing. With lack of confidence and time constraint many teachers often skip the writing parts of the textbook units. In order to ensure that the necessary instruction be provided to the students, supports from the administrators as well as the writing experts and syllabus designers are called for. These supports will have to include appropriate teacher education with instructional materials and guidance on the effective use of those materials provided.

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APPENDIX 1

Source Text: School Uniforms

The experts for the Pro side of the debate believe that uniforms within the school system help children to focus more on learning and less on who is wearing what. School standardized attire may also relieve the pressure students feel trying to fit in. School officials also say that uniform systems improve safety. For example, students all dressed in similar clothing help school officials and teachers recognize if someone comes on campus who doesn't belong. Experts also believe mandatory use of such a dress code reduces violence/bullying within the school.

One of the strongest arguments on the Con side is the problem of self expression and individuality. Since self expression is an important part of a child's developmental process, some experts believe that forcing uniforms is detrimental to a child's development. The results of this system are often forcing students to find other, often less appropriate ways to express themselves. Experts also conclude that stripping children of individuality with the use of uniforms is another way to force all students into one mold, when they should be celebrating and embracing individuality. The experts believe that school uniforms do not truly prepare children for the real world in which they will continue to be judged by their appearances and the choices they make within their own lives.

(Source: <http://www.ucdailynews.com/schools/Are-School-Uniforms-A-Good-Or-A-Bad-Idea-99797684.html>)

APPENDIX 2

Source Text: Plan to Restrict Cell Phone Use at Schools Suspended

The Seoul Metropolitan Council has suspended a plan to make an ordinance restricting students' use of mobile phones at primary and secondary schools due to negative public opinion.

The council had sought to establish the ordinance by the end of the year to keep students from recklessly using phones during class.

Those opposing the ordinance have maintained that it could infringe on students' rights, and that students who come home late at night need cellular phones to contact their parents in case of an emergency.

The Seoul council has recently conducted two surveys to gauge public opinion. In a July survey, most respondents concurred that the use of mobile phones would have a negative impact on students' studies at schools, but more than half were nonetheless in favor of students carrying their cellular phones.

More than 55 percent said that the use of mobile phones should be autonomously regulated by each school, whereas about 32 percent said that it should be regulated by law or ordinance. Also in a survey conducted last month, 55 percent of respondents said that the issue of students using mobile phones should be dealt with by each individual school.

"We have found (through the surveys) that although citizens think that it is not good for students to carry and use cell phones at schools, they think negatively about legally regulating the use of phones. We have put the plan on hold for six months," said Lee Jong-eun, a city councilor.

As local elections are slated for next June, it may be difficult for the council to refocus on this issue in six months' time, observers said.

Educational authorities in Ulsan and South Gyeongsang Province had also sought to make the ordinances, but their legislative bodies have suspended the moves, citing the need to solicit more public opinions.

(Source: <http://www.koreaherald.com/>)

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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