

Voice and Documentation: Korean University Students' Use of Writing Prompts in an English Essay Exam*

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Cho, Sookyung. (2017). Voice and documentation: Korean university students' use of writing prompts in an English essay exam. *Modern English Education*, 18(4), 91-107.

This study examines how Korean learners of English incorporate writing prompts in their essay exams. Studies on the impact of writing prompts on essay exams have examined their topics, formats, and language uses, but to date no research has analyzed how test-takers use writing prompts in their essay. To this end, I administered an essay exam based on a writing prompt to 200 college undergraduates. Their essays were scored (from 1 to 20) and analyzed in terms of voice—direct quotation, adoption, style, parody, and hidden polemic—and documentation type—quotation, exact copy, near copy, paraphrase, and summary. The results reveal that Korean test-takers use adoption and stylization most frequently by means of paraphrasing and summarizing the writing prompt. Although no statistically significant correlation coefficient was found between the usage of the writing prompt and the essay scores, the high group used more parody and summary than the low group. These findings imply that the incorporation and documentation of a writing prompt may serve as an indicator of a test-taker's awareness of the importance of outside sources as well as his/her knowledge of academic writing.

[writing prompt/essay exam/voice/documentation/
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I. INTRODUCTION

Writing prompts have been widely used across a variety of English writing tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, the SAT, and the ACT. Writing prompts not only inform test-takers of the

* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2015S1A5A8018206) and by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2017.

purpose of the exam and the type of essays they are supposed to write, but they also provide test-takers with writing ideas and materials. Due to the frequent use of writing prompts and the increasing importance of prompts in writing exams, scholars have investigated their effects on student writing in a variety of ways, including the effects of their topic (Bridgeman, Morgan, & Wang, 1997; Hinkel, 2002), of their format (Jennings, Fox, Graves, & Shohamy, 1999; Smith et al., 1985), and of their language (Brossell & Ash, 1984; Greenberg, 1981; Hoetker & Brossell, 1989; Nold & Freedman, 1977; Rosen, 1969). While these studies are concentrated on how differences between writing prompts affect exam scores from a test developer's or a test-grader's point of view, they have not examined how test-takers use the writing prompt itself in their essays. Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) argued that a text is not considered the outcome of one's own creation but is viewed as located within the context of a rich culture of past, present, and even future writers. In other words, writers draw upon what other writers have already written, and their texts serve as a new basis for future writers. This intertextuality—the assumption that a text is intertwined with others' texts—becomes more important in the area of academic writing because it is closely related to major concerns unique to academic writing, such as ownership, plagiarism, and citation (Canagarajah, 2002; Kamberelis & Scott, 1992; N. Kim, 2015; Prior, 1998). Taking into account the increasing importance of intertextuality in the academy, examining how students incorporate writing prompts in their essays may indicate the extent to which they are aware of these issues.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have researched the ways in which the topic chosen for writing prompts influences student essays. Hinkel (2002), in her study examining topic choice for placement tests and its effect on the essays of first language(L1) and second language (L2) writers, highlighted the importance of choosing topics that are familiar to students (e.g., popular music, movies, fashion, the Internet, computer technology or TV shows). She argued that these familiar topics ensure students do not struggle when writing, and they write not overly personal, but also general enough to not be culturally disadvantageous to L2 writers. Bridgeman, Morgan, and Wang (1997) investigated the effects of preferred topics on student writing by administering writing exams on four different topics—social/intellectual history, or political/economic history—among history students who took the Advanced Placement (AP) course either in American history or European history. They asked the students to indicate what their preferred topic is and write about all the topics. Bridgeman, et al. found that students received higher scores (one third of a standard deviation higher) on preferred topics than on other topics: only 32 percent of students made a wrong choice in American history and 20 percent of students in the topic of European history; that is, they received lower scores on a preferred topic than the

not-preferred topic. Based on this finding, Bridgeman, et al. suggest that student writers should be given freedom to write about their preferred topic in writing prompts.

Other writing scholars have been interested in how formats of prompts affect student writing. Jennings, Fox, Graves, and Shohamy (1999) compared writing scores when students were given multiple choices of writing prompts and when they were given only one choice of writing prompt. Although they failed to find a statistically significant difference between these two cases, they found that students tended to receive higher scores when they were allowed to choose their own topic out of several choices. Smith et al. (1985) also explored different formats of writing prompts—an open topic structure, a response topic structure with one reading passage, and a response topic structure with three reading passages—on texts written by low, general, and advanced groups of college freshmen. The comparison reveals that while the advanced group performed at a higher level across these three tasks, variations existed among the groups depending on the prompt type: in the one-reading-passage group, the advanced group received the highest scores, while the low and the general received similarly low scores; but in the three-reading-passage group, both the advanced and the general group did well in comparison with the low group. Drawing upon these results, Smith et al. argue that test designers should vary the format of writing prompt depending on test takers' writing abilities.

In addition to topic and format of writing prompt, researchers have also examined the language used in writing prompts. Some have found that language has a clear effect on student texts. Brossell (1983), for example, tested three different wordings of a writing prompt—low information load that presented a topic briefly in a statement (Level 1), moderate information load that introduced a topic and asked for a personal response without mention of purpose and audience (Level 2), and high information load that provided a hypothetical situation and asked for personal views on the topic (Level 3). Although Brossell did not find any statistically significant differences among the three differently-worded prompts, he claimed that there were discernible differences among these three levels. That is, Level 3 produced lower mean scores than the other two levels, while Level 2 produced higher mean scores than the others. Based on this finding, Brossell recommends that too much specification as in Level 3 may be too burdensome to test-takers and that appropriate degree of specification of context should be explored depending on the population of test-takers. Crowhurst and Piche (1979), in their study on the effect of intended audience on the syntactic complexity of writing written by 6th and 10th graders, arrived at a similar conclusion, that is, that the mode of the writing prompt—whether it addresses a friend or a teacher—affects student writing.

However, other studies have not found noticeable differences in student writing as a result of the language used in the writing prompts. Greenberg (1981) examined the effects of wording used in the Writing Skills Assessment Test (WSAT) administered to all entering first year students at the City University of New York (CUNY) by manipulating the

prompts on two levels: cognitive demand levels (i.e., the degree of information and the number of strategies which an essay question requires) and experiential demand levels (i.e., the degree of personal experience for which an essay question asks). Brossell and Ash (1984) did not find any statistically significant difference depending on different words adopted in essay questions—a personal manner of address with a question (PQ) or an imperative (PI) and a neutral manner of address with a question (NQ) or an imperative (NI). Nor did Hoetker and Brossell (1989) find any statistically significant differences in student performance across writing prompts adjusted for rhetorical specification and voice—brief/impersonal, brief/personal, full/impersonal, and full/personal. Based on the finding that the wording of writing prompts does not affect student performance, Hoetker and Brossell suggested that shorter writing prompts are used for the sake of efficiency.

Therefore, past research has focused on how writing prompts affect student writing, but not on how students actually incorporate writing prompts into their own essays. With the increasing emphasis on the intertextuality of a written text, in particular, in the academic world, however, how students utilize writing prompts in their own texts can be another criterion for assessing their essays. Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) emphasized a text's intertextuality by arguing that one's speech is a part of speech uttered by his/her predecessors and will in turn affect his/her descendants:

The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion*. *To be means to communicate*. Absolute death (non being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered. To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another*. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287)

Applying the concept of intertextuality to writing, it can be said that writing cannot be considered the sole creation of the author anymore. The words utilized by one writer have been used by other writers and will continue to be used by writers to come. From this perspective, writing prompts serve a function beyond simply eliciting writing from test-takers. They can serve as indicators of the extent to which test takers understand the intertextuality of an academic text.

While arguing that intertextuality has been mentioned a lot, but it has rarely been studied, Kamberelis and Scott (1992) presented six different categories of intertextuality, out of the analysis of children's text: direct quotation, adoption, stylization, parody, hidden polemic, and idealization. Direct quotation refers to a word-for-word quote of another person's written or oral production; adoption means using others' words without indication; stylization is similar to adoption, but it takes a rather objective stance in comparison with adoption; parody

involves taking on opposing positions in the same utterance; hidden polemic refers to an appropriation and transformation of an original text; and finally, idealization elevates someone else's words or phrases to a level of ideal discourse. By applying this framework to the analysis of academic text, this study aims to better understand how students use writing prompts in their essay. To this end, by examining essays written by 200 Korean learners of English, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do Korean learners of English incorporate writing prompts in their essay?
- 2) How does students' usage of a writing prompt relate to their writing scores?
- 3) How do advanced-level students differ from low-level students in their usage of a writing prompt?

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Procedure

Two hundred twenty-six Korean learners of English were recruited from the university where the researcher works and volunteered to participate in this study. All of them are freshmen students and they major in various areas, including English, International Trade, International Studies, English Education, and Interpretation and Translation. Their TOEIC scores are estimated to range from 700 to 800. On a given day, they came to a large classroom and took an essay exam for 90 minutes. In the exam, they were asked to write their opinions about gender differences and career choice—this topic was chosen because of its familiarity to the test-takers—after reading the prompt presented in Figure 1.

Read the passage and write your opinions about it in English.

Professor Richard Lynn at Ulster University in Northern Ireland argued that performance difference found between men and women can be attributed to the difference in their IQs, but most psychologists and sociologists oppose his view. Recent studies show that the difference between men and women observed in performing a cognitive task may originate from their individual differences or their preferences. For example, men are better at imagining things in their mind and locating a place, while women are better at memorizing and recalling words, and identifying things that match given criteria. In the task of finding a place, experiments prove that women need more time than men, but that they are better at identifying and recalling road signs. Based on these findings, some people argue that men and women should be excluded from certain jobs. Present your opinions about this argument with appropriate evidence.

FIGURE 1 Writing Prompt

2. Analysis

In order to analyze how test-takers incorporate the writing prompt in their essays, I adopted two analysis frameworks: Kamberelis and Scott (1992) was adopted for the analysis of voice, and Campbell (1990) was adopted for the analysis of documentation type. Each was slightly modified for this study. First, while Kamberelis and Scott originally developed six categories (i.e., direct quotation, adoption, stylization, parody, hidden polemic, and idealization), I omitted idealization, the elevation of someone else's remarks to a utopian ideal discourse—transforming the original expression “working toward racial harmony” to “achieved racial harmony” (Kamberelis & Scott, 1992, p. 373), because idealization was not found in my dataset. Table 1 presents detailed information of each of the five categories.

TABLE 1
Analysis Framework for Voice
(Modified From Kamberelis and Scott (1992))

Category	Explanation	Example
Direct Quotation	The writer mentions the writing prompt directly and explicitly.	according to the passage, some argue that....
Adoption	The writer adopts the writing prompt as his or her own without mentioning the prompt.	Most of the psychologists and sociologists disagree with the opinion of Richard Lynn from Ulster University in Northern Ireland...
Stylization	The writer maintains an objective stance towards the prompt discourse by supposing that it is not my style, but not explicitly where it comes from.	Nowadays, many studies show that man and woman differ in abilities as to the recognition of space and direction...
Parody	The writer introduces the discourse of the prompt in order to oppose to it.	Taking away the chance to take on certain jobs depending on an individual's gender causes several serious problems.
Hidden Polemic	The writer recontextualizes the words from the prompt by using them to reinforce his/her own opinion.	For instance, a man who has better ability to remember words than any other women cannot get a chance to have a job he wants.

Note. All the examples are from student writing. Grammar mistakes are not corrected.

In addition to the adoption and transformation of original voice in the writing prompt, type of documentation was analyzed based on Campbell's analysis scheme. Campbell analyzed the type of text appropriation into six categories—quotation, exact copy, near copy, paraphrase, summary, and original explanation—depending on similarity to the original material. In this study, I omitted the category of original explanation, the writer's explanations of technical terms in his/her own expressions, which was specific

to Campbell's task calling for students to explain technical terms from the original text of anthropological studies but which was not found in the dataset. Table 2 summarizes the five categories of documentation type used in this study.

TABLE 2
Analysis Framework for Documentation Type
(Modified From Campbell (1990))

Category	Explanation	Example
Quotation	The writer refers to the writing prompt directly.	according to the given passage...
Exact Copy	The writer uses expressions very similar to the discourse of the original text without using quotation marks.	Professor Richard Lynn at Ulster University in Northern Ireland argued that performance difference found between men and women can be attributed to the difference in their IQs, but most psychologists and sociologists oppose to his view.
Near Copy	The writer uses expressions similar to the discourse of the original text without using quotation marks.	According to the professor of Northern Ireland Ulster University, Richard Lynn, the difference in women's and men's performance of a certain task may owe to variations in IQ.
Paraphrase	The writer uses the discourse of the writing prompt, but with more syntactic and lexical changes.	For example, in finding the route, a man can reach the goal faster. But to memorize the process of reaching and make it possible to get there again, a woman should be there with the man.
Summary	The writer provides the gist from the writing prompt.	There are some abilities that men do better than women and women do better than men.

Note. All the examples are from student writing. Grammar mistakes are not corrected.

Using these two frameworks, the researcher analyzed all the student essays and counted the frequency and the number of words for each category, and a second rater—who has been teaching writing to Korean university students for several years—analyzed—30 percent of the essays, following the same frameworks. In most cases, both raters agreed on the analysis of voice and documentation types, but when disagreement occurred, the raters discussed differences and arrived at agreement by specifying the descriptions of each category.

Finally, in order to better understand the relationship between the usage of the writing prompt in student essays and their scores, all essays were graded in four areas: content, logic, grammar, and expression. Each area was graded on the five-point Likert scale (5 highest and 1 lowest), with the highest score for each test-taker being 20 points. The two raters who did the prior analysis, graded all 226 essays and calculated their average score. When the raters disagreed a lot on the essay, that is, the difference between their scores was greater than 3, the participants were excluded from the study. Therefore, the writing

essays of 200 participants were included in the analysis of prompt usage. The interrater reliability of the two raters was reasonable: $r(200) = .68, p < .01$.

In order to answer the three research questions, a ratio of words was calculated for each category in terms of voice and documentation. Its comparison across categories will answer the first question, how Korean students use essay prompts; as for the second research question, correlation coefficients were calculated between each category and essay scores; finally, to answer the third research question, the difference between high- and low-scored essays in their use of voice and documentation, t-tests were conducted in each category.

IV. RESULTS

1. Ways of Students' Incorporating Writing Prompts in Their Essays

The voice analysis of student essays reveals that out of the five categories, participants used adoption most frequently (the ratio of adoption: $M = 11.43, SD = 11.47$), as can be seen in Table 3. That is, they used the outside sources provided in the writing prompt as if they had found them on their own, without referring to the prompt. The next most frequently used category is stylization (the ratio of stylization: $M = 10.69, SD = 11.38$), which means that participants used the given information provided in the prompt without referring to the prompt, although they distanced themselves from both the prompt itself and the source cited in the prompt by implying that the information is from outside sources. Few students explicitly referred to the writing prompt when they incorporated the given information into their own essays (the ratio of direct quotation: $M = 4.53, SD = 9.58$). The least frequently used category was hidden polemic (the ratio of hidden polemic: $M = 2.15, SD = 4.77$), i.e., transforming the original text for one's purpose.

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics for Voice Analysis

Category		Direct Quotation	Adoption	Stylization	Parody	Hidden Polemic
Frequency	<i>M</i>	1.76	2.12	1.37	1.97	1.50
	<i>SD</i>	1.22	1.18	0.68	1.21	0.59
Number of Words	<i>M</i>	27.47	39.60	26.45	18.25	13.25
	<i>SD</i>	16.44	31.04	16.17	13.03	8.56
Ratio	<i>M</i>	4.53	11.43	10.69	5.63	2.15
	<i>SD</i>	9.58	11.47	11.38	5.33	4.77

Table 4 summarizes the results of documentation type analysis. While most students used paraphrasing skills in documenting information from the writing prompt, the highest average number of words falls under the summary category (the ratio of summary: $M = 11.08$, $SD = 9.88$). That is, when participants quoted original information from the source, they were likely to put the original phrases in their own words or summarize the gist instead of copying the exact wording or phrase. The result is quite promising, in that participants avoided using exact or similar phrasing from the original source; however, in looking at the ratio of quotation, it is of note that they were not completely out of danger of plagiarism. Quotation, i.e., giving credit to the writing prompt for the information, is quite low (the ratio of quotation: $M = 1.29$, $SD = 2.57$) in comparison with the other categories.

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics for Documentation Type

Category		Quotation	Exact Copy	Near Copy	Paraphrase	Summary
Frequency	<i>M</i>	1.57	1.87	1.74	2.05	1.43
	<i>SD</i>	1.00	1.26	1.15	1.12	0.68
Number of Words	<i>M</i>	9.05	38.00	25.15	26.97	24.53
	<i>SD</i>	7.95	32.64	22.94	18.22	14.50
Ratio	<i>M</i>	1.29	4.68	7.79	10.52	11.08
	<i>SD</i>	2.57	10.22	10.81	8.86	9.88

2. Incorporation of Writing Prompts and Essay Scores

To see how use of these incorporation and documentation categories relate to essay scores, correlation coefficients between each category and essay scores were calculated. Unfortunately, the correlation coefficients are quite low, as can be seen in Table 5, and thus it is not plausible to claim that any of these categories seems to closely relate to essay score. These low coefficients may originate from the small number of cases, as many student essays do not contain all voice or documentation categories. It may be that a larger collection of essays that involves more cases of each category will produce more robust coefficients and clarify the effects of incorporation and documentation types on essay scores. For example, out of these low coefficients, parody in voice analysis and summary in documentation analysis show a relatively stronger correlation with essay score ($r = 0.23$ for parody, $r = 0.10$ for summary). A larger data set may strengthen this positive relationship between parody and summary and high scores in student essays.

TABLE 5
Correlation Coefficients Between Use of Writing Prompts and Essay Scores

Analysis Framework	Category	Correlation Coefficient
Voice	Direct Quotation	-0.04
	Adoption	0.00
	Stylization	0.05
	Parody	0.23
	Hidden Polemic	0.02
Documentation Type	Quotation	0.07
	Exact Copy	0.04
	Near Copy	-0.04
	Paraphrase	-0.09
	Summary	0.10

3. Advanced vs. Low-Level Students in Writing Prompt Use

1) Quantitative Analysis

In order to see whether high-scored essays are distinguishable from low-scored essays in incorporation and documentation of the writing prompt, the highest scored essays ($n = 27$, receiving higher than 19 out of 20) and the lowest scored essays ($n = 28$, receiving lower than 14 out of 20) were compared.² Descriptive statistics for the analysis of voice is shown in Table 6. Except for direct quotation, the high-scored group received a higher ratio than the low-scored group in all four categories: adoption, stylization, parody, and hidden polemic. In order to see whether these differences are statistically significant, a series of t -tests were conducted. Because multiple comparisons were conducted, p levels were lowered to .01 (.05 is divided by 5, the number of comparisons), following the Bonferroni correction. None of the t -test results were statistically significant except for parody ($p = 0.00$). That is, high-scored essays used more parody than low-scored essays.

TABLE 6
Descriptive Statistics for Voice Analysis

Level		Direct Quotation	Adoption	Stylization	Parody	Hidden Polemic
High	<i>M</i>	2.97	14.52	10.83	7.71	2.21
	<i>SD</i>	7.15	12.46	5.54	5.32	3.57
Low	<i>M</i>	5.64	11.37	5.53	2.98	1.40
	<i>SD</i>	10.37	9.95	9.47	4.48	3.43

¹ Based on the assumption that a certain degree of gap in scores will guarantee differences in the participants' use of voice and documentation, only high-end and low-end groups are compared in this analysis.

On the other hand, the comparison of documentation types between the high-scored and low-scored groups reveals that, as seen in Table 7, the high-scored group tends to use almost all the categories more than the low-scored group except for paraphrase, in particular, summary (13.38 for the high-scored group, and 6.45 for the low-scored group). The *t*-test results also confirm this difference—as in the analysis of the incorporation ratio above, *p* levels were adjusted to .01 following the Bonferroni correction. None of the comparisons were statistically significant, but the difference between high and low groups in summary is statistically significant ($p = 0.00$). That is, the high-scored essays are more likely to include summary of the writing prompt than low-scored essays.

TABLE 7
Descriptive Statistics for Documentation Type

Level		Quotation	Exact Copy	Near Copy	Paraphrase	Summary
High	<i>M</i>	1.47	6.37	8.12	9.35	13.38
	<i>SD</i>	2.75	11.38	9.46	5.99	9.39
Low	<i>M</i>	1.35	4.23	6.63	10.49	6.45
	<i>SD</i>	2.47	8.46	8.81	11.47	7.54

2) Qualitative Analysis

A closer look at high-scored essays and low-scored essays uncovers how the writing prompt is incorporated and how logic is built. Essays A and B received 19 points, while Essays C, D, and E received 14 points—they were chosen as representative cases of each level. Table 8 shows the number of words per each category for each essay in voice and documentation.

TABLE 8
Ratio of Words in Each Category of Documentation

Level	Essay	Quotation	Exact Copy	Near Copy	Paraphrase	Summary
High	A	0	0	11.5	18	19
	B	0	0	17	11.5	20.67
	C	0	0	11	9	0
Low	D	0	21	32	26	0
	E	0	0	0	0	0

Essay A and B introduce the topic by summarizing the information provided in the writing prompt as seen in Excerpts 1 and 2.

Excerpt 1

According to the research findings, there seems to be a difference concerning the opposite gender's adeptness at certain tasks. (From Essay A)

Excerpt 2

Some believe that the difference in men and women's ability to perform cognitive tasks stem from their difference in IQ. However, recent studies have suggested that this difference might come from individual differences regardless of gender, or from preference. (From Essay B)

While both Essays A and B summarize the major idea of the writing prompt in their own words, Essays C, D, and E start their essays by nearly or exactly copying specific information from the prompt or by discussing a new issue that has not been discussed in the writing prompt as seen in Excerpts 3-5.

Excerpt 3

Employers tend to except male or female in some specific jobs. Of course, there are many differences between two genders. (From Essay C)

Excerpt 4

Richard Lynn acclaimed that man and woman have different of performance degree to solve some problem because of their personal IQ. However almost psychologist and sociologist disagree about his opinion. They acclaim man and woman have different of performance degree, because of their personal different and interest. (From Essay D)

Excerpt 5

Nowadays, unlike old times, men sometimes do a job that women do and women sometimes do a job that men usually do. (From Essay E)

Setting aside grammatical mistakes, Essay C in Excerpt 3 copied almost verbatim the original phrase from the writing prompt—"Based on these findings, some people argue that men and women should be excluded from certain jobs." Similarly, Essay D in Excerpt 4 copied almost word-for-word the original phrases and content from the writing prompt without referring to it. Although Essay E did not copy as Essay C and D did as seen in Excerpt 5, Essay E failed to stimulate an appropriate schema for the readers to understand her point because of its irrelevance to the topic.

In addition to documentation type—exact copy, near copy, or summary—all five essays show a difference in incorporating the writing prompt as seen in Table 9.

TABLE 9
Ratio of Words in Each Category of Voice

Level	Essay	Direct Quotation	Prompt	Style	Parody	Hidden Polemic
High	A	0	17	18	11.5	0
	B	0	9	23.75	11.5	0
	C	0	9.67	0	0	0
Low	D	0	25	37	0	0
	E	0	0	0	0	0

Excerpts 6 and 7 show that Essays A and B used parody—that is, the writer introduces the discourse of the prompt in order to oppose it—in arguing their points of view.

Excerpt 6

Assigning or banning a single sex to or from a specific job can trigger social problems such as gender discrimination and alienation towards lesbians or gays. (From Essay A)

Excerpt 7

As recent studies also suggest that the difference in performing certain tasks might stem from individual difference rather than the difference in gender, there would be no reason to restrict either a man or a woman from acquiring a certain job based on assumptions. (From Essay B)

In the underlined parts, the two writers paraphrase the information given in the writing prompt. As seen in the examples, however, they do not merely introduce the idea from the writing prompt, but rebut it by adding their own idea—“can trigger social problems” in Essay A, and “there would be no reason” in Essay B.

On the other hand, none of the low-scored essays attempted to use parody in the logical development of the topic.

Excerpt 8

Our society have improved a lot by cooperating each other. These problems can be solved if each of the components of society work together. (From Essay C)

Excerpt 9

Woman has a good memory more than man and man can find road more fast than woman. So if they work together, then that makes a better energy. (From Essay D)

Excerpt 10

In some countries such as Pakistan and Iran, there still a limitation of a job than men can do and a job that women have to do. The reason that this is still happening is because Pakistan and Iran have a mind concept that men should do a job that men are good at and women should do a job that women are good at like housekeeping and looking after their children. (From Essay E)

Essays C (Excerpt 8) and E (Excerpt 10) do not incorporate the information from the writing prompt in arguing their opinion at all, while Essay D in Excerpt 9 paraphrases the phrases from the writing prompt, but does not rebut it, unlike Essays A and B.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of these student essays proves that test-takers are more likely to use adoption and stylization in comparison with the other categories. That is, they either use the writing prompt as if the ideas presented were their own research outcomes (adoption) or maintain a certain level of distance without explicitly referring to the writing prompt (stylization). In the analysis of documentation type, test-takers used more paraphrase and summary than quotation, exact copy, or near copy. This finding indicates that Korean learners of English seem familiar with the issue of plagiarism and try to express opinions in their own words rather than copying the writing prompt, although their knowledge and writing ability is not developed enough to allow them to make explicit their source materials, which in this case is the writing prompt. However, this study cannot support the claim that test-takers' incorporation and documentation patterns of the writing prompt relate to essay scores because no statistically significant correlation coefficients were observed. In spite of these low coefficient levels, parody from voice analysis and summary from documentation analysis did demonstrate a positive relationship with student essays, which may suggest that a stronger association can be found in a larger data set. Lastly, the relationship between parody, summary, and essay scores is more remarkable in the comparisons of the high-scored and the low-scored essays, which reveal that these two groups of essays are statistically different from each other at the significance level in their use of parody and summary. That is, it appears that the high-scored group has a tendency to use summary and parody in comparison with the low group.

The findings of this study insinuate that test-takers' usage of the writing prompt—how they incorporate and document it in their own text—can serve as another important indicator of a student's developmental level as an academic writer and their knowledge about citing and incorporating outside sources. Several studies have reported that using

outside sources is a challenging task to learners of English (Hirvela & Du, 2013; N. Ji, 2012; Shi, 2004). For example, Hirvela and Du (2013) argued ESL students have limitations in understanding the purpose of paraphrasing, one of the most representative ways of using outside sources: their participants viewed paraphrasing as a tool of telling knowledge rather than that of transforming knowledge. As Bahktin (1981, 1984, 1986) and Kamberelis and Scott (1992) emphasize, however, it is not only an individual student's textuality—their grammatical accuracy, creative ideas, and organization—but their intertextuality, or how well they locate their opinions in relation to other texts, that is an important measure of writing ability. And thus, test takers' use of writing prompt in their essays not only shows the extent to which they understand the importance of intertextuality in academic writing, but also serves as a useful criterion in evaluating their academic writing skills.

This study has several limitations, including a small number of cases in each category and a limited amount of demographic information for each test-taker. By increasing the number of test-takers or requiring them to mention the writing prompt, a larger number of each analysis category will be obtained, which will provide a better understanding of EFL students' use of writing prompts. Also, detailed demographic information of each test taker will enable a more in-depth analysis of why they prefer a particular type of voice and documentation.

Despite these limitations, the current study has several implications to both test developers and writing teachers in addition to learners of English. As for test developers, this study suggests that a writing prompt can be used as more than a signpost that informs test-takers about what the purpose of the exam is and what type of essay they are supposed to write; it can be used as a way of assessing test-takers' understanding of how to incorporate outside sources. Further studies are required to explore ways to use writing prompts for this purpose. Next, writing teachers need to raise students' awareness of intertextuality in academic writing. As seen in Hirvela and Du (2013), most learners of English do not properly understand the purpose of using outside sources. Therefore, English learners should be reminded of its importance, and at the same time they should be taught appropriate skills, such as how to summarize and paraphrase outside sources and use them effectively—whether to rebut them or use them as evidence to support their opinions—in a writing class. This knowledge and writing skill is not only required from those who have to take a high stakes writing exams in the academia, such as college entrance exams, placement tests, the GRE, or the TOEFL, but it will also help them take advantage of writing prompts in the context of writing exams.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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Received 20 September 2017

Revised 25 October 2017

Accepted 11 November 2017