

Developmental Features of Stance *That* Constructions[※]

: In Korean EFL Learners' Academic Writing

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Abstract

Pyo, SiYeon. 2019. "Developmental Features of Stance *That* Constructions: In Korean EFL Learners' Academic Writing". *The Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea* 27(2). 85~121. The present study examines the usage patterns of stance *that* constructions in Korean EFL learners' written corpora by two different proficiency groups (KEFL 1, KEFL 2) to figure out some developmental features of marking stance in L2 academic prose. Focusing on three main categories (stance verbs, adjectives, and nouns) controlling stance *that* clauses, the study compares the frequency of each feature by the categories and their subcategories across the corpora. Employing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the study found a marked developmental path across the corpora as a cross-sectional study. Indeed, less proficient L2 learners tended to use spoken involvement features as 'a subjective transmitter', emphasizing the writer's view only with a private authorial voice. However, more advanced learners showed remarkable features as 'an objective interpreter' with more implicitly detached stances. Despite a few chunk expressions considered as being memorized, more complex grammatical resources appropriate for academic discourse were observed. Finally, as the final stage, this study suggests 'a refined stance-taker' referring to an expert writer in the academic discourse community, which may be devoid in untrained native speakers' writing. In accordance with the need for university students to transition into more advanced academic discourse sooner,

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this study provides some practical insights into teaching and learning of stance patterns in using *that* complement clauses in English academic discourse.

Keywords: stance, stance *that* constructions, L2 academic writing, stance verbs, corpora

1. Introduction

As two-way communication between readers and writers, writing involves actively interactive processes to convey a message to readers. When it comes to communication in academic text, linguists have paid attention to the linguistic mechanisms adopted by writers to transmit their personal stances and a variety of such investigations have been conducted (Barton 1993; Birber 2006; Biber & Finegan 1988, 1989; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan 1999; Beach & Anson 1992; Conrad & Biber 2000; Holmes 1998; Hyland 1996a, b; Hunston 1994; Hunston & Thompson 2000; Precht 2000). One of the main interpersonal features used in academic prose is expressing the writer's evaluative stance in a scholarly and objective way to persuade the readers. "Scholarly debate involves adopting a position and persuading readers of claims, and the linguistic resources are used to achieve these interpersonal goals (Hyland & Tse 2005: 39)", which have been described in terms of evaluation (Hunston & Thompson 2000), stance (Biber 2006a, b; Hyland 1999) and metadiscourse (Crismore 1989; Hyland 1998). Because giving the writer's opinion or stance is a key aspect, the expressions of evaluation and stance in academic prose have been popular in many studies (Crompton 1997; Hunston 1994; Hyland 1994; Meyer 1997). Specifically, some studies have documented several classes of verbs to express evaluation or stance, such as reporting verbs like 'state, consider, find' (Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland

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2002). However, such studies have focused on classification of syntactic items to express stance, frequencies of target items between in native and non-native corpora, or comparisons in genre- and discipline-specific contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is important to figure out essential aspects of the shared knowledge of a professional academic discourse community. In this respect, the acquisition of academic discourse conventions to express the writer's stance is essential because such “conventionalized expressions used by a target discourse community is an indispensable aspect of the communicative competence that learners must acquire to be fully socialized in an academic setting” (Cortes 2004: 398). However, studies on the developmental features to express the writer's stance in L2 academic prose are still an under-researched field. Especially, L2 learners' use of linguistic devices to adopt a position and persuade readers of claims in terms of writer-reader relationships in academic writing needs to be explored more specifically.

Korean university students who enter into academic writing in English are required to have academic discourse skills. It must be a difficult challenge for L2 learners to acquire those skills because they have to cultivate not only the general English ability to properly express one's thesis on a subject in English, but also the literary and rhetoric characteristics used in the academic discourse community. To allow them to participate in the interactive communication process in a manner appropriate to the academic community, they need to have a good range of major patterns of academic writing. This study starts from a question about how L2 learners develop their academic discourse devices like conventional expressions used in L2 academic community that may be different from those used in their L1 context. For the purpose of figuring out some developmental patterns such L2 learners show when they write academic texts, this study focuses on the lexico-grammatical features

in English which function to express evaluative stance.

Despite increasing attention on epistemic stance expressions by L2 speakers in a considerable number of studies (Crismore 1989; Hewings & Hewings 2002; Hinkel 2002; Hyland & Milton 1997; Hyland 1998; Oh 2007; Oh & Kang 2013), they have not been studied specifically to examine developmental features in L2 academic writing. The present study focuses on how stance *that* construction, as one of grammatical stance devices, is used as a pragmatic marker to express the personal epistemic stance of the writer. Stance *that* construction is considered to provide the writer with more refined and implied evaluative options appropriate for academic prose than other single forms such as stance adverbs or modals. Above all, this structure is viewed as a powerful device to present the writer's stance, which may meet “the assumption that academic writing involves presenting argumentation with a position on things that matter engaging with discipline-specific discourse” (Aull & Lancaster 2014: 152). However, it is relatively difficult to find research articles on specific features and usage patterns of stance complement clauses. As a part of expert writers' tactic genre knowledge, valued expressions of stance need to be acquired to be more successful in college-level writing. When L2 learners have “some access to the rhetorical practice typical of expert groups” (Soliday 2011: 37), including the practice of expressing stance, they are induced to become “a potential colleague and more-than-provisional discourse community member” (Wilder 2012: 102). Accordingly, this study focuses on investigating developmental patterns of *that* constructions as a stance marker in L2 writing across two different proficiency levels.

Taking into account the importance of building writer-reader relationships in academic writing, the current study focuses on L2 learners' authentic usage

of stance *that* constructions marking epistemic stance in academic contexts. Given this, the research questions are as follows:

1. What might stance patterns reveal as English proficiency develops about the expectations of using stance *that* constructions between advanced learners and intermediate learners?
2. What are the most striking frequency patterns about the use of *that* constructions to mark stance in academic essays across Korean EFL learner corpora and native corpora?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework of Stance

In the present study, the definition and overall theoretical framework concerning stance are based on *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (LGSWE, Biber et al. 1999). Basically, the term ‘stance’ is defined as ‘personal feelings, attitudes, value judgements or assessments’ (LGSWE, 1999: 966), which are commonly expressed by speakers and writers. According to Hunston and Thompson (2000), epistemic stance, as part of evaluative discourse, performs three types of interconnected functions: expressing opinion, maintaining relations between the interlocutors and discourse organization. In a similar way, stance is also regarded to fulfill functions as both a subjective and intersubjective device (Gablasova, Brezian, & Mcenery 2017), which allows writers to express a position towards their statement. For example, when we write a statement, we can convey

a range of self-expressive meanings related to confidence, attitude, value systems and so on towards propositional content. In other words, making a statement involves not only a proposition itself, but also the writer's stance on the proposition such as certainty or probability. The following example demonstrates how propositional content can be combined with epistemic stance.

(1) I think that the system should be closely looked at before the license is renewed.

In (1), the writer's evaluative stance is made by inserting *I* and a lexical verb *think*, in the matrix clause and adding a *that* complement clause to express a propositional content. In such a manner, using epistemic stance markers can be one of the core discourse skills in academic writing because giving the writer's epistemic stance or opinion is a fundamental aspect of academic prose. Thus, as a single unit, the matrix structure containing stance *that* complement clauses is a powerful way to express the writer's epistemic stance in academic discourse (Hyland & Tse 2005). Hyland and Tse called such a construction 'evaluative *that*-structures'. In a similar vein, but with a somewhat different perspective, this study calls this structure 'stance complement *that* constructions' because this study focuses on three types of stance complement clauses which are controlled by stance verbs, stance adjectives and stance nouns. The detailed classification of stance complement clause types is described in 2.2.

According to *LGSWE* (1999), stance meanings can be conveyed through various ways such as grammatical devices, word choice and paralinguistic devices. Paralinguistic devices such as loudness, pitch and duration and non-linguistic devices such as gestures to convey personal stance meanings are not only

unavailable, but also unclear in writing. For these reasons, the scope of the current study is limited to grammatically marked stance which is linguistically explicit. Again, the grammatical stance devices are classified into five construction types: stance adverbials, stance complement clauses, modals and semi-modals, stance noun + prepositional phrase and premodifying stance adverb. Among these five types, the two common linguistic devices used to overtly mark stance are stance adverbials and complement clause constructions (Biber et al. 1999; Biber 2006). Here are the examples:

(2) *Definitely*, we need to develop our inner beauty such as intelligence and ability to take risks.

(3) I *think that* women should start to work on fixing their communities and the whole world.

As seen in (2), stance adverbials such as *definitely* express the writer's attitude or evaluation in regard to the proposition included in the matrix clause. In (3), the complement *that* clause is clearly used as a grammatical device with the verb, *think*, to hold a *that* complement clause marking the writer's stance. Moreover, according to several syntactic categories used in the main clause connected to *that* complement clauses, the writer may have more evaluative options by using stance *that* constructions. However, research on the actual use of stance *that* clauses remains relatively unexplored in the field of second language acquisition. The present study, therefore, focuses on how L2 learners use *that* clauses to express epistemic stance.

Epistemic stance markers are central features among subcategories of interactional metadiscourse. Metadiscourse, as discourse of discourse literally, is

defined as textual and interpersonal aspects “of a text which explicitly organize the discourse, engage the audience and signal the writer's attitude” (Hyland 1998: 437). As a key aspect of academic writing, evaluation expresses the writer's stance or opinion and reflects the value system and ideology of a disciplinary community (Hyland & Tse 2005). In this respect, evaluative *that* constructions function as a linguistic device where writer's stance or attitude is projected, including a source of evaluation and the evaluated entity. Based on Hyland and Tse's study (2005), the focal pattern to mark stance in the present study consists of two key parts. One part is the superordinate clause which contains not only a stance, but also the source of the stance. For instance, in “I personally believe that women should have not only inner beauty but also their intelligence...”, the superordinate clause, “I personally believe” involves both a stance or an evaluation and *I* as its source with regard to the proposition in the *that* clause followed by the superordinate clause. This involves lexico-grammatical elements such as a range of verbs to hold *that* complement clauses. The other part refers to evaluative *that* complement clauses, which contains the evaluated entity. In the example above, the evaluative *that* clause, “that women should have not only inner beauty but also their intelligence...”, contains a proposition where the entity of the stance or assessment is represented. Like this, the evaluative *that* constructions signaling the writer's stance are typically framed by *that* complement clauses containing the entity which is evaluated as a proposition. The structure of evaluative *that* devised by Hyland and Tse (2005) is as follows:

Matrix clause [evaluation] + *that*-clause [evaluated entity]

(Hyland & Tse 2005: 40)

There are some grammatical categories connected to the *that*-clause. Other than stance verbs in the matrix clauses, stance can be conveyed through adjectives and nouns involving *that* complement clauses. Like this, by offering various selections of syntactic categories in the matrix clause, the stance *that* construction offers more evaluative options to writers than use of single adverbs or modal verbs. In this structure, the writer's "opinion is given more prominence detached from the evaluative proposition and presented as the starting point of the sentence" (Hyland & Tse 2005: 40).

In terms of epistemic stance, some previous studies in student academic writing have found *that* L2 learners tend to use more certainty markers to express firmer assertions and stronger writer commitment with more authoritative tone (Hyland & Milton 1997). Schleppegrell's (2004) analysis of L1 and L2 students' writing concerning reports in chemical engineering revealed that more skilled L1 students tended to express their stances by choosing more objective wording (e.g., It is obvious that these results are in error.), while the less proficient L2 students tended to opt for more subjectively worded stances (e.g., I believe that these results are in error.) (Halliday 1994; All & Lancaster 2014). With regard to stance patterns between L1 and L2 writers, Coffin (2002) and Hewings (2004) found out that more advanced writers tend to use more frequently discoursal resources to negotiate solidity with potential readers who may hold contrary points of view. According to Coffin's (2002), there is a developmental path in students' history writing, according to which students tend to progress from a "recorder" to an "interpreter, and then to an "adjudicator" of historical discourse. At the first stage of a recorder, a statement is conveyed with a writer-oriented opinion in a direct way, but more advanced writers are expected to take stances that are implicitly attitudinal, detached and open to other views in the discourse.

2.2. Lexico-grammatical Features for Stance *That* Clauses

Although stance can be conveyed in some less explicit ways as mentioned above, stance complement clauses are considered as a clear case to be represented by distinct structural components. Indeed, it is through such linguistic devices that academic content which requires adopting a position can be conveyed, supporting the writer's stance or persuading readers of claim. In this respect, stance *that* constructions can be a powerful way to signal writers' stance or evaluative meaning in academic discourse (Hyland & Tse 2005). The current study, therefore, focuses on complement *that* constructions with some different types of lexico-grammatical features to mark stance. Partially adopting the theoretical framework of major grammatical devices used to express stance mentioned in *LGSWE* (1999), the focal stance complement clauses of the present study are classified as follows:

Table 1. Categories Controlling Stance *That* Complement Clauses

Main Categories		Examples
Stance verbs	controlled by a verb	ex> I just hope that I've plugged it in properly.
Stance adjectives	controlled by an adjective	ex> I'm very happy that we're going to Sarah's.
	extraposed structures	ex> It's amazing that judges can get away with outrageous statements
Stance nouns	controlled by a noun	ex> The fact that he will get away with attacking my daughter is obscene.

The matrix clause plus *that* complement constructions to express an interpersonal feature between the writer and reader can be assorted into three types according to the grammatical categories controlling the subordinate clause.

As seen in Table 1, in terms of stance adjectives, there are two subtypes; one is *that* clauses controlled by a stance adjective, and the other is referred to as extraposed structures. Especially, studies on extraposition have so far caught many researchers' attention because it is commonly used in academic prose. Herriman (2000), for example, found that the structure offers writers the means to give generality and objectivity to the proposition of the following *that* clause, expressing their evaluations for it. Biber et al. (1999) also discovered *that* extraposed structures were used much more frequently in written register such as academic prose and news reports than in spoken register.

As quite useful linguistic stance devices that allow writers to depersonalize by distancing themselves from the following *that* clause, a total of four lexico-grammatical types controlling *that* complement clauses are focused. Above all, stance *that* constructions are definitely considered explicit grammatical devices that L2 learners can use to express stance in a predominant way in their academic prose. This means that such explicit linguistic features need to be learned by L2 learners to make them recognize and acquire such constructions easily to some extent when they learn English academic discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sources of Corpus Data

For the purpose of exploring the usage patterns of stance *that* constructions typically used in academic prose, the data used in this study is based on two sets of corpora of written texts: Korean EFL learner (hereafter, KEFL) and native

English written corpora. The KEFL corpus was compiled from a total of 236 essays written by 236 university students in Seoul. The essays were selected from seven English writing classes which the researcher taught from 2016 to 2017 for one and a half years. Because the course is one of mandatory three-credit courses, all students must write an English essay for 30 minutes online as a placement test to take the course just before signing up for the course. Most freshmen take the course. According to their grades of the test, they are assigned to one of the three levels, moderate-low (ML), moderate-middle (MM) or moderate-high (MH). These levels correspond to Intermediate-Low, -Mid, and -High, respectively in the proficiency guidelines for writing of American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). Basically, students who are able to write paragraph-level essays without any major problems are assigned to above MM classes. In fact, a considerable number of advanced students who can use effective complex sentences belong to MH because it is the highest. Thus, advanced learners among students assigned in the MH were selected based on their TOEFL writing scores or the scores of their mid-term exam, a TOEFL writing test (above 25), which was rated by two lecturers who taught the courses. Accordingly, the learner corpus used in this study is divided into two sub-corpora; KEFL 1 by intermediate learners from the MM classes and KEFL 2 by advanced learners selected from the MH ones.

In terms of L2 acquisition, L2 learners at intermediate levels are expected to show dynamic features in acquiring typical rhetorical aspects required in academic discourse which is different from their L1 (Pyo 2018). Using an L2 rule which a native speaker would not, overgeneralization in L2 learning can occur in a certain pattern at the lexical and grammatical levels. Generally, an intermediate level is considered as a stage where overgeneralization is more evident

than other stages, starting to gradually retreat from it (Yang 2005, 2016). This is the case in L2 learning as well as in L1 acquisition. For these reasons, the present study adopted intermediate and advanced learners of English with the expectation that vigorous aspects of overgeneralization and how to retreat from it as their proficiency level gets higher would be observed.

The participants included in the learner corpora were all female and mostly freshmen with various majors. Because the course was mandatory for all the students, it focused on general English writing, starting from the basic format of a paragraph and expanding to five-paragraph essays with some social issues appropriate to be dealt with in a university setting. Specifically, the compiled corpus data came from an argumentative type of essays with specific reasons and examples to support an opinion. The KEFL 1 sub-corpus consists of 37,011 words by 122 essays and 61,069 words by 114 essays were counted in the KEFL 2. The average words per essay are 419.6 words. The further information about the data is summarized in Table 2 below.

The native English corpus (hereafter, NE) to compare with the learner corpora, KEFL 1 and 2, was from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS). Originally, the LOCNESS was constructed to be used as reference in the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) project. It is a collection of argumentative essays written by American and British university students, which contains present-day English academic essays. The NE data used in this study consists of 114 argumentative essays selected from a total of 347 essays in the LOCNESS.

Table 2. Description of the KEFL and NE Corpora

Corpora	Number of essays	Number of words	Word types	words per essay
KEFL 1	122	37,011	3,107	303,4
KEFL 2	114	61,069	4,567	535.7
NE	114	60,400	6,049	529,8

3.2. Procedures of Data Analysis

The three sets of corpus data used in the current study were basically analyzed according to the 3 categories presented in Table 1 in section 2, using AntConc 3.4.4w (Windows 2014 version), one of the most widely used Corpus tools. Specifically, this study examines three main categories controlling that complement clauses: stance verbs, stance adjectives and stance nouns and 13 semantic categories of the stance markers. Concentrating on the focal examples presented in Table 2, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were employed.

As the first analytic step, the target stance markers were searched using AntConc, a concordancing program, combined with contextual analysis of each item. By Key Word in Context (KWIC) function in AntConc, the distribution and frequency of the target markers involving stance *that* clauses were analyzed in context. Actually, all the examples containing a potential stance marker were searched one by one. Then, the distribution and frequency of each target item were compared across the corpora according to the three main categories and 13 semantic categories. The items used in this study have several inflectional and derivational forms. For example, 'believe' has several inflectional and derivational forms such as *believes*, *believed* or *belief*. Operationally, in this study, only items with the same root but with different inflectional suffixes were considered as the identical forms because different inflectional forms undergo

lemmatization from the identical lexeme without changing syntactic category of the item. On the other hand, items which involve the addition of derivational affixes were regarded as different ones because they undergo syntactic category shift.

Next, combined with qualitative analysis, specific usage aspects in regard with stance *that* constructions were closely examined. Manual inspection was involved to identify the metadiscourse aspects with stance items controlling *that* complement clauses in context accurately. Partially following the classification of evaluative *that* (Hyland & Tse 2005), this study focuses on the writer's evaluative stance and its source in order to examine the property of stance *that* constructions by looking at the relation between projecting matrix and projected complement clauses. The evaluative stance is concerned with the writer's attitude toward the statement in *that*-clause evaluative stance. Hyland and Tse (2005) distinguished it between the writer's attitudinal and epistemic stance. According to their study, attitudinal stance is classified into two subcategories again: the writer's affective attitude toward the given statement, and a perception of obligation, which refers to what the writer believes should be done. On the other hand, epistemic stance indicates the writer's assessment toward the truth or accuracy of the statement in the *that*-clause. Next, in terms of the source of the evaluative stance, three subcategories to attribute the source are considered; a human source such as the author or researchers, an abstract entity like inanimate source such as the result or data, and concealing the source of the evaluative stance.

Table 3. Metadiscourse Properties of Stance *That* Constructions

Properties	Subcategories		Examples
Evaluative stance	attitudinal	affective	I hope that It is important to note that
		obligatory	It must be recognized that
	epistemic		It is likely that, We prove that
Source of the evaluative stance	Human (either the author or other humans)		We show that, Smith notes that
	Abstract entity (inanimate source)		The findings indicate that
	Concealed (un-named originator)		It is well-known that, A general finding is that

Based on the classification presented in Table 3, *that* complement clauses functioning as stance markers were counted under each aspect and semantic subcategory. After comparing the findings across the corpora in terms of the overall distribution and frequency, Chi-square tests were implemented using SPSS 22 to determine whether the differences among the three corpora are statistically significant. Finally, for the purpose of figuring out distinctive usage patterns according to proficiency levels, an examination of stance *that* constructions in each corpus was subjected to close scrutiny.

3.3. Classification by Lexico-Grammatical Features Controlling *That*-Clauses

In the current study, grammatical stance structures are grouped by three grammatical categories depending on the elements controlling *that* complement clauses. The first category refers to stance verbs which function to express stance or evaluation. For example, there are reporting verbs (e.g., *state*, *consider*, *find*),

factive verbs (e.g., *acknowledge, identify, prove*), counterfactual verbs (e.g., *confuse, disregard*), and non-factive verbs (e.g., *claim, propose*) (Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland 2002). Biber et al. (1999) mention cognitive and affective verbs (e.g., *think, know, believe*) and speech act verbs (e.g., *say, state*) and other communication verbs (e.g., *suggest, prove*) as stance verbs. Based on Biber's (2006b) classification, in the current study, stance verbs are classified into 5 types: epistemic verbs, attitude verbs, and speech act and other verbs including research acts, discourse acts, and cognitive acts. The detail examples of each type of stance verbs are presented in Table 4.

Secondly, stance adjectives are analyzed into epistemic (certainty and likelihood), attitude/emotion, and evaluation adjectives. As mentioned above, *that* constructions controlled by stance adjectives include extraposed structures with the dummy pronoun *it* (e.g., It is certain that such rules will save them time and money.). In fact, extraposition is seen as a quite useful device that allows writers to depersonalize by distancing themselves from the following *that* clause. Biber et al. (1999) discovered that extraposition structures are used considerably more frequently in written register such as academic prose and news reports. Herrimen (2000) also argued that extraposition provides writers with the means of expressing their stance as an explicit statement laden with generality and objectivity. Thus, extraposition is a relatively commonly used device in academic prose.

Finally, stance nouns are divided into epistemic (certainty and likelihood), attitude/perspective, and communication (non-factual) nouns. When it comes to the relationships of the matrix to the *that* complement clause dominated by a noun, there are two kinship patterns as seen in (4) and (5).

(4) *The fact that* credit cards are more convenient than cash is apparently accepted.

(5) *The conclusion* obtained from the experiment is *that* the most important factor for young generation ...

In (4), the noun *evidence* and *that* clause directly connected to the noun have an appositive relation. On the other hand, the noun *result* is apart from *that*-clause, but the noun and *that*-clause also have an appositive relation. The examples contain a similar functional kinship to other types of stance *that* structures in terms of presenting a core meaning of stance or evaluation via stance nouns. In other words, writers' stance or opinion is conveyed through stance nouns detached from the evaluated statement, holding the *that* clauses to the nouns. Syntactically, three possible kinds of controlling elements for complement clauses in the current study are verbs, adjectives and nouns and the classification of lexico-grammatical features of each element is analyzed based on the system in Table 4.

Table 4. Classification by Lexico-Grammatical Features Controlling *That*- Complement Clauses

Stance Verb	Epistemic	Certainty	conclude, determine, know, prove
		Likelihood	believe, think, doubt, appear, seem
	Attitude		expect, hope, worry, recognize
	Speech act (Research/Discourse/ Cognitive) & other verbs		demonstrate, indicate, find, show, report, say, argue, propose, suggest, claim, note, perceive, interpret
Stance Adjective	Epistemic	Certainty	certain, clear, obvious
		Likelihood	(un)likely, possible, probable, well-known
	Attitude/Emotion		amazed, shocked, surprised
Evaluation		essential, interesting, noteworthy, important	

Stance Noun	Epistemic	Certainty	conclusion, fact, observation
		Likelihood	assumption, claim, hypothesis
	Attitude/perspective		hope, view, worry
	Communication(non-factual)		comment, proposal

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Frequency of Stance *That* Clauses

As a linguistic device to operate degree of epistemic commitment to the writer's claim or opinion, evaluative stance expressions are necessary in academic prose. For the purpose of examining how undergraduate students engage with academic discourse as provisional community members, the study focuses on stance *that* construction based on the three main categories controlling *that* complement clauses. The two striking results are demonstrated in terms of frequency of stance *that* structures.

Table 5. Overall Frequency of Stance *That* Complement Clauses

Corpora	Token	per 1,000 words	Types	TTR (%)
KEFL 1	230	6.21	16	6.96
KEFL 2	379	6.21	29	7.65
NE	767	12.7	32	4.17

Note. TTR = Type/Token Ratio

Firstly, Table 5 above obviously indicates that NE shows much more frequent use of stance *that* constructions (n=767) than KEFL 1 (n=229) or KEFL 2 (n=379). The overall token per 1,000 words in NE corpus (n=12.7) is nearly double

that in KEFL (n=6.21), while the relative frequencies are exactly the same between the two KEFL corpora. However, in terms of the types which refer to elements controlling *that* clauses such as stance verbs, adjectives, and nouns, the number of types in NE (n=32) was similar to that of KEFL 2 (n=29), but was exactly double that of KEFL 1 (n=16). One thing to be noted here is that the total token number of stance *that* constructions in KEFL 2 is only about half of that of NE (379:767), while the number of types is similar to it (29:32). This result may possibly be accounted for by the assumption that more proficient L2 learners try more varied types of stance *that* clauses although the overall frequency of using them is similar regardless of the proficiency levels, about half of native speakers'.

Next, the frequencies and uses of stance *that* clauses by categories controlling them in each corpus were calculated and compared across the three corpora. As can be seen in Table 6, a clear dominance of stance verbs controlling stance *that* clauses was observed across all the corpora. Although there were subtle differences between stance adjectives and nouns, *that*-clauses controlling by an adjective were seen more than those controlling by a noun in KEFL corpora, which was the opposite in the NE corpus. Put differently, the distribution by categories controlling stance *that* clauses displayed a remarkable disparity between the main categories as seen in Figure 1 below.

Table 6. The Frequency of Stance *That* Construction by Categories

Main Categories	KEFL 1	KEFL 2	NE
controlled by stance verbs	218 (5.89)	324 (5.31)	503 (8.33)
controlled by stance adjectives	10 (0.27)	46 (0.75)	15 (0.25)
controlled by stance nouns	5 (0.14)	30(0.49)	38 (0.63)

Note. () = per 1000 words

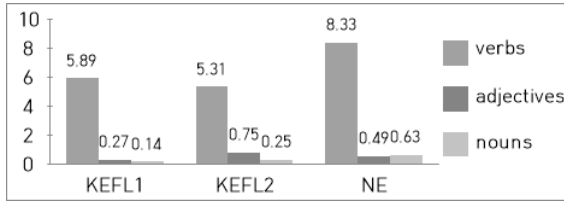


Figure 1. The Distribution of Stance *That* Clauses by Categories

As Figure 1 shows, the result shows that most stance *that* clauses were controlled by verbs in all corpora, showing a big gap compared with the other categories. Among frequently used items occurring with *that*-clauses both in KEFL and NE corpora, strikingly, stance verbs such as *think*, *say*, and *argue* were most frequently used, followed by *believe* and *show*. This result was in line with the findings of Gablasova et al.'s (2017) analysis of verbal expressions as epistemic markers in speaking tasks, in which the most frequently used one was 'I think', followed by 'I know', 'I mean', and 'I believe'. From such findings, 'think' is regarded as the most frequently used stance verb both in written discourse and spoken one. Apart from stance verbs, *clear* and *fact*, in terms of stance adjectives and stance nouns, respectively, are most frequently used in KEFL corpora.

Table 7. Most Frequent Items Controlling Stance *That* Clauses in Rank Order

Ranking	KEFL 1	KEFL 2	NE
1	think* (132)	think* (104)	think* (111)
2	say* (39)	say* (41)	argue* (93)
3	know*, believe*	clear (31)	show* (83)
4	(13)	show* (27)	believe*, claim*
5	clear (7)	suggest* (24)	(54)
6~10	argue* (6) fact, show* (4) seem*, hope* demonstrate* (3)	argue* (23) believe* (20) fact (17) seem* (14) report* (11)	say* (45) fact (25) seem* (19) conclude* (14) note* (9)

In spite of considering the total number of words counted in each corpora as seen in Table 6 and Figure 1, it seems clear that native speakers tended to use ‘stance verbs + *that* constructions’ almost one and half times as frequently as the Korean L2 learners. This might be due to the strong tendency that L2 learners rely on modal verbs as epistemic or stance markers (Biber 2006; Cho & Ko 2005; Pyo 2018). Also, as argued in Hyland’s (1994) study, L2 learners are likely to be exposed to English modal verbs as a hedging device, which might be caused by the easiness of modal verbs (Cho & Ko 2005). In fact, the frequencies of ‘can’ in KEFL 1 and KEFL 2 is considerably higher than in NE (18.65, 16.18, and 9.34 per 1000 words, respectively). Accordingly, one of the causes that the portion of using stance *that* constructions in KEFL corpora is relatively low seems to be closely related to the strong dependency on modal verbs. Nevertheless, through this distributional result, there could be some room to argue that writers who are involved in English academic essays, regardless of whether they are native speakers or L2 learners, prefer stance verb when they employ stance *that* constructions to express the writer’s stance.

4.2. The Usage Patterns of Stance *That* Construction

The overall distribution of the three main categories of stance *that* constructions needs to be examined from more detailed aspects to identify stance considering each context. Based on Biber’s (2006) analyses of lexico-grammatical features used to express stance, the researcher set the revised and modified taxonomy to analyze the functional distribution of stance *that* constructions as in Table 8.

Table 8. Overview of the Functional Distribution of Stance *That* Constructions

Category	Sub-categories		KEFL 1	KEFL 2	NE
Stance Verb	Epistemic	Certainty	13 (5.58)	14 (3.50)	20 (3.60)
		Likelihood	3 (1.29)	20 (5.00)	20 (3.60)
	Attitude		4 (1.72)	11 (2.75)	4 (0.71)
	Speech act (Research/Discourse/ Cognitive)		198 (84.98)	279 (69.75)	459 (81.10)
Stance Adjective	Epistemic	Certainty	8 (3.43)	39 (9.75)	3 (0.53)
		Likelihood	1 (0.43)	7 (1.75)	11 (1.94)
	Attitude/Emotion		0	0	0
	Evaluation		1 (0.43)	0	1 (0.18)
Stance Noun	Epistemic	Certainty	5 (2.15)	26 (6.50)	27 (4.77)
		Likelihood	0	3 (0.75)	5 (0.88)
	Attitude/perspective		0	1 (0.25)	3 (0.53)
	communication (non-factual)		0	0	3 (0.53)

Note. token (%)

As can be demonstrated above, the use of stance verbs functioning speech act by far outnumbered all the other functions across corpora. This result could be accounted for by the overwhelming number of stance verbs which belong to cognitive act, such as *think* and *believe*, and research act such as *say*, and *show*. Although KEFL 1 showed less tokens of speech act verbs (n=198), their percentage (84.98%) is higher than NE (81.1%). This needs to be examined in terms of the specific usage patterns of speech act verbs. Especially, among the most frequently used verbs, the frequencies of ‘I think’ and ‘I believe’ were compared by the total number of ‘think’ and ‘believe’ across the corpora.

Table 9. The Comparison of ‘Think’ and ‘Believe’

	KEFL 1	KEFL 2	NE
I think/think*	115/132(87.12%)	67/104(64.42%)	30/111(27.03%)
I believe/believe*	5/13(38.46%)	9/20(45%)	20/182(10.99%)

As seen in the table, the use of ‘I think’ showed by far the highest proportion (87.12%) in KEFL 1, compared to KEFL 2 (64.42%) and NE (27.03%). This means that less proficient L2 learners have a strong tendency to use more involvement features such as first–person pronouns and private verbs. As English proficiency increases, the proportion of using ‘I think + *that* clauses’ dramatically decreases. Definitely, this is largely assumed to be due to the influence of spoken English as a pattern of co–occurring linguistic features in interactive discourse like conversation (Biber 1988). This result is also line with Gablasova et al.’s (2017) study in which ‘I think’ verbal expression was most frequently used as an epistemic marker in spoken L2 English. Some examples of the typical usage pattern of ‘I think’ shown in KEFL 1 are as follows:

First, ***I think*** that advertisement make ...
 three reasons why ***I think*** that it is harmful ..
 However, ***I think*** there are three reasons ...
 inner beauty is not connected. ***I think*** it is not truth that ...
 that positive ones. However, ***I think*** that studying in the library can ,,
 what students do themselves. ***I think*** it is necessary to have a passive
 of the introverted students. ***I think*** that the problem will get worse ...
 way people prefer them. And ***I think*** I can experience a lot more ...
 from Lookism in this society. ***I think*** that true beauty comes from self–esteem ...

Figure 2. The Typical Usage Pattern of ‘I think that’ in KEFL 1

In addition to the influence of spoken English, ‘I think *that*’ is also considered as a linguistic device to express a subjectively worded stance in cognitive speech

act. This point also accords with the previous report by Halliday (1994) who argued that the less proficient L2 writers tended to use more subjective options (e.g., *Therefore, I believe that working alone without conflicts make works faster.* [KEFL1 04–06]). Because they tend to rely on a limited range of linguistic resources to express their epistemic stance, as Hyland and Milton (1997) pointed, less proficient L2 writers' writings tend to hold firmer assertions with somewhat authoritative tone and stronger epistemic commitment.

Contrary to the stronger dependency of using 'I think *that*' in KEFL 1, more various and complex patterns of using the stance verb, 'think' were observed in KEFL 2 and NE corpora. First, as the subjects of 'think', the 3rd person pronouns such as '(a lot of/many) people', 'they', 'others', and 'one' are frequently used. Second, modal verbs or hedging expressions like 'tend to' or 'seem to' as a tone-down marker are combined with 'think + *that* clauses' as can be seen in Figure 3 and 4.

(A lot of/Many) *People tend to think that* it is important to make ...
They could think that it is bothersome ...
Others would think that you would find your own ...
 ... because we *are likely to think that* being beautiful is a positive and ...
 While *one could think that* it would be cheaper to wear only ...

Figure 3. The Typical Usage Pattern of 'I think that' in KEFL 2

They seem to think that they have some kind of right to kill ...
They would think that they had been giving money.
It is conceivable to think that farmers will change from beef to an alternative product.

Figure 4. The Typical Usage Pattern of 'I think that' in NE

In these brief excerpts from KEFL 2 and NE corpora, the shift from subjectively worded stances to objective wording is definitely observed in using 'think +

that clauses'. In line with the Coffin's (2002) analysis which revealed three developmental stages as a recorder, and an interpreter, and an adjudicator in historical discourses, a similar pattern was seen in this study. Less proficient L2 learners (KEFL 1) are viewed as a 'subjective transmitter' in that they tend to express their own stance using more direct and overly subjective markers such as 'I think that'. Interestingly, as seen in Figure 5, they showed a tendency to use 'say' rather than 'think' when they mention others' opinions. On the other hand, more advanced L2 learners (KEFL 2) tend to use 'I think' when they express their own opinion against others' ideas. Also, they are likely to be characterized as getting an 'objective interpreter' who dynamically starts to engage in objective worded stances using 3rd person subjects. Regardless of whose opinion it is, whether their own opinion or others', more 3rd person subjects in sentences including stance verbs like 'think', 'say' or 'believe' were observed as seen in Figure 3 and Figure 6. Finally, an expert writer is supposed to engage with disciplinary discourses using a greater range of grammatical resources as can be seen in Figure 4, which is termed a 'finer stance-taker' in this study. Even in L1 academic writing, it is difficult for native speakers to reach university-level discourse as long as there is no access to discipline-specific writing and the rhetoric practice (Soliday 2011), especially for early undergraduate writers. It, therefore, seems that there are some similar patterns across KEFL and NE corpora. However, more complexity marked by several stance devices in expressing epistemic stance specifically was seen. For example, there are three stance markers are used in (6): two stance verbs and one stance adjective.

(6) I think that it is possible to argue that the computer has made us.

[NE 06-16]

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Interestingly, some prominent features were found in ‘say that’ construction. Contrary to the remarkable frequency of ‘I think that’ in KEFL 1, ‘I say that’ was not found. Instead, the subjects of ‘say’ were mostly the 3rd person plural and when the subject is ‘I’, a modal verb would be accompanied with ‘say’. The following examples are from KEFL 1.

I would say that studying in the library than ~
 (some) people say that individual work is better ~
 Opposite side says that community market is fallen ~
 Many students say that they don't know what they ~
 Nowadays, it is said that more and more people ~

Figure 5. The Typical Usage Pattern of ‘say that’ in KEFL 1

Especially, the expression of ‘Nowadays, it is said that more and more people ~’ was frequently used in KEFL 1. Given that this expression was mentioned in a sample essay in class, it seems for the L2 intermediate learners to perceive this as a chunk. They may possibly memorize the expression as a kind of stance device to add an academic tone. In the following, it is clearly seen that more proficient L2 learners use ‘it ~ that’ construction as a marker of stance to avoid firmer assertions with authoritative tone.

In my opinion, it is hard to say that it only has negative effects ...
 It is hard to say that having the same face with ...
 In brief, it is said that a woman who has a lack of self-regard is ...
 Moreover, it is said that a plastic surgery in Gangnam ...
 Therefore, it can be said that students who want to have more detailed
 Some people say that you can not guarantee ...
 ... people with a job said that health insurance coverage is ...
 Abraham Lincoln said that you cannot escape the responsibility of ...
 In my case, I would say that I prefer eating a course ...

Figure 6. The Typical Usage Pattern of ‘say that’ in KEFL 2

As can be seen in Figure 6, more proficient 2 learners showed a strong tendency to use various combined forms of “it ~ that” construction with passives and modal verbs, such as “it is hard to say that ~”, “it is said that ~”, and “it can be said that ~”. When used in actives, almost all subjects are 3rd person nouns(e.g., Some people say that ~) and I was followed by modal verbs like “I would say that ~”. Like the result of the KEFL 1, ‘I say that’ was not found at all. Although some structures like “it is hard to say that ~” were presented at the stage of model analysis in class, more refined expressions with various stance devices were clearly observed in KEFL 2 compared to the KEFL 1. Similar patterns were found in NE, showing a little bit more combined forms with other features.

(7) In response, *it can only be said that* smaller charities have been ...

Perhaps it could be said that multi-million jackpots are the new opiate of the masses ...

Doctors and specialists *have said that* the head is not capable ...

Finally, considering the substantial portion of clear in KEFL 2 as seen in Table 5, the pattern where clear is used in context was examined using concordance function of the AntConc. One remarkable pattern that jumps out of the frequency counts of “clear” is found as in (8).

(8) To sum up, *it seems clear that* virtual currency has ... [KEFL 2 03-09]

In conclusion, *it comes clear that* depending on how English ...

[KEFL 2 04-02]

As mentioned above, *it becomes clear that* advertisement ... [KEFL 2 07-06]

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However, *it is clear that* there is no perfect product. [KEFL 2 05-08]

In short, *it seems clear that* English learners can be affected by the level of their first language. [KEFL 2 05-02]

Definitely, ‘clear’ was found to be used in such a fixed pattern as ‘it is/seems/(be)comes + *clear that* ~ ’ by L2 learners in the advanced level. This would be a reason why the portion of stance adjectives in KEFL 2 is larger than that of NE. Also, it can be an evidence of a developmental trajectory to make their own rules, acquiring how to express the writer's epistemic stance in academic prose. Although there are some fixed, memorized structures in KEFL 2 due to their limited range of linguistic resources, they are seen as epistemological features to express the writer's stance considering readers who have different views from the writer.

Based on the findings of this study discussed thus far, it is clearly seen that there are three stages in developing a good range of stance *that* constructions privileged in academic prose that L2 learners need to identify. In line with All and Lancaster (2014)'s study which examined linguistic expressions of stance in essays written by first-year university student in USA, a likely scenario of the developmental disciplinary stages and patterns of stance *that* constructions written by Korean EFL university students in academic context is as follows:

Table 10. Developmental Stages of Stance *That* Constructions in Academic Essays

Stage 1 : Stance on the writer's view toward a given topic	- subjective & authorial tone as a subjective transmitter - spoken features : 1st person references, private verbs ex) I think that ~ ,
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Stage 2 : Stance on the writer's view toward the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reader-friendly features - detached & objective tone as an objective interpreter - frequent use of modal verbs - notice stance devices, memorize and apply them into their writing - some epistemological features ex> It is/seems/becomes clear that ~
Stage 3 : Stance toward the target academic discourse community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - metadiscourse cognition - acknowledge the existence of other views & place the writer's view in league with other views - fully use epistemological features as a refined stance-taker - acknowledge academically appropriate stance markers ex> It is conceivable to think that ~

This study suggests that L2 writers are expected to acquire academic stance through the three developmental stages. Firstly, the writer's point of view on a given topic may be represented as a stance using private verbs and 1st person pronouns (e.g., *I think it is true.*), which emphasizes the writer's view only. Such certainty makers make authorial voice seem too subjective and private, which is not appropriate in academic discourse. Then more proficient L2 learners may realize the importance of considering the reader's view in academic prose and attempt to articulate the writer's stance toward the reader's view. Trying to use more reader-friendly expressions to present the writer's view in more detached and objective manners, they may pay attention to noticeable stance markers and structures. Memorizing some useful expressions like chunks and apply them into their writing, they are likely to start to acknowledge how to construct a stance appropriately in academic context. Indeed, they seem to acknowledge some epistemological features to express the writer's stance taking into account other views which are different from the writer's despite their somewhat restricted grammatical resources for modulating epistemic commitment. The final stage, which is seen to be devoid even in new university writing of native speakers, refers to “stance toward a larger discourse community (one recognizing the importance of complexity and alternative views)” (All & Lancaster 2014: 174). Indeed, this stage is considered as an

ultimate goal of academic writing used in expert academic discourse community, regardless of L1 or L2 English as discussed so far. In light of the three developmental labels, this study revealed that intermediate learners at the 1st stage as a subjective transmitter and advanced learners at the 2nd stage as an objective interpreter are likely to be in a dynamic process of developing their awareness of appropriate epistemic stance for English academic discourse gradually toward the final stage as a refined stance-taker.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the patterns of stance *that* constructions in academic essays written by Korean EFL university students who start to experience the specific disciplinary discourse. Focusing on three main categories controlling *that* clauses, stance verbs, adjectives and nouns, L2 learners' usage pattern of signaling stance were analyzed and compared with NE corpus. The main findings are summarized as follows:

Firstly, regarding the overall frequency of stance *that* complement clauses, native speakers exhibited about double the frequency of L2 learners. As for the types of stance *that* clauses, there was little difference between the NS and the KEFL 2 groups, but a clear difference was observed between KEFL 1 and KEFL 2. This finding demonstrates that more proficient learners try to employ stance *that* constructions in more various ways although the total token number of them is much lower than that in the NE. Despite a somewhat restricted range of linguistic resources for modulating epistemic commitment, more advanced L2 learners seem to undergo a developmental path by attempting to

use more variations of stance *that* constructions in their writing.

Secondly, stance verbs controlling stance *that* clauses were by far dominant across all the corpora, showing a big difference from stance adjectives and nouns. The highest ranking of stance verbs were think, say, believe, say, argue and show. Especially, it was found that the frequency of think was predominant in NE as well as in KEFL corpora. The L2 learners in KEFL 1 showed heavy reliance on the use of 'I think that', while showing relatively frequent use of other involvement features such as 1st person pronouns and private verbs. In congruence with previous studies, this result indicates that less competent writers tend to use spoken features as an epistemic marker in their academic essays, which conflicts with what is expected and valued in academic register. However, as English proficiency increases, L2 writers may start to make a basic distinction between formal and informal prose as well as spoken and written register. Then, more complex forms of stance verbs are assumed to be employed, accompanying by modal verbs or passive forms as seen in the KEFL 2 and the NE corpora.

Thirdly, when it comes to the functional distribution of stance *that* constructions, there was a strong dependency on speech act in all the corpora. Considering that research verbs, discourse verbs and cognitive verbs are classified as speech act function among the subcategories of stance verbs, this result is mainly due to the overwhelming tokens of 'think' and 'believe' which belong to cognitive verbs and 'show' and 'say' to research verbs. Interestingly, in spite of the similar dependency on speech act verbs across the corpora, the usage patterns were completely different and showed a clear developmental path on using stance *that* clauses. Obviously, L2 writers are implicitly expected to move from a subjective transmitter with a more assertive and forceful stance to an objective interpreter with objectively worded stances.

Based on the findings mentioned above, this study carries important conceptual and pedagogical implications for Korean EFL university learners. While they are progressing into upper-level writing in academic prose, they are assumed to start to take a critical stance with respect to others' arguments from a subjective and assertive stance into an implicitly detached and objective attitude. At this stage, they need to be explicitly instructed to start writing tasks to avoid using spoken involvement features with subjectively worded stance and gradually guided to use impersonal constructions and more complex features appropriate for academic rhetorical register. Through the usage patterns of stance *that* constructions, this study showed the developmental trajectories from a subjective transmitter to an objective interpreter to become a provisional discourse community member. Accordingly, this study not only highlights the importance of constructing a stance appropriate for academic prose, but also provides useful information and more comprehensive understanding on the evaluative stance Korean EFL writers take toward the proposition *that* clause contains in undergraduate student academic writing.

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