Korean College Students’ Use of English Demonstratives in Argumentative Essays

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The present study examines the Korean college students’ use of English demonstratives in argumentative essays through a comparison with that of native speakers. The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that overall learners underuse demonstratives compared to the native speakers. More specific quantitative differences include: the learners’ greater dependence on the distal (as opposed to proximal) demonstratives, underuse of this/those as a pronoun and of these as a determiner, and overuse of that as a pronoun, when compared with the native norm. The qualitative analysis reveals several interesting findings such as fewer instances of text reference and the limited type and variety of nouns and modifiers that co-occur with demonstratives in learner essays. These findings are discussed in terms of the rhetorical significance of demonstrative choice in persuasive argumentation, the transfer of spoken characteristics to a written register and the native language transfer. Despite the occasional better performance of the higher level learners than the lower level learners, the two groups are found to generally belong together. This suggests that the native-like use of the demonstratives is not automatically achieved with the increase of the general language proficiency. Some important pedagogical implications are drawn from these results.

I. INTRODUCTION

Demonstratives are one of the linguistic objects that have been extensively studied from diverse perspectives in a variety of languages. In English, researchers have traditionally focused on the semantics of demonstratives (e.g., Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Lakoff, 1974; Lyons, 1977; Sidner, 1983) while some have tried to place demonstratives in the hierarchy of accessibility or topic continuity from a cognitive viewpoint (e.g., Ariel, 1988, 1990; Givón, 1983; Gundel, Hedberg, & Zacharski, 1993). More recently, a number of studies have been carried out from the perspective of pragmatics (e.g., Cheshire, 1996; Glover,
2000; Yaguchi, 2001) and of corpus linguistics (e.g., Botley & McEnery, 2001a, 2001b). These studies cumulatively have provided valuable insights into the semantic, pragmatic and textual/discourse functions of English demonstratives. One perspective which has not been very popular in the studies of English demonstratives, however, is that of language learners (Petch-Tyson, 2000). The present study thus attempts to take the learner perspective and investigate the use of English demonstratives in Korean college students’ argumentative essays.

As seemingly easy and uncomplicated lexical items, the English demonstratives this and that do not at first sight appear to pose significant problems for foreign language learners. The demonstratives are typically introduced to learners at an initial phase of instruction, and the learners seem to get hold of the deictic functions of the demonstratives fairly well. There is some evidence, however, that even advanced learners have problems in using demonstratives especially for textual reference (Hayashi, 1994, 1996; Leńko-Szymańska, 2004; Niimura & Petch-Tyson, 2000), when the choice between the proximal and distal demonstratives is not determined by the physical (or temporal) distance. The recognized problems are usually not so much overt errors as nonnative-like patterns of use because the selection of a demonstrative (rather than, for example, a pronoun or a full noun phrase) and/or the choice between the proximal and distal demonstrative in a particular context depends largely on the speaker’s/writer’s intended meaning (Leńko-Szymańska, 2004). This makes it harder for foreign language learners to master textual uses of the English demonstratives, especially given the textbooks and teaching materials that tend to focus on the deictic uses of the demonstratives.

The proper use of demonstratives for textual reference has in fact been identified as a big challenge not only for language learners but for native writers as well (Geisle, Kaufer, & Steinberg, 1985). In written discourse it is very important to use anaphoric demonstratives appropriately and effectively because a writer who fails to do so can “distract, even mislead, a reader” (ibid., p. 130). The demonstratives may play a significant role in organizing and developing a text, especially when they refer to non-nominal antecedents such as preceding ideas, propositions, events, processes, etc. This kind of “text reference,” where the reference is made to an extended passage of text, is “one of the major cohesive devices of the English language” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 67), which helps to efficiently handle complex information contained in text. It brings about a rhetorical effect of creating building blocks by condensing the content of the preceding text into a noun phrase which functions as a participant in the following text (Petch-Tyson, 2000). As such, it is “particularly important in argumentative writing in which the argument is developed in successive stages, with one idea built upon another” (ibid., p. 45).

The current study investigates how Korean college students use the English demonstratives (for textual reference) in argumentative essays. The study undertakes this
task by comparing a Korean learner corpus and a native speaker corpus both in quantitative and qualitative manners. In the quantitative analysis, a special attention is paid to the different patterns of demonstrative use observed in the two corpora in terms of underuse or overuse by the learners of the particular categories of demonstratives (e.g., the proximal versus the distal demonstratives and the demonstrative determiners versus the demonstrative pronouns) as well as the overall frequency of the demonstratives. Those patterns of use that are identified as specific to one group are subjected to a detailed qualitative analysis. The study is also interested in examining whether the Korean students’ pattern of use of demonstratives moves closer to that of the native writers as their proficiency increases. For this purpose, the Korean learner corpus is divided into two sub-corpora according to the proficiency level of the students and the patterns of use of demonstratives are compared between the higher and lower level students. The present study is expected to provide valuable information on the areas in which the Korean learners experience difficulties and may improve in using English demonstratives especially in order to perform argumentative tasks successfully. It is hoped that this study will thereby help Korean learners acquire the English demonstratives and contribute to the fast-growing area of corpus-based studies of learner language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Studies of English Demonstratives

The notion that has typically been invoked in the study of demonstratives is that of proximity. A number of linguists (e.g., Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Huddleston, 1984; Jespersen, 1939; Kaplan, 1989; Leech & Svartvik, 1975; Lyons, 1977; Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; Quirk et al., 1985; Ramsey, 1968) have suggested that at the most basic level *this* and *that* are deictics (i.e., expressions used for pointing) and the two differ in terms of proximity to the speaker. That is, *this* is used when the referent is near the speaker while *that* is used when the referent is distant from the speaker. According to this view, the “near speaker”/“far from speaker” distinction is the key concept for understanding demonstrative reference and other uses of *this* and *that* may be understood as derived from this basic deictic distinction. The notion of relative proximity is undeniably critical with regard to some uses of *this* and *that*. It has not been fully explicated yet, however, exactly how the spatial proximity/non-proximity distinction should be extended to account for all the various uses of *this* and *that* (Lakoff, 1974, p. 355). Moreover, characterizing the difference between *this* and *that* in terms only of the proximity to the speaker can be “very imprecise” (Lyons, 1977, p. 646).
Dissatisfied with the traditional model of demonstrative reference, some researchers have proposed alternative accounts for the speakers’ demonstrative choices. Many of these alternative models resort to the notion of focus, although the definition and/or the conceptualization of this notion slightly varies across the models. Sidner (1983), for example, defines focus as a particular discourse element on which speakers center their attention. She maintains that *this* is used for main focus while *that* is for potential or old focus. When they occur closely together in discourse, *this and that* can keep the focus on two referents simultaneously. When occurring alone, however, *this* normally moves the focus from what has been talked about to what is now being referred to whereas *that* does not. In contrast to *this*, *that* usually allows the speaker to re-mention elements without making them the subject of the speaker’s focus, and therefore the hearer’s attention (*ibid*, p. 327). In a parallel fashion, Linde (1979) accounts for the uses of *that* as opposed to *it* in terms of their difference in focus. According to her explanation, *it* is used when the reference is made within the focus of attention, while *that* is preferred when the reference is outside the focus of attention. Incorporating the observations made by Sidner (1983) and Linde (1979), McCarthy (1994) proposes that *it* is an option for unmarked reference within the focus of attention, whereas *this* shifts the current focus to a new focus and *that* “refers across from the current focus to entities or foci that are non-current, non-central, marginalizable or other-attributed” (p. 275). In a related but distinctive way, Strauss (1993) describes *this, that*, and *it* as markers of high, mid, and low focus, respectively, defining focus as the degree of attention given to the referent.¹ For her the notion of focus implies “two additional factors: 1) the relative amount of information that the speaker presumes the hearer to have with respect to the referent and 2) the relative importance of the referent itself to the speaker” (*ibid*, p. 404). Strauss’ framework has been supported not only by the results of her own analysis of spoken discourse data, but by a few other studies that have investigated other types of corpora (Nishimura, 1996; Niimura & Hayashi, 1994; Oh, 2001).

2. Studies of Nonnative Speakers’ Use of English Demonstratives

There are not many studies of nonnative speakers’ use of English demonstratives, but those that exist evidence that learning to use the English demonstratives in a native-like way especially for textual reference can be a quite challenging task for foreign language

¹ As evidenced in the studies by Linde (1979), McCarthy (1994), and Strauss (1993), there has been recognition of the need to consider the demonstratives *this and that* along with the pronominal *it* since the three are comparable in terms of their referential function in discourse (see Halliday & Hasan, 1976 and Halliday, 1985).
learners. Niimura and Hayashi (1994), for example, examined the acquisition of English demonstratives by Japanese learners (and the acquisition of Japanese demonstratives by English speakers) by employing a contrastive-analytic methodology. They discovered that foreign language learners had the most difficulties with discourse reference in using the demonstratives of the target language but even advanced learners had not fully acquired the deictic uses of the demonstratives as well. They also point out the inadequacy of the traditional account of demonstratives based on the notion of proximity.

The remaining three studies to be reviewed below have one thing in common: they all have made use of electronic corpora which are collected from (advanced-level) European learners of English. As part of the study of cultural differences in academic rhetoric, Mauranen (1993) compared how English and Finnish speakers who are highly competent academic writers use demonstratives for text reference in research articles. She found that the Finnish writers utilize text reference much less often both in writing in their native language and in English, compared with the native English writers. When the Finnish writers did employ text reference, they preferred to use demonstratives as pronouns rather than determiners, as the result of which the text reference provided little new information. Leńko-Szymańska (2004) identified the patterns of Polish learners’ overuse or underuse of the particular categories of the demonstratives when compared with the native norm. The results point to the Polish learners’ general overuse of demonstratives in argumentative writing, and of distal demonstratives in particular. A comparison between the higher and lower level learners’ writing indicated that the identified patterns of learners’ overuse or underuse “do not change significantly with years of exposure and learning” (p. 89). The author thus concludes that native-like use of the demonstratives is not acquired implicitly by these learners.

Whereas the studies mentioned above had a particular focus on the learners who share a mother tongue, Petch-Tyson (2000) compared the use of demonstratives in argumentative writings of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners with diverse native language backgrounds (Dutch, French, Finnish, and Swedish). Her study, which analyzed the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) and the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), showed that EFL and native writers differ in their use of

As one of the referees has pointed out, the strict distinction between native English speakers and nonnative English learners may not hold, especially in those countries where English is used as one of the official languages. The terms “native” and “nonnative” are used here with a typical EFL context in mind.

The ICLE, which is one of the earliest computer learner corpora, currently contains over 3 million words of writing by advanced learners of English from 21 different native language backgrounds. The LOCNESS contains native English speakers’ comparable essays and is used as reference corpus in the ICLE project (http://www.fltr.ucl.ac.be/FLTR/GERM/ETAN/CECL/Cecl-Projects/Icle/iclc.html).
demonstratives in several respects. First, the overall frequency of the demonstratives is significantly lower in the EFL groups than in the native writers. Second, the learners tend to overuse that, compared with the native writers. Third, demonstrative anaphors are less frequently used for making text reference in the learner corpora, which the author interprets as evidence that the structure of the learners’ argumentation is less hierarchical. As Mauranen (1993) observed in the Finnish speakers’ writings, Petch-Tyson also found that the EFL learners are not able to take full advantage of the nouns which, being attached to the demonstratives, are rhetorically useful in naming and evaluating the preceding text and thereby guiding the reader to interpret the text in a particular way. These differences – underuse of demonstratives in general and of text reference in particular, overuse of that, unsuccessful reference (i.e., unclear or no antecedents), and failure to exploit the nouns that co-occur with the demonstrative determiners to the writer’s advantage – are reported to hold without respect to the native language of the learners. The learner groups, however, do not always display the same tendency. To take an example, the Finnish writers tend to use the pronoun that much more frequently than the other groups, often in order to focus momentarily on the subject of some previous text before changing topic. This may result, the author suggests, from a distinctive, less persuasive approach towards writing.

The previous studies in this area thus demonstrate that foreign language learners are clearly dissimilar to native speakers in using English demonstratives and have identified various such differences. Some of these differences tend to be shared among different L1 (first language) speakers (e.g., overuse of the distal demonstratives) whereas others are not (e.g., overuse of demonstratives by Polish learners vs. underuse of demonstratives by Dutch, French, Finnish, and Swedish learners). The present study is partly motivated by the question of whether, and how, Korean learners are similar to or distinct from these European learners in the use of English demonstratives.

III. METHOD

1. Data

The data used in the study were drawn from two corpora, the Seoul National University Korean English Learner Corpus (SKELC) and the LOCNESS. The SKELC is a collection of essays written by the Korean students who take a College English course as a requirement at Seoul National University. Since the fall of 2005 when the compilation started, the corpus has been continually being expanded. The current study only used the essays

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4 The title of this corpus is tentative (Kwon, 2008). Since the fall of 2005 when the compilation started, the corpus has been continually being expanded. The current study only used the essays
classification system (i.e., argumentation, exposition, narration, and description), the essays chosen for this study are of an argumentative type, where students argue a point of view, justify a stance, or persuade readers to a stated position on a given topic (e.g., the necessity of writing assessment for college admission, the necessity of a teacher evaluation system in secondary schools, the effects of the suicide of the entertainers on teenagers, the causes/effect of the popularity of American TV dramas in Korea, views on the idea of adopting English as the second language of Korea). These essays were categorized into two sub-corpora according to the TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University) scores of the writers; the two corpora are referred to here as LP (Lower Proficiency, 200-549) and HP (Higher Proficiency, 650-800), respectively. The LOCNESS, which was compiled as a reference corpus in the ICLE project, consists of argumentative (and some literary) essays written by British and American university students. For the present study, only the argumentative essays written by the American students were used, and this portion of the LOCNESS is named US here. The numbers of essays and words contained in the three corpora are shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Three Corpora</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of essays</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of words</td>
<td>60848</td>
<td>121628</td>
<td>149672</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Data Analysis Procedure

Four steps of quantitative analysis were performed on the data. First, the frequencies of occurrence of the four demonstratives (*this, these, that, those*) in the three corpora were calculated using the Wordsmith Tools package (Version 5.0, Scott, 2007) and compared across the corpora in order to identify patterns of overuse or underuse in the learners’ essays. In the case of *this, these, and those*, raw texts were used. For the calculation of the occurrence of *that*, the corpora were tagged with CLAWS (a part-of-speech tagger developed at Lancaster University), which tags *that* as a singular demonstrative or a conjunction (which in turn subsumes both *that* as a complementizer and as a relative pronoun). Since the accuracy of the tagging performed by the CLAWS is not perfect, the

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collected in the year 2007. I am grateful to the director of the College English program at Seoul National University for allowing me access to this corpus.

The general English proficiency of the students at Seoul National University may be relatively higher than that of average Korean college students; the distinction between the lower and higher proficiency groups in this study may thus not be valid for other groups of students.
results were verified manually. Second, the proportions of proximal and distal demonstratives were compared across the corpora to detect learners’ potential preferences for one or the other category. Third, the tokens of the four types of demonstratives were manually sorted into two groups depending on whether they premodify the head of a noun phrase (i.e., demonstratives as determiner) or function themselves as the head of a noun phrase (i.e., demonstratives as pronoun). For those demonstratives whose overall frequency was beyond a pre-specified limit (200), 200 tokens were randomly extracted and subjected to manual analysis, with the results of the analysis extended for the entire tokens. The proportions of determiner and pronoun uses of the demonstratives were then analyzed across the corpora with the aim of diagnosing the possible differences between the learners and the native writers (and between the two learner groups). Whenever necessary, chi-square tests were carried out to estimate the statistical significance of the differences in frequency. Fourth, significant collocates for each demonstrative were identified based on the Mutual Information (MI) scores computed by the WordSmith Tools and were compared across the corpora. An MI-score, which indicates the strength of a collocation, “compares the actual co-occurrence of the two items with their expected co-occurrence if the words in the corpus used were to occur in total random order” (Hunston, 2002, p.71). Following Hunston (2002), an MI-score of 3 or higher was taken to be significant for the purpose of this study. The last stage in the data analysis – i.e., qualitative analysis – involved closely examining the specific uses of each demonstrative in its context in order to provide accounts for the differences between the corpora that are discovered through the quantitative analyses. A particular attention was paid to the use of text reference, the types and characteristics of the collocates of each demonstrative and their contribution to the overall argumentation. Preferred patterns in which demonstratives appear were also identified and analyzed at this stage.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overall Frequencies of Demonstratives

The results of analysis have thrown up several major discrepancies in demonstrative use between the learner and native speaker corpora. In this subsection, the three corpora are compared in terms of the overall frequencies of demonstratives. Table 2 presents the raw

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6 MI-scores were selected over t-scores, which also measure the significance of co-occurrence, because MI scores, but not t-scores, can be compared across corpora of different sizes (Hunston, 2002, p. 73). Besides, t-scores are not considered appropriate for identifying the most important collocates for an individual word (Biber et al., 1998, p. 268).
and normalized (per 100,000 words) frequencies of occurrence of individual demonstratives (this, these, that, those) in each corpus. Figure 1 graphically represents the results and Table 3 contains the results of the chi-square tests assessing the significance of differences between the corpora.

### TABLE 2

**Overall Frequencies of Demonstratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(679)</td>
<td>(219)</td>
<td>(289)</td>
<td>(58)</td>
<td>(1244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(739)</td>
<td>(269)</td>
<td>(335)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(1384)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>2233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(829)</td>
<td>(318)</td>
<td>(221)</td>
<td>(124)</td>
<td>(1492)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(frequencies per 100,000 words)

### FIGURE 1

**Relative Frequencies of Demonstratives**

![Relative Frequencies of Demonstratives](image)

### TABLE 3

**Results of Chi-square Test Comparing Three Corpora ($\chi^2$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP/US</td>
<td>12.55***</td>
<td>14.83***</td>
<td>8.35**</td>
<td>18.10***</td>
<td>18.98***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP/US</td>
<td>6.95**</td>
<td>5.5*</td>
<td>32.27***</td>
<td>54.05***</td>
<td>5.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP/HP</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>4.08*</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>5.99*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically significant (p<.001), **(p<.005), *(p<.05)

The tables show that broadly speaking, both groups of learners underuse demonstratives (seen as a whole category) in comparison to native speakers. The underuse is highly significant for the lower proficiency learners ($\chi^2=18.98$, p<0.001), and significant for the higher proficiency learners ($\chi^2=5.52$, p<0.05). This result is consistent with the previous
findings obtained for Dutch, French, Finnish, and Swedish learners (Mauranen, 1992; Petch-Tyson, 2000). (It contradicts, however, the result of Leńko-Szymańska’s (2004) study, which revealed that Polish learners overuse demonstratives.) There is a significant difference between the two groups of learners ($\chi^2=5.99, p<0.05$), suggesting that the underuse of demonstratives improves as proficiency increases.

When looking at individual demonstratives, however, a quite different picture emerges. For proximal demonstratives, the same tendency is observed for the demonstratives as a whole. That is, both the lower and higher proficiency learners underuse proximal demonstratives when compared with the native writers. In the case of distal demonstratives, however, the singular and plural demonstratives display sharply contrasting results. Whereas the learners underuse those, they overuse that in comparison with the native speaker norm. There are no significant differences between the two groups of learners with respect to the frequencies of three out of the four demonstratives (this, that, those). While such aggregate frequency information regarding individual demonstratives is revealing in its own right, it does not tell us enough about the characteristic uses to which the learners and the native speakers put each demonstrative. The following two sections deal with the frequency and use of the different categories of demonstratives (i.e., proximal vs. distal, determiner vs. pronoun) across the corpora, which will shed some light on this issue.

2. Proximal versus Distal Demonstratives

The current subsection attempts to answer the question of whether the learners show a different preference for the selection of proximal versus distal demonstratives when compared with the native speakers. Table 4 presents the (normalized) frequencies of occurrence and corresponding percentiles of the proximal and distal demonstratives in the three corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>these/these frequency</th>
<th>percentile</th>
<th>that/those frequency</th>
<th>percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>1147</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that while the proximal demonstratives occur more frequently than do the distal demonstratives in all the three corpora, they are preferred to a greater extent by the native speakers than by either group of learners. The results of the chi-square tests confirm that the difference between the learners and the native speakers is statistically significant.
Korean College Students’ Use of English Demonstratives in Argumentative Essays

 Learners’ underuse of proximal demonstratives compared to native speakers is a finding reported in other studies as well (Łeņko-Szymańska, 2004; Mauranen, 1992; Petch-Tyson, 2000). It is interesting in this regard to consider the patterns of demonstrative usage in different modalities of native English discourse. Spoken and written discourse appear to be quite dissimilar in their preference for proximal versus distal demonstratives. According to some data-based studies, this is relatively infrequent in oral discourse, occurring half as frequently as that (Strauss, 1993) whereas it accounts for as much as 83.4% of the total demonstratives in academic written discourse (Nishimura, 1996). Such a disparity seems natural within a focus-based model of demonstratives (see section 2.1). Given that written language generally imposes greater inferential burdens than spoken, the frequent occurrence of high focus forms (i.e., this) in the former is rather expected because high focus forms direct the reader to the referent more strongly than do low focus forms (i.e., that). In argumentative essays, this is especially likely to recurrently appear because “writers use this to direct more attention to the referent crucial to their purpose” (Nishimura 1996, p. 74), which can be of service to effective argumentation.\(^7\)

Taking these observations into account, the learners’ underuse of proximal demonstratives in argumentative essays may be said to be one manifestation of the general characteristics of learner writings, which is the transfer of spoken linguistic features to a written genre (Arts & Granger, 1998; Biber & Reppen, 1998; Granger & Rayson, 1998; Petch-Tyson, 1998).

There is also a possibility that the underuse of the proximity form might result in less successful argument in terms of the interaction between the writer and the reader(s). Mauranen (1993) suggests that this produces an impression of “closeness or solidarity” between the two parties and “has the effect of bringing the reader round to the writer’s orientation, or point of view, by implying that the writer as well as the reader are both ‘here’, on the same side, looking at things from the same perspective” (p. 96). An experienced writer who values the interaction with the prospective readers would thus take advantage of the proximal demonstrative in order to invite solidarity from them.

3. Demonstrative Pronouns vs. Demonstrative Determiners

This subsection reports the results of the investigation of the distribution of pronouns and determiners in the use of demonstratives. Tables 5 and 6 contain (normalized)

\(^7\) In contrast to this, that “refers across to another topical entity, often for the purpose of marginalizing it in the informational structure, rejecting its validity or importance in an argument,” or “attributing an entity or proposition to a third party” (McCarthy, 1994, p. 274). As such, that may be used not so much in presenting one’s own argument as in commenting on others'.
frequencies of occurrence of demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative determiners, respectively, and Tables 7 and 8 display the results of the chi-square tests evaluating the significance of differences between the corpora with respect to the pronominal and determiner uses, respectively.

**TABLE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 7**

Results of Chi-square Test Comparing Three Corpora ($\chi^2$): Pronominal Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP/US</td>
<td>49.45***</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>16.94***</td>
<td>27.94***</td>
<td>26.84***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP/US</td>
<td>57.23***</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>31.33***</td>
<td>60.52***</td>
<td>26.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP/HP</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically significant (p<.001), **(p<.005), *(p<.05)

**TABLE 8**

Results of Chi-square Test Comparing Three Corpora ($\chi^2$): Determiner Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this</th>
<th>these</th>
<th>that</th>
<th>those</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP/US</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>13.45***</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP/US</td>
<td>4.83*</td>
<td>4.04*</td>
<td>4.68*</td>
<td>4.43*</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP/HP</td>
<td>0.75*</td>
<td>4.38*</td>
<td>4.16*</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>4.68*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically significant (p<.001), **(p<.005), *(p<.05)

The results reveal interesting differences in the use of the four demonstratives, which have not been captured when the pronominal versus determinant uses of the demonstratives were not separated. First of all, the figures given in Table 5 disclose contrasting patterns of use of pronominal this and that between the learners and the native speakers. Whereas the native writers use the pronoun this over two and a half times as often as that, the learners make more frequent use of the pronoun that. Petch-Tyson (2000) reports a comparable tendency for the EFL groups from various native language backgrounds to prefer that to
"this" as a pronoun. An English grammar book by Biber et al. (1999), which is based upon an analysis of 40 million words of authentic text representing four register categories (i.e., conversation, fiction, newspaper language, and academic prose), also indicates that in academic prose "this" is about two and a half times more frequent than "that" in their pronominal use. In conversation, by contrast, that is by far the most common demonstrative pronoun, which suggests again that learner argumentative essays display characteristics typical of native English spoken register than of a comparable written genre. Results of chi-square tests verify that both the lower and higher level learners in the current study significantly underuse "this" and "those" as a pronoun and overuse "that" as a pronoun (at the 0.001 significance level) (See Table 7). The two learner groups, however, are not significantly different from each other in the use of any of the four demonstrative pronouns.

With regard to demonstrative determiners, the learners and the native speakers tend to exhibit a parallel trait: that is, all the three groups used the proximate forms ("this" and "these") much more frequently than the distant forms ("that" and "those"). Biber et al. (1999) observed the equivalent tendency in the written expository registers while they reported the opposite for conversation and fiction. The only difference that has turned out to be statistically significant at the same level (i.e., p<0.001), as Table 8 shows, is the underuse of "these" by the lower proficiency learners compared to the native writers. All the other differences in frequency between the three corpora were either statistically not significant or significant at a lower level (i.e., p<0.05).

The preceding discussion points to three notable discrepancies between the learners and the native speakers: the learners’ underuse of "this" (and "those") as a pronoun, overuse of "that" as a pronoun, and underuse of "these" as a determiner. The qualitative analysis that follows focuses specifically on these differences in order to uncover the underlying reasons for such disparities and to better understand the characteristics of each group’s use of the demonstratives. The two groups’ use of determiner "this", although not very different in frequency, will also be analyzed in detail because of the observed dissimilarity between them.

4. Qualitative Analysis

1) Underuse of Pronominal "This"

One of the major findings of the current study is that learners underuse pronominal "this" compared with the native speakers. In other words, native writers make much more frequent use of "this" as a pronoun than do the learners. This may, in large part, be attributed to the numerous occurrences of text reference in native speaker essays, which are
commonly made through the use of pronominal this.\(^8\) In text reference, the referent is not a noun phrase but an entire clause or extended passage of text, which “is being transmuted into a fact or a report” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 52). The pronominal this is “English’s routine for pointing economically to a central predication” (Geisler et al., 1985, p. 148), and learners might run the risk of losing economy by not making use of it.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), text reference most often occurs “in equative clauses where the demonstrative provides the ‘given’ element in the message and this then serves to identify some other element that is ‘new’, by simply being equated with it” (p. 67). This type of equative clauses with text referential this is recurrently found in native speakers’ essays, especially in the form of a predicative structure starting with this is… See the following examples:

(1) Their second main point is the constitutional right of freedom of speech. They claim this by bringing out the event in 1969 where the Supreme Court ruled that neither <\(\ast\). This is a good statement but the fact that the court ruled that this type of freedom of speech is o.k. does not mean it would feel the same way about the amendment of church and state. (US)

(2) Once the topics are viewed on the same level, the supporters move into discussing the clean operation of atomic power facilities. They show their audience that a nuclear power plant emits no air pollution, and less radiation then a coal fired power plant. This is a positive aspect to point out, because most people think that the plants produce large amounts of air pollution. (US)

(3) Genetic counselors are failing to provide their insight to patients they serve. This is disgraceful given the fact that these counselors observe the results of their analysis daily whereas the patients more than likely will only have one occasion to decide what they should do. (US)

In the excerpts above, the pronominal this functions as the grammatical subject of the clause that conveys the writer’s attitude towards or evaluation of the proposition that it refers to. This clause serves an important rhetorical function of guiding the reader’s

\(^8\) Nishimura (1996) and Biber et al. (1999) also note that the high frequency of the proximal demonstrative in academic prose is partly due to their use in making text reference.

\(^9\) In the LOCNESS data, quotes are removed and replaced by the <\(\ast\)> symbol except if they are very short and/or integrated in the sentence. The reason for the removal is that the quotes are not produced by the students and are therefore not considered to reflect their linguistic competence.
interpretation in the way that the writer intends. This is done by means of an evaluative adjective (good, positive, disgraceful) alone or together with a specifying noun (statement, aspect) that packages and names the proposition being referred to. It has been suggested that such use of text reference is conducive to the successful integration of the argument presented in the text through two different processes (Mauranen, 1993). For one, the demonstrative in the text references points backwards in the text and simultaneously offers the basis for what is to follow, thereby contributing to the text development. For the other, the use of text references presents the argument as “a hierarchy with layered elements” (ibid, p. 66). As such, text references seem to be characteristic of a good text.

In order to compare across the three corpora how frequently pronominal this occurs in this type of construction (i.e., this is ...), all instances of this is were retrieved in each corpus using the WordSmith Tools. The results indicated a few discrepancies between the corpora. Above all, this structure was only about half as frequent in the learner data (LP: n=51, HP: n=61) as in the native speaker data (n=110). Secondly, the kinds of nouns and adjectives that occur in this structure were different between the learner and native corpora. In the native speaker corpus, such nouns as statement, argument, concept, aspect, policy, example, question, reason, and strategy and various evaluative adjectives such as legitimate, positive, important, disgraceful, ethical, valid, effective, true, significant, and wrong were found. These nouns function as “retrospective labels,” “encapsulating” a preceding piece of text, and together with an accompanying modifier signal to the reader exactly how the part of text is to be interpreted on both ideational and interpersonal levels (Francis, 1994, p. 85). In the learner corpora, by contrast, both the nouns and adjectives that appear in this structure were either qualitatively different or limited in type. In the lower proficiency students’ essays, this, instead of being text-referential, often refers to a concrete antecedent as in (5) or is exophoric (i.e., the referent is not in the text) as in (6).

(4) In 7 days, girlfriend give me vintage cellular phone. I was happy and thank. This is my present cellular phone. Using phone, I remember girlfriend and recollection. (LP)

(5) What are and causes of the popularity of American TV drama in Korea? This is a global generation. So a lot of cultures are held in common between each country. (LP)

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10 These are normalized frequencies (per 100,000 words).
11 The extracts from the learner essays are presented without any correction of overt errors and/or inappropriate uses of language.
The higher proficiency group was a bit closer to the native speakers in the use of some general packaging nouns (e.g., problem, reason, effect, idea) and assessing adjectives (e.g., good, bad, difficult) in this construction (see excerpts 6 and 7 below). But still, compared with the native writers, the learners do not seem to utilize an extensive array of nouns and adjectives that can be useful for presenting their perspectives to the readers.

(6) Nowadays, many entertainers have committed suicide. This is a big problem itself. However, as this affects on teenagers who are emotional and impulsive, this is more serious. (HP)

(7) Some people just emphasize freedom of individual and say that university should not ban alcohol. But this is a dangerous idea. Freedom which can damage others is not real freedom. (HP)

This study thus supports the previous finding by Mauranen (1993) and Petch-Tyson (2000) that EFL learners use much fewer text references in their writings than do native speakers. If Mauranen (1993) is right in arguing that “text references contribute to the rhetorical effect that an argument is felt to be tightly interwoven and develops within the text by progressively building on earlier steps” (p. 95), then as she predicts, the infrequent use of text references in the EFL learners’ writing may culminate in a less convincing and slackly related argument especially in the eyes of the native speakers who are used to a clearer and recurrent assimilation of pieces of text.

Another idiosyncratic feature of the learner corpora in terms of the use of pronominal this is that they have numerous instances of the phrase like this. In the LP there are as many as 11 occurrences of like this accounting for 24% of the total tokens (46) of this as a pronoun.

(8) Therefore a lot of American drama is popular in Korea. Because it's the way of know about their culture and language. Like this, many Koreans like American drama. (LP)

(9) First, if a star they like commits suicide, they are shocked emotionally. They often do that after the star by the shocking. For example, when Jang Guk young died, a 17 girl killed herself. Like this, they are more impulsive than adults. (HP)

As illustrated in the examples above, the learners commonly use this phrase as a discourse connector, a phenomenon not observed in the native speaker corpus. This may be interpreted in terms of a transfer from the native language, in that the Korean language
possesses a variety of adverbial expressions derived from the proximal demonstrative (e.g., *icherem* or *irehkey* ‘like this’), which may serve the role of a discourse connector.

2) Different Use of Determiner *This*

In contrast to pronominal *this, this* as a determinant does not appear to be markedly different in frequency between learners’ and native speakers’ essays (see Table 6). But this similarity in frequency masks a critical divergence in the types of nouns that the demonstrative modifies. The lexical heads in the demonstrative noun phrases can serve several useful functions such as identifying the referent precisely, characterizing or evaluating the referent in a particular way, and specifying the referent’s textual function (Mauranen, 1993). In other words, they may be said to “serve the purpose of guiding the reader’s interpretation process to match the writer’s intentions” (ibid, p. 65).\(^1\)

It is interesting then to see what kinds of nouns co-occur with *this* used as a determinant. The results of the collocate analysis demonstrate that the native speakers exploit a much broader range of noun heads in their writing. The significant collocates of *this* that are unique to the US include *statement, type, attitude, topic, question, theory, argument, issue,* and *claim*. Several of these nouns are “metalinguistic labels,” which serve to describe the preceding passage of text as “a particular type of language” (Francis, 1994, p. 89) (e.g., *claim, statement, argument*). The next excerpts contain such metalinguistic labels:

(10) I believe that the public has a right to be informed anything and everything that they want to be informed about, and people want to be informed about the death penalty; therefore, media should have access to report on executions. However, there access should be restricted to exclude any and all devices which could endanger security or safety of the people involved. **This argument** is debated often around times when the death penalty is actually put into effect. (US)

(11) Respect is not an easy thing to accomplish. Being a talented basketball player and being women does not seem to mix in the eyes of some people. There are still people out there that believe women are not feminine because of their athletic ability. They don't see women as athletes but as sex objects (at least we

\(^1\) The function of determinant *this* (in written discourse), on the other hand, may be seen as two-fold: “First, it can serve a pragmatic function: It can bring a topic into focus for the first time or restore the focus of a topic that has lost it in competition with others. Second, it can serve a rhetorical function: It can emphasize or further characterize a topic.” (Geisler et al., 1985, p. 144).
don't belong in the kitchen anymore). **This claim** is supported by Linnea Smith, the wife of North Carolina's men's basketball coach. (US)

In both of the examples, the propositional content that is referred to gets labeled as a linguistic act, i.e., as an argument or a claim by means of the demonstrative nominal phrase in the reference. In other words, the writer instructs the reader to interpret the linguistic category of a proposition in a particular way. In so doing, the writer may intimate his/her attitude towards the preceding proposition(s). In (11), for example, *this claim* is used to dissociate the writer from the proposition referred to, thereby communicating his/her doubt as to its validity.

In the following examples, on the other hand, the nouns *issue* and *topic* that follow *this* specify the discourse function of the text passage referred to. That is, the readers are directed to understand the text passage not only in terms of its propositional content but also of its textual function (Mauranen, 1993).

(12) Some see the result of watching this on television as a good thing. They think it would wake America up and make them realize what it is they are actually voting for when they pass such things as the death penalty. Others view this experience as a bad thing. This is one reason why the members of the fight to let KQED televise the execution of the death row inmate have established **this issue** as one of value. (US)

(13) The idea I feel that has most significantly changed people's lives in the 20th century is that of caring for the environment. Today, people have become aware of the importance of environment to our future. People are concerned with nuclear weapons. We realize that countries that which have many weapons have the power to destroy the world. Also related to **this topic** is nuclear waste. (US)

The demonstrative noun phrases are, by their anaphoric nature, presented as the given information in the clauses that they belong to, in terms of which the new idea is articulated. Another remarkable and intriguing characteristics of the native speaker corpus is that in such demonstrative noun phrases is very often embedded some new information, typically in the form of the writer’s interpersonal value judgment on the referent. See below.

(14) Currently capital punishment is being left up to the individual state as to whether or not they decide to implement it as a form of punishment. Advocates of **this obscene form of punishment** offer a handful of reasons justifying it's use. (US)
Society and the government have no right to take the life of another man. When they do carry out this heinous action, they simply lower themselves to the status of the criminal. (US)

One in four women experience rape or attempted rape in their life time. Imagine being forced to carry the child of a man who assaulted you and then being force to give birth to this child. Would be able to love him or her? This traumatic event takes months or years to recover from. (US)

In (14), the demonstrative noun phrase discourages the reader from challenging the fact that capital punishment is offensive and thereby the negative evaluation placed upon it. Similarly, this heinous action in (15) and this traumatic event in (16) guide the reader to interpret the referent in a negative way as the writer does. In (14) and (15), the writer’s assessment of the referent is new to the reader, but is presented as part of a given package through the anaphoric demonstrative reference. In (16), the negative attitude toward the referent has been implied in the preceding text and the modifier (traumatic) verbalizes it clearly. As these examples illustrate, the nominal phrases introduced by the demonstrative this can constitute “a subtle but powerful tool for encouraging the reader to go along with the writer’s point of view” (Petch-Tyson, 2000, p. 45). Such a tactical use of demonstrative noun phrases, however, was rarely observed in the learner corpora.

While the US-unique collocates of this were significantly underused by the learners, more general nouns such as point, situation, reason, problem, way, and case were collocates common to the three corpora. In particular, the learners used the lexical head way very frequently as part of the construction in this way, which typically functions as a discourse connector, similar to like this discussed earlier.

Nowadays many different types of English are used by people all over the world. Some of these people use English as their first language, and others use it as their second language. In this way, English is spoken by more and more people. (LP)

Teenagers are specially vulnerable to entertainer suicide. They idolize entertainers and imitate entertainers’ act and speaking. In this way, entertainer suicide have strong influence on teenagers who are considering suicide. (HP)

A few nouns including fact and view that may be used to label a stretch of discourse were significant collocates of this in the HP and US, but not in the LP, suggesting that the
higher level students do perform more like the native writers at least in some respect. The significant collocates of this exclusively in the learner corpora (e.g., area, system, change) were mostly related to the essay topic, except for the noun phenomenon (see examples 19 and 20).

(19) These day so many American drama popularity in Korea. Why this phenomenon is happen? Most Korean have watched all the time Korean TV dramas. (LP)

(20) There are many student who go to abroad. And many of them are primary and secondary students. I think the causes of this phenomenon are mainly two. (HP)

The high frequency of this noun in the learner corpora was particularly remarkable when compared with its zero occurrence in the native speaker corpus. Possibly, this is also a case of the native language transfer. That is, the learners might be using the English counterpart of the Korean word hyensang, which seems to occur not infrequently in the equivalent genre of Korean, in writing in English. This, however, remains a hypothesis until it is confirmed (or rejected) by a corpus-based study of Korean argumentative essays.

3) Overuse of Pronominal That and Underuse of Determiner These & Pronominal Those

Table 5 reveals much more frequent use by the learners of the pronoun that than by the native speakers. Petch-Tyson (2000), who also noted the Finnish learners’ overuse of pronominal that, suggests that “frequent use of that because of its function of shifting focus across topics … may contribute to creating a less persuasive rhetorical effect than a text which is developed using this” (p. 56). Additionally, the higher frequency of that in conversation than in academic prose of the native speakers, as already discussed, hints at the likelihood of immature language learners’ transfer of spoken linguistic features to a written register.

One unexpected and interesting finding was that pronominal that often functions in the native speaker corpus as the grammatical object of verbs, especially reporting ones (e.g., argue, claim, report, say, state), followed by no other element in the sentence. Two such examples are provided below:

(21) Many opponents use religion when talking about the negative effects of a suicide. Rauscher states that. He wants the reader to think about their own religion and its ideas about the necessary suffering. (US)
(22) This is significant because water is something that we need in order to survive and without water one cannot function. Therefore, ones’ behavior can be modified to better the situation of water pollution. The Exchange Theory also states that. In this case society needs to step in and provide rules such as the Clean Water Act to help improve the situation of water pollution. (US)

In the examples above, the writer first presents an opinion or a view in a way that may sound general and then supports it by bringing up a specific person or a theory that is authoritative and holds the same opinion/view. It is in this second part of the text that the writer uses the frame “reporting verb + that,” with that referring to the previously offered opinion/view.

The learners, on the other hand, frequently relied upon the phrase I think that is …, in which the pronominal that refers to some previous passage of text. In most such cases, as in the next examples, the writer uses this construction in order to provide an explicit evaluative comment on some other person’s opinion or a situation that has been stated in the preceding part of the text.

(23) I think TV dramas make us more know about other country's people, not to misunderstand them. Some people say that's negative for us because of cultural difference. But I think that's nonsense. (HP)

(24) Some Korean companies are requiring new employees to take the TOEIC. So many people are studying English for TOEIC score, not for English ability. I think that is unreasonable. (HP)

In comparison with the strategy that the native writers often exploit in presenting an argument, that is, drawing on an authoritative and reliable source that independently lends support to their own stance, the learners’ argument that is conveyed through the frame I think… runs a greater risk of sounding personal belief lacking such an endorsement and thereby of inviting counterargument from the audience.

Another significant quantitative finding reported in the previous section was that the learners (especially the lower proficiency group) underuse these as a determiner compared with the native speakers. The collocate analysis indicates that the three corpora are quite dissimilar in terms of the significant collocates of these used as a determiner. Although there exist a few collocates that frequently figure in all the three corpora (e.g., people, things, days, reasons), a far wider variety of nouns follow the determiner these in the US: practices, instances, methods, results, questions, facts, actions, rules, individuals, cases, arguments, differences, and ideas. Arguments, for instance, is used in comparing and
evaluating various opinions on the given topic, not only as the repeated head of the noun phrase (as in 25) but to label the preceding stretch of discourse as arguments, which may otherwise not be understood as such (as in 26).

(25) For as long as the act of capital punishment has been around, the arguments for and against it have also been clearly present. When forced to compare these arguments, it is clear that the argument opposing the death penalty is both stronger and more sensible. (US)

(26) I am sure that we can still all learn of the circumstances of the victims through psychologists and psychiatrists. Of course, there is the obstacle of patient privilege, but we do not need to analyze the people's names. All we need to know is why people choose suicide as a solution to problems. Are people really crying for help? Do they really feel that their families will be spared much grief if they end their lives prematurely? All of these arguments are good, valid ones, but without any evidence they do not hold up well. (US)

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study has examined the Korean college students’ use of English
Korean College Students’ Use of English Demonstratives in Argumentative Essays

73

demonstratives in argumentative essays by comparing it with that of native speakers, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis has revealed that in overall terms, the Korean learners underuse demonstratives compared to the native speakers and the degree of the underuse decreases as the proficiency of the learner increases. The study has also classified the demonstratives into different categories (i.e., the proximal versus the distal demonstratives and the demonstrative determiners versus the demonstrative pronouns) and compared their proportions across the corpora. The results indicate that the learners tend to depend more heavily on the distal demonstratives than do the native speakers, and that the higher and the lower level learners are not differentiated in this respect. It has been pointed out that this may in part be ascribed to the learners’ transfer of the spoken characteristics to a written register and that the underuse of the proximate forms might lead to less effective argumentation. The comparison of the pronominal and determiner uses of the demonstratives has offered more detailed information regarding the patterns of use of each demonstrative across the corpora. Generally speaking, the pronominal uses by the learners are more akin to those by the native speakers, compared with the determiner uses. Specifically, three disparities between the two groups have been disclosed: the learners’ underuse of this and those as a pronoun, overuse of that as a pronoun, and underuse of these as a determiner, when compared with the native speakers. There was no significant difference between the two subgroups of learners regarding any of these traits. These discrepancies have been subjected to a careful qualitative analysis, which has disclosed several interesting findings. The learners’ underuse of pronominal this mainly results from the much fewer instances of text reference in their writings. In light of the crucial rhetorical functions that text references are observed to serve in native speakers’ essays, the learners appear to be less successful in orienting the readers in the interpretation of the text, as the result of which their essays are less likely to create an impression of persuasive argumentation. Even when the learners and native speakers do not differ in their use of demonstratives in terms of frequency, the patterns of use are sometimes qualitatively different. The use of determiner this is a case in point. The variety and characteristics of the nouns that this demonstrative co-occurs with are vastly dissimilar in both groups’ essays. The choice of noun and modifier(s) that accompany this contributes significantly to the writer’s guidance of the readers on how to interpret the text on interpersonal as well as ideational levels, and the native writers are much more adept at exploiting it to rhetorical effect. The learners’ overuse of pronominal that reminds one of the general resemblance of learner writing to spoken language, while possibly producing less forceful rhetorical effect because of its focus-shifting function and/or a lower degree of focus. Compared with the native speakers, the learners appear to employ a more naïve and fragile argumentative strategy in that their arguments are often presented in a way that renders them potentially vulnerable to disagreement from the readers. Besides, recurrent
cataphoric uses of the determiner *those* have been noted as one of the distinctive features of the native speakers’ essays. Although the qualitative analysis sometimes points to a more native-like performance of the higher level learners than the lower level learners (e.g., more frequent text references, the use of some labeling nouns and adjectives together with determiner *this*, and more frequent occurrences of the determiner *those* with a post-modifier), the two groups generally belong together. This suggests that the native-like use of the demonstratives is not automatically achieved with the increase of the general language proficiency.

The problem with the aforementioned differences between learners and native speakers is not particularly that the learners would be seen to use the language incorrectly (Mauranen, 1993). In fact, they are making neither lexical nor grammatical errors by their underuse or overuse of a certain category of demonstratives or the infrequent use of text reference. Given that the main goal of argumentative essays is to persuade the readers to buy the arguments presented, however, such usage may have more damaging consequences: it may undermine credibility of Korean students’ writing for Anglo-American readers by giving an impression of poorly integrated argumentation that lacks guidance. The appropriate use of demonstratives in argumentative essays thus belongs to “text level rhetorical features rather than at the level of lexicogrammatical” (Mauranen, 1993, p. 97) domain, which may seem harmless but turn out to be a greater barrier in communication.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the present study offers several points to consider. First of all, the traditional instruction of demonstratives based upon the deictic function needs to be expanded to incorporate the demonstrative uses for textual (i.e., discourse) reference. This study has demonstrated that even advanced learners are far removed from the native norm in using these apparently simple lexical items when the choice is not determined by the physical proximity. A brief examination of English teaching materials widely used in Korea indicates that this feature of demonstrative usage is not dealt with in an explicit way (Kim, 2009). Once the textbooks introduce the deictic usage of demonstratives at the basic level, they do not revisit this topic at more advanced levels, nor do they deal with textual reference in much detail. There seems to be a general expectation that learners would acquire this facet of demonstrative use implicitly and naturally (i.e., through exposure to language input) as their proficiency advances. One of the findings of the current study, however, is that the patterns of learners’ demonstrative use do not change significantly with the development of overall language competence. It might be helpful and even necessary, therefore, that discourse reference should be presented and explained to learners overtly and in rich contexts which reflect authentic native speaker usage, and practiced with carefully designed exercises. The focus-based approaches to demonstratives would be a good complement to proximity-based explanations in this regard. It is crucial
for learners to understand that demonstrative choice can depend on the writer/speaker’s point of view such as the considerations of focus, and not mere physical proximity. Competent writers understand that “readers rely on cues of focus to predict what’s coming next” and organize their use of demonstratives to provide a reader with good prospects for his or her predictions (Geisler et al., 1985, p. 142).

Within the domain of discourse reference, this study especially raises the need for and the importance of addressing text reference. Demonstratives have typically been taught in terms of their capacity to refer to nominal antecedents, but as this study evidences, they are centrally used in academic prose to refer to an extended passage of text. Learners, especially of the lower level proficiency, should be familiarized with the option of employing demonstratives for this purpose and provided with the opportunities to practice it in a variety of real or authentic-like contexts. It seems of great importance to teach how to exploit this cohesive device for accomplishing a particular task such as argumentative writing.

Related to the point just made, learners need to understand that demonstrative reference can itself constitute a useful rhetorical strategy in advancing their arguments, which explains why it is “extremely common … in all discourse of an argumentative nature” (Francis, 1994, p. 100). We have seen that demonstrative nominal phrases are used strategically by the native writers to persuasive effect. With a particular choice of a noun head and an epithet that co-occur with the demonstrative, the writers “can get in their evaluation without having to make a special point of it” (ibid, p. 97). Through such device the writer in essence guides the reader’s interpretation of the text in the direction that he/she wants. In order to take full advantage of the strategic resource of this device, then, the learners should develop lexical knowledge as well. EFL learners tend to rely heavily on a few general noun heads, but in so doing they fail to benefit from valuable rhetorical opportunities. They thus need to be introduced to a wide array of nouns that can be used as retrospective labels, together with the information on the kinds of rhetorical effects each choice makes.

In more general terms, learners should be made aware of the essential differences in language use according to register. They should, for example, recognize that the relative proportion of proximal versus distal demonstratives changes depending on the modality of discourse and this reflects the specific function of each demonstrative. Additionally, there is a need to teach the cataphoric usage of those especially to lower level students.

Given that the Korean language has a markedly different demonstrative system from English, that is, a tripartite one, it would be interesting to examine in the future whether, and how, the Korean learners’ use of English demonstratives is influenced by their use of the corresponding items in their native language. Such a study would need to be based, as the current one is, upon a close examination of authentic texts of both languages that are
produced by the learners.

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Applicable levels: college
Kew words: demonstratives, reference, argumentative, writing, corpus

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