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Metadiscourse in persuasive essays by elementary students in South Korea and the US

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Abstract

This study investigated metadiscourse in the persuasive essays of fourth graders from both urban and rural communities: 224 students in South Korea and 188 in the US. Each student was asked to write a persuasive essay in his or her native Korean or English in response to a story not previously read or discussed. Analysis with a taxonomy developed by Hyland (2004) indicated significant differences in the metadiscourse by country. In terms of interactive metadiscourse, South Korean students used more sentence-level transitions than U.S. students, who used more frame markers and endophoric markers. With regard to interactional metadiscourse, U.S. students used more hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and self-mentions in their essays. This study also compared the students' essays by the type of community in which the writers lived. In the US the essays of students in rural communities contained more hedges, whereas those of students in urban areas included significantly more self-mentions. In South Korea, no significant difference was detected in the metadiscourse of students living in rural and urban areas.

Key words: metadiscourse, persuasive essay, interactive resources, interactional resources

In a dominant view of writing as a social practice, written texts represent interaction between the writer and the reader. The writer can facilitate interaction with the reader by using metadiscourse (Thompson, 2001), that is, linguistic material in the text "that does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret, and evaluate the information given" (Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993, p. 40). Also used to signal the writer's attitudes both to the text content and the reader (Hyland, 1998), metadiscourse is particularly crucial in persuasive writing because the writer needs to make his or her claims clearly understood and engage the reader in the argument (Hyland, 1999). Argumentation and persuasion are bound to the contexts in which they occur, so the use of metadiscourse in a persuasive writing is closely linked to the norms and expectations of a particular cultural community. The writer should organize the contents and present the argument to the reader in a rhetorical and interpersonal manner acceptable to the conventional discursive practices of the community. Thus, the writer should first identify the readers of the persuasive text and

make proper assumptions about their knowledge or understanding of the conventions of the discourse community—not only linguistic but also interpersonal. Analysis of texts written for persuasion should reveal metadiscourse patterns and norms expected in the cultural community. The primary purpose of the current study was to investigate the metadiscourse in the persuasive essays of elementary students in Korea and the US (Throughout in this paper, Korea refers universally to South Korea). The next section highlights previous studies of Korean and English metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse in Korean and English texts

Most cross-cultural studies on metadiscourse have involved an approach called *contrastive rhetoric*, in which texts written in two different languages or texts composed in a first and second language are compared to determine variance in writing conventions across cultures or the influence of rhetorical conventions in one language on the way a person writes in another (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1999). In a small number of contrastive rhetoric studies, texts written by students in Korean and English have been compared. C.-K. Kim (2009) examined argumentative texts written in English by Korean learners of English and professional columnists from the UK in a comprehensive study of metadiscourse. He adopted the taxonomies of Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993) for analysis, dividing the metadiscourse into two categories: (a) textual, the purpose of which is to help readers process information in a text efficiently; and (b) interpersonal, the purpose of which is to engage readers in the argument by explicitly constructing textual interaction. He found that college students writing in Korean employed more textual metadiscourse in their English essays, whereas the writers from the UK used more interpersonal metadiscourse. Similarly, in a study of research articles written in English by Korean scholars and scholars who were native speakers of English, Uhm, Kim, Nam, and Oh (2009) discovered that the former employed more textual metadiscourse, whereas the latter used more interpersonal metadiscourse.

With regard to textual metadiscourse, both comprehensive studies noted above showed that the English compositions of Korean writers contained more metadiscourse than those written by native speakers of English. This finding aligns with studies in which one or two specific subcategories of textual metadiscourse were examined. E.-J. Lee (2004) and S.-W. Lee (2007) found that in compositions written in English, learners of English whose native language is Korean tended to use conjunctive adverbials more frequently than native speakers of English. Uhm, Moon, Lee, and Oh (2009) found that compared to research articles written in English by native speakers of English, those written by scholars whose native language was Korean contained more code glosses, such as *that is* and *for example*. Similarly, in a corpus-based study of persuasive essays written in English by students of English as a Second Language (ESL), Hinkel (2002) found that in general, Korean college students used conjunctions and rhetorical expressions for exemplification more frequently than native speakers of English.

With regard to the use of interpersonal metadiscourse, both the comprehensive studies of metadiscourse noted above showed that texts written by native speakers of English contained more metadiscourse than the English texts by writers whose native language was Korean. Studies in which specific subcategories of interpersonal metadiscourse were examined resulted in contradictory findings. Choi and Ko (2005) found that Korean postgraduates' research papers in English contained more hedges than the research articles written by scholars who were native speakers of English. Similarly, in a corpus-based study of persuasive essays written in English by ESL students, Hinkel (2002) found that in general, Korean college students used hedges more frequently than native speakers of English. Hwang and Lee (2008) found that Korean students tended to use more amplifiers—another subcategory of interpersonal metadiscourse—in their English essays than native speakers of English. Thus, studies of interpersonal or interactional metadiscourse produced inconsistent results, necessitating additional cross-cultural studies.

The researchers of those cross-cultural studies may argue that the patterns of metadiscourse used by writers whose native language is Korean and those whose native language is English are primarily the result of first-language transfer. For instance, overuse of hedges in English compositions of writers whose native language is Korean (Choi & Ko, 2005; Hinkel, 2002) may be associated with cultural and rhetorical conventions involving humility. First-language transfer does not, however, fully explain inconsistent findings regarding interpersonal metadiscourse in English texts by writers whose native language is Korean and those whose native language is English. The apparent inconsistencies in the findings of the studies noted above may also relate to the varied levels of English proficiency of the participating Korean students. English compositions by Korean students can be affected by both their English proficiency level and their native culture. In fact, J.-W. Kim's (1999) study supports this explanation. In a comprehensive analysis of metadiscourse, J.-W. Kim (1999) examined English essays written by Korean learners of English and native speakers of English and showed that with regard to textual metadiscourse, native speakers of English used more metadiscourse than writers with either low or high English proficiency whose native language was Korean. With regard to interpersonal metadiscourse, however, the results differed depending on the level of English proficiency of the writers whose native language was Korean. Writers who were native speakers of English used more interpersonal metadiscourse than elementary-level learners of English whose native language was Korean, but the latter employed significantly less interpersonal metadiscourse than advanced-level English learners.

Thus, metadiscourse in English texts written by Korean students is likely to be affected by the culture and conventions associated with the Korean language, but those compositions in part tend to be influenced by the students' level of English writing proficiency as well. The influence of the desire for proficiency in English may be even

greater than the effect of the culture associated with the native language. In a study of English texts by Japanese students, Kobayashi (1984) found a great deal more influence of the English model on their writing than of the native Japanese model. Hinds (1983) pointed out that English compositions by learners of English may also be influenced by their writing textbooks and their English classes at schools and universities.

In addition, cognitive psychologists have suggested that when asked to write in English as opposed to writing in their native language, students may be primed by English culture and try to adopt English rhetorical patterns instead of following the rhetorical styles preferred in their native culture. This view was substantiated by Hong, Benet-Martinez, Chiu, and Morris (2003), who found that after exposure to images representing Chinese or American culture, Chinese college students in the US tended to interpret social situations with cultural values corresponding to the images they had seen. For instance, Chinese students tended to apply collectivist values after exposure to a painting of a mythical Chinese goddess. In contrast, after exposure to an image of the Statue of Liberty, representing American culture, Chinese students tended to apply individualistic values. The Chinese students could switch between Chinese and English cultural frames in very short amounts of time. Findings on the effects of English language instruction and cultural priming have suggested the writing of ESL students in English may not genuinely represent the rhetorical pattern of their first language. Mohan and Lo (1985) showed that ESL students' rhetorical and metadiscourse patterns may relate more closely to their stage of development in achieving writing maturity in English than transfer from their first language. While writing in English, students may try to emulate English rhetorical patterns, but because of a lack of proficiency, their writing may display patterns somewhat different from typical English texts. One of the limitations of previous contrastive rhetoric studies on the use of metadiscourse is, therefore, that they were based on the examination of English texts composed by students who were native speakers of Korean. In order to investigate the preferred patterns of metadiscourse in Korean and English, texts written in the Korean language should compared with texts written by writers who are native speakers of English. To date, few if any cross-cultural researchers have conducted comprehensive analyses of metadiscourse in texts written in Korean. With regard to a more specific analysis of metadiscourse, only one researcher has examined Korean texts in comparison with English texts. In a study of code glosses, Ryoo (2008) found that research articles in Korean contained fewer code glosses than those in English. This finding on Korean texts is in contrast with findings of studies in which researchers examined English texts written by students whose native language was Korean (Hinkel, 2002; Uhm, Moon, Lee, & Oh, 2009).

The other limitation of previous studies on metadiscourse is that researchers have dealt with texts written by college students or scholars. Many Korean college students and scholars, however, already have considerable experiences in U.S. and U.K. culture either through studying English or residing in English-speaking countries and may have already

been affected by English rhetorical patterns. In addition, Korean college students in most previous studies did not constitute representative samples. The students mostly attended prestigious universities in Korea, thereby representing only a small portion of their age group. In a cross-cultural study of text, writing samples should therefore be collected from participants less influenced by American culture and representing a more academically diverse population, such as elementary school children. Compared to college students and scholars, Korean children are less exposed to English; and their rhetorical styles are less influenced by English. Thus, children may display rhetorical patterns more representative of Korean culture.

Another limitation of the previous studies of metadiscourse is that researchers studied Korean students or scholars living exclusively in large cities. Students living in rural communities or midsized cities likely have less contact with foreign cultures than students in large cities; therefore, they may display rhetorical and metadiscourse patterns more faithful to the Korean language and culture. According to national statistics, students in rural and midsized urban schools constitute about two thirds of the total student population in both the US and Korea (Hoffman & Sable, 2006; Y.-P. Kim, Hyun, Yu, Namgung, & Kim, 2006).

The author of the current study aimed to overcome the methodological limitations of previous studies by expanding the cross-cultural investigation to persuasive essays written by elementary school students in the US and Korea in their native languages. Examining the essays written by students in both urban and rural areas in Korea and the US would show (a) the influence of native culture on metadiscourse and (b) more genuine and representative patterns of metadiscourse in both cultures.

Research questions

The research questions were as follows:

1) Do significant differences exist in the overall use of textual and interactional metadiscourse in persuasive essays written by students in Korea and US in their native languages?
2) Do significant differences exist in the metadiscourse in essays written by students living in rural communities in Korea and those of students living in similar communities in the US?
3) Do significant differences exist in the metadiscourse in essays written by students living in urban areas in Korea and those of students living in similar communities in the US?
4) Do significant differences exist in the metadiscourse in essays written by students living in rural and urban communities?

For a comprehensive analysis of the metadiscourse devices, this study adopted Hyland's (2004) classification. One research hypothesis was that a significant difference exists, especially in interactional metadiscourse, as a result of the influence of the culture associated with the native language, specifically that Korean students tend to use less interactional metadiscourse because they are less familiar with such metadiscourse. In Korean culture, argumentation, persuasion, and critical thinking have been emphasized far less than in U.S. culture. Instead, dominance–obedience relationships and social harmony, emanating from the Confucian tradition, have been highly valued in Korean culture (Kim-Goh, 1995). These values contrast with individual critical thinking and argumentation, which are the primary emphasis of U.S. education. Compared with U.S. students, Korean students are less familiar with metadiscourse associated with persuasion; thus they were expected to use metadiscourse less frequently, in particular interactional metadiscourse, including engagement markers.

Another research hypothesis was that a comparison of students in rural communities in both countries would reveal greater differences than a comparison of students in urban communities in both countries because students in rural areas may be less influenced by other cultures. The final hypothesis was that in each county significant differences would exist in metadiscourse of students living in the rural and the urban communities. Because students in urban areas are likely to have more social interaction with other people than those living the rural communities, students in urban schools were hypothesized to use more metadiscourse than those in rural schools.

Method
Participants

Participants were fourth-grade students from public elementary schools in the US and Korea. In each country, participants were recruited from schools located at two different sites: One was an industrial city and the other was a rural community. Table 1 shows the number of classrooms involved at each research site.

Table 1: Participants

Research Sites	School	classrooms
Industrial city in the US	A	6 classrooms
Rural community in the US	B	4 classrooms
Industrial city in Korea	C	4 classrooms
Rural community in Korea	D	2 classrooms
	E	2 classrooms

School A was located in an industrial city in the U.S. Midwest; the majority of students' parents were middle or high school graduates with low to middle socioeconomic status (SES). School B was located in a rural community in the U.S. Midwest; the majority of students' parents were high school or college graduates with mid-range SES.

In Korea, School C was located in Kumi, an industrial city. The majority of participating students' parents were high school or college graduates with mid-range SES. Schools D and E were located in rural communities in Kyungsang Province in Korea. The two schools were comparable in terms of parents' education level and SES; the majority of students' parents were middle or high school graduates with low SES.

The total number of participating students in the US was 188 (97 boys, 91 girls), and in Korea, 224 (103 boys, 121 girls). Students from the school in the industrial city in the US numbered 91, and from the school in the rural community in the US, 97. The students from the school in the industrial city in Korea numbered 129, from the rural community in Korea, 95.
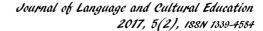
Procedure

Participants in both countries were asked to write a persuasive essay in response to a story they had not previously read. The story, entitled "The Pine Wood Derby" (McNurlen, 1998), is about a boy named Thomas, who wins a model car race but breaks the rules by failing to build his car by himself. He confesses to his classmate Jack that he had received help from his brother. Jack has to decide whether he should tell on Thomas. On one hand Jack feels disappointed that he has not won the race despite all the hard work he has done on his car, and he thinks that Thomas does not deserve to win by cheating. On the other hand, he feels sorry for Thomas, who has probably never won any prize in his life; he is also aware that no one likes a tattletale. After reading the story, the students were asked to write an essay about whether Jack should tell on Thomas. The writing prompt for the essay read as follows:

Should Jack tell on Thomas? Write an essay indicating whether or not you think Jack should tell on Thomas. Remember: Do your best and write as much as you can. You can go back and reread the story if you like.

When the original English story and the writing prompt were translated into Korean, the names Thomas and Jack were changed to Korean names, Taeho and Minsu, respectively. The title ("Pinewood Derby") was not literally translated, but reworded ("A Model Car Race") in order to make the story fully understandable to Korean elementary students. The pilot study showed that Korean students had no problem comprehending this story. After reading it, participants were allotted 40 minutes to write an essay in their native language.

Data analysis

A taxonomy developed by Hyland (2004) was used to analyze metadiscourse in this study. Unlike other metadiscourse models (e.g., Crismore et al., 1993), this model suggests

that linguistic materials commonly called textual metadiscourse serve interpersonal as well as propositional functions. Hyland (2004) argued that the use of a textual device is always related to the writer's awareness of self and the reader in a social context, and thus its use largely depends upon "the writer's interpersonal decisions to highlight certain relationships in the text to accommodate readers' understandings and guide them towards the writer's preferred interpretations" (Hyland, 2004, p. 138). This model was considered most appropriate to analyze persuasive essays in the current study, because in written persuasion the primary role of textual devices is to facilitate the writer's interaction with the reader, such as acknowledging objections and convincing the reader of the writer's argument. To reflect the interpersonal functions of textual devices, this model involves Thompson and Thetela's (1995) terms, *interactive* and *interactional resources* to categorize the organizational and evaluative features of metadiscourse. Below are detailed descriptions of interactive and interactional resources.

According to Hyland (2004), *interactive resources* organize the text to help readers track the information and recover the writer's preferred interpretations. These resources include the following:

- *Transitions* are principally conjunctions that express semantic and pragmatic relations between main clauses. In this study, only sentence-level transitions were examined.
- *Frame markers* are linguistic elements indicating text boundaries, sequences, text stages, or topic shifts.
- *Endophoric markers* are expressions that refer to other parts of the text.
- *Evidentials* refer to the source of information from other texts.
- *Code glosses* provide additional information to help the reader grasp the writer's intended meanings.

Interactional resources signal the writer's attitudes toward both the text and the reader, and engage the readers with the writer's argument. These resources include the following:

- *Hedges* indicate the writer's reluctance to make a full commitment to propositional information.
- *Boosters* imply the writer's certainty and strong commitment to propositional information.
- *Attitude markers* convey the writer's affective attitudes toward textual information.
- *Engagement markers* explicitly address or establish relationship with readers.
- *Self-mentions* indicate explicit references to the author(s) in the text.

Based on these descriptions and the list of metadiscourse provided by Hyland (2004), relevant metadiscourse items in the persuasive essays were searched and coded using the QSR NVivo computer software 9 (2010). Before searching for the metadiscourse, all the

essays were typed with misspellings corrected. For identification of Korean metadiscourse, the linguistic devices whose functions are similar to those of English metadiscourse on the list were searched, but new linguistic devices were also added to the list because they were found to perform the interactive or interactional functions specified in Hyland (2004). Table 2 illustrates some of the English and Korean metadiscourse actually found in the students' persuasive essays.

Table 2: Examples of Metadiscourse Found in Persuasive Essays

Category	Examples from English texts	Examples from Korean texts
Interactive resources		
Transitions	and / but / so / besides	kuriko ('*and*') / haciman ('*but*') / kuremuro ('*so*')
Frame markers	first / next / then / finally / that's all	cekcae ('*first*') / kkut ('*the end*') / cyellon ('*in conclusion*')
Endophoric markers	in paragraph 26 / on page 3 / as I wrote before	akka malhae-ss-tuk-si ('*as I said before*') / cek-eunmal-cherum ('*as I wrote*')
Evidentials	in the story / direction said / teacher said	kul-esse ('*in the story*') / –lul pomeyn ('*according to*') / sunsaengnim-kkey-ssu malhase-ss-ta ('*the teacher said*')
Code glosses	for example / here's a few examples	yelul duluh ('*for example*') / katun ('*such as*')
Interactional resources		
Hedges	might / maybe / probably / a little / kind of	ama ('*maybe*') / -ket katta ('*it seems*') / nae saengkak-enun ('*in my opinion*')
Boosters	definitely / sure / never / really / I bet	pandusi ('*absolutely*') / celdaero ('*never*') / socikhe ('*in fact*') / cengmal ('*really*')
Attitude markers	I agree / I hope / !	-emyen cohke-ss-ta ('*I hope*') / cungyo-han kek-eun ('*the important thing is*')
Engagement markers	imagine if you / just remember / you shouldn't / some people may think	tarun saram-dul-wui saengkak-eun ('*other people may think*') / ney-ka manyak ('*if you were*')
Self-mentions	I / we / my / our	na ('*I*') / cewui ('*my*') / woori ('*our*')

After the researcher finished coding all the essays, about one third of them were randomly selected and independently coded again by another trained rater, a native speaker of Korean for the Korean essays and a native speaker of English for the U.S. essays. Then, the interrater reliability was determined by calculating a simple percentage of agreement, which is the ratio of all coding agreements to the total number of coding decisions made by the raters. The interrater coding reliability of the two raters was 93.6% for the Korean essays and 90.3% for the U. S. essays.

Results

Occurrence of metadiscourse

For comparison of metadiscourse in the US and Korea, the rate of occurrence of metadiscourse was examined. In the current study, the primary interest was not to measure the *proportion* of a text associated with metadiscourse but to compare the *occurrence* of metadiscourse in corpora of unequal sizes. The researcher attempted to investigate the number of times metadiscourse devices were used for various pragmatic functions in a persuasive essay. For this purpose, the sentence was used as a unit of measurement. Although some scholars (e.g., Hyland, 2004) measured metadiscourse frequency per 10,000 words and others (e.g., Crismore et al., 1993) used line density, the sentence was considered to be appropriate for this cross-language study. If the occurrence of metadiscourse were counted per a certain number of words, it would cause a problem in comparison, because some metadiscourse consists of several strings of words, such as an engagement marker (e.g., *some people might say*), but others comprise just one word, such as a hedge (e.g., *probably*).

More importantly, Korean is a synthetic language (agglutinative) and English is an analytic language. To express the same meaning, the English language tends to contain more words in a sentence than Korean. In fact, data in this study showed that the average words per sentence in English was 15.14, whereas the average words per Korean sentence was 11.66. Because English sentences contain more words, an English essay tends to contain considerably more words than a Korean essay. In this study, the mean number of words per essay in English was 107.34, whereas the mean number of words per Korean essay was 71.48. Thus, a comparison of metadiscourse use per English and Korean essay would be unfair. By contrast, the mean number of sentences in English and Korean essays was by far more comparable: The mean number of sentences in English and Korean essays was 7.09 and 6.13, respectively.

For this study, the rate of occurrence per sentence instead of the rate of occurrence per certain number of words was compared. The rate of occurrence per sentence was calculated with the following formula: First, the total number of occurrences of a metadiscourse device in an essay was divided by the total number of sentences in the essay. Then, the result was multiplied by 100. The calculated value represents the rate of occurrence per 100 sentence, although none of the essays actually had more than 100 sentences.

Difference in metadiscourse in the US and Korea

Descriptive statistics for interactive and interactional resources used in the US and Korea appear in Table 3, which presents the mean rate of metadiscourse occurrences per 100 sentences.

Table 3: *Mean* (*and Standard Deviation*) *for Occurrence of Metadiscourse in U.S. and Korean Essays*

Metadiscourse	United States	Korea
Interactive resources	55.14 (45.1)	47.22 (30.9)
Interactional resources	103.65 (61.8)	55.74 (47.9)

The results showed that American students employed more interactive and interactional resources than Korean students. This cross-language difference was much greater for interactional resources (mean difference = 47.91) than for interactive resources (mean difference = 7.92). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The independent variable was the country (the US vs. Korea). The two dependent measures were the rate of occurrence of interactive metadiscourse and the rate of occurrence of interactional metadiscourse in an essay. Before the MANOVA was conducted, the dependent measures were transformed to achieve normality of distribution. After log transformation $[Y' = \log10 (Y+1)]$ was employed, the values of skewness and kurtosis for each dependent measure were close to zero, and the examination of the histogram plot revealed no substantial departures from normality. The MANOVA results showed a significant difference in the US and Korea in the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse, $F (2,409) = 25.50$, $p < 0.01$ (Wilks's $\Lambda = 0.89$; $\eta^2 = 0.11$).

In each country, interactional resources were used more frequently than interactive resources, but the difference in the two types of metadiscourse was greater for U.S. students, who used interactional resources about twice as often as interactive resources; whereas Korean students used interactional resources with almost the same frequency as interactive resources.

For more in-depth analyses, the subcategories of each interactive and interactional resource were examined, and the results appear in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean (and Standard Deviation) for the Occurrence for Subcategories of Metadiscourse

	United States	*Korea*	*Difference*
Interactive resources			
Transitions	30.73 (32.7)	35.60 (26.1)	-4.87**
Frame markers	14.71 (22.5)	1.27 (4.8)	13.44**
Endophoric markers	1.07 (5.7)	0.26 (2.2)	0.81*
Evidentials	8.45 (14.5)	9.56 (15.1)	-1.11
Code glosses	0.18 (1.6)	0.53 (2.9)	-0.35
Interactional resources			
Hedges	26.71 (31.9)	18.56 (28.3)	8.15**
Boosters	17.06 (24.0)	10.90 (17.6)	6.16**
Attitude markers	4.11 (11.7)	5.64 (13.3)	-1.53
Engagement markers	7.13 (19.3)	1.27 (5.5)	5.86**
Self-mentions	48.64 (40.5)	19.37 (21.93)	29.27**

*$p < 0.05$
**$p < 0.01$

The results of the independent *t*-test analyses for each subcategory of interactive metadiscourse indicated that although Korean students used significantly more transitions in their essays than U.S. students, the latter had significantly more frame markers and endophoric markers than the former. For evidentials and code glosses, the differences were not significant. The independent *t*-test for subcategories of interactional metadiscourse revealed that U.S. students used significantly more hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and self-mentions than Korean students (*p*s < 0.01). For attitude markers, the difference was not statistically significant.

In each country, the most frequent type of interactive metadiscourse was the transition, and the most frequent type of interactional metadiscourse was the self-

mention. Thus, in persuasive essay writing, transitions and self-mentions were the most frequently used metadiscourse devices in both the US and Korea.

Difference in rural and urban areas

The rural and urban regions were compared across and within country. Descriptive statistics for interactive and interactional resources appear in Table 5 with regard to rural and urban areas in the US and Korea.

Table 5: Mean (and Standard Deviation) for the Occurrence of Metadiscourse in Rural and Urban Areas in the US and Korea

Metadiscourse	US–Rural	US–Urban	Korea– Rural	Korea–Urban
Interactive resources	63.36 (52.0)	46.38 (34.4)	46.03 (31.1)	48.10 (30.9)
Interactional resources	96.65 (66.0)	111.11 (56.4)	58.37 (57.7)	53.80 (39.3)

When the Korean rural and U.S. rural students were initially compared, the MANOVA result showed that U.S. rural students employed significantly more interactive and interactional resources than Korean rural students, with F (2,189) = 7.33, $p < 0.01$ (Wilks's Λ = 0.93; η^2 = 0.07). This difference was more pronounced in the use of interactional resources than interactive resources. Next, the cross-cultural difference in the writing of students attending school in urban communities in South Korean and the US was examined; MANOVA results revealed that the students at the U.S. school in an urban area employed significantly more interactional resources than Korean students at an urban school, with F (2,217) = 27.34, $p < 0.01$ (Wilks's Λ = 0.80; η^2 = 0.20). These location-related results were consistent with overall cross-cultural differences described in the previous section.

For more in-depth analyses, the subcategories of interactive and interactional resources were examined with regard to location, and the results appear in Table 6. Among the interactive metadiscourse, only frame markers showed significant difference, t (190) = 6.74, $p < 0.01$, in the writing of U.S. students and Korean students at the rural schools. Among the interactional metadiscourse, hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and self-mentions showed significant difference (all ps < 0.01) in the writing of students in the rural schools in the US and Korea. When the differences in the writing of Korean and U.S. students in urban schools were examined, only transitions and frame markers among the interactive metadiscourse showed significant difference, t (218) = -3.48, $p < 0.01$, and t (218) = 9.09, $p < 0.01$. Among the interactional metadiscourse, only engagement markers and self-mentions showed significant difference, t (218) = 4.89, $p < 0.01$, and t (218) = 7.97, $p < 0.01$ in the writing of the U.S. and Korean students in the urban

schools. These results from the location-based analyses on the subcategories of metadiscourse are not completely consistent with overall cross-cultural comparisons. In contrast to overall comparative results, the use of endophoric markers showed no significant difference when the writing of students in the rural and urban communities were compared separately. For interactional metadiscourse, contrary to overall cross-cultural differences, hedges and boosters were not significant when students in urban schools in both countries were compared. These suggest that overall cross-cultural differences may not completely reflect all the differences associated with the subgroups in a culture.

Table 6: Mean (Standard Deviation) and p-Value for Interactive and Interactional Resources in the Essays of Students in Rural and Urban Schools

	US–Rural	*US–Urban*	*Korea–Rural*	*Korea–Urban*
Interactive resources				
Transitions	36.55 (38.8)	24.53 (23.2)	33.78 (26.2)	36.95 (26.1)
Frame markers	16.75 (27.3)	12.54 (15.6)	1.49 (5.0)	1.11 (4.7)
Endophoric markers	1.15 (5.7)	0.99 (5.7)	0.19 (1.5)	0.30 (2.5)
Evidentials	8.77 (14.9)	8.10 (14.2)	10.31 (15.9)	9.01 (14.6)
Code glosses	0.14 (1.0)	0.22 (2.1)	0.26 (2.6)	0.73 (3.1)
Interactional resources				
Hedges	31.81 (34.5)	21.26 (28.0)	20.78 (35.2)	16.92 (21.8)
Boosters	18.95 (26.6)	15.05 (20.8)	11.16 (20.3)	10.71 (15.5)
Attitude markers	3.41 (10.0)	4.85 (13.2)	6.73 (15.7)	4.83 (11.3)
Engagement markers	5.57 (14.3)	8.80 (23.4)	1.86 (7.2)	0.83 (3.9)
Self-mentions	36.90 (35.8)	61.15 (41.6)	17.84 (19.3)	20.50 (23.7)

Analysis of selected essays

To illustrate the use of metadiscourse, two essays were selected from students at various locations in each country. These essays were all judged to typify the performance of participating students and had about the median number in each category of metadiscourse. The essays are presented below with spelling and punctuation corrected. For Korean essays, only English translations are provided because of limited space. The metadiscourse is underlined in the essay.

Essay 1, which was written by a student (female) in a rural community in Korea, follows.

> I would not tell the truth. It would make Taeho more disliked. And the teacher said you have to build a car yourself. Also I think tattletaling is worse because it might hurt friendships. Taeho is an outcast in his class; however, he is not in other classes. In addition, Taeho should not be looked down upon because he is dirty and wears soiled clothes. It is strange not to play with him because he is dirty. And Taeho made some effort in building the car. By the way, although Taeho does not have talent, he can make an effort.

Essay 1 contained 80 Korean words and nine sentences. It had six sentence-level transitions, such as *also,* but no frame markers were used. An evidential, *the teacher said,* was used once. With regard to the interactional resources, one hedge, *might,* was made, but no boosters were used. The writer of this essay did not use any attitude or engagement markers and made an explicit reference to herself three times.

Essay 2. written by a student (male) in an urban area in Korea, appears below.

> It seems that Minsu should not tell on Taeho. Friends should not tattle, and if Minsu tells the truth, Taeho will be very disappointed and hate him. Also Taeho has never received any prizes so far, and so Minsu should not tell the truth to the teacher. And Taeho did a difficult job of painting and decorating all the car parts, including the ones hard to reach. In addition, his brothers simply helped Taeho, not making the car entirely for him. And since Minsu had agreed to keep a secret, he will be punished as well if he tells the truth. Minsu should instead praise Taeho's car and think positively about it. By doing so, he will no longer be worried about Taeho and feel comfortable. Therefore, I think that Minsu should not tell on Taeho to the teacher.

Essay 2 contained 101 Korean words and nine sentences. It had the same number of sentences as Essay 1 and a similar number of transitions. It had one booster, *never*, and one hedge, *seems*. Like Essay 1, it contained no frame markers, and with regard to

interactional metadiscourse, it contained no engagement or attitude markers and had only one self-mention. Although Essays 1 and 2 were written by students from different locations, these essays in Korean displayed an overall similar pattern in terms of metadiscourse.

Essay 3, written by a student (female) in an urban area in the US, appears below.

> I do think Jack should tell on Thomas. First of all, that's called lying. Lying is bad. People won't trust you. You won't have any friends. I think Thomas should tell the truth. Also it's cheating. I cheated and I got grounded, and no one would play with me. Thomas probably would have not won, but I would tell. Last, Jack made his all by himself so should Thomas. You won't learn. Last year in art I could not draw, but I kept practicing. I think practice makes perfect. In conclusion Jack should Thomas. Don't you think?

Essay 3 contained 97 English words and 15 sentences. Although this English essay had by far more sentences than Korean Essays 1 and 2, it contained fewer sentence-level transitions. Instead, unlike the Korean essays, this English essay contained three frame markers, *first of all*, *last*, and *in conclusion*, showing that students whose native language is English tend to use frame markers more frequently than those whose native language is Korean in organizing the arguments. With regard to interactional resources, Essay 3 included four engagement markers, such as *you won't have*, and nine self-mentions, showing a significant difference from the essays written in Korean, which contained no engagement markers and only a few self-mentions. Compared to Korean counterparts, U.S. students may tend to involve the reader more frequently in their written argumentation and make more self-references in their essays.

Essay 4, which was written by a student (male) in a rural area in the US, appears below.

> I think Jack shouldn't tell on Thomas because Thomas has never won any prize. I think if Jack would tell on Thomas, Thomas would beat Jack up. If Jack were to tell on Thomas, Thomas might not get in trouble, and the teacher would get mad at Jack for tattletaling. The kids might start calling Jack the tattletaling boy. If Jack would tell on him, Thomas might get in trouble, and Thomas would have to go to the principal's office. If Jack did not tell on Thomas, Thomas would be happy that he won the prize and he would have friends. He never had friends because he would push somebody down for no reason. Thomas was mean. That's why I think he should not tell on Thomas.

Essay 4 contained 127 English words and nine sentences. Like Essay 3, it contained few sentence-level transitions but employed one frame marker, *that's why*, confirming the cross-language difference in the use of transitions and frame markers by writers who are native speakers of English and those who are native speakers of Korean. Considering that the Essay 3 was written by a student attending a school in an urban area and Essay 4 by one attending a school in a rural community, these essays may also exhibit the difference associated with the location where the writers reside. For example, Essay 4 contained three times as many hedges as Essay 3. Consistent with the results of statistical analyses, writers attending school in a rural community in the US may be less assertive in proposing arguments than their counterparts at schools in urban areas.

Discussion
Interpretation of results

The results of the study show significant difference in the metadiscourse in written texts by students in the US and Korea. Except for the use of transitions, the persuasive essays written by U.S. students contained significantly more interactive and interactional metadiscourse than the essays by Korean students. More specifically, U.S. students used more frame markers, endophoric markers, hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and self-mentions, whereas Korean students used more sentence-level transitions in their essays. The analyses, conducted separately for those living in rural and urban communities, reveal that essays by students in a rural community in the US contained significantly more metadiscourse than those of students in a rural community in Korea. The results are similar for the students in urban areas—more prevalent metadiscourse among U.S students. Thus, regardless of geographic setting, U.S. students in this study showed more frequent use of metadiscourse in a persuasive essay than their Korean counterparts.

These differences in the use of metadiscourse may suggest that in essay writing, U.S. students may make a great effort to organize their arguments and engage readers, whereas students in Korea may be less concerned with providing resources helpful to the reader. Hinds (1987) proposed that Korean as well as Japanese and Chinese are reader-responsible languages in that readers must make relevant connections among sentences and paragraphs in comprehending texts. By contrast, English is a writer-responsible language because it puts the responsibility chiefly on the writer to provide appropriate signaling cues and facilitate the comprehension of texts. This claim has yet to be supported with additional cross-cultural studies, and caution is required when making such a generalization about a language. Labeling a language as reader-responsible may be undesirable and even harmful because it can lead to stereotyping of the language.

Instead of relying on Hinds' (1987) dichotomy, the differences between Korean and U.S. students' use of metadiscourse in this study may be explained by several sociocultural and linguistic factors. First, metadiscourse reflects the students' dispositions toward

involving the reader in a persuasive essay, which may largely be associated with social culture and classroom atmosphere. Influenced by the Confucian tradition, Korean culture, as in other East Asian societies, places a high value on collectivism and social harmony; obedience to authority and acquiescence instead of individualism and critical thinking, which may disrupt social unity, are more encouraged than in U.S. culture. Given this collectivistic culture, in regular Korean elementary classroom instruction, argumentative discussion is rare; and students have few opportunities to present arguments to the teacher or their classmates (Chang, 1989). Recently, interest in argumentation has emerged in Korean education, and formal instruction in argumentative writing has been added to the school curriculum; however, in practice, discussion and other activities to promote argumentation are still not prevalent in Korean elementary classrooms (Cho, 2005), and students receive no formal instruction on argumentative writing until they reach Grade 6. Thus, compared to participants in the US, Korean participants have had far fewer experiences with argumentation and persuasion in and outside classroom; thus, they are likely to be less familiar with interactive metadiscourse devices such as endophoric markers and, more importantly, far less likely to be familiar with interactional metadiscourse. In fact, in this study, the Korean and U.S. students' essays exhibited much greater difference in the use of interactional resources than interactive resources.

The Korean students' use of considerably fewer interactional resources, such as boosters and engagement markers, may indicate a general social and classroom atmosphere characterized by less sensitivity to and awareness of audience and less engagement with the reader. This sociocultural context may have influenced Korean students in developing the disposition to pay little attention to the audience in persuasive writing. By contrast, because of the prevalence of argument and individualism, U.S. students may have developed a strong disposition and tendency to engage their audience to enhance the persuasiveness of their arguments by using effective metadiscourse, including boosters. Somewhat surprisingly, U.S. students use more hedges than Korean students, requiring further study because hedging is considered a rhetorical device for politeness and consideration for others (Holmes, 1982). One might, therefore, expect to find hedges more frequently in a society like Korea, where collectivism is emphasized over individualism. The frequent use of hedging as a rhetorical device by U.S. students in this study might relate to their temporary, strategic, intentional humility in order to enhance their credibility and ethos.

Second, some of the differences may be associated with the grammar of the language (Kim, 2009). For example, the essays of the U.S. students contained more self-mentions than the essays of the Korean students in this study. In English grammar, the subject, including the pronoun *I* or *we*, should not be omitted from a sentence, but in Korean grammar omitting the first-person subject pronoun *I* or *we* is acceptable and common when they can be predicted from the context (Sohn, 1999). Thus, an essay written in English is likely to contain more first-person references than an essay written in Korean,

regardless of the writer's disposition or intention. The grammar of the language may also explain why Korean students' essays contained significantly more sentence-level transitions than U.S. students' essays. In English, conjunctions like *and* and *but* do not typically appear at the sentence-initial position, but in Korean, those conjunctions commonly appear at the beginning of the sentence. Korean students' more frequent use of transitions may, therefore, be related to syntax instead of the writer's intentional efforts to signal a new sentence to the reader.

Third, a few of the differences may be related to writing conventions that students learn through classroom instruction. In this study, U.S. students employed significantly more frame markers than Korean students. Notably, a frame marker on average appeared once in an essay written in English, whereas the average frequency was 0.09 in an essay written in Korean. One may argue that U.S. students tend to rely more on the frame markers than transitions in organizing their arguments, but this finding may also reflect the writing conventions of persuasive essays, which are taught in the elementary school. While this research was under way, the participating students in the US were scheduled to take the statewide persuasive essay test, and the researcher observed that teachers prepared students for the test by demonstrating the conventions of a persuasive essay, including various frame makers. In Korean classrooms, this writing convention is typically not taught until students reach Grade 6. Thus, some use of metadiscourse may be the result of having been taught writing conventions during classroom instruction.

Although some of the metadiscourse in the student essays in this study may be associated with the second and third factors noted above—language grammar and writing conventions—the overall difference in the use of metadiscourse by Korean and U.S. students cannot be explained by the inherent language system alone: The difference should also be accounted for with the first factor, that is, the writer's disposition toward recognizing and engaging the reader, which is associated with the influence of the sociocultural context where students reside.

One of the findings of the current study was that in the US, the students in rural and urban areas showed different patterns in their use of metadiscourse. The students in the urban school used significantly more self-mentions than students in the rural school, whereas the latter used significantly more hedges than the former, indicating that in the US, the students at the urban school tended to be more expressive about themselves and their arguments, whereas the students in the rural school tended to be more reserved and cautious in putting forth their arguments. In Korea, the use of metadiscourse by students in the urban and rural areas showed no significant difference, suggesting that Korea may be homogeneous in the use of metadiscourse across urban and rural areas. Compared to Korea, the rural communities in the US may be more remote from the cities and more conservative; thus, students in rural schools may be more inclined to follow the conventions of writing taught at school. In a cross-cultural comparison, U.S. and Korean students who attend school in rural areas show significant differences in more

metadiscourse categories than the students in the urban schools in the US and Korea. Compared to those living in urban areas, students in the rural areas in each country may be more conservative, less affected by sociocultural interactions with other cultures; thus, they may preserve more genuine patterns in writing and metadiscourse.

Implications

One of the findings of the current study is that Korean students tended to use sentence-level transitions more frequently than U.S. students. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted by E.-J. Lee (2004), S.-W. Lee (2007), and Hinkel (2002). Except for sentence-level transitions, this study also showed that overall, U.S. students tended to use significantly more interactive and interactional metadiscourse in their essays than Korean students. This finding differs from the results of most previous studies, in which texts written by Koreans and U.S. students in their native languages were examined. For instance, C.-K. Kim (2009) and Uhm, Kim, et al. (2009) found that Korean writers' texts contained more textual metadiscourse than texts written by native speakers of English. Other studies have shown that compared to texts written by native speakers of English, Korean students' writing contained more code glosses (Uhm, Moon, et al., 2009), more hedges (Choi & Ko, 2005; Hinkel, 2002), and more boosters (Hwang & Lee, 2008). Thus, unlike the current study, most of the previous studies have shown that Korean students tend to use more metadiscourse devices in essays than students in the US and UK who are native speakers of English.

This inconsistency may be explained thus: In the current study Korean and U.S. students wrote essays in their native languages, whereas in previous studies Korean participants wrote English essays, which were then compared with texts written by native speakers of English with the assumption of contrastive rhetoric that English texts written by Korean students would primarily reflect Korean metadiscursive practices. Studies of cognitive psychology (Hong et al., 2003) have suggested, however, that when asked to write in English as opposed to writing in their native language, students may be primed by English culture and may try to adopt English rhetorical patterns instead of follow the rhetorical styles preferred in their native culture. If Korean students perceived that readers of their texts were native speakers of English, they would try to use metadiscourse devices in a manner expected in U.K. or U.S. cultures. This tendency would be more pronounced for Korean writers who have a high level of English proficiency (C.-K. Kim, 2009) or who are familiar with those cultures. In addition, Korean students' English compositions and their use of metadiscourse may be influenced by other factors, such as the rhetorical conventions prescribed in textbooks in their English classes (Hyland, 1999). All of these factors may lead Korean students to use more metadiscourse in their English compositions than in writing in their native Korean.

Therefore, the contradictory results in the current study and previous ones call into question the assumptions of contrastive rhetoric—that texts written in English by native

speakers of Korean would primarily reflect Korean metadiscursive practices. Reexamination of the research method used to investigate compositions written in English by learners of English whose native language was Korean may be needed to identify the preferred metadiscourse patterns in Korean culture. Furthermore, the contradictory results suggest that in cross-cultural study of metadiscourse, authentic text written in the writer's native language should be examined.

One limitation of the current study is that although Korean essays were examined thoroughly by two trained raters who were native speakers of Korean, some Korean metadiscourse may have gone unnoticed during the analysis. Unlike English metadiscourse, Korean metadiscourse has not been systematically studied, and no comprehensive list of Korean metadiscourse was available; so the raters may have missed some metadiscourse.

Conclusion

The current study is significant in several ways. First, a rigorous research method was implemented. The data collection in the US and Korea followed the same strict procedures. Participants were given the same topic and the same amount of time to write a persuasive essay. To identify cultural patterns of metadiscourse, the researcher examined texts written in Korean and English by native speakers of these languages. Another significance of the current study is that the researcher compared essays of students living in urban and rural communities in the US and Korea and discovered that unlike in Korea, in the US the pattern of metadiscourse was different in texts by students in urban and rural communities. Finally, this study is the first cross-cultural study in which the essays of elementary school-aged children were examined. Texts written by children have generally received little attention, but compared to adolescents and adults, children are assumed to have less contact with foreign cultures; thus, their writing may better represent genuine cultural patterns of metadiscourse than texts written by older writers. Further investigation of metadiscourse in children's texts in cross-cultural studies is, therefore, recommended.

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