

A Corpus-based Study on Korean EFL Learners' Use of Resultive Conjunctive Adverbials*

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Kim, Jee Won & Rhee, Seok-Chae. (2014). A Corpus-based Study on Korean EFL Learners' Use of Resultive Conjunctive Adverbials. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 22(4), 143-161. This study examines the characteristic use of Resultive Conjunctive Adverbials (RCAs) by Korean second language (L2) learners and whether it is affected by their different proficiency levels. The results point to two notable discrepancies between the L2 learners and the native speakers of English: overuse and over-reliance on limited items in the L2 learner corpus. The Korean learners use RCAs more than native speakers and this tendency for overuse decreases as the level goes up. In addition, the Korean students show over-reliance on the limited item "so," which can be attributable to their lack of register-awareness. As the level goes up, the tendency to over-rely on the informal "so" decreases. These results evidence some links between the proficiency level and the characteristic use of RCAs by Korean L2 learners.

Key Words: resultive conjunctive adverbials, learner corpus, cohesion, second language writing

1. Introduction

As a useful device that links ideas overtly, Conjunctive Adverbials (CAs) are helpful in developing arguments (Biber et al., 1999). In argumentative writing, where how to present and support arguments is important, CAs help writers organize and develop the argument. RCAs¹, in particular, are a useful

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device for developing arguments in the academic prose register in that they “mark the conclusions that the writer expects the reader to draw and connect the writer’s claim to supporting facts” (Biber et al., 1999, p.881). In fact, causal links themselves are a feature in English argumentative writing because the cause-effect relationship is necessary to organize arguments in English (Lorenz, 1999). In the same vein, Tanko (2004) stated that the syllogistic sequence “premise 1 + premise 2 therefore conclusion” is typical of argumentative essays and that to achieve this, writers often use RCAs.

With an understanding of the importance of RCAs in developing a writer’s argument in a genre in which presenting and supporting ideas is important, this study examines whether the use of RCAs is different in the argumentative essays of native speakers and Korean L2 learners and whether it is affected by the L2 learners’ different proficiency levels.

2. Background

2.1. General Properties of RCAs

Cohesive relationships occur when there is a semantic relation between one element and another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). While CAs can express a variety of semantic relationships, there is no single, unanimous inventory of the types of this semantic relationship. For example, in Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) taxonomy, CAs are classified under four headings: “Additive,” “Adversative,” “Causal,” and “Temporal,” while Quirk et al. (1985) distinguish seven different conjunctive roles: “Listing,” “Summative,” “Appositional,” “Resultive,” “Inferential,” “Contrastive,” and “Transitional.” Here, we follow Biber et al.’s classification (1999) as their corpus-based approach to language investigation is similar to that adopted in our study. Table 1 illustrates the different categories and provides examples of CAs within each category.

1) According to Biber et al. (1999), in academic genre, RCAs are the most used type of CAs among all semantic categories.

Table 1. Semantic Categories of CAs (Biber et al., 1999, p.875-9)

Semantic Category		examples
Enumeration/	Enumeration	<i>firstly, secondly</i>
Addition	Addition	<i>further, moreover</i>
Summation		<i>in sum, to conclude</i>
Apposition		<i>i.e., for example</i>
Result/Inference	Result	<i>so, therefore, hence</i>
	Inference	<i>then</i>
Contrast/	Contrast	<i>in contrast, instead</i>
Concession	Concession	<i>though, anyway</i>
Transition		<i>by the way</i>

As one of the semantic categories of CAs, the RCAs mark the semantic relationship of “cause-result.” The examples of RCAs provided by Biber et al. (1999) are as follows.

- (1) This year’s commitment we will not reach this year. Therefore, we’ll be into deficit!
- (2) I once acquire a set of recordings of a Bach piano concerto. I was very fond of it, but my mother was forever criticizing and chastising my poor taste... Consequently, I now hardly listen to Bach.
- (3) As the spatial file contains all the geometric relationships necessary to specify the body, this can be used to generate any pictorial view. It is thus not necessary to produce an engineering drawing specifically for the purpose of showing everyone what it looks like.

(Biber et al., 1999, p. 877)

In the examples above, the RCAs function as a linking device that connects the preceding units to the following ones, and at the same time, marks the semantic relationship of two units as causative relation.

Most of the RCAs are used interchangeably without any change in meaning. However, “so” is quite different in its formality from other RCAs in that it is an informal CA that occurs most frequently in the conversation genre. This is evidenced by Biber et al. (1999), where they assert that the reason CAs are very

common in the conversation genre is due to the high frequency of “so” and “then.” In addition, in the conversation genre, the semantic category of a resultive relationship is mostly realized by “so.”

(4) He’s being a zombie, so he’s coming down stairs with two sleeping bags over the top of his head and knocking everything over.

(5) Oh well you’ve seen it anyway, so I won’t put it on.

(Biber et al., 1999, p.876)

In the same vein, Quirk et al. (1985)’s list of CAs provides the formality of each item by marking them as “formal” and “informal” (p.634). According to their taxonomy, “thus” and “hence” are formal and “so” is informal. While Quirk et al. (1985) do not specify the formality of some RCAs (e.g., “as a result,” “consequently”), we still assume that they are “neutral” when they belong to neither “formal” nor “informal.”

2.2. Previous Studies

Cohesive devices are optional because the development of argumentation will occur without them (Harnett, 1986). However, in general, L2 learners seem to rely heavily on the use of CAs to achieve discourse cohesion, compared with L1 writers (Field & Yip, 1992; Milton & Tsang, 1993; Norment, 1994; Reid, 1992). For example, Milton and Tsang (1993) report that Hong Kong students used CAs more frequently than English-speaking expert writers. Crewe (1990) also suggests that many Hong Kong students tended to overuse CAs and their written texts were structured with the repetition of several CAs. According to him, learners tend to overuse connectors to obtain “surface logicity,” while failing to develop “deep logicity.”

As the previous studies have pointed out, the overuse of CAs is a common error found in L2 learners’ writing (Crewe, 1990) in an attempt to fabricate cohesion by using a number of conjunctions (Williams & Colomb, 2010). On the contrary, experienced writers depend more on the logical flow of their ideas than on CAs because “your readers don’t need them when your sentences are cohesive and the passage they constitute is coherent” (Williams & Colomb,

2010, p.78). Given that a higher proficiency level corresponds with a better command of English, this study attempts to find out whether the tendency for reliance on RCAs to fabricate cohesion would change in regard with different English proficiency levels.

In order to use CAs appropriately, language learners must acquire a sensitivity to register, which means “knowing when to use formal or informal CAs” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). However, previous studies have also reported L2 learners’ lack of register awareness in using CAs (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Field & Yip, 1992; Granger & Tyson, 1996). Specifically, L2 students tend to use CAs that are informal. For example, in Field and Yip’s study (1992), learner writers are using formal CAs such as “moreover” alongside the terms preferred in oral speech such as “anyway” and “actually.” Studies regarding Korean L2 learners show the same problem in their writings (Park, 2003; Ryoo, 2007). Park (2003) mentions that learners “do not seem to be aware of the differences between formal/informal and written/spoken discourse” (p.58).

However, in order to use CAs as native speakers do, learners must possess a register awareness of CAs in addition to semantic and the syntactic knowledge. Thus, sensitivity to register can be one of the linguistic properties marking the writer as non-native (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). That is, language skills have a relative effect on the sensitivity to register. In this study, we are therefore concerned with whether the sensitivity to register differs according to different proficiency levels.

Although the previous studies in this area have shown that L2 learners are on some aspects dissimilar to native speakers in their use of CAs (e.g., Crewe, 1990; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Altenberg & Tapper, 1998), no studies have considered how these are used differently by students of different proficiency levels²⁾. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the use of RCAs at different levels of proficiency in learner corpus. The pattern of certain linguistic devices across different proficiency levels is informative with respect to the developmental process of language-learning students (Verspoor et al., 2012)³⁾.

2) In those studies that do include a division between levels, the level diversity is no more than two (i.e., “lower proficiency” and “higher proficiency”).

3) The present study is not longitudinal. However, as Verspoor et al. (2012) stated, “proficiency

The data from the “Yonsei English Learner Corpus 2011” which we used in this study presents the advantage of containing information for different proficiency levels. Thus, as a supplement to previous studies, we seek to find answers to the following research questions:

1. In their argumentative writing, would the Korean students demonstrate an overusing pattern and would the frequency of RCAs decrease as the proficiency level goes up?
2. In their argumentative writing, would the Korean students demonstrate a lack of register awareness by overusing informal RCAs and would this inappropriate use of RCAs show a decreasing pattern as the proficiency level goes up?

3. Method

3.1. Data

The data used for this study is extracted from the “Yonsei English Learner Corpus 2011” (henceforth YELC). It is a large-scale corpus that consists of 2933 argumentative essays written by Korean students. The writing task is a part of a university placement examination and students are required to write a 300-word argumentative essay within 30 minutes. Each text from the 2933 participants received a holistic rating for proficiency level, resulting in nine levels of text groupings. Among the nine levels (C2, C1, B2+, B2, B1+, B1, A2, A1+, A1), the highest (C2) and lowest level (A1) are left out from the data set and the seven levels (C1, B2+, B2, B1+, B1, A2, A1+) are used for our study.

The argumentative essays of native speakers are used as a norm in analyzing the L2 data. For the native corpus, we use the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), which is comprised of American and British university students’ argumentative essays. Since, to a large extent, the type of writing determines the frequency of the use of the cohesive devices (Norment,

levels are assumed to represent stages in L2 writing development as most L2 learners will proceed through these proficiency levels consecutively” (p. 242).

1994), this study has its merits in that it confines its data to one type, namely, "argumentative essay." LOCNESS is a large corpus that is composed of 324,072 words and 16,136 sentences.

3.2. Investigated Items

Empirical studies have used various classification schemes to examine learners' use of CAs. Four classification schemes had been mainly used by these studies: namely, Biber et al.'s (1999) classification, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) classification, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification, and Quirk et al.'s (1985) classification. In this study, we derive a list of resultive CAs from a number of sources in the literature. The resources referred to are Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), Biber et al. (1999), and Quirk et al. (1985). Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) classification is a simplified form of the list from Halliday and Hasan (1976)'s classification, which cannot be readily applied to empirical studies of CAs since it includes other syntactic forms of conjunctions as well as adverbials. The complete list of RCAs to be investigated in this study is as follows: "accordingly," "as a consequence," "as a result," "consequently," "for that reason," "hence," "in consequence," "so," "thereby," "therefore," and "thus."

4. Results

4.1. Frequency and Distribution of RCAs

The frequency and distribution of the RCAs are calculated and displayed in this section. Table 2 provides the frequency of RCAs in each corpus and Table 3 provides the frequency of the RCAs in terms of different proficiency levels.

As seen in Table 2, the Korean L2 students overuse the RCAs. Considering the normalized frequency, the L2 students use the RCAs 735 times whereas the native students use them 232 times. The frequency from YELC is over three times more than that from LOCNESS. A statistical analysis of the chi-square values also shows meaningful differences between the two corpora ($\chi^2=261.6432$, $p<.0001$).

Table 2. Overall Frequencies of RCAs in YELC and LOCNESS

	YELC	LOCNESS
n of words in corpus	744409	305703
n of RCAs	5487	726
n per 100,000 words	735	232

Table 3. Frequency of RCAs in YELC (Different Proficiency Levels) and LOCNESS

	YELC						LOCNESS	
	A1+	A2	B1	B1+	B2	B2+	C1	
n per 100,000 words	968	937	778	696	540	471	388	232

Moreover, as shown in Table 3, the overusing pattern decreases as the proficiency level goes up. The results reveal differences in the use of RCAs at different proficiency levels, which had not been evidenced by previous studies (e.g., Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Mauranen, 1993; Milton & Tsang, 1993). If we project these findings onto the writings of Korean L2 learners who might pass through these developmental stages consecutively, we would expect the frequency of RCAs to change across proficiency levels with beginner learners using more RCAs than more proficient ones. That is, as L2 learners come to master the second language, this tendency for overuse will show a decreasing pattern.

Table 4 shows the distribution of RCAs in each corpus. In contrast to the results of the previous studies where the non-native English writers' compositions contain a more reduced repertoire of CAs than natives' compositions (Field & Yip, 1992; Milton & Tsang, 1993; Norment, 1994; Reid, 1992), it seems that Korean L2 learners use all of the items on the list while native speakers' writings lack three items, which are "accordingly," "for that reason," and "in consequence."

Table 4. Percentage of Each Item in YELC and LOCNESS

	YELC		LOCNESS	
	raw n	%	raw n	%
so	4428	80.70%	234	32.23%
therefore	647	11.79%	280	38.57%
thus	181	3.30%	133	18.32%
as a result	135	2.46%	15	2.07%
consequently	41	0.75%	19	2.62%
hence	23	0.42%	26	3.58%
accordingly	14	0.27%	0	0%
for that reason	9	0.16%	0	0%
thereby	5	0.09%	17	2.34%
as a consequence	2	0.04%	2	0.28%
in consequence	2	0.04%	0	0%
Total	5487	100%	726	100%

Other than the use of a greater repertoire of RCAs by Korean L2 learners, a more surprising finding is that limited items take up a very high proportion of the RCAs used in the L2 corpus. In the L2 corpus, “so” takes up over 80% of all RCAs, while in the native corpus, it only takes up 32.23%. The tendency of overusing “so” is problematic, not only in that the L2 writers are relying heavily on a limited item, but also in that “so” is an informal item, typical in spoken discourse. This finding shows that Korean L2 learners do not seem to be aware of the register sensitivity and thus have difficulties in using the appropriate RCAs in the written mode. Then, would the register awareness differ according to the different proficiency levels? Table 5 shows the distribution of the top 5 RCAs in each proficiency level.

Table 5. Rank and Distributions of Top 5 items in YELC (Different Proficiency Level) and LOCNESS

Rank	YELC						LOCNESS	
	A1+	A2	B1	B1+	B2	B2+	C1	
1	so (91.33%)	so (90.16)	so (84.70)	so (77.92)	so (67.06)	so (42.61)	therefore (36.73)	therefore (39.60)
2	therefore (4.05%)	therefore (6.56)	therefore (9.79)	therefore (14.05)	therefore (20.03)	therefore (34.78)	so (34.69)	so (33.10)
3	thus (2.89%)	thus (1.55)	as a result (2.53)	thus (4.27)	thus (6.11)	thus (13.04)	thus (20.41)	thus (18.81)
4	as a result (1.73%)	as a result (0.95)	thus (1.94)	as a result (2.72)	as a result (4.24)	as a result (5.22)	as a result /hence (4.08)	hence (3.68)
5		consequently (0.43)	consequently (0.79)	consequently (0.88)	hence (1.36)	consequently (2.61)	thereby (2)	consequently (2.69)

In Table 5, the top three preferred items of both groups of students are “so,” “therefore,” and “thus” (except level B1). The Korean learners’ heavy reliance on the informal CA “so” has been reported in previous studies (Lee, 2011; Yoon, 2006), where Korean learners show a strong preference for colloquial and spoken forms of CAs over other written forms in academic writing genres. Our result not only confirms the findings of previous studies but also shows that this tendency toward the favored informal “so” decreases along with the proficiency level of the L2 student.

Furthermore, a tendency for the informal “so” to be ranked first is maintained throughout the L2 learner corpus, and only when it reaches the C1 level, the most preferred RCA item changes to “therefore.” This is interesting since it indicates that even the students who have reached a reasonable level of proficiency (e.g., B2, B2+) show a preference for informal item over others. Unlike “so,” items ranked at 2 and 3 (“therefore” and “thus”) take up little percentage in the lower levels of learner corpora. However, notice that the uneven distribution of each item (“so,” “therefore,” and “thus”) decreases as the level goes up.

In addition, the normalized frequency (frequency per 100,000 words) of each item in each proficiency level reveals that some formal expressions are overused in high proficiency level. In level C1, the normalized frequency of the formal item “thus,” is higher than that in LOCNESS (C1-79, LOCNESS-44) and this difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2=9.9593$, $p=0.0016$). The same is true

for the formal item “hence” where the normalized frequency in C1 is higher than that in LOCNESS (C1-16, LOCNESS-9), although it is not statistically significant ($\chi^2=1.96$, $p=0.1615$). It seems that Korean students with a high level of proficiency choose to use formal expressions more frequently than native students, which has not been revealed in previous studies. The overuse may be derived from their intention to give their text an “academic,” “professional” look, since “thus” is often found in the formal register (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Based on this result, we may infer that high level proficiency students have the acknowledgement of register formality.

If we project these findings onto the writings of Korean L2 learners who might pass through these developmental stages consecutively, we would expect the register awareness for RCAs to change across proficiency levels, with beginner learners using more informal RCAs than more proficient ones. That is, L2 learners come to master the second language, their sensitivity to register will grow.

4.2. The Overuse of RCAs

As the results reveal, the L2 Korean learners use RCAs more than native speakers and this tendency is also correlated with the proficiency level. The explicit use of CAs may not be necessary in cases where the coherence of the sentences is established by tightly connecting thoughts (Bolton et al., 2002; Crewe, 1990). However, the results show a great number of explicit uses of RCAs by Korean students in developing their arguments. This can even occur when it is not necessary. This may indicate that the RCAs are employed so that the text could look logical and organized even though it is not. Many examples show that the learners tend to use RCAs to obtain “surface logicity,” while failing to develop “deep logicity.” This may bring illogicality to the text as in the following examples from YELC.⁴⁾

- (6) Moreover, democracy society doesn't mean individual may hide oneself in difficult case. Democracy society means people in a country, or world, can make rules, countries, world for their own. As a result, the

4) The extracts from the learner essays are presented without any correction of overt errors and/or inappropriate uses of language.

real-name-use system on the Internet can help people decide something frankly and seriously. (an example from YELC B1+)

- (7) The day after the law starting to be valid, lots of articles in the newspaper said students who behaved much nastier than before. It was common for students to attack their teachers, shout bad words and even, ridicule teachers in inhumane ways. As a result, students have become aggressive. In the case, it is even more difficult for teachers to take care of students. (an example from YELC B2)

In the examples, Korean L2 speakers employ RCAs where there is no causal relation. That is, the two units connected by the RCA do not have a “reason-result” relationship. Also, Korean L2 learners often use the RCAs to mark the ultimate conclusion of the essay as in the example (8) and (9). When the RCAs are used in this function by Korean L2 learners, most of them are placed at the end of the essay.

- (8) If their real name are exposed on the Internet they can not do bad things on the Internet. Because of these reasons we must use our real name on the Internet. Consequently, I agree that people must use their real name on the Internet for our peace on the Internet. (an example from YELC B1)
- (9) To sum up, I disagree with the physical punishment of children in schools in that it could cause children to get hurt their mind and it is not the only way to teach children. Therefore, I definitely say that the disadvantages of the physical punishment far outweigh the advantages of it. (an example from YELC B2)

Field and Yip (1992) report that “writers may have relied on rhetorical devices to shape the essay rather than a strong development of their thought” (p.24). It is evident that Korean learners of English depend more heavily on explicit devices because they lack the sufficient language ability to construct a logical sequence with the sentences themselves. As a result, they often rely heavily on the use of RCAs even when unnecessary, resulting in the creation of illogical sequences. Since the command of the L2 language increases as the

proficiency level goes up, this tendency to rely on the use of RCAs decreases.

Furthermore, less successful arguments in the essays of students in lower proficiency level may be attributable to the overuse of RCAs which would have led to a number of redundant and unnecessary RCAs. If non-native students have used them without constructing a logical flow, the overuse of RCAs can mislead readers, because they may signal a relationship that is not intended or have multiple and ambiguous interpretations (Tierney & Mosenthal, 1984). Tomiyama (1980) also points out that misuse of CAs distorts the intended message and the readers are unable to understand the clausal relationship the writer had attempted to convey. This is why Crewe (1990) suggests that “non-use” is always desirable over “misuse”, because misuse can bring communication breakdowns. Thus, we may conclude that the overuse of RCAs may have some effect on the failure to build a logical sequence, resulting in low grading for the essays.

4.3. Repeated Use of “So”

The results show that Korean learners overuse the informal “so” and under-use several linguistic elements compared to the native students. In many cases, the learners’ tendency to rely on a certain linguistic item seems to result in the repeated use of the same word in the text, which may cause the EFL learners’ writing to become redundant. This tendency is illustrated by the following examples from YELC.

- (10) Likewise, cell phone-using drive will cause accident. For sure, accident will kill or hurt someone. And causes big traffic jam. So, it is very bad to everyone. Second, if we do driving and using cell phone on a same time, we can’t concentrate to two things. So it will cause driving accident. Also, a work processed by cell phone would be not good. So, it will be not good for two things. Third, driving and using cell phone on a same time makes people tired. Because, concentrating two things on a same time is too hard work. So people will get easily tired. And if a person is tired, it is hard to drive, or sometimes it causes accident.
(an example from YELC A2)

- (11) For example, There are many bad things in smoke such as nicotin, tarr. When they are fired, The bad things get out and that makes other people feel bad and unhealthy. So I think that we have to make a room for smokers in public buildings and Smoking allowed only that room. But if we make that room, we will spend much money. So the constructor making public building don't want to make that room. So I think government tax on smoking, and help constructor make this room. By doing that we can save smoker's rights and other's health.
(an example from YELC B1)

The examples above show how “so” is repeated over the patches of sentences. The sentences that have a causal relation are marked with no other types of RCA than “so.” Encountering the same linking device several times in the text may cause the Korean L2 learners’ writing to appear boring.

The overuse of limited terms would be attributable to L2 students’ reluctance to use less familiar words. Milton (2000) points out that EFL learners seemed to only use the expressions which they believe they know and thus they could manage. Therefore, this over-reliance on limited items can be attributable to the L2 students’ lack of competence in using unfamiliar items. Thus, Korean L2 learners are relying on a familiar item such as “so,” which they are confident in using, while they hesitate to use less familiar words such as “hence.” In addition, since the writing task was a timed exam, using certain items may have caused a greater workload in their brains. However, as pointed out earlier, this tendency to only use familiar items decreases as the level goes up.

The overuse of the informal “so” can be also explained by the Korean students’ assimilation of the spoken and written register, which is the transfer of spoken linguistic features to a written register (Oh, 2009). As mentioned earlier, “so” is the most popular colloquial RCA (Biber et al., 1999). The result of this study confirms the previous observation that the transfer of spoken linguistic features to a written genre is one manifestation of the general characteristics of L2 learners (Aarts & Granger, 1998; Biber & Reppen, 2012; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Petch-Tyson, 1998).

4.4. Discussion & Pedagogical Implications

This study shows that Korean L2 learners overuse RCAs and tend to over-rely on the informal item “so.” We could also observe a link between these two characteristic features (the overuse and register awareness) and the proficiency level. We conclude that these characteristic features of Korean students are due to their use of RCAs to compensate for their lack of command of English, and to their lack of stylistic awareness. In this section, we suggest two teaching methods to remedy the problems addressed.

First, to tackle overuse, it is essential to teach students that RCAs should not be used as a mere “stylistic enhancement” but should be thought of in terms of managing discourse units beyond the sentence levels. Zamel (1983) mentioned that “learning when not to use them (CAs) is as important as learning when to do so” (p.27). Students should be aware of the fact that it is not always necessary to use RCA where a causal relation is expressed. We need to teach Korean students about the dangers of overusing RCAs, especially when they prefer to use limited items such as “so”. This should be accompanied by practical tasks allowing the students to practice manipulating the RCAs within the sentence and clause structure.

Second, in terms of stylistic use, we should favor the use of authentic texts so that students can grasp the stylistic properties of each item within the text category they are learning. Granger and Tyson (1996) state that such inappropriate usage is most likely attributable to the fact that in schools and universities, relatively little emphasis is placed on matters of style. This can also be applied to the Korean education system as well, in which the distinctions between the spoken and written language are not likely to be touched on. Other researchers (e.g., Johns, 2002) have also reported that L2 learners’ difficulties in mastering the use of CAs is due to the inappropriate presentation of lexical items in teaching/learning materials. For example, most grammar books, dictionaries, and textbooks provide decontextualized lists of CAs (Bernardini, 2002). It is hard to grasp the stylistic properties of the CAs when teaching materials are limited to a list of CAs categorized under different semantic functions. It is important for ESL/EFL students to be able to recognize their stylistic properties while reading and listening. To do this, ESL/EFL

teachers should not introduce CAs as divorced from their contexts.

5. Conclusion

The use of causal links is a feature of English argumentative writing, since the cause-effect relationship is important to the organization of arguments in English (Lorenz, 1999). With this understanding of the importance of RCAs in developing arguments, the aim of this study was to examine the differences between Korean and native students. Furthermore, to better understand the use of RCAs by Korean L2 learners, the present study investigated their use of RCAs in relation to seven different proficiency levels.

The results evidenced some links between the proficiency level and the characteristic use of RCAs by L2 learners. As the level goes up, Korean learners' tendency for overusing RCAs and over-reliance on the informal "so" decreased. Based on the results and analysis from this study, we conclude that it is necessary to teach Korean students about the danger of overusing RCAs, especially when they exhibit a strong preference for the use of limited items such as "so". Moreover, in terms of stylistic use, we should focus on using authentic texts so that students can grasp the stylistic properties of different linguistic items.

Lastly, since a relatively high proportion of "so" was observed, further studies focusing on the use of "so" should be conducted. Additionally, since there is a possibility that the overuse of RCAs may spring from a difference between Korean and English argumentation, further comparative research on argumentation is needed to provide a better understanding of the use of RCAs by Korean students.

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