

Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Textual Coherence in Korean and English Argumentative Writing

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1. Introduction

Textual coherence is defined mainly as a feature internal to text. Whether or not a text is coherent, however, is determined not only by textual features (topic-structuring and cohesion) but also by the reader's ability to interpret the text or the writer's intended meaning (e.g., the reader's prior knowledge and inferencing ability) (Carrell, 1982; Green, 1986; Johns, 1986). Despite of this dual nature of coherence, most of the previous research on coherence has dealt only with text-based coherence (Connor, 1984; Wikborg, 1985a). In attempts to explore both text-based and reader-based coherence, this study investigates American and Korean readers' perspectives on textual coherence in argumentative texts. It compares the factors disturbing their coherent interpretation and the frequency distribution of the problems not only in the writing of their native speakers but also in English essays selected from three groups of writers: American students and Korean students in America and Korea. The study focuses on differences and similarities in Korean and American readers' judgement of coherence.

The present study is based on the taxonomy of coherence problems proposed by Wikborg in her study (1985a) on Swedish student's writing and types of problems identified in Choi (1986). Wikborg (1985a) has examined what causes breaks in the coherence of English and Swedish essays written by Swedish university students. Her study shows that topic-structuring and cohesion problems are the disturbing features which make it difficult for the reader to follow the line of reasoning.¹⁾ Following Wikborg's study, Choi (1986) has been concerned with

*The description of the features contributing to the lack of coherence has been published in *Linguistic Research* (Kyung Hee Language Institute), Vol 8.

1) Wikborg identified six topic-structuring problems and five cohesion problems, as listed below (1985b:360-361):
 Top-Structuring Problems-Unspecified topic/unjustified change of or drift in topic, misleading paragraph division/irrelevance, misleading disposition (ordering of material)/misleading headings; Cohesion Problems-Uncertain inference ties/missing or misleading sentence connection, misleading distribution of given and new information within the sentence/ too great a distance between the cohesive items in a cohesive chain/ the type of co-

features affecting the reader's reconstruction of the writer's intention in English and Korean argumentative essays written by native speakers, respectively, and English essays of Korean ESL students. In her study four types of coherence problems were found besides those in Wikborg's (1985a and 1985b) classification: a lack of adequate justification, insufficient linking of the inductive statement to the preceding discussion, a lack of background information, and misleading lexical items. This finding demonstrates that the determination of coherence involves not only linguistic knowledge but also pragmatic knowledge shared between the reader and the writer.

Wikborg and Choi have provided valuable insights into features disturbing the reader's coherent interpretation of a text. However, Wikborg investigated only text-based coherence. Furthermore, Wikborg and Choi both analyzed coherence in English texts from a Swedish and a Korean speaker's point of view, respectively, and did not consider the possibility that their analysis might be different from that of native English speakers. These weaknesses motivated the present study. In this research, thus, American readers' judgement of the coherence of English essays is compared with Korean readers' analysis of the same English essays in order to examine whether the two groups of readers share the same concept of coherence.

2. Method

The data for the study were 30 Korean essays written by Korean students in Korea (KKK) and 27 English essays by three groups of writers: 11 American students in America (AEA), 8 Korean students in America (KESL), and 8 Korean students in Korea (KEFL).²⁾ The writing task given to the subjects was to write a 300-to-500-word argumentative essay on 'the necessity of tests as a means of measuring a student's achievement.'

The data were analyzed by two groups of three native speakers of English and

heive ties does not actually hold (e.g. an overtly signaled contrast or illustration is not borne out by the actual semantic relations established by the proposition(s))

Of the eleven categories, the most frequent types were uncertain inference ties, misleading paragraph division, missing or misleading sentence connection, unjustified change of/drift in topic, and unspecified topic.

2) The abbreviation representing the ethnicity of the writer and location is used to refer to the four groups of writers in the study.

Korean, respectively. All six analysts were graduate students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Two of the three American analysts were teaching a special rhetoric class for freshmen and the third American reader was teaching a special ESL course for visiting businessmen. All Korean readers were teaching Korean.

The analysts were instructed to mark anything that would make it difficult for them to reconstruct the writer's intended meaning and categorize these problems. In order to make the categorization easier, a taxonomy based on Wikborg (1985a) and Choi (1986) were given to the analysts as reference, as below.³⁾

(1) Taxonomy of Coherence Problem

- a. Topic-structuring: Unspecified topic/Misleading topic sentences
 - Problems Unjustified change of/drift in topic
 - Misleading paragraph division
- b. Cohesion problems
 - . Reference: No referent/Distant referent/Too many referents
 - Linguistically misleading referent
 - . Sentence Connection: No connective/Inappropriate use of connectives
 - Misleading (confusing) information structure
- c. Miscellaneous problems
 - . Inappropriate word choice
 - . Lack of adequate justifying supports: No justification
 - Insufficient justification
 - Inappropriate justification
 - . Inappropriate concluding statement
 - . Lack of some information (background information)

3) The taxonomy used in the analysis is the one revised by the American readers and the researcher. The first version included Wikborg's classification and four additional types identified in Choi (1986). While discussing the taxonomy with some examples, the three American analysts found that the taxonomy was not easily understandable: it was not possible to find what kind of problem some of the categories refer to, especially the problems for which Wikborg did not provide a definition and examples. Thus, the classification was revised. The three native speakers of English and the researcher restated each category and when a category clearly had subtypes, it was divided into its subcategories.

As for Wikborg's six topic-structuring problems, three subtypes were included in the taxonomy since it was clear enough what kind of problems they refer to: unspecified topic, unjustified change of topic, and misleading paragraph division (a change of topic or topic aspect within the orthographic paragraph or a change of orthographic paragraph without a corresponding change of subject or subject aspect). On the other hand, the other three subtypes (irrelevance, misleading disposition, and misleading heading) were not discussed with definitions or examples in Wikborg (1985a and 1985b). Furthermore, the terms used for them were not transparent. Thus, the three subcategories were not included in the taxonomy. Instead of misleading heading problems, 'misleading topic sentence' problems were listed under topic-structuring problems, because few heading problems (sub-title problems) were expected due to the length of essays and because by including topic sentence problems it might be possible to see to what degree topic sentences affect the coherence of a text in English and Korean.

The cohesion problems listed in Wikborg mainly involve reference and sentence connection problems. It seemed that if the two problems were separated, it would be much easier to categorize them. Therefore, they were differentiated as subtypes under cohesion problems, as in (1). They were then further sub-categorized with respect to their causes. First, reference problems were broken into four subtypes: 1) there is no identifiable referent; 2) the referent is too far from the reference item; 3) there are too many possible referents; and 4) the referent is wrong with respect to its linguistic form. Second, sentence connection problems were divided into three subcategories: 'inappropriate use of connective,' 'no connective,' and 'misleading information structure.' The reason for including misleading information structure under the sentence connection category lies in the fact that what is seen as given and new information, or topic and comment, in a sentence is determined by the information presented in the preceding sentence as well as by the syntactic structure. Misleading information structure problems are defined thus: a wrong distribution of given and new information within a sentence or between sentences confuses the reader or does not meet in reader's expectations based on the previous sentences.

Finally, from among the four problems identified in Choi (1986) two categories were revised. First, 'misleading lexical items' refer to the instance in which the use of a lexical item in a wrong context or the ambiguous meaning of a lexical item in the text makes it difficult for the reader to understand the text.

They were restated as 'inappropriate word choice' because it was uncertain to the analysts what 'misleading' meant as used in this way. Next, justification problems are the case where the line of reasoning in the supporting arguments for the writer's claim is very difficult to follow and furthermore it is not direct enough to justify the assertion so that the reader would fail to see how a sentence presenting the claim is coherent to the whole text. These problems were sub-categorized into three types because the analysts found them too vague since they can involve different types of problems: no justification, insufficient justification, and inappropriate justification.

While determining the type of features downgrading the degree of coherence, when more than one factor or an overlap between the types of factors was found, the coherence problem was marked under all the categories, as in Wikborg's study (1985), instead of choosing one over the others. In addition, a decision was made on how the marking of problems would be counted, because all readers of each group did not always mark the same problem in an identical linguistic unit. The method adopted in the study is that problems identified by any of the readers in a group are counted. For example, if one problem was identified by three readers, its occurrence was counted as three; if it was marked by two readers, its occurrence was counted as two. Finally, when a lexical item wrongly selected for the context appeared more than once, it was counted as one occurrence of an inappropriate word choice problem because the reoccurrence of the word is not a new coherence problem, but a consequence or continuation of the wrong word choice.

When the two groups of analysts completed the analysis of their own first languages, the Korean analysts were asked to analyze the 27 English essays evaluated by the American analysts in order to compare the problems identified by native speakers of Korean with those identified by native speakers of English.

After the analysis, each of the groups of readers had a meeting to discuss the differences in their analysis in order to make sure that the problems marked in one category referred to the same type of problems. On the basis of the analysis of the two groups of readers, coherence problems were categorized into nine types of problems. They were classified according to five levels of discourse (textual, contextual, lexical, syntactic, and graphic ⁴), as presented in (2).

4) The classification of the five levels of discourse was used in Nystrand (1982), which attempted to describe how

Textual features refer to aspects of written text and cohesion that are properties of text itself. Besides the types of problems in (2), they include topic-structuring and text structure problems caused by the following factors: irrelevant conceptual material, unnecessary or redundant information, unexpected aspect of topic, unclear topic development, inappropriate titles, and a lack of statement giving the reader a definite sense of closure. In addition, cohesion problems include three new subtypes: uncertain referent, inappropriate sentence arrangement, and inappropriate ellipsis. Ellipsis problems were identified in the instance where the referent of the 'substitution by zero' (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 142-144) was not recoverable by the reader.

Secondly, contextual features include extratextual factors beyond the text per se, such as stylistic feature and contextual information. Contextual problems arise mainly from a lack of shared pragmatic knowledge between the writer and the reader. This category include a variety of types of problems which were not contained in the original taxonomy: a lack of examples or elaboration; register-specific vocabulary or information; missing links that were too implicit to be inferred by logical reasoning; incomprehensible or inappropriate logical reasoning; incomprehensible, nonsensical, or false statements; inappropriate choice of sentence type; and a contradictory inductive statement in the conclusion unit.

(2) Revised Taxonomy of Coherence Problems⁵⁾

A. Textual problems

1. Topic-structuring and text structure

- unspecified topic/unjustified change of topic/irrelevance/redundancy
- unexpected aspect of topic/unclear topic development
- misleading topic sentence/misleading heading
- misleading paragraph division/no conclusion or inexplicit conclusion

2. Cohesion

a. Reference

- no referent/too much distance/too many possible referents
- linguistically misleading referent/uncertain referent

b. Sentence connection

- no connective or inexplicit connection/inappropriate use of connectives
- inappropriate sentence arrangement/confusing information structure

c. Ellipsis

- inappropriate ellipsis

meaningful written communication comes about, focusing on all discrepancies between the writer's words and the reader's guesses.

5) The definition and examples of each category are discussed in Choi (1988b; 1988c).

B. Contextual problems**1. Justification**

- no justification or explanation/insufficient justification
- inappropriate justification

2. Conclusion

- insufficient link between the concluding statement and the previous discussion
- inappropriate conclusion (logically or stylistically)

3. Semantic/Pragmatic problems

- lack of examples or elaboration
- register-specific vocabulary or information without explanation
- unrecoverability of missing links in logical reasoning
- incomprehensible or inappropriate logical reasoning
- incomprehensible sentence/false or nonsense sentence

4. Stylistic Problems

- inappropriate sentence type/stylistically inappropriate word choice
- inappropriate tone of argument (e.g. too weak)

C. Lexical problems

- inappropriate word choice problems (incomprehensible/confusing/ambiguous)/missing word

D. Syntactic problems

- sentence structure problem/preposition/comparative/passives/tense marker/case-marking/ embedded sentence-ending/ grammatically wrong word form/subject-verb agreement subject-verb mismatch/violation of selectional restriction

E. Graphic problems

- punctuation, capitalization and spelling

Next, lexical problems refer to inappropriate use of vocabulary and missing word. In discourse analysis textual coherence is considered irrelevant to sentence-level features. In contrast, lexical items inappropriately used were sometimes one of the key features disturbing the American readers' coherent interpretation of the writing of not only Korean students but also native speakers.

Syntactic features are grammar problems. When the research was originally designed, not many coherence problems due to grammar were expected since coherence is normally related to a level higher than the sentence level, that is, the text level. In contrast, some grammatical problems disturbing a coherent interpretation were found in the English essays of Korean students as well as those of native speakers. These problems included sentence structure problems, wrong prepositions, wrong word forms, comparative constructions, word order, etc. In this study, the category of grammatical problems was not broken into its subtypes in terms of causes; rather, all of the problems were included under the grammar problem.

Finally, graphic features include spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. These problems are usually considered as mechanical problems which do not interfere much with the reader's coherent interpretation. However, they are sometimes a key feature affecting the reader's decoding process, as Cooper (1982) notes in regard to the role of punctuation marks in such processes. On the other hand, if

the context provided sufficient clues to the identification of a misspelled word (e.g. 'is not good criterion to elvaluate a student's achievement'), it did not lead to ambiguity. In some cases, however, a misspelled word was not recognizable by the reader and, consequently, it was an impediment to the reader's comprehension (e.g., 'The reason why tests are widely applied is because they are minimum vices to every case, but is not because they are the best device to each case).

The last step of the analysis was a quantitative analysis. All occurrences of coherence problems marked by the coders were counted with respect to their categories. A correlation was measured in terms of the frequency of coherence problems in categories by using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, for two purposes: 1) to find similarities or differences between the two groups of readers, the Americans and the Koreans, not only when reading argumentative texts in their native languages but also when both groups read argumentative texts in English; and 2) to see to what degree American and Korean readers mark coherence problems similarly in English argumentative essays written by the three groups of writers with respect to the frequency of problems and the types of factors.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Comparison of Korean and English Writing

The first part of the quantitative analysis was the comparison of the number of occurrences of problems in eleven English essays written by native English speakers marked by three American readers, and that in thirty Korean essays marked by three Korean readers. While counting the total number of occurrences of each type of problems, a significant difference was noted among subtypes of textual and contextual features (e.g. paragraphing, justification, reference, and sentence connection). Thus, the statistical analysis was conducted with 12 categories, instead of 5 categories. The twelve categories and their frequency distribution are presented in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the comparison of the frequency distribution of coherence problems in English and Korean essays reveals that ellipsis, style, conclusion and graphic problems were not often identified in both languages and they do not seem to much affect the coherence judgment in the two languages. In ad-

dition, sentence-connection problems were relatively often marked in the two languages.

Table 1. Frequency of Coherence Problems Marked in English and Korean Essays by their Native Speakers

Types of Problems	Language			
	English		Korean	
Textual Problems	112		241	
Topic Aspect	56	(26%)	51	(9%)
Paragraphing	15	(7%)	96	(17%)
Reference	20	(9%)	27	(5%)
Sentence Connection	21	(10%)	60	(11%)
Ellipsis	0	(0%)	7	(1%)
Contextual Problems	79		116	
Justification	51	(23%)	55	(10%)
Conclusion	5	(2%)	20	(4%)
Semantic/Pragmatic	20	(9%)	30	(5%)
Style	3	(1%)	11	(2%)
Lexical Problems	11	(5%)	107	(19%)
Syntactic Problems	9	(4%)	81	(15%)
Graphic Problems	8	(4%)	11	(2%)
Total	219	(100%)	556	(100%)

On the other hand, some significant variations were noted between the Korean and English writing. First, the dominant types of problems between the two languages were distinctive. Topic and text structure problems and justification problems were the key features causing a break in the coherence of the English essays, whereas lexical, paragraphing, and syntactic problems interrupted communication most frequently in Korea.

The high frequency of the sentence-level problems in the Korean essays was a little surprising. Since all the Korean essays were written by native speakers, not many coherence problems caused by grammar or vocabulary were anticipated. By contrast, the Korean readers found such problems relatively frequently in the Korean essays. This result is supported by Lee's (1985) study in which a great deal of grammar and vocabulary problems were found in written texts published in major newspapers and academic journals. The large number of syntactic and lexical problems thus suggests that they are typical problems in the writing of Korean speakers; however, it is also possible that since Korean readers may not

be sensitive to textual and/or contextual problems, they focus on problems more readily identifiable on the surface.

Another variation noted between English and Korean is the types of paragraphing problems marked by their native speakers. This category includes two subtypes: a topic change within an orthographic paragraph and a change of orthographic paragraph without a corresponding change of subject. In English, the first type (12 occurrences) was identified four times as frequently as the second one (3 occurrences). In contrast, the first (70 cases) was much more frequently marked than the second (26 cases) in Korean. This difference shows that Korean readers are not much sensitive to a topic shift in a paragraph, compared to American readers. The large cases of starting a new paragraph without a change of topic aspect in Korean can also be explained by the fact that some Korean writers had a tendency to begin a new paragraph whenever they started a new sentence and many Korean writers did not seem to have the concept of paragraphing and know its function.

The large number of topic structuring problems in the English essays indicates that the implicitness in topic development is the crucial feature downgrading the coherence of the text in English, as the importance of a topic sentence and a thesis statement as well as topic continuity and unity is emphasized in English rhetoric. In contrast, this type of problem does not seem to cause much trouble in reconstructing the writer's message in Korean.

The importance of supporting arguments in argumentative writing is emphasized in both English and Korean rhetoric. By contrast, justification problems were more often marked as affecting the coherence of an English text by American readers than in Korean essays. A possible explanation for this difference between the two languages lies in the role of the reader and the writer in written communication (Hinds, 1987; Kobayashi, 1984; Ong, 1967), as well as the culture-bound standards for observing Grice's maxims (Keenan, 1976; Cooper, 1982). In English writing, the reader is viewed as taking an opposite stand against the writer (Ong, 1967). If an adequate reason for the writer's act (e.g., assertion) is not provided and/or the supporting evidence is not sufficient, the reader considers that the writer has violated the maxim of quality or quantity, and he/she would not accept any assertions made by the writer without adequate and sufficient supporting evidence. In contrast, any particular visualization of the reader's stand has not been specifically discussed in Korean writing. However, the

direct challenge to another person's opinion is not valued in Korean culture. In addition, the standards for compliance with the maxims seem a little different in Korean than in English. For example, Korean speakers often choose an implicit mode of expressing their opinions, especially when expressing their disagreement with another person's point of view (Eggington, 1987). This strategy may be considered a violation of the maxim of manner in English, but not in Korean. The small number of justification problems marked by Korean readers compared with American readers seems to show that Korean readers' expectations of an adequate level of supporting arguments for the writer's assertion is relatively lower. Moreover, it supports the view of the reader as cooperative: making as much effort as possible to interpret the writer's meaning before raising a question.

In order to see to what degree the frequency distribution was different between the two languages, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was tested. Not surprisingly, a low correlation (.253) was found. Consequently, this result suggests that different types of problems interrupt the coherent interpretation of English and Korean argumentative texts.

3.2 Comparison of Korean and American Readers

The twenty-seven English essays read by the American readers were analyzed by the Korean readers. The results of the comparison between the analysis of the two groups of readers reveals similar variations found between the English and Korean essays, although some common features were shared by the two groups of the readers (see Table 2 and 3).

Occurrences of coherence problems in Korean ESL and EFL groups' essays in English marked by the American readers were counted with the 12 major categories. As in Table 2, their distribution was similar to that found in the writing of native English speakers, except for the high frequency of lexical problems. The most dominant types of problems across the three groups of English essays were justification, reference, and topic and text structure problems.

In the investigation of the types of problems most frequently identified by the Korean readers, the occurrences of paragraphing, sentence connection, and lexical problems were very frequent across the three groups, as shown in Table 3. The high frequency of these problems was also noted in the analysis of their native language. One interesting finding here is that Korean readers marked these

Table 2. Frequency of Coherence Problems Marked by American Readers Across Three Groups of English Essays

Types of Problems	Groups of Writers			Total
	AEA	LESL	KEFL	
Textual Problems	112	92	121	325
Topic Aspect	56	26	32	114
Paragraphing	15	14	14	43
Reference	20	42	38	100
Sentence Connection	21	10	34	65
Ellipsis	0	0	3	3
Contextual Problems	79	68	90	237
Justification	51	41	53	145
Conclusion	5	7	3	15
Semantic/Pragmatic	20	15	33	68
Style	3	5	1	9
Lexical Problems	11	44	53	108
Syntactic Problems	9	20	18	47
Graphic Problems	8	5	20	33
Total	219	229	302	750

Table 3. Frequency of Coherence Problems Marked by Korean Readers Across Three Groups of English Essays

Types of Problems	Groups of Writers			Total
	AEA	LESL	KEFL	
Textual Problems	51	43	95	189
Topic Aspect	14	3	19	36
Paragraphing	14	14	27	55
Reference	8	13	16	37
Sentence Connection	12	13	29	54
Ellipsis	3	0	4	7
Contextual Problems	38	24	66	128
Justification	7	2	35	44
Conclusion	18	5	4	27
Semantic/Pragmatic	2	13	16	31
Style	1	4	11	16
Lexical Problems	12	50	55	117
Syntactic Problems	7	13	18	38
Graphic Problems	0	8	13	21
Total	98	138	247	483

types of problems frequently not only in the writing of Korean students but also in the writing of native speakers of English. Unlike the analysis of the American readers, some variations were found across the three groups of writers in that of the Korean readers. The most frequent type in American students' writing was conclusion problems, while the frequency of this type of problem was not high in the two Korean groups. Moreover, topic development problems were often marked in American writers' essays, but not in Korean writers' essays. Finally, the comparison of the three groups shows that justification problems were marked very frequently in Korean EFL student compositions, while they were not frequent in the two other groups.

When the frequency distribution of the twelve categories of coherence problems was compared between American readers and Korean readers, some common features as well as variations were noted. The following list illustrates the dominant problems marked by the two groups.

American		Korean		
1.	Justification	(19%)	Lexical problems	(24%)
2.	Topic Aspect	(15%)	Paragraphing	(11%)
			Sentence Connection	(11%)
3.	Lexical problems	(14%)		
4.	Reference	(13%)	Justification	(9%)

One of the similarities between the two groups of readers is the high frequency of lexical problems. This is due to the Korean writers' limited command of English vocabulary. As mentioned previously, the Korean readers' marking of vocabulary problems was also frequent in the essays of native speakers of English, while the American readers did not find these problems as the key factor causing a breakdown in communication in the same English essays. One conclusion drawn from these findings is that Korean readers are more concerned with sentence-level problems, compared to American readers.

A lack of adequate justifying statement was a key factor interrupting the coherent interpretation of the text for the American readers because their expectation of adequate and sufficient supporting evidence for the writer's claim is high. The occurrence of justification problems was also relatively high in the analysis of the Korean readers. This finding may be due to the nature of the

writing task. On the other hand, a variation between the two reader groups was noted in the frequency of this type of problem among the three groups of writers. The American readers marked such problems evenly across the three writer groups, whereas the Korean readers found them much more frequently only in the writing of Korean EFL students.

Topic development and reference problems caused a breakdown in communication for the American readers more often than to the Korean readers. The frequency of paragraphing problems was also different between the two groups of readers: they were much more frequently marked by the Korean readers.

In order to find to what degree the markings of the two groups of readers were significantly different, a correlation was measured with respect to the twelve categories for all the English essays and for the three groups of writers. A significant correlation was obtained when comparing all the essays (.541); however, the correlation was not consistent across the three groups. The correlation was significant in the two Korean groups (.576 in the Korean ESL group and .793 in the Korean EFL group), but not in the native English speakers group (.262). Furthermore, the highest correlation was achieved in the writing of Korean EFL students. These results show that the more the apparent coherence problems were due to the lack of the writer's linguistic knowledge, the higher the correlation was found to be between the two groups of readers.

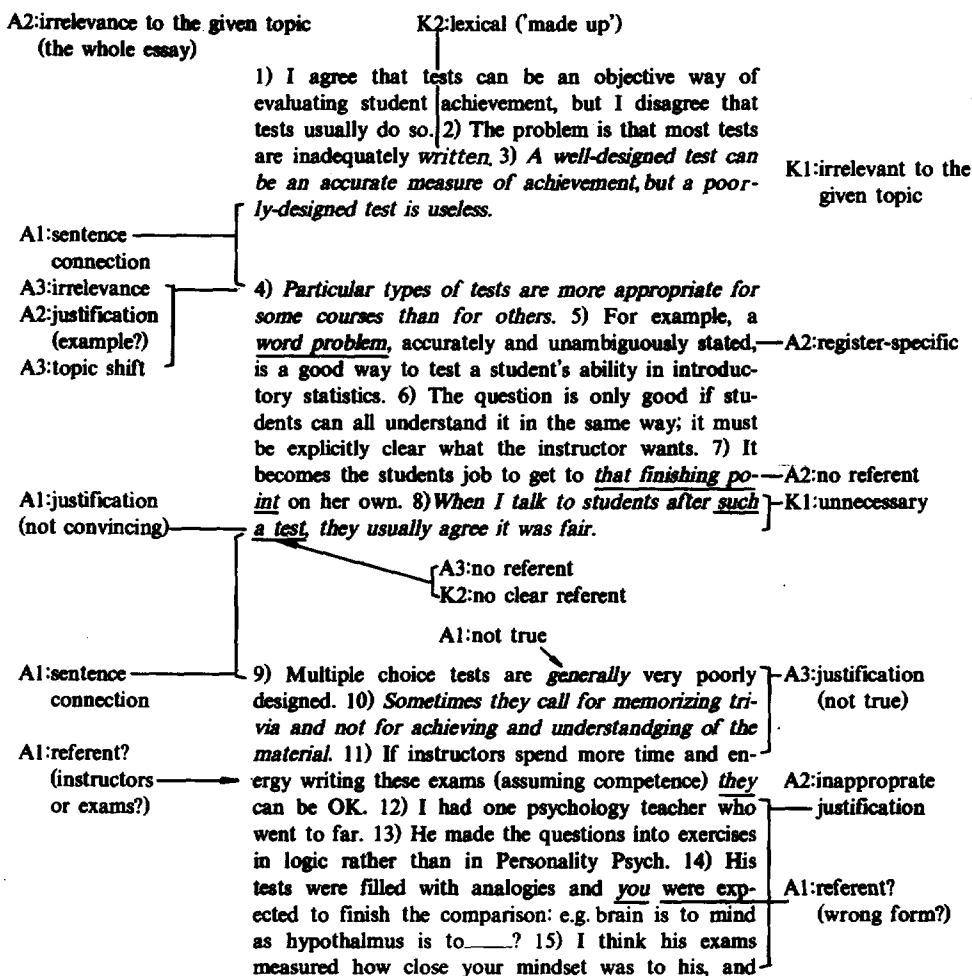
The variations found between the analysis of the American and Korean readers are illustrated in the following essay. In Example (3), American analysts marked 24 problems: 8 topic problems, 6 justification problems, 4 reference problems, 4 sentence connection problems, and 2 semantic/pragmatic problems. On the other hand, Korean coders identified five problems: 2 topic problems, and each of reference, conclusion, and lexical problem. The two groups of readers found the same coherence problem only in two cases: 1) the topic of the whole essay is irrelevant to the topic given in the writing task; and 2) the referent of "such a test" in Sentence 8 is unclear. Except for these, no other similarities were noted between the two groups.

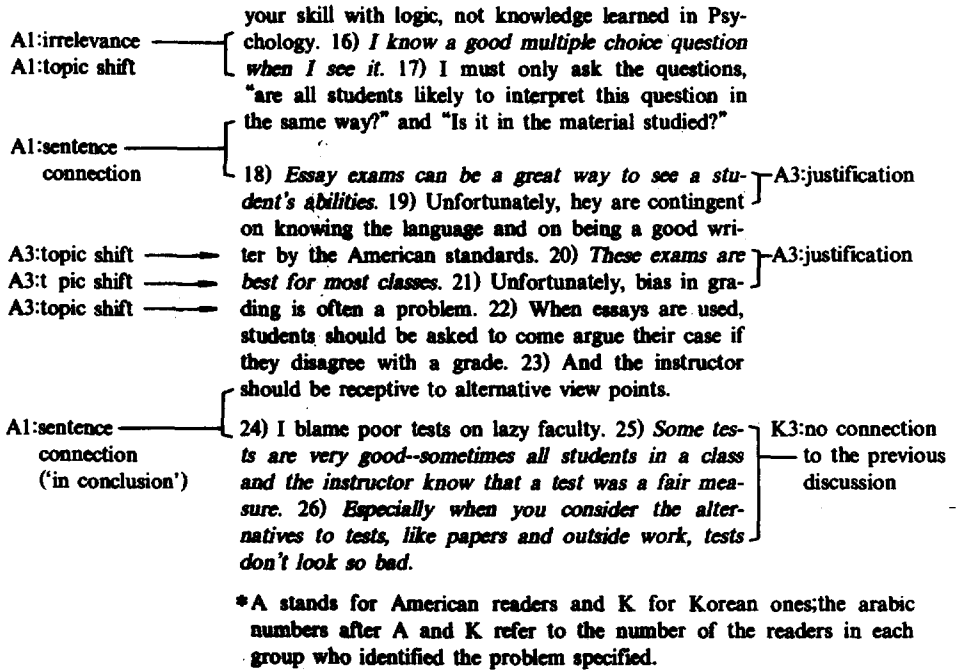
One Korean reader found an irrelevance problem in the sentence (Sentence 3) which functions as the thesis statement of the essay. The thesis statement of Example (3) is about "good and bad tests," which is not related to the given topic: "texts as an objective measure of evaluating a student's achievement." As implied by the function of the sentence, the whole essay is irrelevant to the topic given

in the writing task. The irrelevance of the whole essay was also pointed out by two American coders.

Another similarity was the reference problem marked in Sentence 8. The referent of "such a test" is unclear in the text, although there are two possible referents--a word problem and a test accurately and unambiguously stated for students to understand the questions in the same way. All American readers stated that there was no referent in the essay. In contrast, there seemed to be a referent in the text to the Korean readers but what it might be was not clear to them.

(3) English essay of a native speaker*





The two groups of readers found a similar reference problem in S8; however, a significant difference was noted in the identification of the referent of pronouns. The American coders noted that the referent of "that finishing point" in S7 and "you" in S14 is not present in the text. They also found two possible referents of the pronoun "they" in S11. In contrast, none of these reference problems were noted by the Korean readers. This may be due to the fact that in Korean pronouns are not used as frequently as in English and Korean speakers tolerate the vagueness of the referent much, compared to native speakers of English.

In Example (3) justification problems were found as the major factor contributing to the lack of coherence by the American readers, while this feature did not cause a break to the coherent interpretation of the Korean readers. This finding shows that American readers are much more sensitive to a writer's assertion without its adequate justifying support than Korean readers and they consider such a claim incoherent to adjacent units.

In addition, the American readers often found that topic shift and lack of connectives which make the sentence connection clear contribute to the relative lack of coherence in Example (3). Such problems were never marked by the Korean readers.

Two of the American readers found the register-specific vocabulary "word problem" in S5 as one of the features interrupting the reader's decoding process, while none of the Korean readers marked this lexical item. Unless the reader has taken a statistics course at a college, the meaning of such a phrase is not transparent and the text does not provide an explicit clue to it, either. The two American readers, who had not taken a statistics course, seemed to mark the phrase because their literal interpretation was questionable in the context. On the other hand, the Korean readers seemed to accept the literal meaning, being unaware of that it is a technical term used in statistics.

While the large number of lexical, paragraphing, and sentence connection problems was found in the analysis of the Korean readers, these problems were not marked by them in Example (3). This may be because the essay was the writing of a native English speaker. But, they identified one lexical problem in S2, while none of the American readers found a vocabulary problem.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The results of the analysis has revealed that American readers had very similar types of coherence problems in reading both the writing of their native group and the two Korean groups writing in English, even though the number of lexical problems was much larger in the latter two groups. They have a tendency to mark textual and contextual features (topic continuity, reference, logical reasoning, and supporting arguments) as factors affecting their coherent interpretation. This reflects the characteristics of English argumentative texts in particular and English writing in general that are emphasized in English rhetoric on the basis of the culture-specific standards for observing Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. The large number of occurrences of justification problems can be accounted for by the nature of the type of the writing, argumentative prose, as well as the characteristic of English writing regarding the confrontation of the reader against the writer. The contribution of adequate justification to the coherence of English argumentative text has also been noted in Connor (1984). Next, the finding that the difficulty of identifying the referent of a reference item often caused a breakdown in communication illustrates that the implicit presentation of referent is not tolerable in English writing and that because of the frequent use of pronouns in English reference is the cohesive device most frequently

causing a coherence break. In addition, the relatively high frequency of topic aspect problems shows the importance of topic continuity and development as a key factor of determining the coherence of English texts, as demonstrated in Wikborg (1985a).

In the analysis of Korean readers paragraphing and sentence-level features most frequently caused a coherence problem in the Korean writing, despite of the fact that all the Korean essays were written by native speakers of the language. This shows that Korean speakers have such problems in writing effective argumentative texts in their native language. The same types of problem were noted, however, in their reading of the English essays including the writing of native speakers. These results suggest that Korean readers tend to mark overt problems on the surface as a coherence break. Furthermore, they seem to be less sensitive to the role of the textual properties in the determination of coherence or to be much tolerable with textual and contextual problems (e.g., topic shift and unclear referents) because they have a culture-bound strategy of reading: try to interpret the writer's intention before raising a question.

The variations found between Korean and American readers in reading not only their native language writing but also the same English essays suggest that native speakers of Korean and English have different notions of coherence of argumentative writing and that these notions are closely related to the writing conventions of their native languages that interact with cultural values (e.g., topic unity, intolerability of vagueness such as unclear referents and sentence connection, and unacceptability of statements without adequate and sufficient supports, in English). In addition, they demonstrate that if the coherence of a text in a language is to be explored, it must be analyzed by native speakers of that language, because its determination depends upon not only the linguistic knowledge but also the knowledge of the writing conventions and the reader's prior knowledge.

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