

<http://dx.doi.org/10.20880/kler.2018.53.5.77>

A Reevaluation of Korean Written Discourse

: An Analysis of Contemporary Korean High School Student Writing and Korean Language Arts Textbooks

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I. Introduction

Intercultural Rhetoric, formerly called contrastive rhetoric, has emerged as an important research area for understanding different textual patterns, cultural differences, and the underlying beliefs students have. A major consideration was to investigate rhetorical strategies of the first language (L1) writing in order to identify challenges in teaching and learning second language writing (Kubota, 1997). The field of contrastive rhetoric was launched by Kaplan (1966) who found distinct textual patterns in students' writing. Since then, much of the contrastive rhetoric research on student writing postulated that each language has cultural uniquenesses and second language (L2) writers are likely to produce unnatural L2 texts by adopting the rhetorical conventions they use in their first language writing.

I became curious about the Korean rhetoric, ki-sung-chon-kyul, by reading a pioneering study by Egginton (1987), which indicated ki-sung-chon-kyul as a typical structure used in Korean writing without demonstrating how he inferred that conclusion. In particular, Egginton (1987) noted, "students are asked to emulate them [models such as ki-sung-chon-kyul] in their writing" (p. 157). Half-curious and half-confused, I presented this issue to some of my colleagues, in-ser-

vice Korean language arts teachers. None of them held the view that *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is a generally accepted principle of teaching and learning writing, though they mentioned that it is sometimes used for reading classical poetry. In retrospect, I have never been asked to use the *ki-sung-chon-kyul* pattern for my informative or argumentative essays during a secondary curriculum and have not had opportunities to learn about *ki-sung-chon-kyul* principle for writing instruction from a secondary Korean language arts teacher preparation program.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the distinct features of written Korean texts are circular, tangential, and indirect. A key study on written Korean texts was undertaken by Egginton (1987). He claimed that Korean students struggled to read “general-to-specific” structured texts and they usually placed their core argument at the end of the text. Choi (1988) and Hinds (1990) supported Egginton’s claim by reporting that written Korean texts were indirect or had no main statement. Lee (2001) claimed that Korean traditional rhetoric tendencies were often transferred to English writing by Korean writers. Through the analysis of Korean college student writings, Kang and Oh (2011) also noted that students at higher level tended to display their main ideas at the beginning rather than at the end of the text, whereas the low-level students placed the main ideas in the same location for both L1 and L2 writing even though the locations were different among students. In fact, the real features of written Korean texts are at least partly, if not mostly, different from the widely believed notion described above.

Despite data reported from these studies that appears to support the assumption that Korean rhetorical structure is indirect in informative and argumentative essays, many Korean professors, professional writers, and Korean language arts teachers generally prefer explicit, direct, and “general-to-specific” forms. The existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between contrastive rhetoric and Korean L1 writing disciplinary communities. Given the fact that the findings from the previous studies were outdated (e.g., Choi, 1988; Egginton, 1987;

Hinds, 1990) or were limited by relatively small sample size (e.g., Kang & Oh, 2011; Lee, 2001; Quinn, 2012), a more profound reexamination of the broadly accepted discourse features of written Korean texts is required.

According to Connor (2011), it is important for writing teachers, especially in ESL and EFL settings, to consider small culture (e.g., student, classroom culture) as well as large culture (e.g., ethnic, national group). She demonstrated a key feature of intercultural rhetoric by stating it “considers negotiation and accommodation among interlocutors” (p. 31). What is puzzling is what structural patterns contemporary Korean texts have. If we heavily rely on the established notion of written Korean texts without understanding whether it is still valid, we risk worsening already antiquated concept of Korean discourse. On the other hand, if we discover what the structural features of written Korean texts in today’s world are, we might better understand our students culturally by being mindful about cultural tendencies and also by continually trying to grasp them individually.

The main aim of this study is to investigate high school Korean language arts textbooks as well as written samples of Korean texts from high school students and their perceptions. I argue that the concept of *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is not a typical pattern of Korean informative or argumentative writing. This finding is contrary to previous research, which has claimed that written Korean texts were circular, tangential, and indirect. The present study is therefore focused on the following question:

Do written Korean texts have different rhetorics from the descriptions of previous influential research on Korean rhetoric (e.g., Egginton, 1987; Kaplan, 1972; Hinds, 1990)?

II. Characteristics of Korean writing discussed in Western academia

In the early work of Kaplan (1972), the Korean writing pattern was described to be indirect, circular, and tangential (p. 46). This notion of Korean writing, proposed by Kaplan, is often cited by other scholars as the fundamental characteristics of the Korean language and writing. For instance, Egginton (1987) referred to Kaplan (1972) and stated, “there appears to be no thesis development, but rather a list of points revolving loosely around an unstated central theme” (p. 158). Drawing on Kaplan’s concepts, Hinds (1990) declared *the delayed introduction of purpose* as one of the characteristics of Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and Thai writing styles.

Hinds (1987) also presented another concept, *reader responsible language*, which he claimed that readers needed to connect separate information for them to comprehend the main theme in written Korean texts. In contrast, according to Hinds, English is a writer-responsible language, in which case, writers tend to articulate their ideas explicitly and directly to their readers. Analyzing eleven argumentative essays, Choi (1988) maintained that Korean writing had non-linear structures. Similarly, Lee (1995) claimed that Korean writing is circular, implicit, and indirect. In summary, prior studies have considered Korean writing as indirect due to the distinct features such as “specific-to-general,” “ki-sung-chon-kyul” forms, or “no thesis development.”

III. Korean rhetorical pattern, ki-sung-chon-kyul

According to Egginton (1987), a common organizational framework for Korean writing is ki-sung-chon-kyul, which is similar to the Japanese ki-sho-ten-ketsu and the Chinese qi-cheng-jun-he styles. The ki-sung-chon-kyul style originated in poetry, with a fixed form

written in Chinese characters. The term, *ki-sung-chon-kyul*, can be traced back to texts produced in the Yuan Dynasty of China (1271-1368) and the Joseon Dynasty of Korea (1392-1897). Although there is no clear evidence that can be referenced to support these claims, Egginton (1987) explained the characteristics of the Korean *ki-sung-chon-kyul* style as below:

- (1) *Ki*: Beginning the main theme
- (2) *Sung*: Development of the argument
- (3) *Chon*: Introduction of sub-theme or 'turn' that is not directly associated with the main theme
- (4) *Kyul*: Conclusion

Since the pioneering research on Korean rhetoric conducted by Egginton (1987), other researchers have frequently adopted this concept when investigating Korean writing (e.g., Kim et al., 2011; Lee, 2001; Quinn, 2012; Warnick & Manusov, 2000; Zheng, 2013). However, without further proven investigation, they relied heavily on the efforts of Kaplan (1966, 1972), Egginton (1987), or Hinds (1990). A possible explanation for this might be that they did not have the expansive educational backgrounds in Korea (e.g., Quinn, 2012; Warnick & Manusov, 2000; Zheng, 2013), or the Korean writing written in the first language is not their disciplinary focus (e.g., Choi, 1988; Kim et al., 2011; Lee, 2001).

One specific problem faced in this field is that Egginton is also not a native Korean researcher and thus was not able to examine written Korean texts from an *emic* perspective. Although he had years of experience living and learning in Korea, his perspective was *etic*, as he was an observer from the outside. Studies by Hinds (1987, 1990) took a more *emic* perspective than Kaplan (1966, 1972), but a serious flaw was identified by Kubota (1997): the sample texts Hinds chose were not a representative of Japanese prose. This is also true for Korean rhetoric; since ancient *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is open to differ-

ent meanings, types, and analysis (Gu, 2014), the works of Eggington (1987) or Hinds (1990) are not appropriate to describe a typical written Korean structure.

Another noteworthy detail is that in his study, Eggington (1987) selected two paragraphs from separate journal articles in the field of public administration, and asked Korean participants to read and later recall as much information as they could. The problem is that the value of this measurement may be questionable; reading and writing in a disciplinary community, even among people using the same language, require specific knowledge shared among community members (Hyland, 2008).

Choi (1988) recruited three Americans and eight Korean students and collected eleven essays written by them to identify Korean writing structure, but readers may also question the validity of the students' backgrounds. Given that studying abroad in the United States was not common at that time, one may question how the student participants were recruited and selected. Another question may have been how many years of experience did the students have living in foreign countries. Furthermore, regardless of their Korean nationality, were they actually representative of typical Korean students? This is important because without addressing these contextual factors, empirical research cannot accurately reflect how Korean students write or share their authentic experience of learning to write.

Studies of Lee (2001) and Ryu (2006) are essential to the discussion of Korean rhetorical patterns since they not only revisit the notion of Korean rhetoric claimed by Kaplan and contrastive rhetoric proponents, but also because they are the last studies on this topic so far. Lee (2001) attempted to analyze introductions from various research articles and argued that the structure of texts written by Korean scholars revealed minor differences, regardless of studying in the United States or not. However, significantly absent from Lee's view is the fact that introduction part of the academic manuscript has more like pre-set structures established within each discipline; thus, most

Korean scholars would write introduction using a formulaic form rather than composing texts creatively, especially for writing in English as a second language. Examining texts written by Korean students at English composition classes at the university level, Ryu (2006) insisted that intensive training of English composition led students to place the thesis statements at the beginning of the text with the use of deductive reasoning. This case demonstrates that students will be able to compose English texts that are easily understandable for English native speakers through a short period of intensive training. Ryu (2006) inferred that unnecessary sentences and indirect structure were likely to stem from written Korean discourse without any supporting evidence (p. 289). It can thus be suggested that further inquiry about Korean written texts and how Korean students compose Korean texts as the first language will contribute to the elaboration of written Korean discourse.

IV. Method

1. Content Analysis and Study Context

This study was designed to investigate whether written Korean texts have different rhetorics from the descriptions of previous influential research on Korean rhetoric (e.g., Egginton, 1987; Kaplan, 1972; Hinds, 1990), and if so, how they differed. Thus, the present study focuses especially on the general features of Korean rhetoric that have been globally accepted, and the distinct concept of the Korean rhetoric, *ki-sung-chon-kyul*.

To investigate systematically large volumes of texts from Korean language arts textbooks, a content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004) as a research technique was adopted to provide a further understanding of a particular landscape and practical implications based on valid inferences. Content analysis is a “qualitative data re-

duction and sense-making effort" (Patton, 2002), "a flexible research method for analyzing texts" (Hoffman et al., 2011, p. 29) and "providing new insights" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Key features of content analysis are objectivity, sampling, and systematicity (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004; Parsons & Gallagher, 2016). Objectivity is secured by eliminating personal bias through systemic criteria and procedures (Holsti, 1969). This attribute is related to the reliability of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Would other researchers who investigated the same documents arrive at the same conclusions? Sampling is a significant factor because it affects the validity of research (Parsons & Gallagher, 2016). Can the texts examined answer the research questions posed? Systematicity, which is partly overlapped with objectivity, indicates the extent to which all processes of the research are systematic, such as sampling, coding, and interpreting (Holsti, 1969; Parsons & Gallagher, 2016). Therefore, this study provides an objective description of attributes, themes, and aspects of a text and allows researchers to quantify the instances of specified elements reflected in textbooks. In doing so, content analysis using constructed categories shows the kinds of elements emphasized or marginalized within a text (Cohen et al., 2011).

Although intercultural rhetoric is intellectually stimulating, much of the studies on Korean rhetoric hitherto are disappointing because of their limited scope of methodological approaches. The examination of the present study from different standpoints provided powerful triangulation that demonstrated concurrent validity (Cohen et al., 2011). The methodological triangulation that examined multiple data, from the textbooks, writing samples to student questionnaires, functions to produce an in-depth and rich description of Korean writing by controlling different perspectives and subjectivity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1970). In the following, I illustrated how I strove to be objective and systematic in this study using content analysis method.

2. Why High School Writing?

Most Koreans, for the first and the last, usually receive formal writing instruction during the high school curriculum (Choe, 2011). Although many Korean higher institutions provide the first-year composition courses to undergraduate students, these courses began to be developed recently and thus the underlying consensus is that high school students should gain writing skills that are transferable to university or business sector (Park, 2014). Although transferring writing skills into new contexts is challenging (Lea & Street, 2006), at the same time, it is undeniable that high school writing instruction plays an important role in South Korean context. Put another way; high school writing instruction has been the most influential in shaping notions of good writing for Koreans. For these reasons, this study focuses on high school writing within the South Korean context in order to effectively explore preferred Korean written discourse patterns, beliefs about good writing, and experiences of learning to write.

3. Why Textbook?

To understand the concept of “good” writing and how students learn to write in their mother tongue, analysis of language arts textbooks is required; this is especially true in the context of Korean education. Writing practices and concepts, for most people, are nearly always constructed through a school curriculum (Leki, 1991). Therefore, writing inevitably reflects culturally relevant written discourse, and an exploration of writing instruction would be a starting point to help grasp distinct features of writing within a particular culture. In the Korean education system, the role of textbooks could not be more highlighted, as Korean language arts teachers should follow step-by-step guidelines in the teacher’s edition of the government-authorized textbooks during their instruction due to the centralized national curriculum. Through standards and guidelines, the central-

ized national curriculum controls the textbook content. Given that textbooks have profoundly influenced classroom instruction even in decentralized educational systems like that of the United States (Valverde et al., 2002), textbooks bear a notable significance in South Korea, which has a powerful centralized educational system. Against this background, the genuine importance of textbooks is recognized, as teachers cannot adopt alternative resources instead of the government-authorized textbooks. For this study, two different subsets of textbooks were coded and analyzed: (a) recommended structures for argumentative essay and (b) conceptualization of writing structure for argumentative essay.

4. Data Collection

1) Textbook Selection. The sampling of textbooks occurred in two stages. Since the most recently published textbooks were desired, eleven currently used textbooks for 10th grade (the first year of the high school curriculum) were identified and collected for this study, including the teacher and student editions. The entirety of the documents were sampled (6,362 pages in total) for holistic examination, with consideration of the writing instruction demonstrated in the textbooks. The textbooks for 10th grade were newly revised, reflecting on new guidelines by the Ministry of Education and published from the year of 2014. The 10th grade level was selected because Korean language arts subject is mandatory for the 10th grade students within the centralized national curriculum, and thus, 10th grade Korean language arts textbooks intended for general, rather than specialized (i.e., advanced or remedial).

In Phase 2, although all of the textbook pages were part of the data corpus, for this study, writing and integrated writing with the other component sections were identified and included for the further analysis. This is because each Korean language arts textbook contained the components of literature, reading comprehension, writing,

language, speaking and listening.

Table 1. The Eleven Textbooks Analyzed

Textbook	Pages	Pages for Writing Instruction (%)
A	593	89 (15)
B	600	72 (12)
C	470	122 (26)
D	553	94 (17)
E	588	100 (17)
F	573	86 (15)
G	540	81 (15)
H	605	109 (18)
I	600	72 (12)
J	657	92 (14)
K	583	70 (12)

The eleven textbooks included in this content analysis are presented in Table 1, which displays the textbooks as well as their volumes and writing sections.

2) Student Writing Samples and Questionnaires. To more fully understand students' perceptions surrounding writing and learning to write, questionnaires were also distributed to students, and 204 student participants completed these questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected from a high school located in Seoul, South Korea. This particular high school has a reputation for academic excellence, with higher scores on the nationwide achievement test than that of average scores of the school district. The questionnaires given to the students were designed to explore how students perceive their secondary school writings, the nature of writing they were asked to do, beliefs about essential aspects of writing, and attitudes toward the Korean rhetoric. Before student participants completed their questionnaire sheets, the specific meaning of terms used in the questionnaires was

explained to obtain results based on accurate understandings.

In addition, to reflect Korean students' written capabilities, student writing samples were included in this study. These sample essays were written by 204 students who completed student questionnaires for this study through a typical form of high-stakes writing assessments in Korea: writing argumentative essays according to a writing prompt within an hour. The selection of the essays produced by a high-stakes testing situation presents a representative range of Korean students' writing practices.

5. Data Analysis

1) Developing Codes. The coding frame for the analysis was created drawing on a variety of sources. To create potential topic codes, writing and intercultural rhetoric research synthesis texts were used: *Intercultural Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom* (Connor, 2011) and *Writing and Learning in Cross-National Perspective* (Foster & Russell, 2002). During the first round of analysis, I tried coding a random sample of collected textbooks and continued to develop the coding scheme. The predetermined categories were used to code the topics of each chapter and sub-sections within each chapter of the textbooks and style manuals.

Two raters, former Korean language arts teachers, were trained to understand each category within the coding scheme with examples. Both coders had years of teaching experiences at the 10th through 12th-grade levels. After the training session, both raters independently coded the same sample unit of analysis excerpted from the textbooks. After these trial codings, we compared their results, and then discussed the different understandings of the principles, notions, and disagreements in coding scheme and evaluation. Our early attempts at coding units of one of the eleven textbooks resulted in 67% agreement between two coders (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC]=0.67, $p<.001$). As a result of the discussion on the discrepancies

in interpretation and coding of the unit of analysis, the coding scheme was revised and clarified for both raters. After the second round of trial coding, the inter-coder consistency was found to be higher (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC]=0.95, $p<.001$).

2) Phase 1. In our first cycle of coding, the descriptive coding method was used (Saldaña, 2016), since descriptive coding is useful for analyzing the collected data's basic topics to assist with answering the general question, 'What is going on here?' Investigating textbooks by coding, in the process of developing the categorization of data, we continued to try to address the issue of overlapping between subcategories to make them mutually exclusive of each other. There are four main categories for coding topics: (1) Learning to Write, (2) Writing to Learn, and (3) Written Product (see the revised coding sheet in Figure 1).

3) Phase 2. After the second round of analysis, inter-coder consistency was analyzed to establish the reliability of this study. Rare discrepancies emerged and were discussed, and this inter-coder consistency level between the two coders was greater than 90% (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC]=0.92, $p<.001$). To answer the research question (Do written Korean texts have different rhetorics from the descriptions of previous influential research on Korean?), ways of explaining writing structure, writing process, and written product as exemplary texts were examined.

4) Phase 3. Aside from the textbook analysis, student questionnaires and writing samples collected from a high school were also investigated in order to explore written discourse in Korea from different standpoints. This approach provided powerful triangulation that demonstrated concurrent validity (Cohen et al., 2011). The methodological triangulation functioned to produce an in-depth and rich description of Korean writing by controlling different perspectives and subjectivity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1970).

Category	Definition
Learning to Write	Learning sets of skills of writing process.
Pre-writing	The first stage of the writing process (e.g., outlining, diagramming, mindmapping).
Drafting	The stage of developing a more cohesive text, organizes thoughts.
Revising	The stage where the author reviews, alters, and amends her/his message.
Knowledge of Textual Structure	Declarative knowledge about how information is organized in texts.
Textual Features	Elements and intentions of a text.
Accuracy	Usages of the language system, including grammar, punctuation and vocabulary.
Structures	Ways of organizing the information within a written text.
Writing to Learn	Using writing activity as a tool to clarify understanding of a topic.
Textbook Writing Task	A task that may require the student to compose more than a paragraph.
Writing-Related Task	A task that requires the student to provide a brief written response as in fill-in-the-blank or short answers, rather than composing coherent text.
Writing for Evaluation	Writing activity that is generated for checking student understanding, mastery of information.
Written Product	Finished piece of writing.

Figure 1. Definitions of Analytic Codes for Korean Language Arts Textboo

The primary purpose of analyzing student writing samples was to quantify locations of the thesis statement and preferred structural patterns rather than to score the quality of writing performance. To evaluate the preferred structural patterns reflected in these sample essays, the raters above participated in a training session to rate the essays until they reached a satisfactory level of agreement. For the first and second rounds of evaluation, the rate of agreement was around 80% regarding the location of the main claim and structural patterns. After discussing discrepancies in the evaluation, the third round of assessment reached a more satisfactory agreement level (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC]=0.95, $p<.001$). The evaluating rubric for student writing work was influenced by Toulmin's (1958, 2003) model and Hillocks's (2002, 2005) analytic approach to argumentative writing.

V. Results

1. Ki-Sung-Chon-Kyul Revealed in Textbooks

Eleven Korean language arts textbooks (6,362 pages in total, with publisher names replaced with pseudonyms) were analyzed, and no evidence was found for writing instruction using ki-sung-chon-kyul style. Even the term, ki-sung-chon-kyul, did not exist in any of the eleven textbooks; other recommended structures were identified instead. Table 2 below illustrates how each textbook approached teaching writing. Six out of eleven textbooks describe and explain explicitly appropriate forms and structures for argumentative essays, while the other five textbooks did not explain directly the appropriate or acceptable structures for argumentative essay form. Thus, students would need to figure out what could be regarded as an appropriate form by analyzing the exemplary texts within the textbooks.

Table 2. Recommended structures for essays in textbooks

Textbook	Argumentative Structure	
	Implicit	Explicit
A		○
B		○
C		○
D		○
E		○
F		○
G	○	
H	○	
I	○	
J	○	
K	○	

Note. Implicit = Implicit explanation about recommended structures; Explicit = Explicit explanation about recommended structures

Three-part essay structures were introduced in all eleven textbooks explicitly or implicitly: this style included an introduction, body, and conclusion; known alternatively as a beginning, middle, and end. For instance, textbook A explained (excerpts were translated by the first author): “When it comes to an argumentative essay, a general structure is ‘introduction, body, and conclusion’ style, and informative essays are generally structured by ‘beginning, middle, and end’ with various methods of explanation,” (p. 228).

Table 3. Conceptualization of writing structures by textbooks

Textbook	Argumentative
A	“Introduction-Body-Conclusion”
B	“Introduction”: presenting reasons or purposes of writing; and/or providing a main topic “Body”: organizing main ideas with evidence “Conclusion”: summarizing content; and emphasizing a main topic
C	“Introduction-Body-Conclusion”

D	“Introduction”: Motivation or purpose of writing; and/or previewing following contents “Body”: organizing main ideas with evidence “Conclusion”: summarizing content; presenting author’s argument or view
E	“Introduction-Body-Conclusion”: argumentative essays would be appropriate for articulating certain issues or problems, identifying causes, and then presenting solutions or argument.
F	“Introduction-Body-Conclusion”

Table 3 above presents how certain textbooks (A-F) characterize writing structures of argumentative and informative essays respectively. These six textbooks were categorized as ones that provided explicit explanations about writing structure. As shown in Table 3, they presented the same terms and structures. What stands out on the table is that these textbooks recommended that students should use the three sequence writing structure, but did not specify what could be included in each section. For instance, C textbook briefly mentioned that the concepts of “Introduction-Body-Conclusion” are generally used for argumentative essays, without any further explanations. Textbook B used different terms for informative and argumentative essay structures, but the crux of the explanations surrounding the two structures was exactly the same, regardless of the types of essays.

For example, in the argumentative writing chapter, right after explaining the definition of argumentative writing, the authors of C textbook provided a three-paragraph graphic organizer and asked students to make an outline, “Based on the information above, and sketch its outline.” Each paragraph has a name in order of introduction, body, and conclusion. In doing so, students learn about a tacit knowledge about the expected form of an argumentative essay. On the other hand, E textbook first explained basic elements of argument and textual features of a good argumentative essay and then provided samples for students to analyze and understand how the elements are interconnected within the texts. In the third stage, the authors of E textbook assigned a writing task to students.

Overall, these textbooks may be somehow limited by their short descriptions, including textbooks G-K. As for ki-sung-chon-kyul, while most previous research on Korean rhetoric had assumed it as a typical written structure for Korean writing, these claims have not been verified, despite a thorough hand-search of 6,362 pages of eleven textbooks.

2. Student Questionnaires and Writing Samples

The questionnaires were distributed and collected to understand the students' perceptions of what qualifies as good writing and preferred structural devices for Korean writing essays. According to the results, most student participants preferred an earlier introduction of purpose or thesis statement and direct expressions, as opposed to the delayed introduction of purpose. It is also apparent that they learned how to use three-part structural devices much more frequently than ki-sung-chon-kyul when writing their essays. However, no significant differences were revealed in students' reading comprehension between written Korean and English texts.

Since perceptions and real practices in the classroom might be different (Applebee & Langer, 2013), the current study included the analysis of student writing samples as well. Through the analysis of 204 writing samples, some of the features of Korean secondary school students' writing that occurred in today's classrooms were shown.

Table 4. Questionnaire' Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Perceptions about Writing (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

	N		Mean	SD
	Valid	Missing		
I try to place the main statement at the beginning rather than ending section as much as possible.	204	0	1.58	0.82
I try to place the main statement at the end of my essay	204	0	4.09	0.91

I learned about organizational structures (intro-body-conclusion or beginning-middle-end)	204	0	1.92	0.92
I learned about an organizational structure, ki-sung-chon-kyul, for writing essays	204	0	3.94	0.41
Good writing requires direct and explicit main statements rather than indirect and circular ones.	204	0	1.70	1.12
Korean texts tend to have different structures compared with English texts.	204	0	2.84	1.28
When I read Korean and English texts, I did not become aware the difference in structures between them.	204	0	1.97	0.99

Table 5 below illustrates the locations of thesis statements. The majority of Korean students' essays revealed that central claims were often located in the first paragraph, with 75% of the essays demonstrating such. This outcome is contrary to previous studies (e.g., Hinds, 1990; Kang & Oh, 2011) which have suggested that thesis statements are to be located in later sections in Korean essays, rather than at the beginning.

Table 5. Location of the main claim

Location	Writing samples
Beginning	151 (75%)
Middle	11 (5%)
End	25 (12%)
None	17 (8%)

Furthermore, these writing samples display a three-part structure rather than ki-sung-chon-kyul: introduction-body-conclusion (for the detail, see Table 6 below).

Table 6. Structure patterns in writing samples

Organizational pattern	Writing samples
Ki-sung-chon-kyul	9 (4%)
Introduction-body-conclusion	151 (75%)
Other structures	9 (4%)
None	35 (17%)

The current investigation of Korean student writing samples reveals that *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is not the dominant structuring device for Korean essays and writing, as assumed by previous contrastive rhetoric research. However, the use of *ki-sung-chon-kyul* in written Korean texts should not necessarily be cast aside; it is occasionally mentioned in other Korean secondary school textbooks such as Korean literature textbooks at the 11th grade level as a structuring device, which is generally confined to the use of *ki-sung-chon-kyul* in poetry or stories with a narrow definition of *chon* as a climax. The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis above is that a simple three-part structural device was recommended and suggested by many textbook authors. Furthermore, my investigation of 204 Korean secondary school students' writing samples confirms that a three-part structure, comprising of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, occurred the most frequently among different structural formulas.

VI. Discussion

The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that there is no clear evidence of *ki-sung-chon-kyul* as a typical structural device for written Korean texts. I would argue that written Korean discourse privileges direct, simple, and explicit patterns in order to facilitate a more straightforward comprehension for the reader. This finding is contrary to previous studies, which have assumed that many

written Korean texts were produced based on *ki-sung-chon-kyul* pattern, and that they were indirect, circular, and tangential. In particular, the *ki-sung-chon-kyul* structure was scarcely mentioned in textbooks for teaching and learning writing, especially for argumentative essays.

1. Overgeneralization with a Western lens

In Eggington's (1987) work and latter research on Korean rhetoric (e.g., Choi, 1988; Hinds, 1990; Lee, 2001; Zheng, 2013) and on comparative written structures (e.g., Kim et al., 2011; Quinn, 2012; Warnick & Manusov, 2000), it has been demonstrated that written Korean structural patterns, up to date, have been assumed as indirect, circular, and implicit Asian procedural formulas. In particular, Eggington's research represents a significant advance in the field of contrastive rhetoric in that he introduced *ki-sung-chon-kyul* as a typical structure of Korean text to the English-language scholarship. In Eggington's (1987) work, it appeared that many Korean informants, graduate students, and professors, provided sources and explained their experience of learning this style of writing; however, it is evident that they may not have possessed an expansive knowledge of Korean linguistics. My suspicion began with the term itself, *ki-sung-chon-kyul*; according to the system of notation of Korean roman, *ki-sung-chon-kyul* should have to be written as follows: *ki-sŭng-chŏn-kyŏl* or *gi-seung-jeon-gyeol*. The only reason why I have used the term, *ki-sung-chon-kyul*, is that this has widely been used in Western academia.

More specifically, according to Eggington (1987), the term *chon* follows the same pattern as that of the Japanese rhetorical pattern *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*, demonstrating that readers would experience the sensation of "immediately after finishing the argument, abruptly changes the direction of the argument towards an indirectly connected sub-theme" (p. 156). Along with other follow-up studies of Korean rhetoric, Kim et al. (2011), responsible for conducting a more recent study on Korean rhetoric, also adopted this definition as a conceptual

framework for the investigation of student essays. It is true that one of the characteristics of *chon* is to change a poetic concept as assumed by previous research; however, a further essential aspect of *chon* is to organize poetic ideas to achieve contextualized unity through the whole of writing. Furthermore, Gu (2014) indicates the importance of the logical connection between *ki-sung* and *chon*. According to Gu (2014), *chon* is not a new starting point after finishing the argument; rather, it is used to embody the central theme in conjunction with *kyul* based on a logical flow of *ki-sung*. Since *chon* plays such an important role in poetry, the success and ranking of a poem hinge on the way in which *chon* is constructed (Hwang, 2009). In short, as a procedural formula for poetry or stories, as opposed to informative or argumentative essays, *ki-sung-chon-kyul* has been used and taught as one of the useful poetic practices by many Korean writers (Nam, 2012).

2. Contemporary written Korean: An emic view

The extreme argument from the above analysis of textbooks, student questionnaires, and writing samples is that selected data by previous research on Korean rhetoric was inappropriate and they do not, unfortunately, represent written Korean discourse as a whole. Another potential explanation for this might be that there is a constant evolution in the structure of written Korean texts, through both internal and external stimuli. Forms and structures of a language are shaped and re-shaped reiteratively by a set of social conventions. Such social conventions are constructed and transformed by multiple contextual factors. Volosinov (1986) demonstrated that language can “move together with that [verbal communication] stream and is inseparable from it. Language cannot properly be said to be handed down” (p. 81). From 1960 to 2000, South Korea succeeded in restoring the nearly bankrupt country and developed at a rapid pace along Western lines. Over the past century, the Korean language has been influenced by

Chinese, Japanese, English, as well as other Western languages.

Notions of good writing have changed over time in English, as this is the nature of language (Volosinov, 1986). These notions are different between different English-speaking countries, or even within the same country, as “different scoring rubrics have different characteristics and emphasize different criteria” (Hillocks, 2002, p. 20). What is more, an institutional force is one of the influential factors, of which there are many, that should not be neglected when exploring features of written discourse. Given this background, it can thus be suggested that the features of contemporary written Korean texts have also been developed and reshaped by multiple contextual factors, including educational curriculum, political convulsions, scholarly efforts to purify Korean language, and the effort to embrace Western educational practices.

3. What This Study Adds

Since the pioneered contrastive rhetoric research by Kaplan (1966), contrastive rhetoric research has been conducted to help students with different language backgrounds learn how to write in English (Maxwell-Reid, 2011). However, the Anglo-centric assumptions underlying research on Asian rhetoric have not escaped criticism from various academics (Cahill, 2003; Kubota, 1997). In light of diverse discourse, the field of contrastive rhetoric, later called intercultural rhetoric, has developed beyond Kaplan’s hypothesis — creating the so-called Oriental thought pattern (Donahue, 2008). Nevertheless, this field is still linked closely to the teaching of English as a second language (Belcher, 2014; Connor, 2002). Perhaps the most serious drawback of previous research is that of contrastive rhetoric researchers’ limited linguistic proficiency, and their scant access to native language resources. Cultural homogeneity underlying Japanese discourse style assumed by Kaplan (1966) and Hinds (1987, 1990) was empirically discussed and undermined by latter studies (e.g., Cahill, 2003;

Kubota, 1997, 1999). Discursively constructed notion about Chinese rhetoric was also discussed, and eventually reshaped by theoretical and methodological advances (e.g., Liu, 2005; Liu & Furneaux, 2014). The current research into Korean rhetoric reveals, though belated but dovetailed with ongoing scholarly efforts, a different understanding of characteristics of written Korean discourse beyond established consensus within the English-language literature.

VII. Conclusion

In previous research on written Korean discourse, it has been claimed that Korean is characterized by *ki-sung-chon-kyul* and a circular, indirect, and tangential style with a sudden change of the direction of topics that makes readers responsible for understanding the main themes by appropriate linking between separate sub-themes. However, such generalized features represented by the existing literature (Choi, 1988; Kim et al., 2011; Lee, 2001; Quinn, 2012; Warnick & Manusov, 2000; Zheng, 2013) relied heavily on the works of Eggington (1987) or Hinds (1990). The problem is that the assumptions suggested by Eggington (1987) and Hinds (1990) stemmed from sources that may not have been representative of general trends in written Korean texts. In addition, the claim that *ki-sung-chon-kyul* could be regarded as a primary structural device for Korean writing is questionable, as the term *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is not found in writing selections among any single Korean language arts textbook that is currently used at the 10th grade level in schools. Furthermore, an analysis of student writing samples provided evidence that *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is not a preferred writing structure.

Contrary to popular opinion, I argue that the concept of *ki-sung-chon-kyul* is not a typical pattern of Korean informative or argumentative writing, and contemporary written Korean discourse privileges direct, simple, and explicit pattern. The arguments presented in this

study provide significant implications for the understanding of intercultural rhetoric research, and international writing studies. Decontextualized extrapolation should be avoided in both intercultural rhetoric and international writing research from cross-national perspectives. Twenty years ago, Kubota (1997) pointed out the need to critically re-assess cultural characteristics of different languages, including *ki-sung-chon-kyul* in Korean, due to the limited proficiency in native-language sources within pioneering works on each written language. In non-Western rhetoric research, the complexity and dynamics of Japanese rhetoric (e.g., Kato-Yoshioka, 2016; Kubota, 1997, 1998, 1999; Kubota & Shi, 2005) and of Chinese rhetoric (e.g., Han & Li, 2011; Hu & Cao, 2011; Liu, 2005; Liu & Furneaux, 2014; Loi & Evans, 2010) have been investigated. Yet, previous Korean rhetoric research unquestioningly adopted the assertion that characteristics of written Korean language are circular, indirect and a delayed introduction of the main argument, with a procedural formula— *ki-sung-chon-kyul*. Against this backdrop, this research not only adds to a growing body of literature on written Korean discourse, but also enhances one's understanding of the complexity of contemporary Korean writing, which has been shaped over time by exploring multiple data sources with an *emic* view. From Lunsford's (2012) notion of information brokers, another key strength of the present study is to translate and explain various concepts across different nations and disciplinary boundaries.

My intention was not to describe the field of intercultural rhetoric as if it hasn't moved since the early days. However, when it comes to the Korean rhetoric research, even the recent studies still heavily rely on the early studies conducted in the 1980s or 1990s. Against this backdrop, my initial motivation for working on this study was to explore the textual features of contemporary Korean discourse by analyzing textbooks, student writing samples, and questionnaires. As a consequence, this paper might seem somewhat dated in some ways, especially when compared with the recent intercultural rhetoric studies. This study could be a foundational framework for the further

research on Korean rhetoric. Historical and documentary research would be required to identify processes of change and continuity of ki-sung-chon-kyul concepts chronologically. As language and culture are more dynamic rather than static, more research on the influential contextual factors that contribute to Korean writing instruction is also required.

* Submitted	2018.10.27
First revision received	2018.12.10.
Accepted	2018.12.10.

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ABSTRACT

A Reevaluation of Korean Written Discourse

: An Analysis of Contemporary Korean High School Student Writing
and Korean Language Arts Textbooks

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According to previous studies, Korean writing is characterized by *ki-sung-chon-kyul*. Korean writing has been regarded as inductive, implicit, and indirect. It was claimed that Korean students have difficulty understanding English texts due to differing textual features, and for the same reason, English-speaking people have difficulty understanding written texts in Korean. The primary aim of this study is to challenge these hypotheses on the features of Korean texts. In an attempt to fill the gap, this study investigates high school Korean language arts textbooks and student writing samples. The present study both adds to a growing body of literature on international writing studies and enriches the understanding of our assumptions about written texts.

KEYWORDS International writing, Contrastive rhetoric, Intercultural rhetoric, Korean writing, Written discourse