A Speech-based Probe of Korean EFL Learners' Use of Metadiscourse Markers

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Abstract

Metadiscourse, a linguistic means that is used in the production and organization of ideas, is vital in achieving successful communication. In language studies, metadiscourse in writing and speaking have been disparately investigated, where the former received more attention than the latter. Thus, the present study analyzes metadiscourse in the speech production of 57 Korean L2 learners purposively chosen relative to their language proficiency. The current results suggest two significant findings. First, the quantitative analysis of metadiscourse *frequency* reveals the interactional category's superiority over the interactive metadiscourse, which implies that the Korean L2 learners are more interested in interacting with the listeners than organizing discourse and asserting their role as speakers. Secondly, the quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that the *logical connectives, relational markers, hedges,* and *personal markers* are metadiscourse features that significantly predict Korean L2 speakers' speech proficiency. Except for *personal markers,* these proficiency indicators reveal a clear-cut divergence regarding the levels of lexical sophistication and lexical expansion among the proficiency groups using a vocabulary profiler. The present study proves that speech proficiency in the Korean context depends on the employment of metadiscourse in frequency and diversity. Possible future applications and directions relevant to the present study are also provided.

Keywords: *metadiscourse, interactive metadiscourse, interactional metadiscourse, proficiency level, L2 speech, Korean L2 speakers*

1. Introduction

In linguistics and language, there has been a growing number of studies regarding metadiscourse (**MD)**, a linguistic means that speakers and writers employ to interact and connect with the readers or listeners, which in general, affects how ideas are conveyed and understood. MD, as a 'fussy' and 'an umbrella term,' is a word, phrase, clause, or sentence, which is positively

associated with interaction because it helps make texts effective (Hyland, 2005). Simply put, MD studies subtly imply the three-way components of MD, which are essential elements in successful communication: the text/message, the writer/speaker, and the reader/listener. MD can serve as a bridge that links these elements together. Used as a persuasive skill, MD helps the writer make his or her claims well-conveyed to the listeners (Hyland, 1999). Not merely for information transference from the writer/speaker to the reader/listener, MD also signals the writer's attitude or assumptions towards both the content of the proposition and the audience of the text (Hyland & Tse, 2004). On the other hand, these linguistic markers help guide the readers/listeners to the text or production where more attention should be given.

Metadiscourse markers are a concept that receives ample attention. Previous frequency-based MD studies in written discourse have compared MD in the language, culture, discipline, and EFL learning and teaching contexts (Abdi, 2002; Mina & Biria, 2017; Dahl, 2004; Kedri et al., 2013; Kim & Lim, 2013; Kobayashi, 2016; Mur-Dueñas, 2011). Other MD studies also include the investigation of its discursive role in academic lectures (Mauranen, 2001) and collegiate course presentations (Magnuczné Godó, 2012). Most of these studies involve the comparison of the two main categories of MD. In several benchmark studies, these two MD categories have been appointed different names, but mainly the functions are the same: *metatext* and *audience interaction* (Ädel, 2010), *textual metadiscourse*, and *interpersonal metadiscourse* (Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2005; Kopple, 1985), and *interactive metadiscourse* and *interactional metadiscourse* (Hyland, 2005). The first of the MD dichotomy refers to MD features that guide the reader in the text by providing propositional content, while the second involves and guides the reader in and through the text. Besides, most MD studies give light to MD's frequency distribution in the written texts (Kim & Lee, 2014; Kizil, 2017; Yüksel and Kavanoz, 2018), but not many incorporate both frequency and diversity in MD studies (Huh & Lee, 2016).

With this trend in MD, Ädel (2010) raises the concern that the focus of MD studies is mainly on L2 writing, i.e., academic, cross-cultural comparison, frequency-based; while MD in speech has been regarded with little concern (Kizil, 2017; Mauranen, 2001, 2002; Thompson, 2003; Wei-yan, 2014). MD studies that focus on speech production remain scant up to the present. Among the scattered few are MD studies in the rally speeches of prominent political figures (Esmer, 2017; Mai, 2016; Sukma, 2017), but not much is known about MD's use in the speech of second language learners with particular emphasis on the varying proficiency levels. Park and Oh

(2018) mention the correlation of writing proficiency and MD usage and how MD markers are deployed as proficiency advances. With regards to speech proficiency, very few have ventured into the exploration of its association with MD. Thus, Ädel (2006; 2010) and Hyland (2005) call for further exploration of MD, particularly within the speaking component. Crookes (1991) reminds that the neglect of studying such L2 production "is likely to continue unless there is steady pressure to assert its importance and to make the somewhat scattered findings generally accessible (p. 114)." Therefore, the need for a circumspect identification of MD patterns, mainly in the speech production of non-native speakers, can be viewed from several angles. First, it can provide relevant information towards improving second language learners' communication abilities. Secondly, it can lay out a more profound understanding of how non-native speakers interact, connect, and build relationships with their listeners, and lastly, it can serve as a basis for comparison over MD with the previous studies of written production and subsequent MD studies in spoken discourse. To fill in the void of MD studies in speech, the researchers of the current study attempt to explore the presence and use of MD in Korean L2 learners' speech production with varying proficiency levels. In particular, this study is anchored and guided by the following research questions:

1. *Is there a relationship between speech proficiency and the employment of MD in the speech of KEFL learners?*
2. *Is there a significant difference among KEFL learner groups in their utilization of MD diversity and MD frequency?*
3. *Between interactive and interactional MD, which category is manifested as the preference of Korean L2 speaker groups?*
4. *What are the distributional patterns of Korean L2 speakers' MD features, and which MD features are predictive of Korean L2 speakers' proficiency?*

To this end, inspecting the commonalities and divergences of MD usage in the speech of L2 learners with varying proficiency can contribute to our general understanding of MD and its usage in an EFL or ESL context.

2. Literature review

This section presents first the development of MD taxonomies where one of which is this study anchored upon. Also, relevant studies of frequency-based MD categories and MD features

are presented, then specific MD studies in Korean L2 learners' language related to the current study are reviewed.

2.1 Metadiscourse and its different taxonomies

Metadiscourse is not a new concept. It has been studied since the 1960s. Among the first reference that used metadiscourse is Harris (1959), who sought to understand the use of language by concentrating on the way speakers or writers project their speech or present their text that seems to guide the receiver of the discourse. With the growing interest in the concept, Crismore et al. (1993) seem to have unified the various definitions of metadiscourse in their comprehensive statement. Metadiscourse is a "linguistic material in text written or spoken which does not add anything to the propositional content, but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret or evaluate the information given" (p.40). Hyland (2017) adds that metadiscourse is a recipient-designed filter that helps spell out the intended message to the readers or hearers through our running commentaries. Since metadiscourse interacts with the audience and makes a connection between texts and contexts, several scholars have studied the MD concept, some have attempted and succeeded in putting forward taxonomies to categorize metadiscourse (Ädel, 2006, 2010; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2004, 2005; Kopple; 1985) for understanding better its discursive, pragmatic and other linguistic roles. Table 1 illustrates the comparison of these prominent categorization samples. Each MD model has two salient categories. As mentioned earlier, one category involves the writer/speaker's propositional content, while the second attempts to involve and guide the reader/listener to the text or discourse. Several corresponding MD features or descriptors exemplify the represented MD category.

One of the benchmarks is the classification system set by Kopple (1985), where a line segregates between the two categories of *textual* and *interpersonal* MD. Crismore et al. (1993) further develop the taxonomy but retain the two major categories' labels. However, the textual MD descriptors are subdivided into two, the textual markers and interpretive markers, which also have more specific sub-classifications. Hyland (2004, 2005) then modifies the categories and improves the two general categories' descriptions. This new improvement can cater not only to the written production but also to the spoken production. The label, *interactive metadiscourse,* replaces textual metadiscourse. The *interactional metadiscourse* label, also known as *stance,* is used for interpersonal metadiscourse. The definition of the categories, however, remains the same.

Table 1 Taxonomies of metadiscourse markers

Kopple (1985)		Crismore et al. (1993)	Hyland (2004)	Hyland (2005)	Ädel (2010)
	TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE			**INTERACTIVE**	**METATEXT**
Text connectives *Code glosses* *Validity marker* *Narrators*		**1. Textual Markers** *Logical connectives* *Sequencers* *Reminders* *Topicalizers* **2. Interpretive Markers** *Code glosses* *Illocution markers* *Announcements*	*Logical connectives* *Frame markers* *Endophoric markers* *Evidentials* *Code glosses*	*Transitions* *Frame markers* *Endophoric markers* *Evidentials* *Code glosses*	**1. Metalinguistic comments** *Repairing* *Reformulating* *Commentating on linguistic form/meaning* *Clarifying* *Managing terminology* **2. Discourse organization** *Introducing topic* *Delimiting topic* *Adding to topic* *Concluding topic* *Marking asides* *Enumerating* *Endophoric marking* *Previewing* *Reviewing* *Contextualising* **3. Speech act labels** *Arguing* *Exemplifying* *Other speech act labelling*
	INTERPERSONAL METADISCOURSE			**INTERACTIONAL**	**AUDIENCE INTERACTION**
Illocution markers *Attitude markers* *Commentaries*		*Certainty markers* *Attributes* *Attitude markers* *Commentary*	*Hedges* *Emphatics* *Attitude markers* *Relational markers* *Personal markers*	*Hedges* *Boosters* *Attitude markers* *Self-mentions* *Engagement markers*	**1. References to the audience** *Managing Comprehension/ channel* *Managing audience Discipline* *Anticipating the audience's response* *Managing the message* *Imagining scenarios*

Mauranen (2001) suggests that the study between spoken and written MD should be investigated separately, but others (Ädel, 2006, 2010; Hyland, 2010; Luukka, 1994) believe they

should be studied in conjunction with each other. The former is known as the *splitting* approach, and the latter is the *lumping* approach. Even if both discourses can be assessed as one, Ädel (2006) further posits that the spoken metadiscourse, when compared with the written discourse, has shown a greater range of discourse actions. This finding is from Ädel's comparison of the spoken data from university lecturers and written essays from highly proficient students. As a result, Ädel (2010) proposes a revised and extended spoken MD taxonomy, which categories are *metatext* and *audience interaction*. Though similar to the previous models, Ädel (2006) includes several subcategories and proposes more MD features. However, Hyland (2010) asserts that MD markers work similarly with both speech and writing, and utilizing the same paradigm in the analysis can provide prospective points for comparison. Therefore, the results in the studies of spoken MD are as significant as the written MD. Of all these mentioned taxonomies to date, the model that is earlier proposed (Hyland, 2004) and later remodified by Hyland (2005) has been the most widely used in different MD studies. In our present investigation, Hyland's taxonomy will be adapted to incorporate both the 2004 and 2005 models.[4] Initially, Hyland's (2004) taxonomy follows the previous categorizations of textual MD and interpersonal MD set by the earlier proponents of MD. This is specifically intended for written texts. In 2005, the categories were renamed and can therefore cover both written and spoken discourses. Since then, there had been a surge of frequency-based studies regarding MD in writing (Akbas, 2012; Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Gholami et al., 2014; Heng & Tan, 2010; Tan & Eng, 2014). Hyland's interpersonal model has been influential even in technology-assisted MD studies. As with other previous MD frameworks, Hyland's model is divided into two general categories: *interactive* and *interactional*. The interactive MD category (viz. *logical connectives, frame markers, code glasses, endophoric markers, and evidentials*) guides the readers/listeners throughout the text or production. On the other hand, the interactional MD category (viz. *attitude markers, hedges, relational markers, personal markers, and emphatics*) involves the reader or listener in the argument.

[4] Hyland's 2004 and 2005 models are identical, except for relabeling the former MD features to cater to the spoken discourse in the latter. This study incorporates both models because some labels, i.e., *logical connectives, emphatics, relational markers, and personal markers,* are preferred over *transitions, boosters, engagement markers,* and *self-mentions,* respectively.

2.3 Related metadiscourse studies and MD frequency distribution

MD studies in writing provide precedential evidence with comparing the frequency of MD. Studies of the frequency distribution of MD in written discourse have shown contrasting results regarding the prevalence of one MD category over the other. Since MD is context-dependent, i.e., genres, languages, Hyland (2015) posits that MD offers extensive opportunities for numerous interpretations.

Some studies report that the MD interactive category, the one that mainly highlights the writers' propositional content, is more prevalent in the written production of these different English L2 users. In one investigation of MD categories, Farahani (2019) reports the distributional pattern of MD from two corpora - British Academic Spoken English Corpus and British Academic Written English Corpus. In both academic spoken and written English modes, the predilection is more on the interactive category. In another investigation of MD in English medical texts and their Persian-translated counterparts also shows the dominance of the interactive MD category over the interactional MD category in the two texts (Gholami et al., 2014). This means that English authors for medical texts establish a closer relationship with the readers by attempting to comment about the text more. This also explains the reason why Persian translations sound restricted. Mina and Biria (2017) also give the same report about Iranian social science authors who seem to prefer the interactional category more in their research articles.

On the other hand, the study from Yüksel and Kavanoz (2018) reveal that in the texts of Turkish speakers/writers, interactional[5] metadiscourse markers are used more than the interactive MD. However, this finding cannot be generalized because it displays the combined results of participants who differ in language, cultural, and proficiency backgrounds. In Mina and Biria's investigation (2017) between Iranian social science and medical doctors, the latter prefers interactional MD while the former is inclined with interactive MD.

Another interesting result that quantifies the frequency distribution of MD is conducted by Dafouz-Milne (2008). She develops a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural investigation of the pragmatic role of MD in *The Times* and *El País*, British and Spanish newspapers, respectively. She

[5] The original paper uses *interpersonal* and *textual* MD for *interactional* MD and *interactive* MD, respectively.

attempts to identify the MD category that predominates in the newspaper discourse. The results expose that there is no significant difference with the use of the two general MD categories, but there are minor variations seen with the MD features.

In speech, some research of MD studies concentrates on monologic genres in the academic field, such as lectures and class presentations. Mauranen (2001) inspects the MD standpoint in academic lectures and, she categorizes two subtypes of MD spoken discourse, which include monologic and dialogic. In her conclusion, she states that MD expressions are extensive in academic discourse, and they function to structure an on-going speech. Magnuczné-Godó (2012) also investigates MD in the course presentations of college students. However, the focal points of the study are the interactive strategies that are employed by the students in connection with the responses and the reactions of the audience, as well as the raters' holistic perception of the presentation quality. The results report that the speeches, which are categorized as successful, have incorporated considerable metadiscursive strategies. In a similar study, Magnuczné-Godó (2012) investigates the course presentations of students and concludes that more successful presenters are distinguished by a higher proportion of interactive MD features. In addition to metadiscourse, another investigation regarding text-structuring MD and intonation in academic lectures is presented by Thompson (2003), who argues that intonation also helps in organizing a 'coherent map' that guides the audience or listeners about the lecture. In one study, Kizil (2017) investigates MD in Turkish speech following Adel's (2010) model. The study implicitly reports that Turkish English speakers are inclined to MD interactive category, which in results shows the participants' weaker tendency regarding audience interaction.

Several studies on the discursive functions of MD follow the rally speeches of prominent political figures. Mai (2016) inspects 60 rally speeches of American and Chinese politicians and finds that some features of MD differentiate the American from Chinese speakers. By using specific MD features, the American speeches produce a more credible and persuasive appeal compared to the Chinese speeches. The interactional features of MD also help construct persuasion and emotional bond with the audience, which is evident in the investigation of Barack Obama's speech (Sukma, 2017). The interactional MD helps reveal the clear expression of the personal feelings, commitment, and concern for the country the politicians in Turkey are serving (Esmer, 2017).

In the diverging comparative studies of MD, there is one noteworthy implication. Authors construct their interactions differently, and the use of MD is not uniform across genres, disciplines, and languages (Fu and Hyland, 2014). The employment of varying MD featires depends highly on the cultural, social, and other contexts. Looking at MD from different perspectives gives us a clearer picture of the role of MD in language use. Therefore, MD and its features are the focus on the investigation of the current paper from the perspective of the varying proficiency of Korean L2 speakers.

2.4 Metadiscourse studies about Korean L2 learners

As mentioned, metadiscourse studies in writing are investigated from different viewpoints, of which extent relates to language, culture, discipline, and EFL learning and teaching. Studies about Korean MD include Huh and Lee's (2016) investigation reporting that Korean undergraduate students employ in their writing the metadiscourse markers available to them but are considerably limited in rhetorical sophistication. They also emphasize that metadiscourse is an essential characteristic of effective and persuasive writing. In one comparative study of MD use between the English text by American elementary school students, Kim (2017) finds that American elementary students use more interactive and interactional MD than Korean students. This finding contrasts with Kim's (2009) and Uhm et al.'s (2009) results, who state that Korean writers employ more interactive metadiscourse than their native counterparts. Similar to Choi and Ko's (2005) and Hwang and Lee's (2008) findings, Koreans use more metadiscourse features than native English speakers. This stark contrast is explained by Hong et al. (2003) that, as cognitive psychology suggests, non-native students or writers who write in English may be primed by English culture, and thus, their writing may be influenced by English culture projected in the classrooms or textbooks.

This notion seems to support indirectly Park and Oh's (2018) claim that there is a relationship between proficiency and MD employment. They posit that as language proficiency progresses, the more diverse the range of MD, the lesser reliance on MD features under the interactive category, and the more balanced the use of interactional resources. When the students' proficiency is comparable with the native speakers', not only would the non-native speakers use MD equally with the native speakers, but they would similarly use the language.

On this note, we have established that MD results may vary by culture and by proficiency. Since there are several MD studies in Korean L2 writing, the present study wants to fill the gap by investigating the other modality, which is the speaking component where MD is involved.

3. Methodology

This section presents the participants' profiles, instruments, and how the data is collected, operationalized, and analyzed.

3.1 Participants

Fifty-seven (57) adult Korean EFL learners produced the transcribed speech data in an English learning institute in Seoul City, Korea. The participants are 16-40 years of age, and the proficiency levels are pre-determined by a series of assessment tests from the academy, which includes a simulated OPIc[6] test. The speakers' proficiency levels are pre-identified as Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. At the onset, 20 speakers are originally selected to represent each proficiency group. However, three participants' speech data, including one for each level, are excluded due to incomplete responses to the speaking tasks. The participants' profile is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Participants' Profile

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Total
Female	13	10	12	35
Male	6	9	7	22
Total	19	19	19	57

3.2 Data collection

In the English institute where the participants attend, each student is tasked to have a monthly simulated OPIc test. A set of six questions are provided, and a maximum time limit of 2 minutes for each question is allowed for the test-takers to state their responses. This study's data samples are gathered based on the students' replies to the following questions from their monthly tasks.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?

[6] The Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer (OPIc) test was selected since it elicits natural and authentic conversational language from the speakers by creating a simulated conversation environment in the act of an interview using a computer. This test is also one of the standardized speaking assessments frequently administered in Korea for university students or job applicants to showcase their speaking skills

2. Tell me about your house? Please describe in detail.
3. Can you describe your typical day from start to finish?
4. Which kind of technology these days do you use the most: a notebook computer, a cellular phone, or any handheld device? Tell me how you use it/them?
5. How do you think technology has changed from past to present? How was the technology you used in the past different from what you use at present?
6. One of my hobbies is traveling to many countries. You can ask me four questions regarding a vacation or trip that I have recently taken.

3.3 Data instruments, operationalization, and analysis

3.3.1 Transcription

The audio data are first transcribed by a text-to-speech tool. To ensure the transcription precision, we manually rechecked the data using *Voicewalker 2.0*, a transcriber's tool that aids speedy transcription. It offers a more reliable transcription process vital for deciphering rapid speech.

3.3.2 Identification, coding, and calculation

With the use of technology, some frequency-based information regarding language usage can be easily identified. When studying MD, some programs and software help assist in revealing its use. These programs further expose which patterns have been overly used and underused. The present study employs and adapts Hyland's (2004; 2005) MD functional model, and it is considered the starting point. *Text Inspector* is a professional web tool, which works as a vocabulary profiler and text analyzer. It is used to inspect the different kinds of MD features present in the production of the speakers. Table 3 below summarizes specific metadiscourse features under the two MD categories, which serve as the leading indices or descriptors of the analysis used in this study. The examples for each feature are provided.

Table 3 Metadiscourse classification model (Hyland: 2004, 2005)

Category	Function	Examples
INTERACTIVE	*Help to guide the reader through the text.*	
Logical connectives	Express relations between the main clause	*in addition, but, thus, and*
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences, and stages	
	Sequencing	*finally, next*
	Label stages	*to conclude, in sum*
	Announce goals	*I suggest, I will emphasize*

	Topic shifts	*with regard to, well*
Endophoric markers	Refer to the information in other parts of the texts	*noted above, see figure, in section 2*
Evidentials	State information from other texts	*according to --; -- states*
Code glosses	Expound propositional meaning	*such as, namely, e.g.,*
INTERACTIONAL	*Include the reader in the text*	
Hedges	Emphasize uncertainty and open dialogue	*maybe, perhaps, possible*
Emphatics/Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	*certainly, show*
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to intentions	*surprisingly, unfortunately, I agree*
Personal markers	Overt reference to authors	*I, we, my, me, our*
Relational markers	Openly build a connection with readers	*you can see that, consider, note*

3.3.3 Analysis

The present study employs quantitative and qualitative analyses in the investigation with two-fold foci, the MD token and the MD type patterns apparent in Korean EFL speakers' speech data. A *type* typically refers to a word or words that are concrete and particular, while a *token* is the occurrence of any type. Therefore, in the sentence *"Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose*," there are three different words or *types,* but we may count ten *tokens.*[7] For easier identification, MD tokens are hereby referred to in this study as *MD Frequency (MD-F)*, while MD types are identified here as *MD Diversity (MD-D).*

Non-parametric statistical analyses through SPSS are used to compare the MD count differences for both frequency and diversity. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is employed to compare the three proficiency groups, while the Mann-Whitney U test is for the differences of the interactive and interactional categories of the MD-F and MD-D. *To answer the relationship between speech proficiency and MD's employment in terms of frequency and diversity, we use Kendall's tau b.* Lastly, *stepwise multiple regression analysis is applied to assess the predictive power of metadiscourse features concerning proficiency.* In addition to the quantitative analyses, a qualitative investigation assesses in closer detail the characteristics of MD-D using the English Vocabulary Profile as reference.

4. Results and Discussion

This section is composed of three sub-headings that include (1) comparison of speaker/proficiency groups, (2) the MD categories, and (3) the discussion of MD features. The

[7] From *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* retrieved at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/types-tokens/

statistical results will be presented in the first two subtopics, and additional qualitative analysis will be incorporated in the last topic.

4.1 Comparison of speaker groups in the employment of MD

In comparing the three groups regarding MD-F and MD-D usage, the Kruskal Wallis test determines the frequency differences. The results shown in Table 4 reveal that the null hypotheses are rejected in both the MD-F and MD-D. This means that the three proficiency groups are statistically different with the use of MD-F, $H(2) = 42.727$, $p = .000$ and MD-D, $H(2) = 38.745$, $p = .000$. However, the pairwise comparisons further disclose the specific differences among the three groups. Table 5 displays the pairwise comparisons between the groups based on the MD-F and MD-D counts.

Table 4 Comparison of MD-F and MD-D across the proficiency groups

	N	*H*	*Df*	*Sig.*	*Decision*
MD-F	57	42.727	2	.000	Reject
MD-D	57	38.745	2	.000	Reject

Table 5 Pairwise comparisons of the proficiency groups

	Groups (Mdn)	*H*	*Std. Error*	*Adj. Sig.*
MD-F	Novice (33) – Intermediate (149)	-20.921		.000*
	Novice (33) – Advanced (265)	-34.974	5.385	.000*
	Intermediate (149) -Advanced (265)	-14.053		.027*
MD-D	Novice (8) – Intermediate (19)	-20.89		.000*
	Novice (8) – Advanced (27)	-33.105	5.379	.000*
	Intermediate (19)-Advanced (27)	-12.211		.070

In the pairwise comparison of MD-F, it has been found out that each group is statistically different from each other. The medians for each group, 33, 149, and 265 for the novice, intermediate, and advanced, are in ascending order and statistically different. The advanced group is statistically higher than the intermediate group, $H(2) = -14.053$, $p = .027$, and the intermediate group is higher than the novice group, $H(2) = -20.921$, $p = .000$.

The pairwise comparison of MD-D showed a different result from MD-F. There is a relatively significant difference between the novice group *(Mdn=8)* and the intermediate group *(Mdn=19)*, $H(2) = -20.89$, $p = .000$ and the novice group *(Mdn=8)* and the advanced group

(Mdn=27), $H(2) = -33.105$, $p = .000$. However, there was no difference between the intermediate group *(Mdn=19)* and the advanced group *(Mdn=27)*, $H(2) = -12.211$, $p = .070$.

These analyses inspect the commonalities or the divergence of the novice, the intermediate, and the advanced Korean speaker groups for the MD use in both frequency and the diversity counts. The MD-F results confirm the order of the proficiency groups in MD usage as novice, intermediate and advanced levels. Their use of MD reflects the upward trajectory alongside proficiency, and the results of the present study confirm the validity and reliability of the proficiency classification administered by the language academy, where the participants of the current study attend. The results inform us that the number of MD-D is spread similarly between the intermediate and advanced groups. However, the novice group's MD employment can be seen as inferior to the other two groups.

The MD-F and MD-F analyses, which present a slightly contrasting result, seem to follow a similar upward trajectory. The direction of progress advances as the level gets higher. These results also agree with Yüksel and Kavanoz' (2018) argument that MD features develop with experience, regardless of the L1 background. Since cohesion and coherence in the discourse can be mostly attained by MD features (Littlewood, 1966), the preliminary results suggest that one should consider MD's employment in both frequency and diversity to acquire richer findings. As much as the MD's frequency is insightful, the number and the accuracy of the MD diversity throughout the spoken discourse are equally important.

To answer if there is a relationship between speech proficiency and MD engagement in terms of frequency and diversity, we employ Kendall's tau-b correlation analysis, and the results are reflected in Table 6.

Table 6 Correlation table between proficiency and MD (frequency and diversity)

		Proficiency	MD Frequency	MD Diversity
Kendall's tau_b	Correlation Coefficient	1	.852	.829
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	57		

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results show a strong, positive association between proficiency and MD's frequent use, which is statistically significant, τ_b=.852, p=.000. Similarly, there is a strong relationship between proficiency and MD diversity, which is also statistically significant, τ_b=.829, p=.000. The results

imply that the MD deployment is correlated with the level of proficiency. The findings agree with Park and Oh's (2018) claim that as proficiency increases, the more diverse its range becomes. As MD distinguishes Korean L2 users' good writings from poor ones (Huh & Lee, 2016, Kim & Lee, 2014, Oh & Kang, 2013), the present study also claims that the employment of MD characterizes the speaking proficiency of Korean L2 speakers.

4.2 The interactive and interactional MD categories

Identifying Korean L2 speaker groups' preferences will help distinguish MD's role in Korean L2 speakers' spoken discourse. Mann-Whitney U tests are run to determine if there are statistical differences in MD-F and MD-D between the interactive and the interactional categories for each group.

The statistical results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7 Comparison of the MD categories by MD-F

		Mdn	*U*	*Z*	*Sig.*
Novice	Interactive	16			
	Interactional	22	266	2.50	.012*
Intermediate	Interactive	72			
	Interactional	93	259.5	2.31	.021*
Advanced	Interactive	121			
	Interactional	158	270	2.61	.008*

Significant results are revealed across the three proficiency levels that prove the interactional MD category's dominance over the interactive MD tokens in the count of MD-F. For the novice group, the median (22) for interactional MD is significantly higher than the median (16) for interactive MD (U = 266, z = 2.50, and p = .012). Similarly, for the intermediate group, the median for interactional MD (93) and interactive MD (72), respectively, are significant (U = 259, z = -2.31, and p = .021). For the advanced group, interactional MD (*Mdn* = 158) is significantly different from the interactive MD (*Mdn* = 121), U = 270, z = 2.61, and p = .008.

However, the results for the MD-F show a diverging pattern from the MD-D (Table 8). There are no statistically significant differences in the median scores of the MD-D between the interactive and the interactional categories, as consistently shown in each of the three groups, U = 150, z =-.891, and p = *.385* for the novice group, U = 178, z = -.073, and p = .954 for the

intermediate group, and $U = 159$, $z = -.633$, and $p = .544$ for the advanced group. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 8 Comparison of the MD categories by MD-D

		Mdn	*U*	*Z*	*Sig.*
Novice	Interactive	5			
	Interactional	4	150	-.891	.385
Intermediate	Interactive	11			
	Interactional	12	178	-.073	.954
Advanced	Interactive	15			
	Interactional	14	159	-.633	.544

The inspection of the MD incidence for the two MD categories, interactive and interactional MD, discloses a somewhat contrasting outcome. The results show that in the MD-F, the interactional MD markers are more prevalent than the interactive MD. While in the MD-D, there is no significant difference. The results have conflicting outcomes compared with other written MD investigations because the interactive MD is more extensive than the interactional MD in Bal-Gezegin's (2016), Farahani's (2019), and Lin's (2005) studies. Written discourse needs cohesion by nature, and cohesion can be attained by incorporating metadiscourse features since writers need to fully inform the readers of the clarity of their intentions by writing a more coherent and well-organized output. Therefore, interactive MD helps the writers guide readers through the text. However, the widespread use of interactional MD is consistent with the MD studies' results in speech, specifically the political speeches of famous personalities and politicians (Esmer, 2017; Mai, 2016; Sukma, 2017). Using interactional MD can aid the speaker by considering and involving the listeners in the spoken discourse as reflected in the results of the present study. Also, there are no significant differences in the use of MD-D for the two categories. This result explains that the two MD categories' ratio in the three groups' speech is comparative. A significant difference is how frequently the speakers use these MD types, which eventually leads to a different frequency count, and interactional MD tokens supersede the interactive MD.

Based on the high-frequency use of the interactional MD over the interactive MD in frequency, which is similarly patterned in the three proficiency levels, Korean EFL speakers in this study are categorized as responsible and listener-friendly speakers. The results refer heavily to features that guide and involve listeners in the discourse by asserting their speaker roles more than focusing on self or speaker stance. They are more interested in conducting interaction with

the speakers than organizing the discourse. Reasonable discourse, which includes written or spoken, does not guarantee objectivity and factuality. Hyland (1999) posits that by applying social, linguistic conventions, writers or speakers can only be convincing if the intended audience, including the reader or the listener, finds it persuasive. The Korean speakers try to construct meaning by involving the listeners in the conversation and mutual thinking. Therefore, for the L2 learners to improve their communicative ability, they should enhance their awareness of the significance of metadiscourse, which is more reader-friendly or listener-friendly (Hyland, 2004) and, at the same time, acceptable to the English audience. To convey meaning effectively, both the speaker/writer and the listener/reader are equally crucial to the discourse organization (Kim & Lim, 2013).

4.3 Distributional rankings of MD features

Results have revealed earlier that there was a significant difference between interactive MD and interactional MD in MD-F but not in MD-D. This section will discuss the distributional patterns of MD by closely identifying specific interactive and interactional MD features that the Korean EFL speaker groups frequently and significantly use.

4.3.1 MD Features in Frequency

The interactional MD's significant prevalence over the interactive MD in frequency across all three proficiency groups is visually displayed in Figure 1. It can also be seen in Figure 2 the distribution of MD in diversity count, and as noted, no significant difference between the interactive and interactional MD features. From the two representations, we can see the disparity of MD distribution.

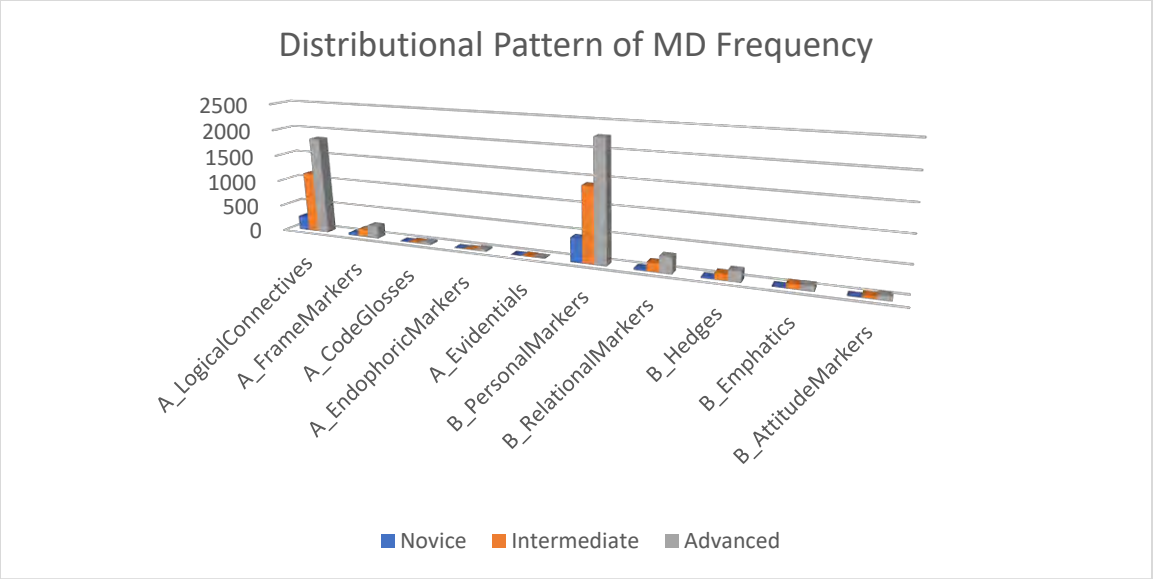

Figure 1. Distributional Pattern of MD Frequency

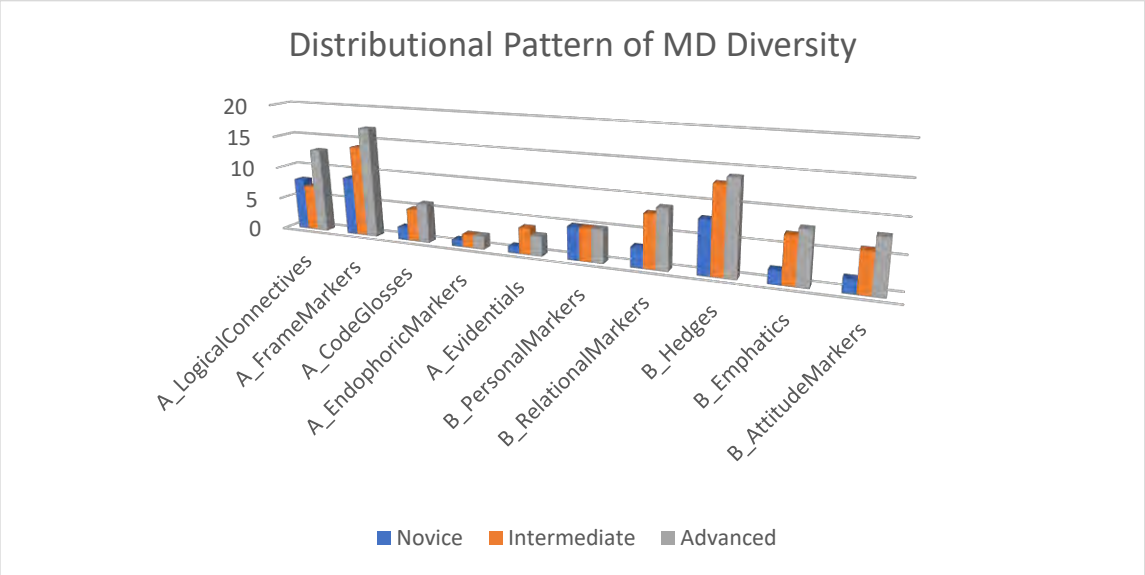

Figure 2. Distributional Pattern of MD Diversity

The statistics presented in Table 9 are the raw counts of MD features for the three levels. The feature that stands out the most in the interactional MD tokens is *personal markers*, which totaled 53.3% (448) for the novice and 44.5% for both the intermediate (1406) and the advanced (2257). Personal markers are followed by much less prominent *relational markers,* which are 4.2% (35) for novice, 5.2% (165) for intermediate, and 5.9% (301) for advanced. *Hedges* come third with 2.7% (23), 3.7% (117), and 3.8% (191) for the novice, intermediate, and advanced,

respectively. *Emphatics* are rarely used at 1.9% (16), and *attitude markers* at .02% (2) are the least used interactional MD tokens.

Table 9. Distributional Pattern of MD-F

MD	*Novice (%)*	*Intermediate (%)*	*Advanced (%)*	*Total (5)*
A. **Interactive MD**	**316 (37.6)**	**1341 (42.5)**	**2153 (42.5)**	**3810 (42)**
Logical Connectors	265 (31.5)	1151 (36.5)	1847 (36.4)	3263 (36)
Frame Markers	44 (5.2)	141 (4.5)	234 (4.6)	419 (4.6)
Code Glosses	4 (0.5)	25 (0.8)	35 (0.7)	64 (0.7)
Endophoric Markers	2 (0.2)	10 (0.3)	29 (0.6)	41 (0.5)
Evidentials	1 (0.1)	14 (0.4)	8 (0.2)	23 (0.3)
B. **Interactional MD**	**524 (62.4)**	**1816 (57.5)**	**2915 (57.5)**	**5255 (58)**
Personal Markers	448 (53.3)	1406 (44.5)	2257 (44.5)	4111 (45.4)
Relational Markers	35 (4.2)	165 (5.2)	301 (5.9)	501 (5.5)
Hedges	23 (2.7)	117 (3.7)	191 (3.8)	331 (3.7)
Emphatics	16 (1.9)	86 (2.7)	90 (1.8)	192 (2.1)
Attitude Markers	2 (0.2)	42 (1.3)	76 (1.5)	120 (1.3)
Total	**840 (100)**	**3157 (100)**	**5068 (100)**	**9065 (100)**

The subcategory that stands out the most in the interactional MD-F is the *personal markers*, which totaled 448 (53.3%) for the novice, 1406 (44.5%) for intermediate, and 2257 (45.4%) for the advanced. For the interactive MD-F, the predominant MD descriptors are the *logical connectives*, which totaled 265 (31.5%) for the novice, 1151 (36.5%) for the intermediate, and 1847 (36.4%) for the advanced group. The rest of the features are less conspicuous and are lower than 10%.

In general, the distributional patterns of the MD-F disclose that *personal markers* are the most salient in the interactional MD followed by *relational markers*, which occur much less often. With the interactive MD, the *logical connectives* are prevalent, followed by less prevailing *frame markers.* For the overall frequency counts, *personal markers* and *logical connectives* have the most number in all three levels. These two aforementioned features confirm the characteristics of informal spoken language or discourse (Biber et al., 1999). *Personal markers* are used profusely throughout the discourse of the different speakers. Self-mentions or *personal markers* represent in writing the author's identity through the interaction and show their strong presence in the discourse (Faharani, 2019; Hyland, 2005). Similar to Mai's (2016) findings, *personal markers* play an important role in adding a credible appeal in American and Chinese politicians' speeches. Also, speakers emphasize more personal responsibilities about the proposition or the argument if

personal markers are combined with *hedges* and other interactional features. For *personal markers*, it is noticeable that *I* has been the most used self-mentions followed by *my* in all three groups. In the case of the subject plural pronoun, *we* and the dependent possessive *our*, it is noticed that the lower the level, the lower is the incorporation of other individuals in a subjective proposition. It can be inferred that as the level of proficiency progresses, the speaker not only focuses mostly on self but masters the art of involving others as discourse participants. The use of *we* and *our* in a speech discourse can also signal a degree of seriousness and formality (Mai, 2016), such as in the excerpt below from a novice and an advanced Korean speaker, respectively.

> ***"I** use smartphone to chat with my friends or take pictures these days, and **I** also use laptop to only [watching] drama. In the past, **I** used cellphone, which is folder or slide. And … **I** usually uh send messages or call in the past. But, these days, **I** use smartphone and … **I** can chat with my friends, and also **I** can do internet … when **I** go outside". (Nov-12)*

> *"In the past, **I** use the MP3 player when **I** want to listen to the music … Also, when **I** want to hear music, there was a Walkman or CD player, but these days, **we** don't have that [devices], but **we** can listen to the music anywhere no matter what circumstances. So, it's very different from the past … the smartphone is … for [touching], so we have a large screen on smartphone … **we're** just [touching], so it's very convenient to use …" (Adv-14)*

On the other hand, transitions or *logical connectives* connect main clauses to the sentences. Therefore, they can add support to the ideas, and they are an integral part of a discourse. By applying these logical connectives, authors or speakers show a willingness to produce a message so that the readers or listeners can unfold their logic (Faharani, 2019). The most common logical connectives used by the three groups are *and so*, followed by *but, because*, and *or*. In the sentence-initial position, connectives such as *and but* are characteristics of conversation, according to Biber et al. (1999). However, some logical connectives have been noticeably misused, overused, and abused, which is the case with *so* in the examples below.

> *"My health is really weak, **so** I have to exercise. My body is so weak, **so** it's really sensitive. **So,** it's tired. **So**, the other person can't understand me. **So**, I'm so sad… **So**, I care about my health." (Int-8)*

> *"I have to use a thick natural book or some kind of paper **so** I can use instead of these hard copies. **So**, uh there are so many benefits in I-pad. **So**, my major is also engineering **so**, I am interested in technology." (Adv-7)*

Similar to the case of *and*, *so* has been frequently used by some of these speakers as an adverb, and at times in the forms of fillers. However, *and* can be inserted as natural fillers between clauses. Substituting *and* with *so* to fill gaps and pauses will result in a disrupted, chaotic message. According to Hinkel (2002), other Asian L2 learners, including Koreans, find it challenging to distinguish coordination from subordination. Therefore, it is recommended that speakers employ variations, such as fillers and hesitation techniques, so as not to overuse and misuse the connective.

4.4 MD features and proficiency

The previous section has mentioned the distributional frequency of MD, and two MD-F features have shown dominance - the *personal markers* and the *logical connectives*. As noted in Table 6 earlier, for MD-F, there is a significant difference among the groups. For MD-D, there is also a significant difference in the novice group, but no statistical difference between intermediate and advanced groups for MD-D. To statistically confirm what specific features are indeed predictive of Korean L2 speakers' proficiency, Tableaux 10 and 11 show the results of stepwise multiple regression analysis tests in MD-F and MD-D.

Table 10. Multiple Regression Analysis Test – MD-F

Model	R	R Square	Df	F	B	Sig.
Personal Markers	.866	.750	(Reg) 2	80.819	.012	.000
Relational Markers			(Res) 54		.015	

Dependent Variable: Proficiency

Table 11. Multiple Regression Analysis Test – MD-D

Model	R	R Square	Df	F	B	Sig.
Logical Connectives	.840	.705	(Reg) 3	42.290	.224	.000
Personal Markers			(Res) 53		.211	
Relational Markers					.109	

Dependent Variable: Proficiency

The first multiple regression analysis results for MD-F, which was conducted to predict MD-F features correlating with proficiency, are shown in Table 10. The linear combination of both *personal markers* and *relational markers* frequency count was significantly related to proficiency, $F(2,54) = 80.819$, $p = .000$. The multiple correlation coefficient was .866, indicating that approximately 75% of the variance of the proficiency can be accounted for by the linear combination of *personal markers* and *relational markers*. However, Table 11 for MD-D shows a

slightly different result from MD-F, which includes *logical connectives* to the list with *personal markers* and *relational markers* that were significantly related to proficiency, F(3,53) = 42.290, p.= 000. The results also indicate that with the correlation efficient of .840, approximately 71% of the variance of proficiency can be accounted for the three MD features, *logical connectives, personal markers*, and *relational markers.*

Further qualitative analyses regarding the MD-D reveal a clear-cut variance in lexical choice use to provide further evidence regarding these results. As mentioned, there is no considerable significance on the MD-D counts of intermediate and advanced, except for novice. However, a more conspicuous inspection further discloses a more significant divergence among the groups. When the MD types are placed in a vocabulary level profiler, which is the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP), it is revealed that most of the items on the list of MD features by proficiency go by the vocabulary level. In the CEFR[8]In the investigation, it is discovered that most items in the novice group's list of MD types are at the low level, which is followed by the intermediate level, and the advanced level has the highest CEFR level of the three groups, as seen in Table 12. Three specific MD features have shown considerable attention, *logical connectives*, *hedges*, and *relational markers*. This result is almost similar to the quantitative findings without *personal markers* and *hedges* as an addition. *Personal markers* are not included on the list since there is a limited number of personal markers, *i.e., I, my, we, our,* and all three levels use the same personal markers.

Table 12 CEFR level comparison of Korean EFL speakers

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Logical Connectives			
A1	*also, and, because, but*	*also, and, because, but*	*also, and, because, but*
A2		*since, so. However*	*since, so, however*
B1			*moreover*
B2			*though*
Hedges			
A1	*maybe, mostly, sometimes*	*maybe, mostly,*	*maybe, mostly,*
A2		*sometimes*	*sometimes*
B1		*almost, could*	*almost, could, probably*
B2		*frequently*	*frequently*
			relatively
Relational markers			

[8]***Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*** *is an international standard for describing language ability with six descriptive levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2.*

A1	*you, your*	*you, your, us*	*you, your, us*
B1	*let*	*let, notice*	*let, notice*
B2		*note*	*note, imagine, recall*
C1			*consider*

In the case of the *logical connectives*, the MD-D list for novice speakers is limited to *also, and, because*, and *but,* which can be categorized as the A1 level. The intermediate group employs additional words, such as *since, so*, and *however,* which belong to the A2 level. In addition to the A1 and the A2 level words, the advanced group uses B1 and B2 levels that include *moreover* and *though.* The advanced group not only uses more types of logical connectives, but it also uses high-level and sophisticated choices, which is referenced on EVP. In the use of hedges, both the advanced and intermediate speakers show no considerable differences both with the types and the tokens. Similar to the EVP ranking of the logical connectives previously mentioned, novice speakers utilize hedges that are ranked A1, such as *may be, mostly,* and *sometimes.* Statistically, there is no difference between the intermediate and the advanced speakers in MD-F and MD-D. However, an EVP investigation reveals that intermediate speakers include only A2 and B1 hedges, e.g., *almost*, *could, frequently*, and the advanced speakers employ B1 and B2 in addition to the list, e.g., *probably* or *relatively*. This pattern is similar to *relational markers*, the MD features that explicitly build relationships with the readers or the speakers. The novice group needs to learn more *relational markers* in order to reach the listeners. Aside from the limited list, most of them are low vocabulary profile markers. Although the intermediate and advanced groups are not significantly different, the choice of high-level vocabulary words as *consider, imagine,* and *recall* still put the advanced group on a pedestal compared with the intermediate's *notice, note,* and *think about.*

In these salient features, it is known that lexical variety and sophistication in the number of types correspond with the proficiency level. Therefore, it is proposed that the number of *logical connectives*, *hedges,* and *relational markers,* can be good indicators of proficiency. Suppose Chiang (2018) claims that the vocabulary size is one strong predictor of Taiwanese students' TOEIC scores. In that case, it is logical that we propose in this study that the most divergent MD types, precisely that of *logical connectives, hedges*, and *relational markers*, can also be indications of proficiency because they show diversity along with the progression of proficiency. Even though it is not directly stated, Mai's (2016) intercultural analysis regarding the persuasive power MD markers between the Chinese and the American political speeches identify the Chinese speakers' lack of *logical connectives* and, most specifically, *hedges*. These two indexes are identified as the contributors to the American speeches' rational and credible appeal by expressing respect to the listeners and audience. They also show the level of proficiency displayed by the American native-English speakers compared to the L2 Chinese speakers.

As for the speakers' general lexical choice, the advanced speakers employ a more sophisticated MD vocabulary with a high CEFR level over the intermediate and novice speakers. Low-level learners need

to expand their working vocabulary repertoire, so appropriate words can be aptly chosen to convey meaning successfully. As Parvaresh (2008) suggests, MD's explicit instructions can be an excellent benefit for lower proficient learners in particular, not only with speech competency but even with text comprehension. Cheng and Steffensen (1996) and Tavakoli et al. (2010) also attest that by increasing the number of MD after an intentional instruction, the subjects have successfully conveyed higher scores in their essay activities. For the intermediate group, specific MD types need to be developed as well. *Relational markers* and *hedges* are used more, but other markers are either underdeveloped or underused, such as *emphatics*, *frame markers,* and *attitude markers*. The advanced group has displayed a more balanced use of MD, and the areas needed to enhance more include *emphatics, code glosses,* and some features of *frame markers*. *Evidentials* and *endophoric markers,* which broadly characterize written MD, are generally the least used MD features. To help draw learners' attention to the explicit instruction of MD, Kizil (2017) strongly notes to language practitioners the importance of the use of authentic materials i.e., instruction.

5. Conclusion

This study investigates the use of metadiscourse in Korean EFL learners' speech and examines the similarities and differences of the types and tokens used by novice, intermediate, and advanced speakers. The present study shows a few findings that are briefly stated below.

With the comparison of the Korean proficiency groups, the MD tokens' frequency count significantly follows the proficiency levels' trajectory trend. The advanced level accounts for the highest use of MD features, followed by the intermediate group and then the novice group. Having a considerably higher interactional MD in the Korean EFL's speech is consistently revealed in all three levels, and the results show an opposite direction from that of MD in writing (Bal-Gezegin, 2016; Farahani, 2019; Lin, 2005), where the interactive MD is widespread. In written texts, writers need a more coherent and well-organized output, and thus, interactive MDs are more widely used. However, in spoken discourse, the speakers endeavor to involve and accommodate the listeners as reflected in the present study. In agreement with Mulholland (1999) and Sukma (2017), the discursive interactional MD in speech is used by the speakers as persuasive strategies by constructing an affinity and an emotional bond with the audience. If these features are missing or omitted, the message may be spoiled by losing cooperation and harmony. The findings illustrate that the Korean speakers are more interested in conducting interaction with the audience rather than organizing discourse. *Personal markers* and *logical connectives* are the most dominant features in the interactional and interactive categories, respectively. In contrast with the previous studies' results about written MD, *endophoric markers* and *evidentials*, which are more frequent in writing, are the least used with spoken MD in speech.

In the MD-D analysis, no considerable quantitative differences in the MD-D count are found between the interactional and the interactive categories. However, further quantitative and qualitative considerations reveal the clear-cut divergence on the CEFR level of the MD vocabulary list. The level of sophistication, i.e., the use of advanced MD types, has progressed with proficiency. This finding leads the present study to propose that the varying MD-D employment depends on the learner's proficiency level. This assumption can add to the existing knowledge of MD, which states that the employment of MD in the discourse considers proficiency as another factor in addition to cultural factors (Kobayashi, 2016; Mur-Dueñas, 2011), language (Kim & Lim, 2013; Dafouz-Milne, 2008), and discipline (Abdi, 2002; Mina & Biria, 2017; Dahl, 2004; Kedri, Heng & Ebrahimi, 2013).

Also, the lexical variety or diversity and the CEFR level progression of specific MD features, i.e., *logical connectives, hedges,* and *relational markers,* can be good indicators of the Korean speakers' proficiency level. The use of *personal markers* also varies with proficiency, wherein high-level speakers tend to include others as *we* or *our* in the proposition rather than *I* and *me* as commonly used by the lower level. Less MD-D can lead to *underuse, overuse, misuse,* and *abuse* of some MD features. If the L2 learners' lexical repertoire is more diverse, more appropriate, and more explicit, the meaning can be conveyed if the words are appropriately selected from an extensive vocabulary list. Lexical sophistication, measured by EVP, can therefore be considered in the general knowledge and teaching of metadiscourse.

The current investigation has provided descriptive definitions of metadiscourse's discursive roles in Korean L2 learners' speech. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, we leave open questions for further investigations. This paper's findings warrant follow-up studies that could explore and verify the results by extending the exploration to a larger sample from different EFL or ESL contexts or speech corpus in general for more optimum and substantive results. Such findings can help researchers, teachers, practitioners, and L2 speakers, in general, to build up additional knowledge regarding the relevance of metadiscourse topics that apply to different learning contexts.

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