



Gendered Anaphoric Strategies in Korean: A Study on Male and Female Selection of BNPs and DNPs in Bridging Anaphora*

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates how Korean speakers regulate anaphoric form selection across different task types, focusing on how gender interacts with discourse and processing demands. In Korean, an article-less language, speakers alternate between bare noun phrases (BNPs) and demonstrative noun phrases (DNPs) to maintain referential coherence in bridging contexts. Drawing on accessibility-based models of reference, 142 native speakers (89 females and 53 males) completed two complementary experiments: a naturalness rating task and a cloze production task. Both tasks manipulated discourse conditions defined by bridging relation (whole-part vs. product-producer) and subject marking (topic vs. nominative). The results revealed that apparent gender differences arose not from fixed communicative styles but from task-dependent modes of cognitive engagement. In the rating task, males showed greater modulation by discourse accessibility, reflecting an analytic and contrast-sensitive evaluative heuristic, while females applied more stable, consistency-based criteria of coherence. In the cloze task, the pattern shifted under real-time processing pressure. Females adjusted anaphoric explicitness more dynamically across contexts, whereas males maintained more stable, economy-oriented production. These findings demonstrate that what seems to be gender asymmetry in referential form selection actually reflects adaptive responses to the distinct cognitive and pragmatic demands of evaluation and production tasks, refining accessibility-based theories of reference and emphasizing the importance of task type in modeling discourse-sensitive anaphoric choice.

KEYWORDS

accessibility, anaphora, BNPs, bridging references, cloze task, DNPs, gendered language, rating task

1. Introduction

Anaphora lies at the heart of discourse coherence, allowing speakers to link referring expressions to previously mentioned entities and thereby sustain referential continuity across utterances. In article-less languages like Korean, where multiple anaphoric markers, bare noun phrases (BNPs) and demonstrative noun phrases (DNPs), are available, the choice of an anaphoric marker is not merely a grammatical matter but a pragmatically significant one since it reflects speakers' judgments about discourse accessibility, semantic relatedness, and the informational status of referents (Kim 2015, Lee et al. 2023, Sohn 1999). The selection of anaphoric markers has thus long been central to theories of pragmatics and cognitive processing (Ariel 1990, Grosz et al. 1995, Gundel et al. 1993, 2010, Kehler 2002). Despite this centrality, relatively little is known about how socio-cognitive variables, most notably gender, modulate the use of anaphoric markers in article-less languages like Korean.

As a follow-up to Lee et al. (2023), who showed that Korean speakers display systematic biases in their choice of anaphoric markers across different discourse contexts, the present study further addresses this line of inquiry by integrating Ariel's (1990) accessibility-based accounts of referring form selection¹ with sociolinguistic perspectives on gendered discourse. Our central aim is to examine how male and female speakers diverge in their selection and evaluation of BNPs and DNPs in different types of bridging anaphora. In addition, the present study incorporates subject marking (topic vs. nominative) as an experimental factor. This factor is motivated by prior research like Choi (1997, 1999), which shows that topic marking enhances discourse prominence and referential continuity, whereas nominative marking typically introduces new or contrastive referents. Controlling for this morphosyntactic variable allows us to more precisely assess how gender interacts with discourse accessibility in shaping anaphoric choice. Crucially, we also test whether task type, evaluative judgment in a rating task versus generative production in a cloze task, engages distinct cognitive processes underlying anaphoric marker choice (Arnold 2010, Bard et al. 1996, Ferreira 2003, Fukumura and van Gompel 2010, Kaiser and Trueswell 2008).

Despite a growing body of research on referring expressions, especially anaphoric forms, in bridging anaphora² (Ariel 1990, Beaver 2004, Clark 1975, Fraurud 1990, Gundel et al. 1993, Hou et al. 2018, Kobayash and Ng 2020, Lee et al. 2023, Poesio and Vieira 1998, Vieira and Poesio 2000 among others), the intersection of gender and anaphoric form selection remains underexplored both in Korean and in discourse pragmatics more broadly. Existing accounts in cognitive linguistics and pragmatics generally treat referential choice, even across genders, as universally governed by accessibility hierarchies, without considering possible socio-cognitive modulation (Ariel 1990, Chafe 1994, Grosz et al. 1995, Gundel et al. 1993, Lee et al. 2023). By contrast, much of the sociolinguistic literature on gender has focused mainly on macro-level features of interaction, such as lexical choice, politeness strategies, and turn-taking patterns (Coates 2013, Holmes 1995, 2006, Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Kiesling 2007, Lakoff 1975, Tannen 1990), with limited attention to micro-level discourse operations like

¹ Accessibility-based accounts refer to theoretical frameworks in pragmatics that explain how the form of a referring expression (pronoun, demonstrative, full NP, etc.) depends on how accessible the referent is in the hearer's mental representation of the discourse. Ariel (1990), for example, introduces a hierarchy of referring expressions ranked by cognitive accessibility, and claims that the more accessible or activated a referent is in memory, the less linguistic material a speaker needs to identify it. That is, highly accessible referents tend to be expressed with more reduced forms like zero anaphors and pronouns, while less accessible referents require more explicit, rigid forms such as demonstrative and definite NPs.

² Bridging anaphora is formed when the interpretation of an anaphoric expression relies on an inferential link to a prior referent, not on a strict morphosyntactic co-reference (Clark 1975). For example, in "*I bought a book yesterday. The author is very famous.*," the anaphor expression *the author* in the second sentence is linked contextually to *a book* in the preceding sentence via a producer-product relation. Similarly, in "*She entered the room. The window was open.*," the anaphor *the window* is linked to *the room* via a whole-part relation.

anaphoric form selection. Likewise, while prior research claims that Korean speakers generally prefer BNPs to DNPs when the referents are highly accessible and hence easily identifiable in discourse (Ahn 2019, Kang 2021, Kim 2023, Lee et al. 2023 among others), it remains unclear whether this preference holds uniformly across genders or whether male and female speakers diverge in the degree of preference depending on discourse complexity and cognitive demands.

This study fills this gap by investigating how gendered communicative strategies shape anaphoric form choice in Korean, offering empirical insight into how males and females differently balance the competing demands of clarity (from the hearer's perspective) and economy (from the speaker's perspective) in discourse. To this end, this study pursues three research goals. First, it investigates whether there is a gender effect in Korean speakers' evaluation and production of BNPs and DNPs across different types of discourse contexts. Second, it further examines how this gender effect (if any) interacts with bridging reference type and morphosyntactic subject-anaphor type. And third, it aims to combine findings from both evaluative rating and productive cloze tasks to develop a unified account of gendered anaphoric strategies.

2. Previous Studies

2.1 Accessibility and Anaphoric Form Choice

One of the most influential lines of inquiry into referential form choice stems from the assumption that speakers systematically select referential forms based on the discourse prominence of a referent. For example, noticing that there exists a widely attested correlation between the grammatical form of an anaphor and the referent's discourse prominence or topical salience, Givón (1983) proposed a topicality-based continuum in which topic continuity predicts referential reduction. That is, the more continuous or prominent a discourse topic is, the more likely it is to be encoded with a reduced form such as an unstressed pronoun or null subject. This insight laid the groundwork for more cognitively grounded frameworks that focus on mental activation and attentional states.

Building on this tradition of discourse prominence, accessibility theory offers a cognitively oriented account of how referential form maps onto the hearer's presumed mental representation of discourse entities (Ariel 1990, Chafe 1994, Gundel et al. 1993). The central idea of this theory is that referential forms are universally specialized to encode different levels of cognitive accessibility, i.e., the ease with which an addressee can retrieve the referent from working memory. Accordingly, speakers choose among a set of referring expressions (e.g., zero anaphors, pronouns, demonstratives, and full noun phrases) based on their assumptions about how accessible the referent is to the listener at the point of reference.

For example, a key contribution of the Accessibility Theory proposed by Ariel (1990) is its formalization of a hierarchy of referring expressions, where reduced, nonrigid, and attenuated forms are reserved for highly accessible referents, and more explicit, informative, and rigid expressions are reserved for less accessible ones. A commonly cited version of this scale is presented in (1):

(1) null forms > (unstressed) pronouns > demonstratives > full noun phrases

This hierarchy has received cross-linguistic support (Gundel et al. 1993, 2010) and has been particularly useful in explaining referential form selection in article-less languages such as Korean (Lee et al. 2023). In Korean, BNPs function analogously to null forms or pronouns in other languages, encoding high accessibility through their

reduced, nonrigid, and phonologically minimal structure. DNPs, by contrast, are more rigid and morpho-syntactically marked, signaling lower accessibility and often serving to reintroduce or shift attention to less salient discourse referents.

While grammatical roles such as topichood and subjecthood influence the accessibility of referring forms, accessibility is also shaped by extralinguistic factors, including visual prominence, discourse structure (unity and recency), and speaker focus (Ariel 1990, Arnold 2010, Chafe 1994, Fukumura and van Gompel 2010, Gundel et al. 1993, 2010). Such complexity calls for a gradient, multifactorial model even for the study of anaphoric form selection, one that accounts for variation not only across discourse types but also across speaker groups and socio-pragmatic factors such as gender. The current study takes this theoretical background as a point of departure to explore whether and how gender modulates anaphoric form selection in Korean.

2.2 Gender and Anaphoric Form Choice

While foundational theories of referential form have long emphasized cognitive accessibility as a universal principle guiding anaphoric form selection (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993), emerging sociolinguistic perspectives complicate this view by introducing social variables, particularly gender, as influential factors in referential form selection. These approaches could be extended to an assumption that the selection may be influenced by stylistic preferences rooted in gendered patterns of interaction.

A growing body of corpus-based research supports this assumption. For instance, drawing on a large-scale analysis of over 14,000 text samples, Newman et al. (2008) found that female writers consistently used a greater number of referential terms and noun phrases with modifiers than their male counterparts. This pattern suggests a deliberate orientation toward explicitness and referential clarity, which reveals females' distinctive communicative strategies that facilitate cohesion and support the hearer's comprehension, not the speaker's production. These findings echo the classical claims made by Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990), and Holmes (1995), who characterize women's discourse as more affiliative, cooperative, and precision-oriented, often marked by overt cohesive devices and hypercorrected forms. Coates (2013) further emphasizes that women favor standard and prestigious forms, showing a heightened tendency toward hypercorrection and cohesive structuring. In referential contexts, we predict that this orientation by females may surface as a distinct pattern of preference for DNPs, particularly in structurally ambiguous or inferentially demanding settings where clarity and disambiguation are crucial.

Building on these insights, this study investigates whether male and female Korean speakers show a different pattern in their selection and evaluation of BNPs and DNPs across two discourse-semantic anaphoric relations (whole-part vs. product-producer) and two types of subject-marking anaphors (nominative vs. topic).

2.3 Korean Speakers' Choice of Anaphoric Forms

Drawing on Schwarz's (2009) typology of weak and strong definites in German, Lee et al. (2023) investigated Korean speakers' referential choices between BNPs and DNPs in varied bridging anaphoric contexts. Using both rating and cloze tasks, they demonstrated that Korean speakers are sensitive to the semantic complexity of the bridging relation when selecting anaphoric forms: DNPs (e.g., *ku* NP) were significantly preferred in product-producer (p-p) bridging contexts, while BNPs were more acceptable and frequently produced in whole-part (w-p) bridging contexts.

They claim that this pattern reflects the relatively higher inferential demands, that is, lower accessibility in Ariel's (1990) accessibility hierarchy, imposed by the semantic opacity of p-p relations. Unlike whole-part

relations, which typically involve spatial or structural contiguity and are thus more transparent and highly accessible, p-p links often require a greater degree of conceptual inference to establish the relationship between the two discourse entities. Korean speakers appear to employ the demonstrative *ku* in such contexts to facilitate discourse coherence and reduce processing effort, thus realizing cognitive economy through referential explicitness. This interpretation is consistent with the earlier insights by Horn (1984, 1993) and Ahn (2019), who emphasized that marked referential forms may serve a hearer-oriented clarity function in situations of low accessibility or increased processing load.

As a follow-up to Lee et al. (2023), which identified Korean speakers' biased preference for DNPs in such complex bridging contexts as p-p relations, this subsequent study explores whether such preferences are modulated distinctively by different genders. Specifically, by examining the interaction of bridging type, subject marking, and gender, this study investigates how sociolinguistic variables like gender shape anaphoric form selection in Korean discourse. For this purpose, we formulated the following task-specific predictions.

In the rating task, which emphasizes the hearer's perspective, we predicted that female participants would display a stronger and more consistent preference for overt and hearer-oriented forms like DNPs in both types of bridging references, while male participants would favor BNPs over DNPs overall, reflecting an economy-driven style of anaphoric form selection (Coates 2013, Holmes 1995, Lakoff 1975, Tannen 1990). In the cloze task, which highlights the speaker's perspective, we further predicted that female participants would use DNPs significantly more often, even in w-p contexts where the anaphor-antecedent relation is already highly accessible, whereas male participants would favor BNPs, especially in w-p contexts, relying more on implicit cohesion and shared assumptions in discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

This study employed a mixed-methods experimental design to investigate how Korean male and female speakers distinctively select BNPs and DNPs as anaphoric markers across varied discourse contexts. The methodological framework integrated two complementary experimental tasks that differ in their cognitive focus and methodological purpose. In the naturalness rating task, only sentences containing DNPs were presented, which does not directly measure the participants' preference between DNPs and BNPs but examines how contextual and participant-related factors modulate the acceptability of DNPs within different discourse environments. To address the limitation of this single-form evaluation and to capture relative referential choices more directly, a cloze production task was additionally implemented, where the participants freely selected between BNPs and DNPs under the same contextual conditions. Together, we believe that the two tasks provide a complementary perspective.

By employing a fully factorial design manipulating semantic bridging relation type (w-p and p-p) and syntactic subject marking (topic- and nominative-marked anaphors), this study systematically examined how gender interacts with discourse-pragmatic factors (including accessibility) in shaping anaphoric choice.

3.2 Participants

A total of 160 native Korean speakers were initially recruited from universities across South Korea, with 80 assigned to the rating task and 80 to the cloze task. To ensure participant homogeneity and reduce potential

limitations from external linguistic exposure, individuals with more than three years of residency in English-speaking countries or those majoring in foreign language studies were excluded from participation.

To ensure data reliability, participants who submitted more than three neglectful or inconsistent responses were excluded from the final dataset. Following this exclusion, the sample eventually comprised 66 participants for the rating task and 76 for the cloze task. In line with established practices in psycholinguistics and discourse processing research, the materials, 96 experimental sentences (24 items \times 4 conditions) and 48 fillers, totaling 144 sentences, were evenly distributed across three groups (A, B, and C) for each task. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these groups, such that each individual completed a total of 48 items. Before beginning the Google Form survey, participants provided demographic information, including sex, age, and educational background, in English. These data were used to verify eligibility and to establish a demographic record of the sample.

As this study was conducted as a follow-up to the earlier experiment by Lee et al. (2023), strict gender balance across groups could not be maintained, reflecting both the constraints of the study design and practical considerations in participant recruitment and scheduling. This results in the following groupings with males and females.

Rating Task: 66 participants (22 males, 44 females)

Group A (24): 7 males vs 17 females

Group B (24): 12 males vs 12 females

Group C (18): 3 males vs 15 females

Cloze Task: 76 participants (31 males, 45 females)

Group A (25): 12 males vs 13 females

Group B (26): 9 males vs 17 females

Group C (25): 10 males vs 15 females

This design ensured practical load balancing while maintaining the integrity of the factorial structure. Each participant was assigned to one group and instructed to evaluate 48 items (32 experimental sentences and 16 fillers).

3.3 Experimental Design

3.3.1 Rating task

This task was designed to determine whether gender influences the perceived naturalness of BNPs and DNPs as anaphoric markers from the hearer's perspective across different bridging anaphoric contexts.

Materials & procedures

The experimental materials comprised 96 complex sentence items (24 sentences \times 4 conditions), along with 48 fillers designed to mask the experimental conditions and reduce potential strategy effects. The critical sentence items were systematically balanced, first, across two semantic bridging types: w-p relations, where the anaphor denoting a part (of the whole) is contextually associated with its antecedent denoting the whole, and p-p relations, where the anaphor of a producer is contextually linked to a previously mentioned product. And secondly, across two morphosyntactic conditions: topic-marked anaphors (bearing *-(n)un*) and nominative-marked anaphors (bearing *-i/-ka*). By crossing bridging type with subject marking, we created a fully factorial 2×2 design that

enabled us to examine how semantic and morphosyntactic factors jointly influence male and female participants' choices between BNPs and DNPs. To reduce order effects and avoid priming, the stimuli were presented in a fully randomized order. Each participant received a unique IP address and an individualized Google survey link via email and was randomly assigned to complete one version of the task consisting of 48 items. Participants were first guided to complete a brief pretest designed to familiarize them with the survey format and to ensure that they understood the task instructions before proceeding to the main experiment. And then, (s)he rated the naturalness of each sentence on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely unnatural, 5 = completely natural).

The distribution of conditions and sentence examples is provided in Table 1:

Table 1. Experimental Conditions and Example Sentences

Condition 1	Condition 2	Sentence Examples
Whole-Part	Top	Cinswu-ka casin-uy tongnay-eyse itaylisik leysuthorang-ul hana chac-ass-ta. <i>Ku syepu-nun</i> nollawul cengtolo mat cohun phica-lul sepinghay-ss-ta. 'Jinsu found one Italian-style restaurant in his neighborhood. <i>The chef</i> served pizza that was surprisingly delicious.'
	Nom	Cinswu-ka casin-uy tongnay-eyse itaylisik leysuthorang-ul hana chac-ass-ta. <i>Ku syepu-ka</i> nollawul cengtolo mat cohun phica-lul sepinghay-ss-ta. 'Jinsu found one Italian-style restaurant in his neighborhood. <i>The chef</i> served pizza that was surprisingly delicious.'
Product-Producer	Top	Cinswu-ka kilkeri-eyse phwungkyeonghwa han cem-ul sa-ss-ta. <i>Ku hwaka-nun</i> phokpwungu chinun pata-lul citun kalsayk-ulo pyohyenhayssta. 'Jinsu bought a piece of landscape painting on the street. <i>The painter</i> expressed the stormy sea in deep brown.'
	Nom	Cinswu-ka kilkeri-eyse phwungkyeonghwa han cem-ul sa-ss-ta. <i>Ku hwaka-ka</i> phokpwungu chinun pata-lul citun kalsayk-ulo pyohyenhayssta. 'Jinsu bought a piece of landscape painting on the street. <i>The painter</i> expressed the stormy sea in deep brown.'

3.3.2 Cloze task

The second task was designed to examine gender-based differences in the production of bridging anaphoric forms, focusing on how male and female speakers distinctively achieve referential coherence by selecting BNPs or DNPs from a speaker's perspective.

Materials and procedures

The cloze production task employed the same 96 complex sentences used in the rating task. However, for this task, the position of the anaphoric marker was intentionally left blank to prompt participants' natural referential choices. This design enabled the direct observation of participants' spontaneous anaphoric selections across varying discourse contexts, without overt cues or restrictions.

The experimental conditions and example sentences for the cloze task are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Cloze Task Conditions and Example Sentences

Condition 1	Condition 2	Sentence Examples
Whole-Part	Top	Cinswu-ka casin-uy tongnay-eyse itaylisik leysuthorang-ul hana chac-ass-ta. () <i>syepu-nun</i> nollawul cengtolo mat cohun phica-lul sepinghay-ss-ta. 'Jinsu found one Italian-style restaurant in his neighborhood. <i>The chef</i> served pizza that was surprisingly delicious.'
	Nom	Cinswu-ka casin-uy tongnay-eyse itaylisik leysuthorang-ul hana chac-ass-ta. () <i>syepu-ka</i> nollawul cengtolo mat cohun phica-lul sepinghay-ss-ta. 'Jinsu found one Italian-style restaurant in his neighborhood. <i>The chef</i> served pizza that was surprisingly delicious.'
Product-Producer	Top	Cinswu-ka kilkeri-eyse phwungkyeonghwa han cem-ul sa-ss-ta. () <i>hwaka-nun</i> phokpwungu chinun pata-lul citun kalsayk-ulo pyohyenhssta. 'Jinsu bought a piece of landscape painting on the street. <i>The painter</i> expressed the stormy sea in deep brown.'
	Nom	Cinswu-ka kilkeri-eyse phwungkyeonghwa han cem-ul sa-ss-ta. () <i>hwaka-ka</i> phokpwungu chinun pata-lul citun kalsayk-ulo pyohyenhssta. 'Jinsu bought a piece of landscape painting on the street. <i>The painter</i> expressed the stormy sea in deep brown.'

Participants were instructed to complete the sentence either by leaving the blank empty, indicating a BNP, or by inserting the demonstrative determiner *ku*, thereby producing a DNP. Each participant completed 48 items in total, comprising 32 experimental sentences and 16 fillers. All other procedures followed the same protocol as in the rating task.

3.4 Statistical Tools

For the rating task, we employed linear mixed-effects models (LMMs) to analyze the data (Baayen et al. 2008, Barr et al. 2013), with three fixed effects – gender (male vs. female), bridging type (whole-part vs. product-producer), and subject marker (topic vs. nominative). To capture the full range of possible interactions, both two-way and three-way combinations among these variables were included. Additionally, random intercepts for both participants and items were specified to account for individual differences and item-level variation.³ This approach allowed us to isolate the effects of our primary variables of interest while controlling for variability that could otherwise confuse the results.

For the cloze production task, which yielded binary responses (BNP = 0, DNP = 1), we used generalized linear mixed-effects models (GLMMs) with a logit link function. The fixed and random effects structures mirrored those used in the rating task, including gender, bridging type, and subject marker, along with their interactions. This parallel design enabled direct comparison between perception-based judgments and production-based choices.

In both tasks, we carefully checked that the statistical models were reliable and provided a good fit to the data. We included as many random effects as possible to account for variation between participants and items, following best practices in mixed-effects model analysis (Baayen et al. 2008, Barr et al. 2013). We focused on understanding the main effects (like gender or subject marking), as well as two-way and, when relevant, three-way interactions, especially those involving gender. This approach provided a detailed picture of how gender influenced the choice

³ The statistical analyses of our study were conducted in R using the lme4 package with random intercepts for participants and items, where each variable was converted into a binary value, 0 or 1, so that one level serves as the reference category and the other as the contrast category: female = 0, male = 1 (Gender); whole-part = 0, product-producer = 1 (Bridging Type); and nominative = 0, topic = 1 (Subject Marking).

of anaphoric expressions across different discourse conditions and task types. To make these patterns clearer, we also created interaction plots that visually captured key effects, particularly the ways gender interacted with bridging type.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Rating Task

This section outlines how gender influences the participants' absolute judgments of the naturalness of the DNPs across the two linguistic conditions, bridging type and subject marker. The analysis includes both the main effects and interactions, with a particular focus on gender-based differences in participants' judgments.

4.1.1 Overview of rating distributions

Table 3 below presents the descriptive statistics for 66 participants' (22 males and 44 females) naturalness ratings of the DNPs in bridging anaphoric contexts. These results, broken down by gender, bridging type, and subject marking, are also visualized in Figure 1.

Table 3. Means and SDs by Gender, Bridging Type, and Subject Marker (Rating Task)

Gender	Bridging Type	Subject Marker	Mean	Std Dev
F	p-p	nom	3.50	1.31
F	p-p	top	3.88	1.17
F	w-p	nom	3.36	1.36
F	w-p	top	3.65	1.30
M	p-p	nom	3.89	1.18
M	p-p	top	4.11	1.02
M	w-p	nom	3.48	1.27
M	w-p	top	3.87	1.16

Across all conditions, males consistently rated DNPs as more natural anaphoric markers than females, a pattern that runs counter to our initial prediction and to the classical sociolinguistic claims that women generally prefer hypercorrect referential forms (Holmes 1995, Lakoff 1975, Tannen 1990). In p-p contexts with nominative subjects, for example, males ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.18$) rated DNPs significantly higher than females ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.31$). Similar patterns emerged in the remaining three conditions, p-p with topic subject, w-p with nominative subject, and w-p with topic subject, indicating a clear gender-based and yet unexpected divergence.

These results, broken down by gender, bridging type, and subject marking, are illustrated in Figure 1.

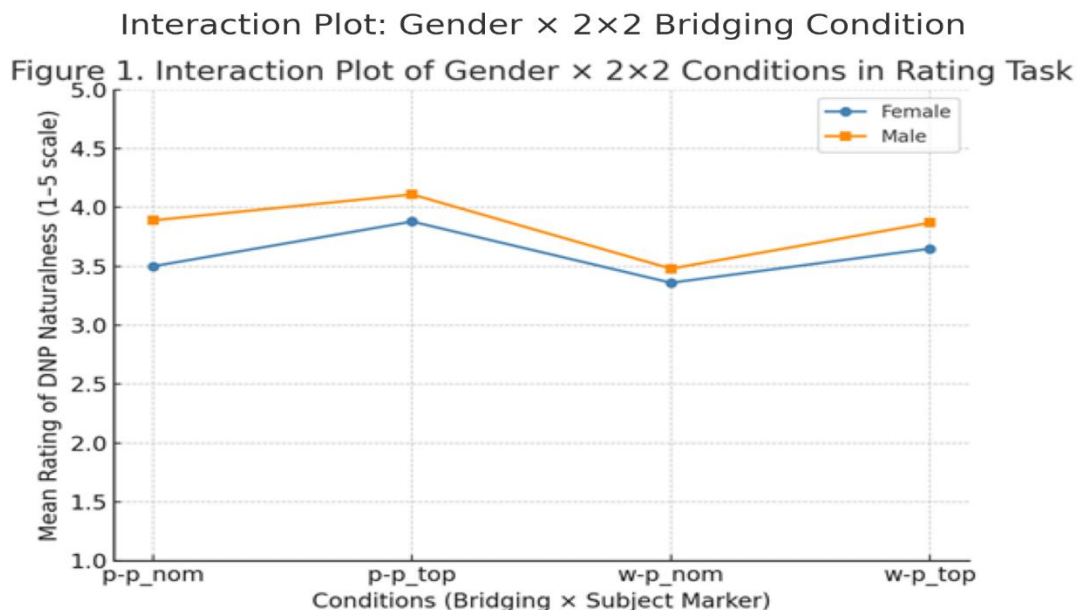


Figure 1. Interaction Plot (Gender × 2×2 Conditions) in Rating Task

With respect to the subject marker effect, both genders rated DNPs as more natural in topic-marked than in nominative-marked subject contexts. For females, naturalness ratings increased by 0.29 points in w-p relations and 0.38 points in p-p relations when shifting from nominative to topic marking. Males showed comparable gains of 0.22 and 0.39 points, respectively. These patterns indicate a consistent tendency for the topic marker *-(n)un* to raise the perceived naturalness of DNPs.

Turning to the bridging type effect, both genders responded to the increased inferential demands of p-p relations, typically less semantically transparent than w-p relations (Clark 1975, Lee et al. 2023, Poesio and Vieira 1998), by assigning higher ratings to DNPs in the p-p contexts.⁴ The bridging effect was especially noticeable among male participants, whose DNP ratings rose by 0.24 points in topic-marked contexts and 0.41 points in nominative-marked contexts when moving from w-p to p-p relations. Females also showed sensitivity to this contrast, though their increases were more moderate at 0.14 and 0.23 points, respectively. The crucial point in the bridging type effect lies not in the direction of preference but in the degree of adjustment. Males exhibited more sharply differentiated ratings, suggesting that they may be more responsive to the inferential demands of less transparent bridging contexts such as p-p relations, or more inclined to resolve referential ambiguity through overt forms. Females likewise preferred DNPs in p-p contexts, but their modulation across bridging types was more moderate and stable.

The descriptive analysis of the ratings has revealed two complementary patterns. First, males consistently rated DNPs as more natural than females across conditions, contrary to our initial prediction and classical sociolinguistic

⁴ As one reviewer thoughtfully reminded us, the inferential difficulty between w-p and p-p relations may not derive solely from the inherent semantic properties of the relation type. Rather, it can vary depending on discourse-pragmatic cues (e.g., topic marking, connective expressions) and the activation of background world knowledge, which jointly modulate the degree of discourse accessibility in context. We acknowledge the significance of this point and hope to address it more systematically in future research.

claims. Second, the gender difference lay not in the overall direction of preference but in the degree of adjustment. Males showed sharper differentiation across bridging types, whereas females maintained a steadier preference for explicit DNP anaphors. These findings suggest that men respond more flexibly to discourse complexity, while women adopt a more stable strategy in hearer-oriented acceptability judgments of naturalness.

These descriptive trends deserve further validation through statistical analysis and, more importantly, comparison with the cloze task results, which capture participants' production preferences.

4.1.2 Statistical analysis: linear mixed-effects model (LMM)

To determine the extent to which gender, bridging type, and subject marking influenced participants' naturalness ratings of DNPs, we analyzed the rating task data using a linear mixed-effects model (LMM). By including random intercepts for each participant, the model controls for individual differences in rating tendencies. Table 4 presents the full results, including coefficients, standard errors, z-values, and p-values for each fixed effect.

Table 4. Key Results of LMM in Rating Task⁵

Effect	Coef.	Std. Err.	z-value	p-value
Intercept	3.503	0.11	30.88	< 0.001
Gender[M]	+0.389	0.2	1.98	*0.048
Bridging[w-p]	-0.142	0.08	1.78	0.075
Subj[top]	+0.372	0.08	4.62	*< 0.001
Gender[M] × Bridging[w-p]	-0.257	0.14	1.86	0.063
Gender[M] × Subj[top]	-0.151	0.14	1.08	0.281
Bridging[w-p] × Subj[top]	-0.080	0.11	0.70	0.483
3-way Interaction[M×w- p×top]	+0.222	0.2	1.12	0.261

Note: * $p < .05$

The analysis in Table 4 revealed a significant gender effect, with males assigning higher ratings to DNPs across conditions ($\beta = +0.389$, $p = 0.048$), thereby confirming the descriptive trend observed in Section 4.1.1, which ran against our initial prediction that females would show a stronger preference for overt, hypercorrect forms such as DNPs. It was males who consistently rated DNPs as more natural, suggesting that gendered sensitivity to anaphoric marking may operate differently than the classical sociolinguistic accounts predict.

A strong subject marker effect also emerged. Topic-marked anaphors received significantly higher ratings than nominative-marked anaphors ($\beta = +0.372$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with the well-established discourse prominence of topic marking in Korean, which enhances referential accessibility and coherence (Choi 1997, 1999, Jun 2015, Kim 1990, Kim 2015, Lambrecht 1994, Lee et al. 2023, Sohn 1999).

⁵ The linear mixed-effects model was fitted using the lme4 package in R. Each participant completed 32 experimental and 16 filler items (66 in the rating and 76 in the cloze task), yielding over 4,500 analyzed observations. In lme4, z-values are computed as the ratio of the coefficient estimate to its standard error, and p-values are derived from the standard normal distribution. Given the large number of observations, reporting p-values based on z-statistics is appropriate under the normal approximation for mixed-effects modeling (Baayen et al. 2008, Barr et al. 2013).

A marginal interaction between gender and bridging type ($\beta = -0.257, p = 0.063$) indicated that males reduced their DNP ratings more sharply than females in w-p contexts. This trend, while not reaching conventional levels of significance, points to a potential gender-based asymmetry in how Korean speakers respond to discourse complexity. Males appeared to be more inclined to reduce their use of DNPs when the anaphor-antecedent relation is semantically transparent, thereby aligning more closely with economy-driven principles of reference (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993, Horn 1984, 1993). Females, by contrast, appeared less inclined to make such perceptible adjustments, maintaining a steadier preference for explicit marking even in contexts where reduced forms might have sufficed.

No other interactions reached significance. Neither the Gender \times Subject Marker nor the Bridging \times Subject Marker interactions were reliable, and the three-way interaction (Gender \times Bridging \times Subject Marker: $\beta = +0.222, p = 0.261$) also failed to reach significance, although the direction of effects was theoretically consistent with the descriptive patterns observed.

Taken together, the inferential results revealed a more complicated gender asymmetry than our initial predictions anticipated. Contrary to the expectations and long-standing sociolinguistic claims, it was male participants, not females, who consistently rated explicit DNPs as more natural across conditions, highlighting that preferences for overt anaphoric forms cannot be simply attributed to gendered tendencies toward hypercorrection. At the same time, the marginal interaction with bridging type suggests, on the other hand, that the two genders diverge less in the direction of preference than in the degree of sensitivity to discourse context. That is, males adjusted their ratings more sharply in response to semantic transparency or discourse accessibility, while females maintained a consistent reliance on explicit DNP anaphors.

4.2 Cloze Task

This section reports the results of the cloze task, designed to investigate gender-based differences in the actual production of anaphoric forms across the same conditions tested in the rating task. Participants were asked to complete the sentences by either inserting the demonstrative determiner *ku* (yielding a DNP) or leaving the slot blank (yielding a BNP). Their responses were subsequently coded numerically as 1 (DNP) or 0 (BNP) for statistical analysis. The production data obtained through this task serve as a critical complement to the rating task, enabling a more comprehensive examination of how gender influences anaphoric strategies in Korean discourse.

4.2.1 Overview of production distributions

The descriptive results of the cloze task, presented in Table 5, which are also visualized in Figure 2, reveal distinct gender-related patterns in the production of DNPs (coded as 1) versus BNPs (coded as 0), depending on the interaction between bridging type and subject marker. These patterns, together with those obtained from the rating task, provide a comprehensive empirical foundation for the examination of how male and female speakers differentially realize referential coherence under varying discourse conditions.

Table 5. Means and SDs by Gender, Bridging Type, and Subject Marker (Cloze Task)

Gender	Bridging Type	Subject Marker	Mean	Std Dev
F	p-p	nom	0.53	0.50
F	p-p	top	0.60	0.49
F	w-p	nom	0.28	0.45
F	w-p	top	0.42	0.49
M	p-p	nom	0.47	0.50
M	p-p	top	0.55	0.50
M	w-p	nom	0.33	0.47
M	w-p	top	0.44	0.50

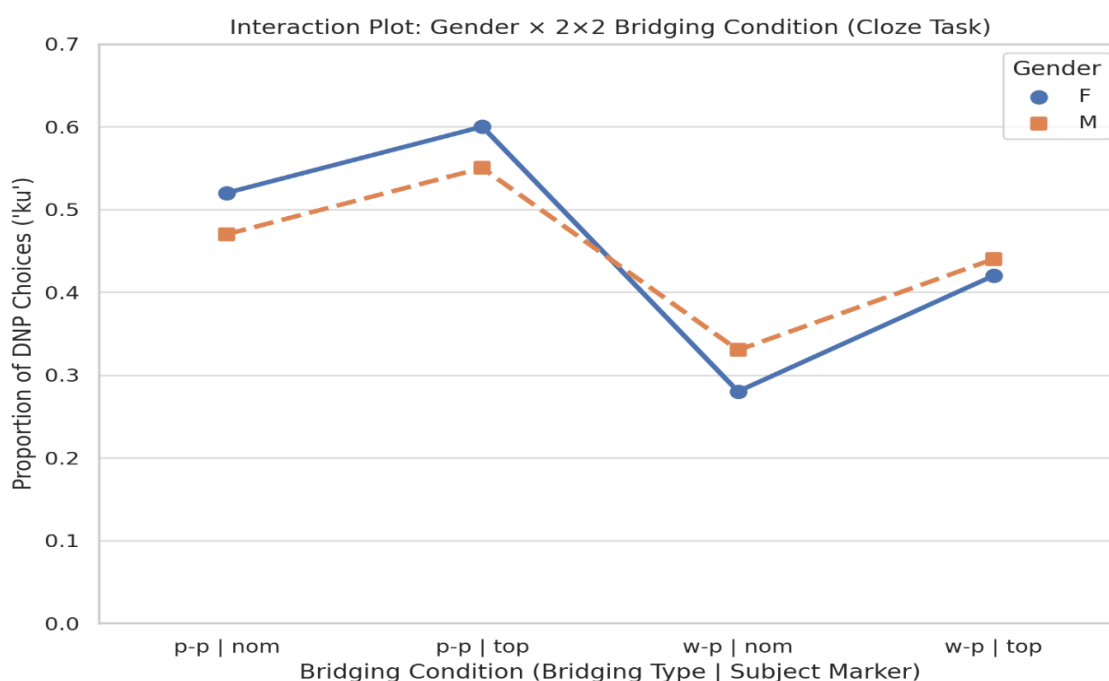


Figure 2. Interaction Plot (Gender × 2×2 Conditions) in Cloze Task

In contrast to the rating task, where males unexpectedly assigned higher ratings to DNPs in all conditions, the cloze task revealed a partially reversed pattern, especially in p-p contexts. This gender difference was most evident in p-p/nom-marked conditions, where females used DNPs at a rate of 0.53, compared to 0.47 for males. This reversal pattern suggests that, in actual production, females were more likely than males to opt for overt anaphoric marking in bridging contexts that impose heavier inferential demands. In contrast, in w-p contexts, where the semantic link between antecedent and anaphor is more straightforward and transparent, males still used DNPs slightly more often than females, suggesting a subtle crossover in gender preferences depending on bridging type.

With respect to the subject marking effect, both female and male participants produced DNPs more frequently in topic-marked than in nominative-marked anaphor contexts. This consistent pattern supports the well-established role of topic marking in enhancing discourse prominence and facilitating the choice of explicit anaphoric

expressions (Choi 1997, 1999, Jun 2015, Kim 1990, Lambrecht 1994, Lee et al. 2023).

Turning to the bridging type effect, p-p contexts consistently elicited higher DNP production than w-p contexts across both genders. However, the degree of variation between bridging types differed notably between female and male participants. Females exhibited a more substantial decline in DNP production when shifting from p-p to w-p contexts, as clearly visualized in Figure 2 above. Specifically, their DNP use markedly dropped from 0.60 to 0.42 in topic-marked anaphor sentences and from 0.53 to 0.28 in nominative-marked anaphor sentences. In contrast, male participants exhibited less variability across the bridging types. Their DNP production remained relatively stable, though dropping from 0.55 to 0.44 in topic-marker conditions and from 0.47 to 0.33 in nominative-marked anaphor sentences. These findings demonstrate that in the cloze task, females were more sensitive to the shifts in bridging context than males, a pattern that contrasts with the rating task, where males showed sharper sensitivity by adjusting their DNP ratings more strongly across bridging contexts.

4.2.2 Statistical analysis: generalized linear mixed-effects model (GLMM)

Here are the results of the logistic regression model testing for gender-based differences in the production of BNPs (0) vs. DNPs (1), across the 2×2 conditions:

Table 6. Key Results of GLMM in Cloze Task

Effect	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	p-value
Intercept	0.10	0.106	0.95	0.343
Gender [M]	-0.213	0.165	-1.29	0.197
Bridging [w-p]	-1.028	0.158	-6.53	< 0.001
Subj Marker [top]	0.294	0.151	1.95	0.051
Gender × Bridging	0.436	0.243	1.79	0.073
Gender × Subj Marker	0.030	0.235	0.13	0.900
Bridging × Subj Marker	0.325	0.219	1.49	0.137
3-way Interaction	-0.203	0.339	-0.60	0.549

Note: * $p < .05$

The main effect of gender indicates that males were slightly less likely to produce DNPs than females overall, though this difference ($\beta = -0.213$, $p = 0.197$) did not reach the significance level. This result stands in contrast to the findings from the rating task, where males significantly and consistently rated DNPs as more natural.

Bridging type exerted a statistically significant effect on anaphoric form selection ($\beta = -1.028$, $p < 0.001$). Both genders were significantly less likely to use DNPs in w-p contexts than in p-p contexts. Again, this finding is consistent with the accessibility hypothesis (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993, 2010), which predicts that semantically less accessible referents, such as those antecedents in p-p relations, are more likely to be identified by overt, informationally rich forms like DNPs. The strength of this effect underlines the central role of semantic bridging in anaphoric form choice.

Although the interaction between gender and bridging type did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance ($\beta = 0.436$, $p = 0.073$), it appears worth noting that females were more sensitive than males to the semantic structure of the bridging relation in production. Specifically, females showed a sharper decline in DNP use when shifting from p-p to w-p contexts. This finding stands in contrast to the rating task, where male participants showed greater modulation of DNP acceptability across bridging types.

No other interaction terms reached statistical significance. The Gender \times Subject Marker interaction ($\beta = 0.030$, $p = 0.900$) indicates no reliable gender difference in response to subject marking. Similarly, the Bridging \times Subject Marker interaction showed only a non-significant trend ($\beta = 0.325$, $p = 0.137$), suggesting that topic marking may slightly increase the likelihood of choosing DNPs in w-p contexts, though this effect was not robust. The three-way interaction among Gender, Bridging Type, and Subject Marker was also non-significant ($\beta = -0.203$, $p = 0.549$), indicating no compounded influence of these variables on DNP production.

In summary, the cloze task results suggest a noteworthy reversal of the pattern observed in the rating task. While the main effect of gender indicated that males were overall slightly less likely than females to produce DNPs, this difference did not reach statistical significance. More revealing was the marginal interaction between gender and bridging type, which pointed to greater female sensitivity to the semantic structure of bridging relations. Females reduced their use of DNPs more sharply when moving from p-p to w-p contexts. This stands in contrast to the rating task, where males exhibited greater modulation of DNP acceptability across bridging types.

These conflicting results of the two tasks highlight the importance of distinguishing between metalinguistic evaluation and actual production. The rating task focuses on hearer-oriented acceptability judgments of naturalness, while the cloze task captures speaker-oriented choices in real-time production (Arnold 2010, Bard et al. 1996, Ferreira 2003, Fukumura and van Gompel 2010, Kaiser and Trueswell 2008). Within this framework, males appear more responsive to semantic relations when evaluating the acceptability of naturalness, while females demonstrate greater sensitivity to semantic relations when producing anaphoric forms. This asymmetry highlights the task-dependent nature of gendered sensitivity to discourse complexity and suggests that anaphoric form selection reflects not a single cognitive mechanism but the interplay between accessibility (or economy), clarity, and task-specific demands.

5. Discussion

This study examined gender-based differences in Korean speakers' anaphoric form selection strategies in bridging anaphora, focusing on the use of BNPs and DNPs across the rating and cloze tasks. The findings across both tasks provide converging and diverging evidence on how male and female participants evaluate and produce anaphoric forms under varying discourse conditions, shaped by semantic bridging type and morphosyntactic subject marking.

Although both genders rated and produced more DNPs in p-p than in w-p contexts, the extent and manner of sensitivity to bridging relations were modulated by gender and task. In the rating task, males consistently assigned higher ratings to DNPs than females across conditions, a pattern that diverges from the sociolinguistic claims that women generally favor overt or hypercorrect forms (Holmes 1995, Lakoff 1975, Tannen 1990). Moreover, the Gender \times Bridging Type interaction showed that males were more responsive to semantic complexity, reducing their DNP ratings more sharply in w-p contexts. This is consistent with accessibility-based accounts of referential economy (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993, 2010), which predict that highly accessible antecedents, such as those linked via whole-part relations, license reduced forms like BNPs. Female participants also rated DNPs higher in p-p contexts, but their adjustments across bridging types were more moderate, reflecting a relatively stable preference for explicit marking.

While the rating task provided a crucial insight into the participants' acceptability judgments, it should be noted, however, that the task measured only the acceptability of DNPs, not their relative preference over BNPs, since the test items contained only DNPs. This methodological limitation was purposefully compensated for by the cloze

task, which prompted the participants to produce anaphoric forms spontaneously under identical discourse conditions.

Within this dual approach, the cloze task revealed a reconfiguration rather than a reversal of gender effects. Female participants produced more DNPs than males, particularly in p-p contexts with nominative marking, while producing fewer in w-p contexts. This pattern complements the rating results by showing that, when generating discourse, females tend to prioritize referential clarity and explicitness where inferential demands are high, as in p-p relations, but economize where contextual linkage is transparent, as in w-p relations. Male production, in contrast, remained relatively stable across conditions, suggesting a greater reliance on discourse economy and shared contextual assumptions.

Thus, the two tasks converge in showing that both genders are sensitive to discourse accessibility but differ in how they operationalize this sensitivity. Males adjust more in acceptability judgment, whereas females adapt more dynamically in real-time production. This alignment between methodological design and observed patterns highlights the internal coherence of the findings, rather than a contradiction between tasks.

The following layout provides a clear summary of the gender-based contrasts observed across the two tasks:

Table 7. Gendered Patterns of Anaphoric Choice: Results from Rating and Cloze Tasks

Dimension	Rating Task (Hearer-Oriented Evaluation)	Cloze Task (Speaker-Oriented Production)
Overall Gender Effect	Males: Rated DNPs higher than females across all conditions (significant).	Males: Produced fewer DNPs overall (non-significant).
	Females: Rated DNPs lower overall, contrary to predictions that women prefer overt forms.	Females: Produced more DNPs than males in p-p/nom contexts.
Bridging Sensitivity	Males: Sharper decline in DNP ratings in w-p contexts, consistent with accessibility-driven economy.	Males: Stable production across contexts.
	Females: Modest adjustment; relatively stable ratings across contexts.	Females: Sharper decline in DNP use from p-p to w-p contexts.
Subject Marker Effect	Males: Rated topic-marked DNPs higher than nominative-marked DNPs.	Males: Produced more DNPs with topic marking.
	Females: Same pattern, but with slightly smaller shifts.	Females: Produced more DNPs with topic marking; larger shift than males.

The divergence between the rating and cloze tasks can be coherently explained by the distinct cognitive and pragmatic demands each task imposes, rather than by gender per se. The rating task primarily engages metalinguistic awareness and reflective judgment (Arnold 2010, Bard et al. 1996), requiring participants to assess the appropriateness of given forms rather than to produce them in real time. Because this task minimizes processing pressure, responses reflect normative evaluations of clarity and coherence more than spontaneous production preferences. In this reflective frame of rating task, the two groups appeared to differ in how strongly they weighted the two criteria of the same evaluative mechanism, explicitness and discourse accessibility.

Males' higher sensitivity toward explicitness and discourse accessibility suggests that the analytical stance encouraged by the rating task led them to treat explicit marking as a pragmatically safe or appropriate option, while also heightening their awareness of contextual contrasts. In transparent w-p relations, they penalized redundant DNPs, whereas in less transparent p-p contexts, they endorsed them as contextually justified. In contrast, females' lower sensitivity to explicitness and discourse accessibility may be attributed to their stability of judgment under reflective conditions, applying a uniform standard of coherence and explicitness rather than adjusting judgment for every contextual shift.

The cloze task engages real-time processing pressures, requiring participants to actively generate anaphoric

forms under discourse constraints (Ferreira 2003, Fukumura and van Gompel 2010, Kaiser and Trueswell 2008). Under production conditions, females produced more DNPs, particularly in p-p contexts, demonstrating greater responsiveness to inferential load and a tendency to ensure referential clarity when discourse relations were less transparent. This behavior reflects the adaptability of production-oriented processing, where participants adjust the explicitness of referential forms to maintain cohesion in real time. Males, in contrast, exhibited more stable production patterns across conditions, suggesting a reliance on procedural efficiency and shared contextual assumptions, an economy-driven routine that minimizes additional marking when coherence can be pragmatically inferred.

These patterns do not represent opposing communicative styles but rather different adaptive strategies shaped by task constraints. In the rating task, both genders operated within a reflective frame that privileges heuristic evaluation, but in production, participants shifted to dynamic referential management, balancing efficiency with clarity under temporal pressure. The female participants' sharper modulation across bridging types in the cloze task, contrasting with their steadier ratings, thus reveals not a reversal of orientation but a shift in cognitive engagement, from evaluating appropriateness to managing coherence online. This interpretation aligns with discourse-production models emphasizing audience design, in which speakers continuously adjust the explicitness of referential forms to match the listener's informational needs (Brennan and Hanna 2009, Clark and Murphy 1982).

In sum, the findings of this study demonstrate that gender-related differences in anaphoric form choice are best understood through the lens of task-dependent cognitive engagement rather than fixed communicative styles. In the rating task, males and females employed distinct evaluative heuristics: males demonstrated greater sensitivity to accessibility contrasts. In contrast, females applied stable coherence-based norms, reflecting different modes of evaluative judgment. In the cloze task, these tendencies shifted under real-time production pressure: females adjusted anaphoric explicitness more dynamically across contexts, while males maintained economical stability. Together, these results reveal that what appears as gender divergence in referential form selection turns out to reflect adaptive responses to the cognitive and pragmatic demands of distinct tasks, discourse evaluation, and production.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how Korean speakers' evaluation and production of anaphoric forms are modulated by task type, focusing on the choice between BNPs and DNPs across bridging contexts. Although gender differences were observed, they are better explained as task-dependent variations in cognitive engagement rather than stable communicative styles. In the rating task, males and females adopted distinct evaluative heuristics: males showed greater adjustment to accessibility contrasts while females maintained stable, consistency-based judgments of coherence, which reflects different modes of reflective evaluation. In the cloze task, however, both groups shifted toward real-time discourse management: females increased DNP use in less transparent contexts to ensure clarity while males maintained stable, economy-oriented production patterns.

Taken together, the findings indicate that what appears as gendered asymmetry in anaphoric preference actually reflects adaptive responses to the cognitive and pragmatic demands of different tasks. These results refine accessibility-based models of reference (Ariel 1990, Gundel et al. 1993) by showing that discourse sensitivity emerges not only from speaker or gender variables but also from the processing mode, evaluative versus productive, through which referential decisions are made. Methodologically, this study emphasizes the value of integrating

perception- and production-based paradigms to capture both reflective and procedural dimensions in Korean speakers' referential form selection. Pedagogically, it suggests that effective instruction in article-less languages such as Korean should address how speakers balance economy, clarity, and context differently in different types of discourses, metalinguistic evaluation, and real-time production.

Despite these contributions, some limitations remain. The uneven gender distribution, especially in the rating task, may have constrained statistical power. The rating task in this study presented only DNP-containing items as stimuli, and thus, the data may not directly capture a relative preference contrast between DNPs and BNPs. Future studies should employ more balanced sampling and expand the range of bridging relations and syntactic positions to test the generality of these findings. Further exploration of how task demands interact with speaker variables promises to clarify the broader cognitive mechanisms underlying anaphoric choice across languages and contexts.

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Examples in: English & Korean
Applicable Languages: English & Korean
Applicable Level: Tertiary