Analyzing Workplace English Communication Use and Needs: Insights from Korean Corporate Employees[*]

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Despite the ever-increasing use of English in international business encounters, there seems to be comparatively little attention given to the interface between actual workplace communication and language programs in terms of identifying and meeting learners' needs. To fill that void, the present study reports on the routine communicative practices in English of fifty-one Korean corporate employees. Insightful data from the so-called 'domain experts' who use English on a regular basis were obtained through an online survey with eight participants invited to a follow-up telephone interview. Based on the types of needs operationalized in the study, the findings imply that there indeed exist different dimensions of needs. The study indicates that transactional and non-transactional communicative genres were both important but to a different extent with each genre being assessed differently according to their profession. Lastly, implications regarding the importance of incorporating needs analysis as a key process that requires constant re-examination of language programs concerning workplace communication is discussed.

Keywords: needs analysis, English for Business Purposes, Korean corporate employees, workplace communication

1 Introduction

With present-day globalization, the ever-increasing number of people who are using English as an additional language shows how the role and status of English have changed over the past several decades (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins et al., 2020; Seidlhofer, 2011). While the predominant use of English as a lingua franca has brought business professionals operating globally to interact with relative ease, it has also presented communication challenges to many individuals (Cogo, 2012; Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Nickerson, 2015). This, in turn, has led demands on having a good command

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of work-related English skills to increase today than ever before. With such demands, recent years have witnessed an increasing influx of people with relatively high standardized English proficiency test scores into the job market. However, doing actual work using English as a medium in workplace settings requires a different dimension of language competence, and many have long been aware of this discrepancy (Kang, 2020; Ryu, 2007). To address this issue with regard to strengthening and securing their competitiveness in global settings, many Korean corporations have been offering business English courses as part of their in-house training programs to foster their employees' English communication skills for business purposes.

Whether such courses are reflecting upon real-life workplace situations, however, has become a major concern in the recent literature of English for Business Purposes (EBP) with studies pointing out the inadequacies of business English courses and published materials used in language programs (see Bhatia & Bremner, 2012). In response to recent strands in the field of EBP education, studies have been carried out to investigate what English skills are actually being utilized and required at a corporate level (e.g., Chan, 2009, 2014; Lam et al., 2014). Nevertheless, less attention has been paid to the English communicative skills that Korean corporate employees need to possess in order to perform competently at their workplace. To fill that void, the present study attempts to gain a better understanding of the use and needs of workplace English communication skills reported by Korean corporate employees who are in regular contact with foreign business counterparts.

2 Literature Review

With English being the *de facto* lingua franca in many international business contexts, the important roles of spoken and written communication in English have been the primary foci in much workplace communication research. According to Nickerson (2005), there has been a shift toward analyzing contextualized communicative genres in investigating business contexts regarding effective communication strategies in major verbal and written communicative genres such as business meetings (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Bilbow, 2002; Lockwood & Song, 2020), negotiations (e.g., Charles, 1996; Vuorela, 2005), and e-mails (e.g., Gimenez, 2006; Gimenez-Moreno, 2010; Jensen, 2009; Kim & Lee, 2017).

Based on the importance of such communicative genres, notable research has directed their attention to examine spoken and written communicative use and needs, aiming to further provide insights in facilitating the teaching and learning of practical and authentic business English. Jackson (2005), for example, focused on the perceptions of business English lecturers in Hong Kong to understand the nature of English communication demands that were placed on students at tertiary institutions. Through semi-structured

interviews and group discussions, his project emphasized the importance of collaboration between researchers and lecturers. Ainsworth (2013), receiving feedback via surveys and interviews, attempted to uncover business students' attitudes toward foreign language and necessary intercultural communication skills for their studies and future careers. She argued that in order to prepare them for the international workplace, all stakeholders should be engaged in the curriculum creation process to enhance students' capacity to successfully communicate.

Despite the importance of gaining data from language instructors and pre-service learners, there have examples of mismatches that have been occasionally reported (Long, 2015). While they together have much to offer as sources of information, recent research has revealed that domain experts (i.e., experienced workers) are likely to provide more sufficient and reliable description of their task. Increasingly, corporate employees' perspectives have become the focus of investigation as they are insiders who are intimately familiar with the work and thus considered to be a major source of information (Chan, 2014; Serafini et al., 2015). This has led studies to investigate communicative needs directly from workplace employees.

With an objective to develop intensive English language courses for trainee employees at a Japanese firm, Cowling (2007) emphasized the importance of the needs analysis process to reach an in-depth understanding of communicative practices and expectations in the target environment. He argued that insiders who were in positions using English at their work were found to be the most authentic and useful sources as they were able to provide quality information about their routine tasks. Studies with similar attempts were also carried out in identifying English communicative events and skills that were being used and required by workplace employees in the textile and clothing (So-mui & Mead, 2000), banking (Chew, 2005), engineering (Kassim & Ali, 2010), and service industries (Evans, 2010).

While the aforementioned studies concentrated on examining transactional communicative needs, other recent studies have directed their attention to the importance of non-transactional communication, which requires soft skills related to a person's relationships with others (Planken, 2005; Pullin, 2010; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). By receiving feedback from corporations, Crosling and Ward (2002), for instance, found out that knowing how to engage in informal conversation was as important as attending any formal events. Robles' (2012) study also showed that employers required employees to possess strong interpersonal qualities. Moreover, Moshiri and Cardon (2014) revealed how interpersonal skills have garnered increased attention in business English courses. These findings indicate a shift toward acknowledging the importance of interpersonal communication skills over the past decade as they are considered crucial for productive performance in workplace settings (Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015).

As such, the importance of analyzing the transactional and non-transactional communicative needs of corporate employees has been burgeoning in the field of EBP. With some studies being an exception, research related to that of the contemporary workplace in Korea are found to be relatively scarce in number. One of the several studies related to the English needs in the Korean workplace involving business education coordinators and business practitioners was conducted by Cho et al. (1998). Their study found that although English skills were not in frequent demand, tasks requiring speaking and writing were the two major skills that were of importance. By specifically focusing on private manufacturing corporations, Choi (2002) identified that employees who held middle management positions working in sales and marketing were significantly more likely to make use of business English than any other divisions. This was due to the fact that their jobs required taking part in business meetings and presentations, sending and receiving e-mails, attending receptions, and dining with foreign business counterparts. With regard to workplace education, Yang et al. (2006) found results showing that Korean corporations held relatively negative views in the effectiveness of English and foreign language education implemented by universities. Companies stated that they are offering language programs to complement what universities somewhat failed to achieve.

Despite being limited, these studies have much to offer in terms of directing the present study as they suggest workers who hold middle management positions encounter frequent use of business English, and that those with regular contact with foreigners could produce more in-depth results. In this light, a more recent understanding of Korean corporate employees' business English language training alongside their English communicative skills needed at their workplaces deserve analytic attention. This study, therefore, sets out the address the following research questions stated below.

(1) What types of workplace English training are being offered to Korean corporate employees during their employment?
(2) What spoken and written genres do Korean corporate employees engage in intercultural communication?
(3) What challenges do Korean corporate employees face when interacting with foreigners in intercultural communication?

3 Research Method

3.1 Participants

A total of 51 individuals (male: 35%, female: 65%) who were all native speakers of Korean were recruited from the author's social network and through convenience snowball sampling to meet the study's criteria. Only

those who had more than 3 years of experience using English for work-related
purposes were invited to take part in the study. To further gain authentic,
insightful data, participants who had lived abroad for more than 2 years, those
who had rare or little experience using English, and new entrants with less than
2 years of work experience were excluded from the study. Such criteria, thus,
resulted in the lack of participants. The participants were white-collar
corporate employees working in their respective fields in which engaging in
intercultural communication took up an important portion of their jobs with
work experience ranging from 3 to 16 years. With an average age of 32.7 years,
ranging from late 20s to late 30s, all participants held mid-level positions in
their organization, possessing an average TOEIC score of 903. They came
from industries related to manufacturing ($n = 25$), finance ($n = 10$), advertising
($n = 5$), service ($n = 3$), shipping ($n = 2$), and legal affairs ($n = 2$).

3.2 Data collection and procedure

The main research instrument used for this study was an online survey, which
was divided into four sections. The first section was developed to observe the
participants' demographics. Sections two and three were constructed to
identify the participants' experience in attending workplace English training
programs. The final section, which constituted the main part of the study, was
established to measure the participants' objective and subjective English
communicative needs, further divided into conscious and unconscious needs
in intercultural communication by adopting Vandermeeren's (2005)
operationalization of communicative needs, as shown in Table 1 (See
Appendix A for sample items for each genre).

Table 1. Different Dimensions of Communicative Needs

Type	Definition
Objective needs	Needs identified through the measurement of the frequency of contact with foreign business counterparts to perform (non)transactional communicative tasks (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = regularly, 5 = frequently, 6 = always)
Subjective needs	English proficiency required to perform (non)transactional communicative tasks (1 = not required, 2 = low, 3 = low-intermediate, 4 = intermediate, 5 = intermediate-high, 6 = advanced)
Conscious needs	English proficiency required according to frequency of foreign contact
Unconscious needs	English proficiency required regardless of frequency of foreign contact

Prior to administrating the main study, a small-scale pilot study was carried
out to evaluate the adequacy and feasibility of the survey. Three participants

who shared similar demographics of the study were invited to participate in the pilot study. They did not, however, take part in the main study. The three were asked to determine whether the questionnaire items were clearly articulated to avoid any confusion. By incorporating their feedback and suggestions, several adjustments were made accordingly. The link of the finalized version of the online survey was distributed via e-mail. Participants were asked to carefully read and complete the survey individually and to invite acquaintances who were the members of the relevant target population. To increase validity and reliability of the study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered to reflect the communicative needs of the population from which the sample was drawn (Gilabert, 2005; Long, 2005; Serafini et al., 2015).

3.3 Data analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to capture the complexity of their communicative use and needs of the participants. Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to understand the participants' workplace English training programs. A series of one-way repeated measures ANOVA were carried out to define the representative spoken and written genres and to examine if they were any significant difference in their use. Post-hoc tests were computed through paired samples *t*-tests, and several independent samples *t*-tests were also conducted to see if there were any differences in their use of genres between groups. [1] Cross tabulations using chi-square tests were also carried out categorically to find their (un)conscious needs. Finally, to make the most out of the data providing detailed and comprehensive picture, follow-up open-ended questions and semi-structured telephone interviews were adopted for triangulation (See Appendix B for interview questions sample items). [2] Since all participants were Koreans using Korean as their first and dominant language, the research was administered in Korean. Their comments were later translated into English. [3]

4 Results and Discussion

This section reports the findings, including (a) the availability of language programs and their importance, (b) objective needs regarding transactional and non-transactional genres, (c) subjective needs incorporating conscious and unconscious needs, and (d) participants' suggestions for business English courses.

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[1] Due to the lack of participants, it should be noted that only the manufacturing and finance population was compared.

[2] The questionnaire used for the study is available upon request from the author.

[3] For space reasons, only the author's English translations are given.

4.1 Workplace English education programs

When participants were asked to answer the types of official English
proficiency tests that they have taken during their employment, 90% answered
that they took TOEIC, which was followed by TOEIC speaking (32%) and
OPIC (12%). [4] When asked for why they took these English exams,
participants reported that their test scores had to be submitted in partial
fulfillment of their performance assessment and requirement for future
promotion. This showed that productive skills were considered important in
carrying out tasks at their workplace.

With regard to whether their companies offered or supported any
English programs, 58% (29 out of 51) of the participants answered 'yes'.
Participants were asked to check all the English programs that have been
offered by their respective companies. 62% (n = 18) answered that they were
receiving telephone English lessons, 41% (n = 12) replied that they received
financial support for enhancing their English proficiency (i.e., private language
institutes) alongside English education programs directly offered by the
companies. Moreover, 41% (n = 12) reported that they were taking English e-
learning courses, 38% (n = 11) stated that they took in-person courses
developed by commissioned outsourcing education. [5] Figure 1 shown below
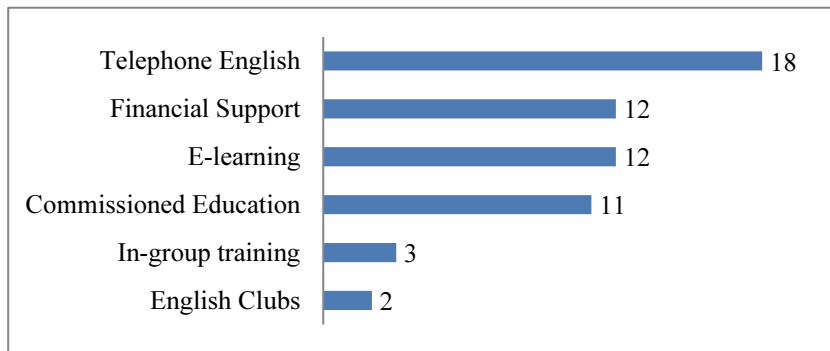illustrates the English programs offered or supported by their respective
companies.

Figure 1. Workplace English education programs

When participants were asked to point out the most and least helpful methods,
they mentioned that courses related to e-mail writing and telephone English
were the most helpful ones, whereas taking e-learning courses were considered

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[4] As there were participants who took more than one type of exam, it should be noted
that the numbers did not add up to 100%.
[5] As there were some participants took part in more than one program, it should be
noted that the numbers again did not add up to 100%.

the least helpful. Responses to the open-ended questions showed that the participants were in favor of English programs related to business topics, which helped them enhance their productive skills. However, they were dissatisfied with programs that were non-interactive and relatively irrelevant to the nature of their work. In a follow-up interview, two participants shared their thoughts regarding this matter.

> *"A business English course that I took provided me with useful tips, which helped me enhance my English skills in e-mail writing. However, general English conversation courses were not that helpful."* (Participant #25, Manufacturing, Dairies)

> *"In-person business English courses helped me a lot in terms of learning sophisticated expressions used in real life situations. For instance, if I use awkward expressions, my teacher offered me feedback to make my English sound more natural and professional. However, e-learning courses were less helpful in that I was not able to practice my English-speaking skills."* (Participant #27, Manufacturing, Cosmetics)

With regard to their overall satisfaction of such English programs, they were mediocrely satisfied with them ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .83$). However, when they were asked whether the on-the-job programs offered by companies enhanced their job performance, statistics showed a positive correlation ($r = .878$, $n = 29$, $p < .001$). This indicates that English programs offered by the companies were helpful, and that there was indeed a need for companies to continue providing language programs in an effort to enhance their employees' English skills.

Apart from these in-house training programs, 75% participants reported that they were studying English individually. Among them, 37% mentioned that they watched American dramas, 34% reported that they attended private institutes to improve their general speaking skills, and 24% stated that they listened to news or podcasts with the help of subtitles and transcripts. To develop their business English skills, 63% reported that they took business English courses offered by private institutes. This clearly shows how the participants spared their time to sharpen their English competence.

4.2 Frequent use of communicative genres

4.2.1 Written transactional genres

Participants were asked to make a six-point scalar judgment with 1 being 'never' and 6 being 'always.' The results showed that e-mail was the most frequently employed written communication genre for intercultural communication. One-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed that there were

significant differences among the use of written communication (F (2.59,
43.04) = 19.34, p = .000). [6]

To examine if there were any significant differences among the use of
the five written genres, a series of paired samples t-tests were computed.
Statistical results showed that the use of e-mail (M = 5.06, SD = 1.10) was by
far the most used genre followed by meeting materials (M = 3.96, SD = 1.52),
business reports (M = 3.88, SD = 1.61), and messengers (M = 3.65, SD = 1.81).
It was found that there were no significant differences among messenger,
business reports, and meeting materials, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Paired Samples t-tests Results of Written Genres

Pairs	Mean Difference	SD	t	df	p
1 (Email-Text)	2.04	1.55	9.40	50	.000**
2 (Email-Messenger)	1.41	1.75	5.78	50	.000**
3 (Email-Business report)	1.18	1.18	6.67	50	.000*
4 (Email-Meeting material)	1.1	1.29	6.10	50	.000*
5 (Text-Messenger)	-.63	1.74	-2.52	50	.013*
6 (Text-Business report)	-.86	2.0	-3.07	50	.004**
7 (Text-Meeting material)	-.94	1.9	-3.53	50	.001**
8 (Messenger-Business report)	-.24	2.19	-.77	50	.45
9 (Messenger-Meeting material)	-.31	1.93	-1.16	50	.25
10 (Business report-Meeting material)	-.08	.96	-.59	50	.56

* p < .05, ** p < .001.

Although the scope of this study was small, it was possible to observe the
different use of genres by the participants working in manufacturing and
finance sectors by computing an independent samples t-test. With other written
communication being similar, significant difference was found in their use of
messengers (t(33) = -3.32, p < .005). Participants working in the finance sector
(M = 5.3, SD = 1.57) used messengers far often than those working in the
manufacturing sector (M = 3.24, SD = 1.69). This was mainly due to their
having to synchronously communicate with foreign counterparts working in
other countries. Having access to real-time financial market indices and trade
were highly relevant to the nature of their work. During the interview, two
participants from the finance sector noted the following.

> *"Communicating through online messengers is part of my job. I
> have to keep myself updated with many issues that occur in real*

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[6] According to the Mauchly's Test of Sphericity, sphericity was violated. Therefore,
Greenhouse-Geisser was reported in the present study.

time in the stock market. Moreover, I need to respond to my clients and provide them with necessary information upon their request." (Participant #41, Finance, Securities)

"I use online messengers to instantly exchange important information and negotiate trading prices, which cannot always be dealt via other mediums. Knowing how to efficiently communicate online is important" (Participant #42, Finance, Federal Bank)

4.2.2 Spoken transactional genres

With regard to spoken communication, participants were again asked to make a six-point scalar judgment with 1 being 'never' and 6 being 'always.' Results showed that participating in conference calls was the most commonly used genre. One-way repeated measures ANOVA results showed that there were significant differences among the use of spoken genres (F (3.17, 6.94) = 6.93, p =.000).

To examine where the differences came from, paired samples t-tests were further carried out. As shown in Table 3, the results showed that negotiations (M = 3.96, SD = 1.41) and conference calls (M = 3.98, SD = 1.22) showed no significant difference ($t(50)$ = -.11, p < .91). However, they together were more frequently employed than presentations (M = 3.49, SD = 1.45), formal meetings (M = 3.43, SD = 1.36) and informal meetings (M = 3.25, SD = 1.32). Presentations, formal and informal meetings showed no significant difference among them, as shown in pair 5, $t(50)$ = .31, p = .76, pair 6, $t(50)$ = 1.21, p = .234, and pair 8, $t(50)$ = 1.93, p = .06. Moreover, statistical results revealed that there were no significant differences in spoken genres including presentations, formal meetings, and informal meetings, as shown in the table provided below.

Table 3. Paired Samples t-tests Results of Spoken Genres

Pairs	Mean difference	SD	t	df	p
1 (Negotiation-Presentation)	.47	1.26	2.68	50	.010*
2 (Negotiation-Formal meeting)	.53	1.29	2.94	50	.005**
3 (Negotiation-Informal meeting)	.71	1.36	3.70	50	.001**
4 (Negotiation-Conference call)	-.02	1.24	-.11	50	.91
5 (Presentation-Formal meeting)	.06	1.36	.31	50	.76
6 (Presentation-Informal meeting)	.24	1.39	1.21	50	.23
7 (Presentation-Conference call)	-.49	1.36	-2.57	50	.013*
8 (Formal meeting-Informal meeting)	.18	.65	1.93	50	.06

	Mean difference	SD	t	df	p
9 (Formal meeting-Conference call)	-.55	1.24	-3.17	50	.003**
10 (Informal meeting-Conference call)	-.73	1.28	-4.04	50	.000**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Through an independent samples t-test, it was found that with other spoken communication being used to a similar extent, participants working in the finance sector ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 1.16$) used conference calls more often than those working in the manufacturing industry ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.26$), ($t(33) = -2.39$, $p < .05$). Finance participants reported that this was because they had to communicate with people working in other countries such as the U.S., U.K., Singapore, or Hong Kong synchronously in order to continuously check and make decisions regarding the fluctuations of the stock prices, bonds, or foreign currencies based on real-time. Again, participant #42 (Finance, Federal Bank) stated,

> *"I regularly make conference calls. This is because communicating via e-mail and online messenger do not suffice. I instantly request conference calls to make decisions on the spot to proceed with the work at hand, and such relevant tasks take up an important portion of my work.*

4.2.3 Non-transactional genres

Alongside transactional genres that were observed above, non-transactional genre is also worth being paid attention to as they are ways of managing rapport. One-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed that there existed a significant difference among genres ($F(1.17, 5.37) = 11.45$, $p = .000$).

Statistics have shown that engaging in receptions/greetings was the most commonly employed genre. According to table 4, it was found that participants engaged more in reception/greetings ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.32$) than casual talk ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.42$) and having meals together ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.20$) as can be seen in pair 1 ($t(50) = -.41$, $p =.000$), and pair 3 ($t(50) = 5.18$, $p = .000$).

Table 4. Paired Samples *t*-tests Results of Non-transactional Genres

Pairs	Mean difference	SD	t	df	p
1 (Meal-Reception/Greetings)	-.53	.92	-4.09	50	.000**
2 (Meal-Casual Talk)	-.02	1.03	-.14	50	.89
3 (Reception/Greetings-Casual talk)	.51	.70	5.18	50	.000**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

When the manufacturing and finance sectors were compared, those in finance (*M* = 5.0, *SD* = 1.05) were more involved in reception/greetings than manufacturing sector (*M* = 3.8, *SD* = 1.32), *t*(33) = -2.56, *p* < .05. Moreover, participants from finance (*M* = 4.5, *SD* = 1.51) engaged in more casual talk than manufacturing sector (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 1.33) (*t*(33) = -2.44, *p* < .05). Finance participants reported that they frequently worked via messengers and conference calls requiring them to have more opportunities to engage in relationship building activities in intercultural communication.

4.3 Communicative (un)conscious needs

In addition to objective needs (i.e., frequency of intercultural contact), this section takes subjective needs (i.e., perception of proficiency needed) also into account. To uncover participants' un(conscious) needs that they face in intercultural workplace communication, participants' subjective needs in relation to objective needs were computed through cross tabulations. For objective needs, participants who chose 1 = never, 2 = rarely, and 3 = occasionally were grouped as one and people who selected 4 = regularly, 5 = frequent, and 6 = always as another, coming up with two groups in total. For subjective needs, participants who selected 1 = never, 2 = low, and 3 = low-intermediate were grouped together as they did not consider English proficiency of much importance. People who chose 4 = intermediate, 5 = intermediate-high, and 6 = advanced were grouped together as they thought English proficiency was a significant factor. In terms of how they were categorized as shown in table 5 and table 6.

Table 5. Categorization of Objective Needs

	Written genres				
	E-mail	Text	Messenger	Business report	Meeting material
Occasionally	7 (14%)	33 (65%)	24 (47%)	20 (39%)	20 (39%)
Regularly	44 (86%)	18 (35%)	27 (53%)	31 (61%)	31 (61%)
	Spoken genres				
	Negotiation	Presentation	Formal meeting	Informal meeting	Conference call
Occasionally	20 (39%)	27 (53%)	30 (59%)	33 (65%)	21 (41%)
Regularly	31 (61%)	24 (47%)	21 (41%)	18 (35%)	30 (59%)
	Non-transactional genres				
	Meal	Greeting	Casual talk	-	-
Occasionally	31 (61%)	20 (39%)	30 (59%)	-	-
Regularly	20 (39%)	31 (61%)	21 (41%)	-	-

Table 6. Categorization of Subjective Needs

	Written genres				
	E-mail	Text	Messenger	Business report	Meeting material
Low-Mid	4 (8%)	22 (43%)	20 (39%)	6 (12%)	3 (6%)
Mid-High	47 (92%)	29 (57%)	31 (61%)	45 (88%)	48 (94%)
	Spoken genres				
	Negotiation	Presentation	Formal meeting	Informal meeting	Conference call
Low-Mid	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	6 (12%)	12 (24%)	6 (12%)
Mid-High	43 (84%)	48 (94%)	45 (88%)	39 (76%)	45 (88%)
	Non-transactional genres				
	Meal	Greeting	Casual talk	-	-
Low-Mid	13 (25%)	20 (39%)	18 (35%)	-	-
Mid-High	38 (75%)	31 (61%)	33 (65%)	-	-

4.3.1 (Un)conscious written communicative needs

With regard to e-mails, the Chi-square test revealed that the relationship between frequency in contact and required skill was not significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = .47$, $p = .5$). This shows that participants thought that having a good command of English in composing e-mails was a prerequisite, regardless of frequency of contact with foreigners. A similar finding was also observed in writing up English business meeting materials. The relationship between frequency in contact and skills needed was not significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 1.008$, $p = .32$). This indicates that one needs to be competent in creating meeting materials in English regardless of frequency in contact.

However, there was a significant relationship between frequency of contact and skill required when communicating through texts ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = .8$, $p = .005$), messengers ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 10.31$, $p = .001$), and writing business reports ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 10.54$, $p = .001$). In other words, there was no need to enhance their skills in these genres, unless involved in such relevant activities.

Findings revealed that English skills in writing e-mails and business meeting materials were considered important regardless of frequency, showing their unconscious needs. Other written genres, on the other hand, were considered important only when they were in regular contact with foreigners, revealing their conscious needs. When the amount of difficulty was compared through further analysis, it was found that participants considered making written business meeting materials a more difficult task than writing e-mails ($t(48) = 6.06$, $p = .000$). Statistical results were supported by some interview responses from the manufacturing sector.

"I am aware that being able to write English e-mails is a must if one wants to do work with foreigners. I want to make my e-mails look more professional." (Participant #25, Manufacturing, Dairies)

"Although my English is not perfect, I do not think that I have much difficulty writing e-mails. There are many books that show how to write business e-mails. But writing meeting materials is a bit challenging. I do not think that I have had ever seen a business-related English book that deals with writing meeting materials. Meeting materials should not be lengthy and should show what we want to deliver and achieve. I experience difficulty when writing succinct phrases or sentences in English." (Participant #27, Manufacturing, Cosmetics)

In line with recent studies of Chan (2014), Evans (2012), and Lam et al. (2014), participants underscored the importance of possessing proficient and effective skills in writing e-mails in order to successfully communicate with foreign counterparts. Further results showed that knowing how to write business meeting materials in English was also very important according to the participants' response. It could be conceivable that business meeting materials in English were considered as a summary of what the employees or the team wanted to achieve in their intercultural meeting.

4.3.2 (Un)conscious spoken communicative needs

With regard to spoken communication, participants considered that being proficient in giving business presentations was important, regardless of frequency in contact, ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 2.83, p = .09$). Having a proficient level of English in other spoken genres such as negotiations ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 9.28, p = .002$), formal meetings ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 4.76, p = .03$), informal meetings ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 8.56, p = .003$), and conference calls ($\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 4.99, p = .03$) were considered important only when they had more than regular contact with foreigners. Two participants from the manufacturing sector stated why this was so.

"Giving English presentations is not a frequent event compared to writing English e-mails. However, I want my English to be clear and logical so that I can represent myself as a well-prepared and well-educated elite. Moreover, knowing how to use persuasive and impactful expressions will make my English sound better. I want to impress my co-workers and my boss." (Participant #8, Manufacturing, Cosmetics)

"I think I only need to know the skills that my job requires. Giving presentations in fluent English is definitely a skill that I need to

*acquire. I need to learn more abundant expressions that sound
formal so that others, especially corporate executives, will think
that my English sounds professional. I want to make a good
impression."* (Participant #15, Manufacturing, Electronics)

These responses illustrate that having a proficient level of English when
giving presentations was considered important, which showed their
unconscious needs. However, proficient English skills in other spoken genres
were required only when they were in regular contact with foreigners,
revealing their conscious needs. Taking the analysis a step further, it was found
that developing their English speaking skills when making presentation were
indeed their strongest communicative needs ($t(47) = 8.41$, $p = .000$).

As stated in their interview, the two participants commonly mentioned
that when having foreign counterparts gathered together for business, this also
required the presence of the corporate executives and senior directors.
Therefore, giving an intelligent impression by using sophisticated and
professional English was thus highly required, possibly leading to future
promotion. The importance of giving presentations was something that was
less relatively mentioned in previous studies (cf. Crosling & Ward, 2002).
However, participants pointed out that having a high proficiency in giving
English presentations was considered to be an important need due to its formal
nature in delivering their speech and their showing their professionalism
together.

4.3.3 (Un)conscious non-transactional communicative needs
Across all three non-transactional genres, carrying out conversations during
their meals, greetings while holding receptions, and doing casual talk during
their tasks with foreigners were significant only for those who had more than
regular opportunities in engaging in such non-transactional communication.
However, one-way repeated measures ANOVA results showed that there were
differences among them regarding difficulty ($F(1.76, 1.002) = 5.82$, $p = .006$).
The interview data provided by the participants demonstrates this point.

*"I have difficulty in engaging in informal chats. If I am not talking
about work-related issues, I usually remain quiet. I want to build
up rapport, but I am afraid that I might be asking or talking about
inappropriate things."* (Participant #26, Manufacturing,
Electronics)

*"Engaging in casual conversation is difficult for me. I do not know
what to talk about. I feel like I lack skills in forming a friendly
atmosphere."* (Participant # 28, Law, Patent Attorney's Office)

> *"Maintaining good social relationships with my foreign counterparts is very important for me. I am trying to build up positive relationships, but I am not still sure whether I am being professional in doing so."* (Participant #41, Finance, Private Bank)

> *"I want to say more besides simply saying hi, how are you, have a nice day, and thank you before initiating and closing my talk. But I am not sure if some expressions that I want to say are culturally appropriate in their countries."* (Participant #42, Finance, Federal Bank)

The participants reported that they lacked interpersonal skills. In transactional communication, participants were able to rely on their prepared agenda and their pre-planned scripts and thoughts, despite their difficulties in communicating. When participants were engaged in non-transactional communication, on the other hand, they did not know how and what to talk about. They mentioned that the atmosphere was awkward especially when having meals together. Some participants mentioned that they were not quite aware of which culture to conform to and felt uncomfortable because they were not sure how to handle conversation topics related to cultural aspects. Lack of defining global manners and absence of knowing their counterparts' cultures seemed to function as a barrier to building rapport. They also mentioned that they were concerned about making mistakes that could result in unintended misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Even though quantitative results showed less significance, open-ended comments and interviews revealed the importance of non-transactional talk. This lends support to previous research in that engaging in interpersonal communication can help achieve not only relational, but also transactional goals (Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015; Koester, 2010). The results of this study are in line with Crosling and Ward's (2002) study in that informal conversation and networking besides transactional work-related talk require a degree of rapport between parties when engaged in communication. In addition, understanding cultural differences in terms of appropriateness was another concern for them. Findings suggest that non-transactional talk is far too prevalent to be considered peripheral or marginal in the workplace (Koester, 2010).

4.4 Participants' desires for business English courses

In addition to the responses that participants have provided in the above sections, they were further asked to state any comments or suggestions to improve the business English courses offered by their workplace. The following responses show what the participants provided in the open-ended

questions. As there were overlapping answers, they were quantified, as shown
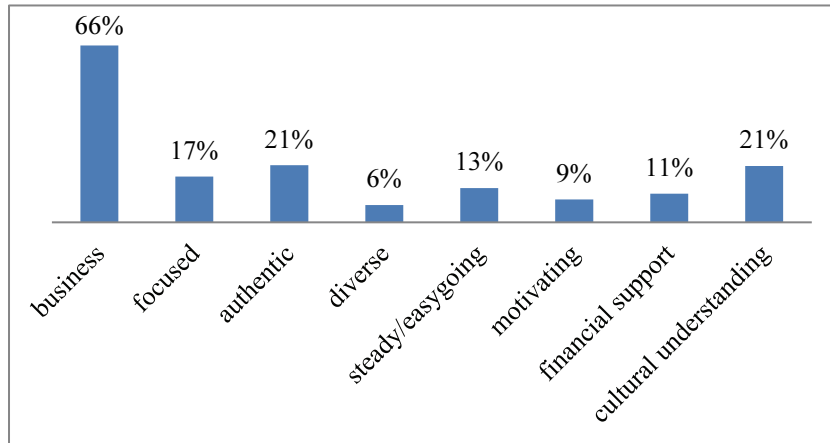in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Desired workplace English courses

66% of the participants mentioned that they were more eager to take courses
that were more relevant to their work. These participants commonly stated that
they wanted to spend their time wisely. They mentioned that it was difficult to
spare much time in learning English as they had many other tasks to carry out
at work. Other than their desire to take work-related English courses, 17% of
the participants stated that they wanted to receive focal attention from their
English instructors in terms of the appropriateness of their use of English
expressions at work through small, focused tutorial groups. 21% of them
suggested that they wished to be provided with authentic materials that they
could benchmark in updating their professionalism by knowing how to employ
English in a more appropriate, strategic, and professional manner. Moreover,
another 21% mentioned the importance of cultural differences that lay between
them and their foreign counterparts. They were willing to learn about their
counterparts' culture that they were in regular contact with, so they could
somehow build rapport and show respect when interacting interculturally.
Taking all the findings into account, participants in this study were willing to
take courses that were based on authenticity and practicality; however, they
were reluctant to spend time on things that were not relevant to their work at
hand.

5 Conclusion

In response to the growing body of research in needs analysis, the study
analyzed Korean corporate employees' use and needs of spoken and written

communication skills alongside the challenges that they faced in intercultural workplace communication. Looking into several dimensions of needs from different perspectives, the study showed that needs analysis was a valuable method in understanding the communicative skills that the participants lacked when carrying out work-related tasks. Through a quantitative approach, the study was able to generally clarify which genres were more significant. With qualitative analyses, it was possible to listen to the participants' introspections that showed supporting evidence of what made quantitative results significant and robust (Creswell, 2009). The findings indicate that not only transactional but also non-transactional genres related to cultivating soft skills were, without a doubt, considered important when using English in the workplace. Moreover, the study has shown that the use and realization of genres varied according to the nature of the industry, and that professional genres differed across workplace settings.

However, it should be noted that this study has several limitations. Due to the data collection procedure, the participants may not represent the general population of the Korean workplace as they come from various fields. In addition, while the study relied on multiple measures contributing to obtaining important needs, it was not enough to make specific assessments about each genre due to the lack of participants and their different profiles. Although the most representative workplace genres were explicitly revealed in this research, specific needs of the participants were not always clearly identifiable. It is thus suggested that future research gather more participants across industries and triangulate the data based on observing real authentic work data and make comparisons within and across industries to obtain more reliable results.

Despite the small population and the limitations that were mentioned, implications can be drawn from this study, especially in instructional settings. With more and more university graduates striving to enter the global workforce, business English communication has become an integral subject area within the academe. The importance of workplace language training has percolated down through tertiary-level institutions with demands for business English communication courses burgeoning in higher education (Ilie et al., 2019; Xie, 2016). As many universities in Korea, regardless of their ranking, are offering an array of credit-bearing business English communication courses apart from English for Academic Purposes courses to equip students with necessary communication skills (cf. Lee & Lee, 2018), gaining insights from domain experts can be very useful in terms of getting aspiring business professionals prepared for entering the global labor market.

It might be nearly impossible to exactly replicate real life workplace situations in classroom settings. Curriculum designers and instructors could, nevertheless, take into account the importance of being well equipped with authentic business knowledge and practice beyond having mere linguistic expertise. Moreover, they should "be aware of the needs and expectations of

working [professionals] in developing suitable curriculum that mirrors professional practice in the workplace" (Chan, 2014, p. 378).

In this regard, the study suggests that needs analysis should be a continuing process that needs to be constantly checked, evolved, and reassessed to make corporate employees' learning experience more authentic and meaningful (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The importance of this study lies in its primary attempt to incorporate and reflect upon empirical introspective evidence obtained from domain experts in the workplace. By taking a further step toward a more holistic understanding of the use of English, it was possible to identify many current needs, which would become the future needs of prospective corporate employees (Basturkmen, 2012; Cowling, 2007). Finally, it is hoped that this study can serve as a basis for developing and elaborating effective business English curricula and teaching materials for enhancing current and aspiring Korean corporate employees' intercultural communicative competence in the workplace.

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Appendix A
Sample Questionnaire Items Measuring Objective Needs

How often are you in contact with foreign business counterparts regarding the
following genres?

1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = regularly, 5 = frequently, 6 = always

1. E-mail	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
2. Text	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
3. Messenger	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
4. Business report	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
5. Meeting material	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
6. Negotiation	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
7. Presentation	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
8. Formal meeting	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
9. Informal meeting	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
10. Conference call	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
11. Meal	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
12. Reception/Greeting	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
13. Causal talk	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

Based on the answers above, for what purpose do you use English? Please
share your experience and the challenges that you face.

Appendix B
Semi-structured Interview Questions

I. Overview
1. Describe the company that you work for?
2. What field do you work in?
3. What is your position in the team?

II. Speaking Genres
1. What types of English-speaking skills does your job require?
2. Have you experienced any difficulties when speaking in English? What are
some difficult aspects?
3. Have you ever felt confident when speaking in English?

III. Writing Genres
1. What types of English-writing skills does your job require?

2. Have you experienced any difficulties when writing in English? What are some difficult aspects?
3. Have you ever felt confident when writing in English?

IV. Workplace English Education
1. How were you able to manage and learn relevant English skills required at your workplace?
2. Is there a specific language area that you would like to concentrate on?
3. What should be included in the existing and/or future workplace English courses to make them more relevant to the work?

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