A TASK-BASED NEEDS ANALYSIS
FOR A BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE

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The purpose of this study was to conduct a needs analysis for an ESL business English course aimed at improving learners' general business English communication skills. A task-based needs analysis was conducted on business English use in the Korean business context with the purpose of identifying business English target tasks frequently performed by Korean business professionals. In addition, Korean business professionals' previous experiences of taking business English classes were investigated as well as their attitudes and wants regarding the courses. Prior to collecting data, the literature on business English was reviewed. Then, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey were adopted as the methods of the needs analysis. Regarding the source for this study, Korean business professionals were included as the domain experts of the Korean business contexts, as well as the previous learners and potential clients of the targeted course. In total, 75 Korean business professionals from 13 different companies participated in the study. Through the interviews and the questionnaire survey, 26 business English target tasks were identified along with their frequency. These were classified into more abstract and super-ordinate target task types. Regarding the previous experiences and attitudes toward business English courses, only a small number of Korean business professionals seemed to have taken business English courses, although more than half of them were willing to take such courses. The findings of this study provided a sound basis and valuable implications for curriculum developers and teachers in developing business English courses.

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s, research on English for business purposes (EBP) has flourished as English has become widely accepted as the primary language for international business (Boyd, 1990; Esteban & Cañado, 2004). A considerable amount of research has been conducted on business English including the analysis of business

writings, conversation, communication skills, and strategies. Also many language institutions have offered business English courses. In line with the increased interest in business English, beginning in 2005, the University of Hawai'i English Language Program started to offer a business English communication course for ESL learners who planned to do business in the United States or in their own countries using English. The course aimed at improving learners' general business English communication skills. The purpose of the current study was to conduct a task-based needs analysis to identify target tasks that the students need to perform during and after the course. With this purpose in mind, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey were adopted as the bases for the needs analysis. Prior to collecting data, the literature on business English was reviewed. Korean business professionals were then interviewed and administered the questionnaire.

This paper is organized in the following way. First, the institutional context of the business English communication course will be examined to better understand the course and the project. Then, the literatures on business English and needs analysis will be reviewed to provide a theoretical framework for the study. Detailed descriptions of the research design of the current study will follow the literature review, which provided the rationales for the selected methods and sources. This paper then presents the findings of the study starting with the semi-structured interviews and then the questionnaire survey. The target business English tasks identified through the interviews and the questionnaire will be reported in terms of their frequencies, and the Korean business professionals' previous experiences and their attitudes toward business English courses will be addressed afterward. Discussion of the findings of this study and answers to the research questions will then be presented, followed by reflections on the limitations of the current

study and suggestions for further studies at the end of the paper.

Hawai'i English Language Program and the Business English Course

The Hawai'i English Language Program (HELP) is a full-time, intensive English language program located on the main campus of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. HELP is geared toward improving students' general English proficiency and at the same time preparing them for further academic studies in the United States. HELP students tend to be academically oriented, and many of them are preparing to enter the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa or other U.S. universities.

Beginning in summer 2005, there was a move to change the entire focus of the program from skill-based to content-based instruction (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Crandall & Tucker, 1990; Kasper, 2000). The rationale for the change was that, although skill-based courses such as listening or writing intensive courses were offered, inevitably all of the courses had to incorporate other skills as well. Therefore, it was thought to be better to focus on content areas in which students might be interested, while encompassing all four skills in each course. Accordingly, content-based courses were developed in five different areas: (a) business and travel, (b) academic preparation, (c) language in literature, (d) media studies, and (e) TOEFL/TOEIC. Most of the content areas stemmed from previously taught courses such as "contemporary fiction: Harry Potter" (for language in literature), "American culture through film" (for media studies), "academic writing and research" (for academic preparation), and "advanced TOEFL listening" (for TOEFL/TOEIC preparation). Only business and travel was a newly created content area in which courses were offered. Business English courses were designed to develop students' knowledge of business practices and to improve their communication

skills in various business situations. For this purpose, four different courses were

developed in this content area: 'business communication', 'business presentation', 'case

studies in business', and 'research and business site visits.' Each course is taught as an

eight-week intensive course, except during the summer, when four-week courses are

offered instead with the same number of instructional hours as the eight-week courses.

Business communication course. The needs analysis undertaken here was designed

for the business English communication course, the focus of which is to improve

learners' general business English communication skills. Target students for this course

are those who plan to do business in the United States or those who plan to work in a

business setting in their own countries but need to be able to use English in the work

place. This course addresses business interaction, reading and writing business

documents, job applications and interviews, and business presentation by introducing a

series of tasks throughout the semester. The tasks will be developed based on the current

needs analysis results, and at least one major task will be assigned to the students each

week to perform in class or submit directly to the teacher. It is also expected that the

students can learn business-related vocabulary and idioms, and understand cultural

differences by learning appropriate business etiquette and customs while performing the

tasks.

In terms of proficiency level, this course is designed for high intermediate and

advanced students according to HELP placement levels. HELP students are placed into

four proficiency levels–beginner (100 level), low intermediate (200 level), high

intermediate (300 level), and advanced (400 level)–according to either their placement

test scores, in the case of new students, or end-of-term assessments for continuing

students. After being placed into levels, the students are allowed to choose courses

according to their levels. The business English communication course was primarily designed for high intermediate level (300) students. However, advanced level students (400) are also allowed to take this course since no business communication skills course is offered at the advanced level.

Considering that this course is content-based and focused on business communication skills, a task-based approach to syllabus design was adopted. Although the content-based and task-based approaches were regarded as different approaches to syllabus design, these two seemed to coincide well for the targeted course from theoretical and practical perspectives. The task-based syllabus seemed to satisfy most of the rationales for content-based instruction. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) summarized five implicit rationales of content-based instruction: (a) taking into account the eventual uses of the target language; (b) increasing motivation by using content relevant to learners; (c) building on the previous experience of the learner; (d) promoting contextualized use of the target language; and (e) providing comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985a; 1985b).

The task-based syllabus seemed to satisfy at least four of the rationales. First, it promotes the eventual uses of the target language by emphasizing the real-world resemblance of the tasks with the purpose of preparing the students for the real-world tasks. Second, tasks derived from the analysis of learners' needs increases learners' interest and motivation (Robinson, 2001). Third, while performing tasks, learners can learn the target language through contextualized and meaningful use of the language rather than learning sentence-level usage of the language. Forth, tasks presented with gradually increasing complexity provide rich, elaborated, and comprehensible input for the language acquisition to occur (Doughty & Long, 2003).

As for the practical reasons, although the HELP courses were designed according to a

content-based approach, no strict guidelines were provided for teachers regarding how much content should be involved and in what ways it should be taught. It seemed that as long as the materials, tasks, or any kind of class activities were directly or indirectly related to the targeted content, it was acceptable. As a result, the course developers decided to adopt a task-based syllabus for the target course under the larger framework of content-based instruction.

The task-based syllabus has also been widely employed in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, including business English courses, since the need to use real-world target tasks matches well with the task-based syllabus. In addition, this approach to language teaching has been considered more efficient than other traditional language teaching methods for teaching cross-cultural aspects of business English, which this particular course also purports to teach, as Gimenez (2001) suggested in his study on cross-cultural business negotiations:

> By the same token, it seems sensible to suggest that teaching negotiations to business English learners could be more efficiently tackled by a task-based approach. Tasks which present cross-cultural models to study and examine can be more beneficial than formulaic representations of business negotiations. Such tasks would also warn learners about the dangers of transferring "ready-made" models to international contexts and situations. (p. 187)

In addition, proficiency gaps between students from two levels as well as two distinct groups of target students were other driving forces to adopt a task-based syllabus. Since both intermediate and advanced students are allowed to take the course, a proficiency gap was expected to present a problem in the course. In addition, it was assumed that there would be two distinct groups of students in the business English course: pre-service

students who are preparing to get a job and in-service students who already have work experience and want to improve their English to be of better service in their professions. The expected proficiency gaps among the students, and the two different groups of students, required a means for facilitating individual learning to better meet the student's needs. Doughty and Long (2003), in their methodological principles for Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), claim that "in TBLT, individualization occurs in the selection of syllabus content, in respect for individual internal syllabuses, and in modifications of the pace at which and manner in which instruction is delivered, as suggested by diagnostic information gathered on individual differences" (p. 67). Thus, the task-based syllabus was believed to facilitate individualized learning in the course by adapting tasks for the individual student's needs and interests as well as proficiency level. In accordance with the task-based approach to syllabus design, the course is structured around a series of tasks rather than quizzes and tests.

The process of developing the business English course was undertaken during spring 2005. In the process of developing the business communication course, there was a strong need for the curriculum developers to understand business English tasks that were performed in real business contexts in order to design the course around those tasks. Since the course aimed at preparing the students for doing business in the United States or in their own countries, it was assumed to be necessary to identify business English tasks in both contexts. As for the United States, a domain and language expert who was familiar with the business tasks in the U.S. context as well as English language teaching was newly hired for the content area and then helped with developing the course. Nonetheless, there was still a need to investigate the business English tasks that were performed in students' home countries, where most of the students might do business

after finishing the course. Since most of the HELP students were from Japan or Korea, these two countries were considered to be the most appropriate target contexts for conducting a needs analysis of business English tasks. A needs analysis of business English tasks in the Korean context was conducted first, and it is the focus of this study.

Task-based Needs Analysis

According to the task-based syllabus proposed by Long and Crookes (1992), TBLT adopts tasks as the analytic unit of the syllabus and organizes a course around different types of tasks. Principles underlying TBLT also emphasize the importance of developing pedagogic tasks based on real-world tasks that learners need to perform using the target language after or during the course. As a result, to develop a TBLT program, it is necessary to conduct a task-based needs analysis to identify real-world target tasks and to develop pedagogic tasks based on these. Task-based needs analysis is assumed to enhance the real-world relevance of the course and increase student interest and motivation. Robinson (2001) noted:

> …adopting tasks as the unit of analysis helps to ensure a high degree of real-world relevance, since they are based on a needs analysis of target performance objectives, thereby most likely increasing student interest and motivation in classroom pedagogic activities, and the possibility of direct transfer of the abilities developed in classrooms to similar situational contexts. (p. 292)

Task-based needs analysis (Long, 2005) is distinguished from a traditional needs analysis framework such as *target situation analysis* (Munby, 1978)*, present situation analysis* (Richterich & Chancerel, 1980), and *learning centered approach* (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) in that the former adopts tasks as the unit of analysis and syllabus design

while the latter have used linguistic categories (lexical, structural, notional, and/or functional) as the units of analysis. Long (2005) also claims that task-based needs analysis has advantages over other traditional needs analysis approaches since: (a) task-based needs analysis provides more valid data on the target tasks by utilizing the knowledge of domain experts rather than outsiders' such as language teachers and applied linguists; (b) task-based needs analysis identifies the real-world uses of the target language, the dynamic qualities of the target discourse while traditional linguistically based needs analyses provide a list of decontextualized structural items; and (c) the results of task-based needs analysis can be readily used as input for the task-based or content-based course design.

The importance of task-based needs analysis is well manifested in the six steps to develop a TBLT program suggested by Long and Norris (2000):

1. Conduct task-based needs analysis to identify target tasks.

2. Classify target tasks into target task types.

3. Derive pedagogic tasks.

4. Sequence pedagogic tasks.

5. Implement syllabus with appropriate methodology and pedagogy.

6. Assess student achievement using task-based, criterion-referenced performance tests.

The first step of this process is conducting a task-based needs analysis, which is necessary to identify target tasks for specific groups of learners. Target tasks are the real-world tasks that the learners should be prepared to undertake during or after the course outside of the classroom, and they can only be identified through empirical needs analysis, not merely through the intuition of curriculum developers. Once the target tasks are

identified through needs analysis, the target tasks can be categorized into more abstract, super-ordinate target task types. From the target task types, pedagogic tasks can be developed. These are the tasks that teachers and students work on in the classroom. To enable the learners to perform the target tasks by the end of the course, pedagogic tasks should be sequenced gradually according to difficulty and complexity to form a task-based syllabus. After developing and sequencing pedagogic tasks, the next steps are to implement the task-based syllabus with appropriate methodology and pedagogy and to assess the students' performance using task-based assessments. In essence, according to Long and Norris, only when the target tasks are identified and classified through needs analysis can pedagogic tasks be derived and implemented in the classroom.

Among the six steps, the aim of the particular needs analysis for the current project is to accomplish the first two steps. Through interviews and the questionnaire survey with Korean business professionals, target tasks of business English will be identified, and those tasks will be classified into more abstract, super-ordinate target task types.

The importance of the triangulation of methods and sources in task-based needs analysis has been emphasized recently. Triangulation is a process of comparing data from different sources or methods with one another to validate the data and ultimately to increase credibility of the interpretation of the data (Long, 2005). Long advocates the utilization of multiple sources and methods in needs analysis in order to achieve triangulation. However, there have been only a few cases where triangulation by various sources and methods has been actually employed in the literature (see Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002; Jasso-Aguilar; 1999, 2005; Gilabert, 2005). Despite the paucity of needs analyses conducted, in a study on the needs of Waikiki hotel maids, Jasso-Aguilar (1999, 2005) was able not only to identify discrepancies among different sources, but also

to explain them by utilizing and comparing various sources (hotel maids, supervisors, the executive housekeeper, and a human resources staff member) and methods (participants observation, unstructured interviews, and questionnaires). Gilabert (2005) also utilized triangulation in his study on the needs analysis of Catalonian journalists and reported that the use of various sources (scholars, company representatives, and domain experts) and methods (unstructured interviews, questionnaire, limited non-participant observation, and collecting textual samples) helped to obtain more reliable and better validated findings.

Literature Review of Business English Needs Analysis

As the demands for business English have increased in recent years, a considerable amount of research has been carried out on business English (Barbara, Celani, Collins, & Scott, 1996; Charles, 1996; Chew, 2005; Eustace, 1996; Gimenez, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006; Grosse, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996, 2002; Nickerson, 2005; St. John, 1996). Recently, business English also has been given much attention, as English is regarded as a lingua franca in international business contexts (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Planken, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, in press). Most of the research, however, has been conducted on genre analysis of business writing, discourse analysis of business communication, or business communication skills and strategies, rather than needs analyses of business English tasks. Genre analysis research on business writing (Akar, 2002; Bhatia, 1993; Eustace, 1996; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000, 2002, 2005; Jenkins & Hinds, 1987; Santos, 2002) has mainly focused on business letters and email communication, examining specific moves that distinguish a certain type of business English texts as well as cultural aspects of a particular discourse community that affect acceptable moves and rhetoric of the text. Discourse analysis

research on business communication (Charles, 1996; de Beaugrande, 2000; Gimenez, 2001; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002, Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) has investigated discourse patterns of frequently used business English communication tasks such as business meetings and negotiations. These studies have revealed not only discourse patterns attributed to the tasks but also other factors influencing discourse patterns, including business relationship characteristics, degree of formality, and cross-cultural aspects. Research on business communication skills and strategies (Barbara et al., 1996; Chew, 2005; de Beaugrande, 2000; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996; St. John, 1996) started by investigating frequently used business communication skills, but then shifted its focus into communication strategies for effective communication in business, applying the findings and the implications of discourse analysis research on business English use. In addition, most of the needs analyses conducted on business English have been case studies dealing with specific situations such as a textile company in Hong Kong (Li So-mui & Mead, 2000), senior German bankers (Edwards, 2000), or Singapore accountants (Yin & Wong, 1990). Hence the results of these studies are not directly applicable to the target course in the current study, although they should offer insights into types of tasks that may be of interest.

Despite the scarcity of needs analyses of core business English tasks, there have been some studies that have tried to distill general business English tasks. St. John (1996) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) suggested a set of core business skills based on studies by Holden (1993) and Yin and Wong (1990). The skills comprised oral skills (such as telephoning, socializing, giving presentations, taking part in meetings, and negotiating) and written skills (including correspondence and report writing). Louhiala-Salminen (1996) conducted a survey study on the written business communications of Finnish

business professionals and reported the following written business communication situations: (a) exchange of written messages (letters, faxes, telexes, and email), (b) writing reports, (c) reading professional journals and other publications, (d) translation, and (e) writing official documents. A survey study on communication patterns of the Brazilian business context (Barbara et al., 1996) identified reports, memos, prospectuses, proposals, projects, meetings, and presentations as the most frequently performed business writing tasks. In a needs analysis on Mexican business executives, Grosse (2004) reported the most comprehensive and up-to-date business English tasks, including phone call, email, fax correspondence, telephone, video or face-to-face conference, writing business letters, negotiation, presentation, products exhibition, training programs, meetings, business trips, attending foreign guests, professional reading, and Internet research. Finally, despite being limited to the tasks performed by newly hired bank employees, Chew's study (2005) on Hong Kong bankers presented various tasks that were not identified in the previous studies, such as daily commentary, opinion letters, internal newsletter, press releases, invitations, and road shows.

All the business English tasks identified throughout the literature on business English are shown in Table 1. Irrespective of whether the study identified business English use in terms of tasks, skills, or target situations, all the tasks that were mentioned for English in the studies were identified and included as business English tasks. For example, in the case of Barbara et al. (1996), oral tasks were included in addition to the written tasks mentioned earlier, since there were some respondents who mentioned oral tasks, although the main focus of the study was restricted to writing tasks. The findings of these studies provided examples of possible business English tasks to be taught in the course. Nonetheless, most of the studies were not comprehensive enough to cover all the possible

tasks (e.g., Barbara et al. and Louhiala-Salminen's studies that were limited to writing tasks) or not specific enough to serve as a unit of analysis for the syllabus design of this particular course, which is a task (e.g., business English skills in St. John's study). In addition, many of the studies were conducted in South American or European countries rather than Asian countries, where most of the HELP students come from, and thus might be of limited use for generalization to the Asian context. The studies that were conducted in Asian contexts were also subject to limited application, since they were mostly case studies of specific company types, such as banks or accounting companies. Therefore, the current study sought to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis encompassing all the types of business English tasks performed in Korean business settings.

Table 1

Business English Tasks Identified Through Literature Review

	St. John	Louhiala-Salminen	Barbara et al.	Grosse	Chew
Correspondence	• telephoning • writing correspondence	• letters • faxes • telexes • email	• telephone calls	• letters • faxes • phone call • email	• email (request) • faxes
Writing a document	• report writing	• reports • official documents (e.g., contracts)	• reports • memos • prospectuses • proposals • projects • meetings • presentations		• minutes, letters, memos • review report, requests • procedural guides • proposals, daily commentary • contracts and agreements • writing rules and regulations • opinion letters • internal newsletter • press releases and invitations • research analysis reports
Business Meeting	• presentations • meetings • negotiating		• seminars • teleconferences	• meetings • negotiation • conference • products exhibition • presentation	• seminar presentations • meetings • conferences • road shows
Business trip			• visits	• business trips	
Attending foreign guests			• dealing with guests	• reception of visitors	
Translation		• translating			• translating (customers' opinions, reports)
Readings related to the job		• prof. Journals • other publications		• prof. readings	
Others	• socializing	• revising English text	• interviews • purchasing	• Internet • face-to-face interaction • training programs	• reviewing & updating clients files • spread sheets (charts and tables) • reading manuals • credit reviews research • oral command to colleagues

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to identify target tasks for a business English course and to classify the identified tasks into target task types. This study also aimed at investigating the Korean business professionals' previous experiences with business English courses and their attitudes toward those courses as well. Keeping these purposes in mind, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the tasks that Korean business professionals need to perform using English at work?

2. How frequently is each identified task performed?

3. What are the Korean business professionals' previous experiences with business English courses?

4. What are their attitudes toward and wants for taking business English courses related to their jobs?

In order to answer the first research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five Korean business professionals. For the rest of the research questions, a questionnaire was developed based on the results of the interviews and administered to Korean business professionals.

Method

In the current study, various sources and methods were used to achieve triangulation of the data. As for the sources, literature on business English was reviewed, and Korean business professionals were included as the domain experts of Korean business settings, previous learners of business English courses, and potential clients of the courses.

Researchers have suggested that domain experts are the most useful and reliable source to identify target tasks, as Gilabert's study (2005) noted:

> As far as the use of multiple sources is concerned, it has been shown how, although all the social actors of a domain can provide useful information about the kind of tasks that are carried out within the domain, as well as about the language needs they have, it was domain experts who provided the most accurate and reliable information. This supports Long's claim that, if only one source is to be used in a NA, domain experts should be that source, rather than students, scholars, company representatives, or applied linguists. (p. 197)

Although domain experts are regarded as the most reliable sources of the target domain by providing the insider's view (Gilabert, 2005), they also have been criticized for being unable to provide accurate information regarding the linguistic aspects of tasks. However, as Long (2005) pointed out, it is expected that "using task as the unit of analysis enables domain experts to provide quality information of the kind they do possess" (p. 28), while subsequent discourse analysis of the target discourse samples by linguistic experts would reveal the necessary linguistic information of the target tasks. Since the current project aimed to identify business English tasks that were performed in the Korean context, while leaving discourse analysis of the target tasks as the scope of the next study, Korean business professionals were considered to be the most reliable source of information on the domain for the current project.

Along with their knowledge as domain experts of the Korean business contexts, their experiences of taking business English courses as previous learners and their attitudes toward and wants for the courses as future clients of the courses were also investigated in the study. Although the Korean business professionals were selected as the most reliable

source on the targeted domain, it was also expected to be interesting and beneficial to explore their previous experiences of taking business English courses. Thus, questions were included regarding not only how many of them had taken business English courses, but also what the courses were like and what were the advantages and disadvantages of the courses they perceived as learners. This was done to be better informed of the nature of existing business English courses as well as their previous experiences. In addition, the investigation of their attitudes toward and wants for business English courses were sought to reveal what they really expected and wanted from the business English courses.

As for the methods, literature survey, semi-structured interviews, and a survey questionnaire were employed. Previous studies on business English needs analysis were reviewed in order to understand what kinds of business English tasks had been identified through the studies and also in which contexts previous studies had been conducted. Following the literature review, semi-structured interviews were conduced to obtain a better idea of the Korean business context and to identify business English target tasks for the purpose of developing a questionnaire. Finally, a questionnaire was designed and administered to Korean business professionals in order to investigate business English use in the various parts of the Korean business context. The questionnaire aimed at: (a) identifying the core business English tasks that Korean business professionals perform in the workplace as well as the frequency of each task; (b) investigating respondents' previous experiences with taking business English courses; and (c) examining their attitudes toward taking business English courses and their particular wants for the courses.

Participants

In total, 75 Korean business professionals participated in the study: five for the semi-structured interviews and 73 for the questionnaire survey. Three of them participated in

both the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire survey. All volunteered to participate in the survey, and some of the participants received compensation of gift certificates equivalent to two to five dollars after completing the questionnaire. Compensation was made after consulting with the contact person of each company. Only when the contact person thought it was necessary was compensation made, and the amount was also decided based on the contact person's opinion. The process of participant selection and the demography of the participants are described here in detail starting with the semi-structured interviews and then the questionnaire survey.

For the purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews, 13 business professionals from 13 different companies (four financial, three manufacturing, two information technology, two telecommunication, and two other companies) were selected as potential interviewees and personally contacted by the researcher. Among them, however, five business professionals were excluded due to lack of English use at work, and another three were not able to participate during the interview periods due to their busy work schedules. As a result, five Korean business professionals participated in the semi-structured interviews.

Detailed descriptions of their backgrounds are shown in Table 2. Two of them were from financial companies while the others were from manufacturing or telecommunication companies. Three of them were working in the planning departments of their companies, and the other two were working in the actuary or sales departments. With regard to job positions, one manager, two assistant managers, and one staff member were included. On average, they had been working at their companies about five years, ranging from two-and-one-half years to seven years. Among them, one interviewee was employed by a foreign company, where she faced a great need to speak English since she

had to work with foreign colleagues. In addition, one of the interviewees from the
manufacturing companies was working at the China branch of his company, taking
charge of the international business of the branch.

Table 2

Demography of Interviewees

	Type of company	Department	Position
Interviewee 1	Finance	Actuary	Assistant manager
Interviewee 2	Manufacturing	Planning	Assistant manager
Interviewee 3	Telecommunication	Planning	Staff
Interviewee 4	Finance	Sales	Assistant manager
Interviewee 5	Manufacturing	Planning	Manager

In the survey questionnaire, 73 Korean business professionals participated. There
were 48 male and 25 female business professionals ranging in age from 25 to 48 ($M =$
32.16). They had worked in their companies for an average of 5.21 years, ranging from
one month to 20 years. In order to ensure that the study results were not biased toward
certain types of companies, eight different Korean companies were selected for the study.
Originally business professionals from ten companies were personally contacted by the
researcher and asked whether they could assist with conducting the survey in their
companies. Among them, two companies (one tire manufacturing and one trading
company) were not available to participate in the study, thus resulting in eight companies
in total. Considering that English use is limited to certain departments in domestic
companies, only the employees working in the department where English use was

necessary were included. From each company, five to 13 employees participated. On average, there were about nine participants from each company.

A detailed description of each company is shown in Table 3. With regard to company type, there were four manufacturing companies, two financial companies, one telecommunication, and one advertising company. Among the eight companies, four were domestic companies, and the other four were international companies that are owned by a foreign company. The proportion of foreign companies (50%) included in the study was much higher than the current distribution of domestic and foreign companies in Korea. However, considering that the purpose of the study is to identify business English use, an equal number of domestic and foreign companies was purposely included in the study in order to capture various business English tasks as much as possible. In terms of the location of the companies, five of them were located in Seoul while the others were from other cities of Korea.

Table 3

Description of Companies

	Company Type	Domestic/Foreign	Location	No. of Participants	Comments
Company 1	Manufacturing	Domestic	Suwon	8	Electronics
Company 3	Manufacturing	Domestic	Seoul	10	Scales
Company 2	Manufacturing	Foreign	Gunsan	12	Chemical
Company 4	Manufacturing	Foreign	Seoul	5	Camera
Company 6	Financial	Domestic	Seoul	6	Insurance
Company 5	Financial	Foreign	Seoul	9	Insurance
Company 7	Telecommunication	Domestic	Koyang	13	
Company 8	Advertising	Foreign	Seoul	10	

Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) scores were used as

indices of the respondents' English language proficiency. The respondents were asked whether they had taken the TOEIC test, and if they had, they were asked to indicate their scores on seven continuous score bands. TOEIC is an English language proficiency test developed and administered by ETS to evaluate English proficiency for the global workplace. This particular test was selected for the study since it was the English proficiency test most widely used by Korean companies when recruiting, promoting, or deploying employees, and consequently, it was also the most widely taken by Korean business professionals.

Sixty (82.2%) among the 73 respondents answered that they had taken the TOEIC test, and the distribution of their test scores is shown in Figure 1. The scores of the respondents ranged from 600 to over 900. All the respondents scored over 600 on the test, and 20 of them scored above 900. Considering that TOEIC is a standardized test with a score range from minimum 10 to maximum 990 and that the mean score for Korean test takers is 541 ($SD = 193$) according to ETS test-taker report in 2004, the respondents can be regarded as having intermediate to highly advanced levels of English proficiency.
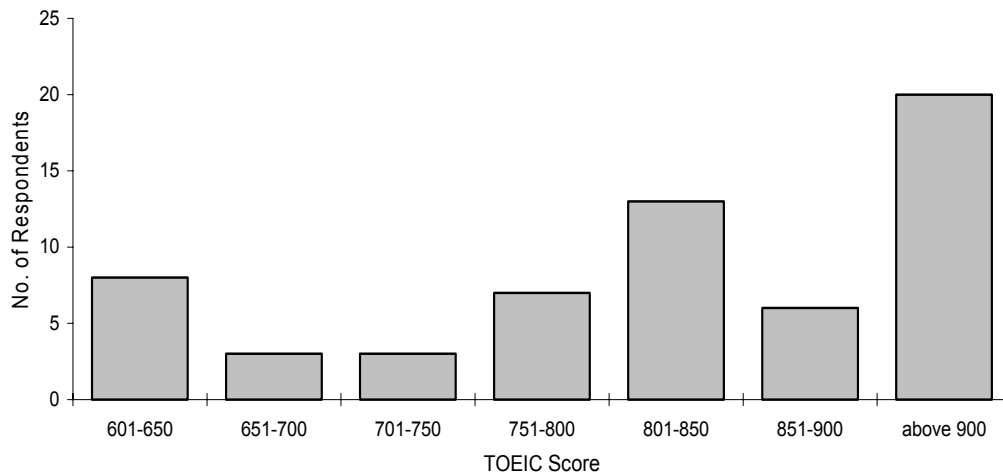

Figure 1. TOEIC Score Distribution.

Instruments

A series of questions was developed for the semi-structured interviews.   These questions can be divided into three major categories: (a) bio-data, (b) business English tasks, and (c) business English classes. The participants were first asked about their backgrounds (company, department/team, and working experience), and they were asked about the tasks that they performed at work using English. For each task they listed, the researcher asked them to describe the task in detail, and additional questions regarding the frequency and difficulty of the tasks followed if time allowed. Afterward, questions concerning business English classes were asked. Respondents were asked whether they had taken business English classes before and, if they had, to what extent it was helpful in performing their jobs (see Appendix A for the interview questions).

Based on the interview results, a questionnaire was developed for further survey purposes. The questionnaire was composed of four major sections: (a) background information, (b) getting a job, (c) business English tasks, and (d) business English courses. Questions concerning company name, department/team name, company type, work experience, and language proficiency were included as background information questions. In Section B, the participants were asked to answer yes-no questions regarding the tasks they performed in English when they applied for a job. Section C investigated how frequently the business English tasks identified through the semi-structured interviews were performed by the respondents. In total, 26 business English target tasks classified into ten target task types were included. The participants were asked to indicate the appropriate frequency for each task on a Likert scale. Each question had a five-point scale: 'never' (0), 'rarely' (1), 'sometimes' (2), 'often' (3), and 'everyday' (4). Following questions on business English tasks, two open-ended questions were included on the

importance of English in performing jobs and advice to future job applicants. In Section

D, questions were asked on the respondents' previous experiences with business English

courses followed by questions about the respondents' attitudes toward and wants for the

courses (see Appendix B for the questionnaire). The questionnaire was written in English.

However, the respondents were allowed to answer either in English or in Korean. To

make sure that the questions were understandable and clear to the respondents, the

questionnaire was pilot tested with two Korean business professionals as well as two non-

business native speakers of Korean. A few minor revisions of question wording were

made as a result of their comments.

Procedures

Since face-to-face interviews were not possible due to distance (i.e., the interviewer

was in Hawai'i and the interviewees were in Korea), an Internet chat tool, MSN

Messenger, was used as a medium for the interviews. Both the interviewer and the

interviewees were very comfortable with MSN Messenger; they used Messenger for

everyday conversations at work as well as at home and were able to type fast enough to

conduct the interviews through chatting. The interviewer met the interviewees on the

Internet through MSN Messenger, and the interviews were conducted using the chat tool.

The interview procedures were not considered different from face-to-face interviews

except that they were conducted through written communication. Each interviewee was

interviewed individually, and there were, in total, five interview sessions. An interview

took about one-and-a-half hours on average. All of the interviews were conducted in

Korean, which is the first language of both the interviewer and the interviewees.

Based on the interview results, the questionnaire was developed and pilot tested with

Korean business professionals and non-business native speakers of Korean as mentioned above. In order to administer the questionnaire in eight different companies, one businessman from each company was contacted by the researcher. The researcher explained the purpose of the survey as well as the process of distributing, completing, and collecting the questionnaires. The eight business professionals administered the questionnaire to their colleagues in the company and sent the completed questionnaires to the researcher. The questionnaires were mainly distributed and collected as a word file through email or MSN Messenger due to the distance between the researcher and the Korean business professionals. However, some of the questionnaires were distributed and collected as hard copies while the researcher visited Korea.

Analyses

All the interview dialogues were automatically saved as XML documents by MSN Messenger. The researcher carefully read through the interview dialogues and examined the business English tasks mentioned during the interviews. All the tasks that the interviewees mentioned having performed in English at work were identified as target tasks, and groups of similar target tasks were categorized into more abstract and super-ordinate target task types using Microsoft Excel software. Since there was no previous work done on business English target task types to refer to, the researcher developed the target task types primarily based on the target tasks identified through the semi-structured interviews, but also took into consideration the tasks mentioned in the other studies shown in Table 1.

All the answers written on the questionnaire were coded for quantitative and qualitative analyses. As for the quantitative data analyses, descriptive statistics, an

internal-consistency reliability measure (Cronbach alpha), and factor analysis were employed. In the case of yes-no questions in Section B, when the respondents did not choose any of the options, they were separately coded into the 'no answer' category. As for qualitative data analyses, the answers to open-ended questions were transcribed as they were written on the questionnaire; all the grammatical errors and spelling errors were kept as written on the questionnaires. The answers were then coded into more general, encompassing categories identified through examination of the data by the researcher and another coder who was familiar with the study. The initial intercoder agreement between the two coders was somewhat low (72.2%) due to the second coder's misinterpretation of the coding instruction for question number twelve. However, all the disagreements between the two coders were resolved through discussion.

RESULTS

Business English Tasks Performed by the Korean Business Professionals

Through the interviews, a variety of tasks were identified and classified into pertinent target task types as shown in Table 4. The target tasks that each interviewee listed were somewhat different from one another, depending on their company types and job responsibilities. All the tasks that the interviewees listed were taken into consideration for the purpose of developing a questionnaire that captured various target business tasks as much as possible. It should be noted that although the identified tasks were classified into the most pertinent target task types, many tasks were in fact integrated and occurred simultaneously with the tasks from other target task types. For instance, when a company received a foreign guest, it did not involve just picking up the guest and offering him or

her a guide for sightseeing. In addition, negotiations, presentations, and writing a contract

could also take place while attending to the guest.

Table 4

Target Tasks Identified in the Interview

Target Task Types	Target Tasks
Getting a job	writing a resume and cover letter, job interviews, translation, free talking, presentation
Correspondence	email, phone calls, faxes
Writing a document	memorandum, proposal, report, contract/agreement, business letter, order, claim, annual report, evaluation form, international relations materials, summary of meetings
Order/customer satisfaction	placing and receiving an order, purchasing, dealing with claims
Business meeting	meetings, conferences, seminars, social meetings, briefing, presentation, Q&A, negotiations, video conferences, teleconferences
Business trip	making a reservation, business meetings, sightseeing, finding directions, visiting other companies or factories, social meetings
Attending foreign guests	pick-up, sightseeing guide, interpreting
Interpretation	business meetings, company ceremonies
Translation	documents, booklets, brochures, books
Market research	visiting other companies' homepages, asking questions using Q&A board
Reading	reading articles and magazines related to job
Others	social talks with foreign colleagues or foreign guests, making an English homepage, proofreading, making presentation materials

In addition to asking about business English tasks, a question was asked about how

important the interviewees thought English was in performing their jobs. The answers to

this question varied from English being absolutely important in performing job

responsibilities to English being relatively less important than creative ideas and planning

ability. For instance, one interviewee mentioned that a good command of English was very important to obtain new career opportunities such as study or training programs abroad. Another interviewee added that English was very crucial to differentiate himself from other colleagues. Contrary to these opinions, another interviewee mentioned that English seemed to be secondary to good ideas and planning abilities since in her company a professional interpreter was available for those with creative ideas.

Throughout the interviews, the importance of understanding cultural differences and building a personal relationship with business partners was addressed. One interviewee, who used English the most frequently of all the interviewees, mentioned that it was important to approach business partners in different ways respecting their cultures. For instance, he welcomed and talked to North American business partners in a casual way using rather informal English and wearing casual clothes. In the case of South Americans, however, he talked to them formally as if he had been in front of the president of the country. The importance of building personal relationships was emphasized as well. An interviewee mentioned that personal relationships with his business partners not only affected how well the work progressed but also how they dealt with problems when they arose. He said that when a strong relationship was built with his business partners, he and his partners were able to overcome the problems, but, without a strong relationship that was not always the case.

In addition, social talk was regarded as important by the interviewees in building personal relationships with their business partners. Since business meetings always entail topics other than the business matters at hand, it seemed to be necessary to prepare various topics to talk about with business partners from diverse cultures in order to successfully lead and participate in the social talk. Interestingly, good pronunciation was

also mentioned to be important in business meetings by one interviewee. He mentioned that, even though both business parties had a shared understanding of what would be discussed during the meeting, if the poor pronunciation of one party hindered communication, the other party tended to show disrespect for his or her partner immediately.

The survey questionnaire administered after the interviews included questions regarding: (a) the frequency of business English tasks; (b) the importance of business English perceived by the Korean business professionals; (c) their recommendations for potential job applicants in terms of English, and (d) their experiences with taking business English courses and their attitudes toward and wants for the courses. The results will be presented in the following sections organized in terms of these four categories.

Frequency of Business English Tasks

In Section B and C, questions were asked with regard to the frequency of business English tasks performed by the Korean business professionals. In Section B, the tasks related to job applications were investigated, and the other business English tasks performed in regular work situations were included in Section C. The results of the two sections follow in detail.

Getting a job. In Section B, three tasks were included in relation to applying for a job: writing a resume, writing a cover letter, and having a job interview. As shown in Table 5, all three tasks were performed by approximately half of the respondents, and the job interview was the most frequently performed task among the three tasks by the respondents when they applied for a job. In detail, 43 participants (58.9%) performed one of the three tasks and 31 participants (42.5%) performed all three tasks. Besides the three

tasks, "phone test of spoken English" (by four participants), presentation (2), and self-introduction (1) were also mentioned in the "other" section. In addition, there were two respondents who mentioned that they had submitted English proficiency test scores instead of performing those tasks.

Table 5

Getting a Job

	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Writing a resume	37 (50.7%)	34 (46.6%)	2 (2.7%)	73 (100%)
Writing a cover letter	33 (45.2%)	38 (52.1%)	2 (2.7%)	73 (100%)
Job interview	41 (56.2%)	30 (41.1%)	2 (2.7%)	73 (100%)

Business English tasks. Twenty-six business English tasks identified through the semi-structured interviews were presented in Section C, and the respondents were asked to indicate the appropriate frequency scale point for each task on a Likert scale. To examine the consistency of the answers to the questions, an internal-consistency reliability measure (Cronbach alpha) was employed, and Cronbach alpha (α) for the whole questionnaire was .98. Since the high reliability of the whole questionnaire could indicate that the subsections in the questionnaire were not as different as they were designed to be (Brown, 2001), Cronbach alpha (α) was calculated for each subsection as well, and all of these were over .80 (see Tables 7 to 12 for the figures).

In addition to the reliability estimates, factor analysis was employed to explore and verify the convergent and discriminate structures of the subsections (Brown, 2001). Table 6 presents the results of the factor analysis (principle factors extraction) after a

VARIMAX rotation. A six-factor solution was employed in this study, since the six factors had eigenvalues over 1.00 (a widely accepted cut-point). In addition, the six-factor solution seemed to be appropriate considering the questionnaire design which included five target task types and a miscellaneous group of tasks. The six factors accounted for 74.8% of the variance in this study.

According to the factor analysis results, document writing tasks loaded most heavily on factor three, and order/customer satisfaction tasks most heavily on factor five. In addition, the tasks in the business trip subsection loaded most heavily on factor one. However, correspondence and business meeting tasks showed somewhat complex patterns. Although all the correspondence tasks loaded most heavily on factor two, the tasks also showed loadings over .30 (a traditional cut-point) on the other factors, indicating that these tasks were also related to other subsections. This pattern, however, is reasonable, since correspondence tasks share certain characteristics with writing a document, and the correspondence can be part of business meeting and business trip tasks.

The business meeting subsection showed the most complex patterns among the subsections. While four of the business meeting tasks loaded most heavily on factor four, the other two tasks, negotiation and social meeting, loaded most heavily on factor two and six. In addition, the tasks other than briefing showed loadings over .30 on the other factors, particularly on factors one and two. A close examination of the patterns makes them understandable since negotiations, conferences, and seminars often take place while taking business trips (factor one), and negotiation, conference, and social meeting tasks inevitably entail correspondence (factor two) in order to schedule the tasks or in order to report the outcome of the tasks. In addition, it makes sense that the social meeting task loaded most heavily on factor six, since the task usually takes place while attending to

Table 6

Factor Analysis Results

Business English target task types Business English target tasks	Factors						h^2
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
A. Correspondence							
a. Email	.195	**.625***	.350*	.354*	.007	.203	*.718*
b. Phone call	.188	**.694***	.125	.323*	.196	.356*	*.802*
c. Fax	.351*	**.727***	.020	.188	.295	.088	*.782*
d. Writing a business letter	.144	**.596***	.333*	-.118	.222	.190	*.586*
B. Writing a document							
a. Memorandum	.209	.124	**.742***	.165	.078	.313*	*.741*
b. Proposal (e.g., project, plan, etc.)	.181	.172	**.796***	.227	.205	.047	*.792*
c. Report (e.g., sales, meeting, etc.)	.134	.053	**.823***	.213	.031	.279	*.822*
d. Contract/agreement	.235	.280	**.575***	.147	.343*	.075	*.609*
C. Order/Customer satisfaction							
a. Placing an order/Purchasing	.144	.232	.177	.071	**.829***	.075	*.805*
b. Receiving an order	.146	.081	.090	.245	**.877***	.117	*.878*
c. Dealing with claims	.115	.359*	.185	.137	**.736***	.301*	*.827*
D. Business meeting							
a. Briefing	.193	.116	.282	**.763***	.269	.201	*.826*
b. Presentation	.242	.189	.311*	**.785***	.133	.070	*.830*
c. Negotiation	.342*	**.633***	.055	.252	.399*	.136	*.761*
d. Conference	.494*	.340*	.068	**.646***	.211	.088	*.833*
e. Seminar	.502*	.244	.262	**.613***	.125	.115	*.786*
f. Social meeting (e.g., party, dining, etc.)	.139	.434*	.139	.199	.095	**.576***	*.607*
E. Business trip							
a. Business trip to foreign countries	**.721***	.322*	.237	.234	.145	-.053	*.758*
b. Making a reservation (e.g., hotel, flight, etc.)	**.854***	.213	.153	.212	.180	.130	*.894*
c. Visiting other companies/factories	**.802***	.098	.161	.068	.176	.187	*.749*
d. Sightseeing	**.767***	.238	.214	.185	.019	.157	*.750*
F. Attending to foreign guests	.512*	.120	.014	.276	.025	**.520***	*.625*
G. Interpretation (e.g., meeting, conference, etc.)	.135	.137	.237	.050	.149	**.799***	*.756*
H. Translation (e.g., document, booklet, etc.)	.020	.304*	.298	-.069	.266	**.663***	*.696*
I. Gathering information on the market or other companies	**.482***	.163	.103	.314*	.208	.436*	*.601*
J. Reading articles, magazines, and books related to job	.449*	-.074	.218	.340*	-.002	**.493***	*.613*
Proportion of Variance	*.167*	*.125*	*.121*	*.117*	*.111*	*.107*	*.748*

* = Loadings over .30; **bold** = highest loading for each variable.

foreign guests and interpreting. In sum, the factor analysis results showed that the tasks in each subsection predominantly loaded on a single factor (i.e., correspondence tasks on factor two, writing a document on factor three, order/customer satisfaction on factor five, business meeting on factor four, and business trip on factor one), providing some evidence for the validity of each subsection of the questionnaire.

Among correspondence tasks, email correspondence was the most frequently used task in the Korean business settings as shown in Table 7. At the same time, it was the most frequently performed task among all the tasks included in the questionnaire. All but one participant answered that they had written an email in English, and twenty-three participants (31.5%) responded that they wrote emails in English every day. In 1996, Louhiala-Saliminen conducted a survey study on written business communications with Finnish business professionals and found that mail and telefax were the most common mediums of communication. In a recent study on Mexican business executives' English use, Grosse (2004) reported email and phone calls as the most frequently used communication channels. Compared to the results of these studies, it seemed that the use of phone calls and fax in English had been relatively reduced in the Korean business context, while the use of email has increased rapidly.

Table 7

Frequency of Correspondence

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	*SD*
Email	6.8%	13.7%	23.3%	24.7%	31.5%	2.60	1.25
Phone call	12.5%	31.9%	25.0%	20.8%	9.7%	1.83	1.18
Fax	23.6%	25.0%	25.0%	22.2%	4.2%	1.58	1.19
Writing a business letter	19.4%	26.4%	19.4%	26.4%	8.3%	1.78	1.26

Cronbach alpha (α) = .86

In relation to writing a business document, writing a report was the most frequently performed task as shown in Table 8. Writing a memorandum was also frequently performed among the respondents; nineteen respondents (26%) answered that they wrote memorandums often or every day. Surprisingly, 47% of the respondents were working for domestic companies. Considering that most of the employees in domestic companies are Korean and memorandums are mostly used for in-house communications, this finding is quite unexpected. From the survey results, however, it is not clear whether they wrote the memorandums for in-house communications or for communications with other companies. As other tasks related to writing a document, 'writing specification' and 'documentation' were mentioned. However, it is not clear what they meant by 'specification' and 'documentation' since they did not specify the tasks.

Table 8

Frequency of Writing a Document

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	*SD*
Memorandum	17.8%	26.0%	30.1%	12.3%	13.7%	1.78	1.26
Proposal	18.1%	25.0%	29.2%	19.4%	8.3%	1.75	1.20
Report	12.5%	25.0%	27.8%	26.4%	8.3%	1.93	1.16
Contract/agreement	29.2%	36.1%	19.4%	13.9%	1.4%	1.22	1.06

Cronbach alpha (α) = .86

The tasks related to orders and purchasing were found to be the least performed tasks by the respondents (see Table 9). Nearly 70% of the respondents answered that they had not performed or rarely performed those tasks. This finding might be due to the fact that only employees from certain departments of a company deal with orders and customer satisfaction while other task types are generally performed by the employees regardless of department types.

Table 9

Frequency of Order/Customer Satisfaction

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	*SD*
Placing an order/Purchasing	38.9%	30.6%	18.1%	9.7%	2.8%	1.07	1.10
Receiving an order	37.5%	31.9%	15.3%	12.5%	2.8%	1.11	1.12
Dealing with claims	47.2%	29.2%	11.1%	4.2%	8.3%	0.97	1.22

Cronbach alpha (α) = .80

With regard to the tasks related to business meetings, conference was the most frequently performed task followed by briefing. Although many respondents answered that they wanted to improve presentation and negotiation skills to prepare for business meetings (refer to Section D: Business English Courses), most of the respondents seemed to have few chances to participate in business meetings, as shown in Table 10. In fact, negotiation ($M = 1.11$) was the least frequently performed task in this section. Other tasks related to business meetings—'video conference,' 'teleconference,' and 'joining in membership training'—were mentioned by one respondent each.

Table 10

Frequency of Business Meetings

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	*SD*
Briefing	21.9%	27.4%	28.8%	20.5%	1.4%	1.52	1.09
Presentation	26.0%	27.4%	31.5%	13.7%	1.4%	1.37	1.05
Negotiation	34.7%	29.2%	27.8%	6.9%	1.4%	1.11	1.01
Conference	19.4%	23.6%	36.1%	19.4%	1.4%	1.60	1.05
Seminar	20.8%	31.9%	31.9%	15.3%	0.0%	1.42	0.98
Social meeting	27.8%	36.1%	25.0%	9.7%	1.4%	1.21	1.00

Cronbach alpha (α) = .94

Table 11 displays the frequency of the tasks related to taking business trips. Considering that taking business trips to foreign countries is not an everyday task, it is quite noticeable that almost half of the respondents marked 'sometimes' (2) for business trips to foreign countries. Most of the respondents who had taken business trips to foreign

countries also mentioned that they had performed related tasks such as making

reservations, visiting other companies/factories, and sightseeing.

Table 11

Frequency of Business Trips

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
Business trip to foreign countries	27.4%	23.3%	46.6%	2.7%	0.0%	1.25	0.89
Making a reservation	30.6%	22.2%	43.1%	4.2%	0.0%	1.21	0.93
Visiting other companies/factories	29.2%	22.2%	38.9%	9.7%	0.0%	1.29	0.99
Sightseeing	26.0%	30.1%	35.6%	8.2%	0.0%	1.26	0.94

Cronbach alpha (α) = .91

Other target tasks that were included in Section C are reported in Table 12. It is

remarkable that 'reading articles, magazines, and books related to your job' was

performed very often by the respondents. Indeed, it was the second most frequently

performed task among all the tasks included in Section C, following email. More than

50% of the respondents answered that they read material in English related to their jobs

often or even every day. In accordance with the study by Grosse (2004), which reported

wide use of English among Mexican executives in reading job-related materials such as

English magazines, research reports, Internet news sources, and training materials, it

seemed to be important for the Korean business professionals to read English materials in

order to acquire the most up-to-date knowledge in work-related fields as well as business

in general. Besides the tasks included in the questionnaire, respondents also mentioned

other tasks such as taking an overseas or online training program (1), taking a job-related

exam in English (1), and reading survey reports in English (1).

Table 12

Frequency of Other Target Tasks

Tasks	0	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
Attending to foreign guests	17.4%	29.0%	37.7%	14.5%	1.4%	1.54	0.99
Interpretation	24.7%	38.4%	24.7%	8.2%	4.1%	1.29	1.05
Translation	19.2%	19.2%	31.5%	27.4%	2.7%	1.75	1.13
Gathering information	16.7%	23.6%	27.8%	26.4%	5.6%	1.81	1.16
Reading related to job	5.5%	8.2%	32.9%	39.7%	13.7%	2.48	1.01

Cronbach alpha (α) = .84

The Importance of English Perceived by the Korean Business Professionals

At the end of Section C, two open-ended questions were asked regarding the importance of English and the respondents' advice for job applicants in terms of English. Question 12 investigated how important respondents thought English was to performing their jobs. The answers to the question addressed either the importance of English or the necessity of English. Initially, the answers addressing the importance of English were coded into four categories: (a) very important, (b) important, (c) not so important, and (d) not important. Forty (54.8%) among the 73 respondents answered that English was very important and seven respondents (9.6%) answered it was important. Six respondents (8.2%) answered that it was not so important and three respondents (4%) answered it was not important.

The answers related to necessity of English were coded into three categories: (a)

necessary, (b) necessary when, and (c) not necessary. Three respondents (4%) answered that English was necessary for their work while four respondents (5%) answered that English was not necessary. Other respondents (10) specified the situations in which they needed to use English, and their answers were coded into 'necessary when.' The situations they mentioned included communicating with foreign colleagues or foreigner investors, getting information or reading articles related to their job, and dealing with insurance claims.

According to the results, the respondents seemed to acknowledge the importance of English in performing their jobs in general. Some of the respondents mentioned that English was a basic skill to get a job and also to perform their work responsibilities. Furthermore, even the participants who had no need to use English at work seemed to be aware of the importance of English for their future career developments. For example, a respondent answered "there is no effect in my job. However, English is essential to me for development of my career." However, it was not clear from the answer whether the respondent meant that English would be needed in the future performing her current job or English proficiency would be needed to get a different job even though there would still be no need to use English in her new job.

In addition to the importance or necessity of English in performing their work, many respondents wrote additional reasons why they thought English was important or necessary. Among the reasons, communication with foreign colleagues or foreign clients (23) was the most frequently mentioned, followed by documentation (9) and information gathering on the market (7). Other reasons such as business meetings (4), interpretation/translation (4), handling claims (4), trading (2), and future career (2) were also mentioned.

Recommendations for Potential Job Applicants

In question 13, the respondents were asked what they would recommend for potential job applicants to prepare in terms of English. The answers to this question were coded into eleven categories derived from the answers. Table 13 shows the categories as well as the number of respondents who mentioned each. When a respondent mentioned more than one category in the answer, the answer was coded into all the pertinent categories. It should be noted that, against the original purpose of the question, which was to inquire about target tasks, the respondents mentioned more about the four skills or the strategies to improve English proficiency rather than business English target tasks. It seemed that the instructions for question 13 were not clear to the respondents, revealing a limitation in the questionnaire design. "Improving English speaking or conversation ability" was the most frequently mentioned advice by the respondents. Considering the eight respondents who mentioned listening ability, the respondents seemed to regard oral English as the most important ability to improve in order to get a job. Some respondents (5), however, emphasized the importance of increasing knowledge related to the job rather than increasing English ability. For instance, one respondent answered that "I think that English is very important. But the basic knowledge for my own job is more important." Another participant also mentioned that relatively low English ability could be complemented by sufficient knowledge of the job. Besides the advice included in Table 13, presentation, phone calls, grammar, and English test score were also mentioned by one respondent each.

Table 13

Advice to Potential Job Applicants

Advice	No. of Respondents
Speaking/Conversation	28 (38.4%)
Writing	13 (17.8%)
Vocabulary or expressions related to the job	10 (13.7%)
Study English hard, steady, and continuously	9 (12.3%)
Actual experience or practice of English	9 (12.3%)
Listening	8 (11.0%)
Exposure to English or the culture where English is spoken	7 (9.6%)
Express ideas clearly in English	5 (6.8%)
Job interview	4 (5.5%)
Reading magazines and books related to the job	4 (5.5%)
Studying abroad	4 (5.5%)

Korean Business Professionals' Previous Experiences of Business English Courses

In Section D, questions regarding Korean business professionals' previous experiences with taking business English courses were asked in addition to their willingness to take business English courses. With regard to their previous experiences of taking business English courses, 26 participants (36%) answered that they had taken such courses. However, according to the description of the courses, eight of them had taken general English classes such as English conversation courses, ESL courses, or 'live English' rather than business English courses. In addition, two of them attended business schools where they learned business itself rather than business English. Thus only 16 of

them could be regarded as having taken business English courses. Most of the classes they had taken were focused on business communication or writing skills. As helpful aspects of the courses, learning business expressions (4), business writing (4), cultural education (2), and having a mock job interview (1) were mentioned.

Korean Business Professionals' Attitudes Toward and Wants for Business English Courses

Concerning the respondents' willingness to take a business English course, 42 participants (57.5%) answered that they would like to take a business English course. In the business English course, the participants wanted to improve presentation skills (18), speaking or communication skills (14), writing skills (9), skills related to business meetings (9), negotiation skills (6), expressions related to business (5), business manners (2), and listening (2). Grammar, vocabulary, and TOEIC were also mentioned by one respondent each. It is noteworthy that presentation skills were the most desired task to improve by the respondents although they seemed not to have many opportunities to do presentations at work as shown in Section C.

On the other hand, 29 participants (39.7%) did not want to take business English courses. As for the reasons not to take business English courses, seven of them answered that practicing English at work was better than taking business English courses. For instance, one respondent mentioned "I think that learning English while one is doing his job is more helpful than learning English in class." Skepticism about the effectiveness of business English courses was another frequently mentioned reason given by the respondents. Seven respondents thought that business English courses were not effective enough to invest time and money, or business English courses were not as different from

general English classes as they should be. Some of the respondents said that they wanted to improve overall English skills rather than business English skills. In addition, lack of time to take business English courses as well as lack of opportunities to use English at work were mentioned as other reasons not to take business English courses.

DISCUSSION

Through the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire survey, various target tasks were identified and classified into more abstract and super-ordinate target task types. The tasks identified in this particular study provided more comprehensive and, at the same time, specified business English tasks compared to the results of previous studies shown in Table 1 (Barbara et al., 1996; Chew, 2005; Grosse, 2004; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996; St. John, 1996). The current study also presented the mean frequency of each task, indicating how frequently each task was performed by the Korean business professionals compared to the other tasks. Since the Korean business professionals who participated in the study cannot represent the whole Korean business context, let alone the Asian business settings from which most HELP students come, the findings of this study can have only limited implications for business English courses. However, the identified target tasks and their frequency can offer a tentative basis for selecting and implementing tasks for the targeted business English communication course. Teachers and curriculum developers can build business English courses around the frequently performed tasks. For example, email correspondence was ranked as the most frequently performed task by the Korean business professionals among the identified target tasks. Thus, teachers and curriculum developers can give special attention to the email correspondence task during

the course so that students can be prepared for the various purposes and genres of the email task. In order to do this, teachers and curriculum developers should also be well informed of the nature of each target task by referring to the findings of genre and discourse analysis studies on business English tasks when developing pedagogic tasks for classroom use.

With regard to the previous experiences of taking business English courses among the respondents, only 16 respondents (22%) seemed to have taken genuine business English courses among the 26 respondents (36%) who answered that they have taken business English courses. According to the results, it seemed that taking business English courses related to their jobs was not popular among the Korean business professionals who participated in the study. Also, the responses regarding previous experiences of taking business English courses indicated that many business English courses were not specialized enough to substantially deal with business-related tasks and materials. Many of the respondents, even though they answered that they had taken business English courses, seemed to have taken general English courses rather than a business English course, given what they had learned in the courses. The lack of specialization and consequential ineffectiveness of business English courses also appeared as the reasons not to take business English courses among the Korean business professionals. The respondents mentioned that business English courses were not much different from general English courses, and, as a result, taking business English courses was not worth investing time and money. These findings offer the curriculum developers and teachers of business English courses an important caveat. An effective business English course should be substantially differentiated from other general English courses by focusing on business English tasks and materials. At the same time, the targeted business English

communication course at HELP, as it aims to teach general business communication skills, should be comprehensive enough, in terms of business English tasks, in order to meet the needs and wants of the students from various occupational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) pointed out in their distinction among necessities (what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation), lacks (the gap between what the learner knows already and the attainment goals that the learner needs to acquire), and wants (what the learner wants to learn in the course), considerable discrepancies were found between the target tasks that the Korean business professionals performed at work using English and the tasks that they wanted to learn. The respondents did not want to learn all the target tasks while some target tasks that were not frequently performed were more desired by the respondents. For example, although the respondents did not have many chances to perform presentations in real business meetings, presentation skills were the tasks most desired by the respondents.

The same tendency was found in Chew's study (2005) on the business English use of Hong Kong bankers. The discrepancy between the target tasks and wanted tasks might have arisen because the respondents felt that they were weak in performing some tasks and consequently wanted to improve those skills, which can be defined as lacks. Or the respondents might have perceived presentation and negotiation skills as the most required skills to succeed in business settings, thus wanting to improve these skills. In this case, these skills can be defined as their wants.

Regardless of being lacks or wants, the discrepancies between the target tasks and the learners' wants or lacks offer a valuable implication for developing a business English course. The business English communication course should reflect not only the target

business English tasks but also learners' lacks and wants, and they should keep a balance between them in order to teach what the learners generally need to be able to do in the target situation and to meet their particular needs and wants at the same time.

According to the survey results, most of the respondents seemed to acknowledge the importance of English in performing their work; more than 80% of the respondents answered that English was either important or necessary to do their work. Moreover, even the respondents who answered that English was not important or necessary for their jobs expressed their awareness of the importance of English for their future career developments. In addition, strong demands for spoken English among the respondents were revealed through the study. As shown in their advice to potential job applicants as well as their wants for business English courses, the respondents greatly emphasized the importance of improving English speaking ability such as conversation, negotiation, or presentation skills. Also they wanted to improve these same skills in business English courses.

The use of various sources and methods was found to be effective in validating the data and as a result achieving triangulation. The business English tasks obtained from the literature review and the target tasks identified in this study through the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire survey were comparable to a considerable extent, with many tasks in common. The use of a questionnaire survey also supported the comprehensiveness of the target tasks identified through the semi-structured interviews; all the target tasks identified through the interviews were actually performed by at least some of the Korean business professionals, and only a few target tasks were newly identified through the questionnaire survey use. In sum, the credibility of the target tasks identified in the study was triangulated using various sources and methods.

CONCLUSION

For the purpose of identifying the target tasks that the students need to perform in real business contexts, a task-based needs analysis was conducted in Korean business settings. The Korean business professionals' previous experiences of taking business English courses and their attitudes toward and wants for the courses were investigated as well. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with Korean business professionals for the purpose of identifying target business English tasks, and a survey questionnaire was developed based on the interview results and administered to the Korean business professionals from different business settings. Various target tasks were identified through the study and classified into more abstract and super-ordinate target task types. The identified target tasks offered a tentative basis for selecting and implementing tasks for the business English communication course. Moreover, the participants' previous experiences and attitudes toward business English courses investigated in the study provided insights into the nature of currently offered business English courses, as well as helpful guidelines to design business English courses that could meet learners' needs and wants by examining what the learners wanted to learn and what they did not like about business English courses.

Although this study offers a sound basis and worthwhile implications for developing a business English course, it also suffers from several limitations. The major limitation of the study would be sampling problems. For the purpose of identifying important business English tasks in Asian business settings, Korean business professionals were selected as a source of data. However, clearly, Korean business professionals cannot represent all the Asian business professionals who use English in their work situations, and Korean

business settings cannot be generalized to the other Asian business settings. Hence, further studies along these lines should be conducted on the business English tasks in other Asian business countries to better define the core business English tasks in Asian settings.

In addition, the participants of this study were not randomly selected. It would have been better if stratified random sampling had been employed in order to more accurately represent the target population. For further study, where possible, it is strongly recommended that stratified random sampling be employed among the companies to represent all the different types of businesses, as well as within a company to include all the employees who use English in the company.

This study also suffers from several methodological weaknesses and limitations. Though various sources and methods employed in the study were found to be effective in validating the data and achieving triangulation in the study, they were also shown to be somewhat limited in covering broader perspectives and resolving the ambiguities that arose in the study, thus calling for the use of other sources and methods in further studies.

As for the sources, non-native Korean-speaking business professionals were investigated as the domain experts, previous learners, and potential learners in this study. However, it would have been interesting additionally to listen to other sources such as American business professionals who were native speakers of English and had dealt with the Asian business professionals, as well as potential learners at HELP. The American business professionals with abundant experiences of working with non-native, particularly Asian business professionals, would have been able to offer valuable information regarding: (a) what they thought to be important in terms of English from their non-native business partners; (b) what they thought non-native business

professionals were most lacking in general; and (c) what they would recommend for the non-native business professionals to improve in terms of English. In addition, the potential learners at HELP could have shown different needs and interests from the Korean business professionals as one of the stakeholders of the targeted class regarding what they wanted to learn and what their motivations were to study business English as well as to take the class.

In addition, combining other methods with the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire would have allowed further investigation of business English use resolving ambiguities that arose in the study and cross-checking the findings as well. Throughout the questionnaire analysis, several ambiguities arose from the respondents' answers indicating the limitations of the one-time survey administration, and the use of follow-up interviews would have been advantageous in resolving these issues. For instance, in the survey questionnaire, regarding the importance of English, a respondent answered "there is no effect in my job. However, English is essential to me for development of my career," the meaning of which was not clear. It could be either that English would be needed in the future performing her current job or that English proficiency would be needed to get a different job.

In the same way, according to the respondents' answers about business writing, the specific use of the memorandum in domestic companies as well as the distinction among memorandum, specification, and documentation was not clear, calling for the further investigation of these tasks. For these issues, follow-up interviews could have been conducted with small representative sub-groups of the survey participants, or with the respondents whose answers were not clear, in order to straighten out the ambiguities and to pursue any interesting issues from the survey results as well.

In addition, non-participant observation following the questionnaire administration would have helped cross-check the findings of the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire survey. By observing what the Korean business professionals really performed in English at work as an outsider, the researcher might have been able to not only confirm the findings of this study, but also learn what had not been revealed through the introspection and retrospection of the Korean professionals through the interviews and the questionnaire survey (Long, 2005).

The first two steps of developing a TBLT program (Long & Norris, 2000) were conducted in this study by identifying the target business English tasks and classifying them into various target task types, although further studies on other Asian business settings and pre-service learners need to be pursued to complement the findings of this study. Once target tasks and learners' needs are more fully identified through further comprehensive needs analyses, the next step will be to examine each task in detail to develop pedagogic tasks that can be used in a classroom. Each task should be observed by language experts and task experts to understand how the task is performed via language use in the real world. Then, discourse samples or writing samples of the target task should be obtained and analyzed in order to identify the prototypical discourse structures or genres of the task (refer to Chaudron, Doughty, Kim, Kong, J. W. Lee, Y. K. Lee, Long, Rivers, & Urano, 2005; Gilabert, 2005; Sullivan & Girginer, 2002; and Winn, 2005 for the use of discourse analysis in needs analyses). It would also be advisable to refer to the well-documented discourse analysis studies on some popular business English tasks such as email communication (Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000, 2002, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005), business letters (Akar, 2002; Eustace, 1996; Santos, 2002), business negotiations (Charles, 1996; Gimenez, 2001; Planken, 2005), and business

meetings (Bilbow, 2002; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Porcini, 2002). Based on the discourse or genre analysis, pedagogic tasks that are appropriate for the learners should be derived and implemented in the classroom, as done in Chaudron et al. (2005) for the Korean language program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa or in Winn' s study (2005) for the US naturalization interview preparation courses. The pedagogic tasks derived through this process will help students become better prepared for the tasks that they will need to perform in the real world as the target course purports to do.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1. Bio-data

A. How old are you?

B. What is your company's name? Please briefly describe your company

C. Which department or team do you belong to? What kinds of work do you to in the department/team?

D. How long have you been working in your company? What is your position in your company?

2. Tasks

A. Do you use English at work?

B. If yes, on what occasions do you use English? Think for a moment when you needed English after you had started working?

C. Could you explain the tasks in detail?

D. What are the most frequent tasks you perform at work in English?

E. How important is it for you to use English in your job?

F. What are the most important tasks that you should perform in English?

G. Which tasks are most difficult for you to perform in English?

3. Business English

A. Have you ever taken a business English class?

B. If "yes," please describe the course. What were the most helpful work-related things that you learned in those classes?

C. If you can take a business English class, what do you want to learn in the class? What might be useful for you to improve your performance in English at work?

D. If you can give an advice to those who are preparing for a job, what would you recommend them to prepare in terms of English?

4. Wrap-up session

A. Have-I-got-you-straight? (To review and confirm the answers with the respondent)

B. Think about tasks you mentioned today. If there is anything you forgot to mention or want to add, please let me know when I contact you during the next week.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE TO KOREAN BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

Business English Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a needs analysis to develop a business English course. The information you provide is very important to identify business English tasks and to develop a business English course based on the results. This questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. **Please answer in English. However, if you prefer to respond in Korean, please do so.** Thank you very much for your participation.

Section A: Background Information

1. Company name: _____
2. Department/Team name: _____
3. Position: _____
4. How long have you been working in your company? _____
5. What kind of company is it?
   Manufacturing _____ Finance _____ Trading _____ Service _____
   Others (specify): _____
6. Gender: F _____ M _____
7. Age: _____
8. Have you ever taken TOEIC test? Yes _____ No _____
9. If yes, where does you score belong to?
   601-650 _____ 651-700 _____ 701-750 _____ 751-800 _____
   801 – 850 _____ 851-900 _____ above 900 _____ Others _____

Section B: Getting a job

10.   Did you perform the following tasks in English when you applied for a job?

A. Writing a resume	Yes		No	
B. Writing a cover letter	Yes		No	
C. Job interview	Yes		No	
D. Others (Specify):				

Section C: Business English Tasks

11.   How often do you perform the following tasks in English at work? (Please write down the number on the right column)

	Frequency					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Everyday	Answer
Example: Writing a resume	0	1	2	3	4	**3**
A. Correspondence						
a. Email	0	1	2	3	4	
b. Phone call	0	1	2	3	4	
c. Fax	0	1	2	3	4	
d. Writing a business letter	0	1	2	3	4	
e. Others:	0	1	2	3	4	
B. Writing a document						
a. Writing a memorandum	0	1	2	3	4	
b. Writing a proposal (e.g., project, plan, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
c. Writing a report (e.g., sales, meeting, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
d. Writing a contract/ agreement	0	1	2	3	4	
Others:	0	1	2	3	4	
C. Order/ Customer satisfaction						
a. Placing an order/ Purchasing	0	1	2	3	4	
b. Receiving an order	0	1	2	3	4	
c. Dealing with claims	0	1	2	3	4	
Others:	0	1	2	3	4	
D. Business meeting						
a. Briefing	0	1	2	3	4	

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Everyday	Answer
b. Presentation	0	1	2	3	4	
c. Negotiation	0	1	2	3	4	
d. Conference	0	1	2	3	4	
e. Seminar	0	1	2	3	4	
f. Social meeting (e.g., party, dining, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
. Others:	0	1	2	3	4	

	Frequency					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Everyday	Answer
. Business trip						
a. Business trip to foreign countries	0	1	2	3	4	
b. Making a reservation (e.g., hotel, flight, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
c. Visiting other companies/factories	0	1	2	3	4	
d. Sightseeing	0	1	2	3	4	
e. Others:	0	1	2	3	4	
F. Attending to foreign guests	0	1	2	3	4	
G. Interpretation (e.g., meeting, conference, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
H. Translation (e.g., document, booklet, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	
Gathering information on the market or other companies	0	1	2	3	4	
Reading articles, magazines, and books related to your job	0	1	2	3	4	
K. Others (Specify):	0	1	2	3	4	
	0	1	2	3	4	
	0	1	2	3	4	

12.   How important is it for you to use English in your job?

13. If you can give advice to those who are preparing for a job, what would you recommend them to prepare in terms of English?

Section D: Business English Course

14. Have you ever taken a business English class?   Yes _____ No _____

15. If yes, what was the name of the class?

16. Please briefly describe what the course was like.

17. What aspects of the class helped you to do your job better? Please list the most important things you learned in the class?

18. Would you like to take a business English class now or in the near future?   Yes _____
                                                                                   No _____

19. If yes, what kinds of tasks would you like to learn to do in relation to your job?

20. If no, what are the reasons that you do not want to take a business English class?

APPENDIX C

Section C: Business English tasks

Business English Tasks	Mean	Mode	Median	Min	Max	Range	SD	N
A. Correspondence								
a. Email	2.60	4	3	0	4	5	1.25	73
b. Phone call	1.83	1	2	0	4	5	1.18	72
c. Fax	1.58	1	2	0	4	5	1.19	72
d. Writing a business letter	1.78	1	2	0	4	5	1.26	72
B. Writing a document								
a. Writing a memorandum	1.78	2	2	0	4	5	1.26	73
b. Writing a proposal (e.g., project, plan, etc.)	1.75	2	2	0	4	5	1.20	72
c. Writing a report (e.g., sales, meeting, etc.)	1.93	2	2	0	4	5	1.16	72
d. Writing a contract/agreement	1.22	1	1	0	4	5	1.06	72
C. Order/Customer satisfaction								
a. Placing an order/Purchasing	1.07	0	1	0	4	5	1.10	72
b. Receiving an order	1.11	0	1	0	4	5	1.12	72
c. Dealing with claims	0.97	0	1	0	4	5	1.22	72
D. Business meeting								
a. Briefing	1.52	2	2	0	4	5	1.09	73
b. Presentation	1.37	2	1	0	4	5	1.05	73
c. Negotiation	1.11	0	1	0	4	5	1.01	72
d. Conference	1.60	2	2	0	4	5	1.05	72
e. Seminar	1.42	2	1	0	3	4	0.98	72
f. Social meeting (e.g., party, dining, etc.)	1.21	1	1	0	4	5	1.00	72
E. Business trip								
a. Business trip to foreign countries	1.25	2	1	0	3	4	0.89	73
b. Making a reservation (e.g., hotel, flight, etc.)	1.21	2	1	0	3	4	0.93	72
c. Visiting other companies/factories	1.29	2	1	0	3	4	0.99	72
d. Sightseeing	1.26	2	1	0	3	4	0.94	73
F. Attending to foreign guests	1.54	2	2	0	4	5	0.99	69
G. Interpretation (e.g., meeting, conference, etc.)	1.29	1	1	0	4	5	1.05	73
H. Translation (e.g., document, booklet, etc.)	1.75	2	2	0	4	5	1.13	73
I. Gathering information on the market or other companies	1.81	2	2	0	4	5	1.16	72
J. Reading articles, magazines, and books related to your job	2.48	3	3	0	4	5	1.01	73