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Korean Culinary College Students' Desired Careers and English Proficiency Needs

Kitaek Kim*

(Gyeongin National University of Education)

Kum-Jeong Joo

(Seoul National University)

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This paper explores the English needs of culinary college students in Korea, asking whether their English needs differ by their desired careers. To this end, we administered a survey to 123 culinary college students and divided them into six groups based on their desired careers. The results show that the type of desired career of the participants is highly correlated with their perceived need for learning English, the kind of English skills that they want to learn, and the level of English proficiency that they hope to achieve. For example, students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel abroad had the highest English proficiency needs whereas those planning to study in graduate school in Korea and those planning to work for a restaurant or hotel in Korea had relatively lower needs. The results suggest that college English programs need to provide diverse college English courses to prepare students for their diverse future careers.

Key words: culinary college students, English for specific purposes, English needs analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

As research on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has consistently reported, career is one of the most important motives for college students to learn English. For example, Warden and Lin (2000) reported that the primary orientation of Taiwanese college EFL learners with non-English majors was “career improvements or at least the

* Kitaek Kim: First author; Kum-Jeong Joo: Corresponding author.

potential for improving their careers” (p. 542). This is also the case in the Korean EFL context. Chong and Kim (2001) reported that the English learning of Korean college students is strongly oriented to preparing for their future careers.

In the ESP research, it is imperative to identify English learners’ needs. Belcher (2006, p. 135) stressed that “needs assessment is seen in ESP as the foundation on which all other decisions are, or should be, made.” She further points out that ESP specialists are “needs assessors first and foremost” (p. 135). In a similar vein, Hutchinson and Walters (1987) emphasized that an English needs analysis should be the first step in developing college-level English courses.

According to ESP researchers, needs are commonly defined as the “gap between learners’ current and target competencies” (Belcher, 2009, p. 3). This definition originates from Hutchinson and Walters (1987), who offered three constructs for defining target needs: (a) *wants*, i.e., “what the learners want or feel they need” (p. 57); (b) *necessities*, i.e., “what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation” (p. 55); and (c) *lacks*, i.e., the gap between what the learners already know and their necessities/wants. Hutchinson and Waters stressed that understanding the gap between learners’ current state and learners’ goals is important. They proposed that this gap, or the learners’ *lack*, should be the basis for the development of language programs. In this regard, they state that target needs concern the “starting point” (*lacks*) and the “destination” (*wants* or *necessities*) (p. 60).¹

Target language proficiency is undoubtedly an important construct in L2 studies (Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990), as well as a crucial consideration when designing a language course (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters (p. 56) argued that “target proficiency...needs to be matched against the existing proficiency of the learners,” which means that it is important to identify the gap between their current proficiency level and proficiency *wants/necessities*. In a similar vein, Butler’s (2004) study with elementary English teachers in EFL contexts argued that educators must identify the gap between their students’ current English proficiency levels and the desired levels needed for the workplace to support the students’ eventual successful performance in the workplace.

To date, English needs analysis studies have been conducted for Korean college students majoring in engineering (Park, 2006), tourism (Choi, 2006), hotel management (H.-R. Kim, 2007), medical science (Lee & Kim, 2011), law (Kang & Lee,

¹ Hutchinson and Walters (1987, p. 60) defined another type of needs, i.e., “learning needs,” which deal with the “route”; for example, reading interesting texts rather than long and dull texts is more likely to fulfill learning needs.

2014), and so on. All of these studies contribute to the understanding of college students' specific needs in the learning of English for their future careers. However, in a review of the research, Jeon (2015) concluded that, as only a handful of ESP studies have been conducted in the Korean context, more such research, including needs analyses in particular, is needed. Notably, no studies to date have explored learners' *wants*, *necessities*, and *lacks* together in terms of English proficiency.

This study has two goals. First, it investigates the English needs of Korean culinary college English learners and further explores whether their English needs differ by their desired future careers. The study is the first of its kind to focus on this population in the Korean context. In addition, it further advances the ESP research, by exploring the specific English needs of the learners whose desired future careers differ from each other. Second, it investigates these students' perceptions of their current and desired or necessary levels of English proficiency and look at whether there is a substantial gap between their current level of English proficiency and their desired or necessary level for successful performance in the workplace. In other words, the study explores the students' *wants* (desired level), *necessities* (necessary level), and *lacks* (gap between current and desired/necessary levels) regarding English proficiency (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Again, we explore whether *wants*, *necessities* and *lacks* differ by the learners' desired future career. The researchers conclude the study with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the study's results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ESP

Among the many types of ESP, the best known is EAP (English for Academic Purposes), which concerns the needs of learners at various educational levels. Less well known and more diversified is EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), notably EBP (English for Business Purposes), ELP (English for Legal Purposes), and EMP (English for Medical Purposes). Less commonly encountered varieties of EOP include English for Air Traffic Controllers, English for Tourist Guides, English for Horse Breeders, and English for Brewers (Belcher, 2009). There are also hybrid permutations of EAP and EOP, such as EAMP (English for Academic Medical Purposes; for medical students) and EALP (English for Academic Legal Purposes; for law students). In addition to

EAP, EOP, and further combinations of both, there is ESCP (English for Socio-Cultural Purposes) for those whose needs for learning English are related to, for example, coping with physical disabilities or seeking citizenship. According to this classification, the current study's focus, the English needs of culinary students, is one of the less well-known branches of EOP. To our best knowledge, Hou (2013) is the only study to date looking at the English needs of culinary students.

2.2. English Needs Analysis

Intriguing observations about the role of career in EFL learning orientation have been made in ESP studies conducted in EFL contexts. Emphasizing the need for ESP programs to teach authentic English usage in actual workplaces, these studies have suggested that the systematic design of college EFL curricula relies on full consideration of the significance of English in career performance. One group of needs analysis studies has looked at the English needs of employees or employers in the target professions, including teachers, translators, and interpreters (Angelelli & Deguelde, 2002); bankers (Chew, 2005); business people (Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008); and mountain guides (Wozniak, 2010). In the Korean context, previous studies have looked at the English needs of business people (Jeon, 2002), nurses (Soh, 2004), medical doctors (Lee, 2012), and lawyers (Kang & Lee, 2014).

Another group of English needs analyses conducted in EFL contexts has surveyed college students (and professors in some studies). For instance, Chostelidou (2010) surveyed 395 Greek students of accountancy, asking how their English needs were related with their future careers. The vast majority responded that they expected to use English in the workplace very often (38%) or sometimes (34%). Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive (1999) conducted a survey of 349 Taiwanese medical students, and found that they perceived English as a necessity: 91% responded that English was very important for their future careers. For culinary college students, who are the focus of this study, Hou (2013) examined the English needs of 225 culinary students in Taiwan. The study reported that the culinary students considered the following topics to be included in an ESP course, giving agreement ratings over 2 (0 = strongly disagree; 3 = strongly agree): cultural knowledge, daily life, food cultures, food knowledge, gastronomy, health & safety, hotel, information technology, management, marketing, nutrition & lifestyle, restaurant arts, and travel & tourism. Note that all these topics are closely related with their future careers. In addition, the study reported that 97.3% of the participants

responded that English was very important or important for their future careers; however, in their self-evaluation on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., *poor, fair, good, excellent*), most considered their English skills *poor*. For example, the senior grade participants chose *poor* at the following rates: 60.6% for listening, 65.7% for speaking, 63.6% for reading, and 76.8% for writing. The results, however, provided their current proficiency level only; no information indicated their desired levels (i.e., *wants*) or necessary levels (*necessities*).

In the Korean EFL context, Choi (2006) surveyed 121 college students majoring in tourism. Following Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) approach, she looked at their *wants, necessities, and lacks* of English skills, and found that they *want* to have good English skills, that they *need* to acquire speaking skills for their future careers, but that they *lack* English speaking skills; however, no information identified the *wants, necessities, and lacks* of English proficiency levels. Park's (2006) survey study with 147 engineering students reported that about 43% of the students expected to use English in their future workplaces. Park also reported that they preferred to learn spoken language skills (i.e., listening and speaking) over written language skills (i.e., reading and writing), consistent with previous English needs analysis studies with general groups of Korean college students showing the same preference (Joh, 2002; Song & Park, 2004). Lee and Kim (2011), however, surveyed 215 Korean medical students and found that they felt the need for both English speaking skills to participate in research conferences and English reading skills to keep up on recent advances in their fields (e.g., by reading international journals).

Although most ESP studies looked at their participant groups as largely homogeneous in terms of future careers, Kim, Yang, and Sung (2013) did not; they conducted a needs analysis with 532 college students in Korea and divided their participants into seven groups based on their desired future careers. Kim et al. reported that the English needs of the career groups differed from each other and observed a connection between the participants' desired careers and their perceived need for learning English, the domains of English skills they wanted to learn, and the levels of English proficiency that they hoped to achieve. In addition, they identified a huge gap between the students' current and desired English proficiency. However, this study does not tell us whether the students' desired level of proficiency corresponded to the level they would need for the successful performance of their desired careers.

All in all, no ESP studies have examined culinary college students in Korea, which means that we do not know whether these students perceive English as important for their future careers; furthermore, we are ignorant of what future careers they pursue and whether their English needs differ by their desired careers (Kim et al., 2013). In addition, very few

studies in the Korean context have explored the gap between learners' current level of English proficiency and their desired or necessary level for successful performance in the workplace, despite the importance of understanding such gap (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The current study thus asks the following research questions:

- 1) Do Korean culinary college students show differences in perceived need of learning English depending on their desired future careers?
- 2) Do Korean culinary college students show differences in current, desired, and necessary levels of English proficiency depending on their desired future careers?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 123 undergraduate students (65 female; 58 male) at a college of culinary studies at a university in Korea. It is one of the most renowned culinary programs in Korea, and most of the graduates work at hotels, restaurants, and culinary companies either in Korea or abroad. Some graduates go on to graduate school in Korea or abroad for further study. The participants were required to take two college English courses (6 credits in total) before graduation. In these courses, students were taught general English, i.e., not English particularly for culinary majors.

3.2. Materials

Studies that seek to identify gaps between current and desired levels of proficiency must measure perceptual levels of proficiency. Butler (2004) used the Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSEM) developed by Padilla, Sung, and Aninao (1997) for the assessment of skills in the following domains: listening comprehension, oral frequency, vocabulary in speech, pronunciation, and grammar. She also created her own FLOSEM for the domains of reading and writing. These matrixes provide brief descriptions of six proficiency levels for the given domain (e.g., Listening comprehension Level 1: *"I can understand a limited number of high frequency words and common conversational set expressions as "How are you" or "My name is..."*"; p. 277). Kim et al. (2013) developed simplified versions of the

ACTFL guidelines for each of the four domains of English skills, based on a 5-point Likert scale (with 5 corresponding to ACTFL's superior level and 1 corresponding to ACTFL's novice level). They present five proficiency levels for each domain, with a brief description for each level (e.g., Listening comprehension Level 1: *It is quite hard to understand even a very short dialogue*). Because there is little qualitative difference between FLOSEM and the evaluation tool developed by Kim et al., the current study adopted the latter tool. This decision was made because the latter tool is simple, in the Korean language, and sufficient for addressing the following research questions (see the appendix for this proficiency self-evaluation tool).

For the survey, a two-section questionnaire was developed and used. The first section dealt with the students' desired professional careers and their needs for English learning. The second section concerned their perceived current and desired levels of English proficiency as well as their perceived level necessary for successful performance in their future careers (henceforth, current level, desired level, and necessary level, respectively).

In the first section, participants were asked what career they planned to pursue. They were then asked to identify their extent of determination for the desired career on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = quite undetermined; 5 = very determined). Next, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the four English skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are important in their desired careers, again on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all; 5 = very important). Then, they were asked to identify how hard they currently study English. This item again used a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., "How much do you study?"; 1 = not at all; 5 = very hard). The students who rated their studying 3 or less were asked to answer the subsequent question of why they currently were not studying English harder.

The second section dealt with the English proficiency: The participants were asked to choose their current, desired, and necessary levels of English proficiency. To assess perceived proficiency levels, the questionnaire items presented simplified versions of the ACTFL guidelines for each of the four language skills, again using a 5-point Likert scale (with 5 corresponding to the ACTFL superior level and 1 corresponding to the ACTFL novice level) (Kim, Yang, & Sung, 2013). The questions about perceived current, desired, and necessary levels of English proficiency were intended to examine to what extent the level of the participants' current English proficiency differed from the level of their desired proficiency as well as from the level of their perceived necessary proficiency for successful performance in the workplace.

In the course of developing the questionnaire, one of the authors consulted five culinary

students about potential future careers and other background information for this population. These five students did not participate in the survey. We also consulted two professors in the program, again to collect information about the students' possible future careers. After we developed the questionnaire, the five students completed it as a pilot test to check its practicability.

3.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

The survey was conducted during regular class time. The students were informed that their responses would remain confidential. On average, it took about 15 minutes for the participants to complete the survey.

The survey data were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. First, a factor analysis on the questions was used for a reliability test.² The Cronbach alpha index of internal consistency was then calculated to determine whether the collected data under each factor were reliable for analysis. Second, the responses were divided into groups according to their desired careers. The descriptive as well as inferential statistics of the career groups were then calculated.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Reliability Analysis

A principal components analysis (henceforth, PCA) with varimax rotation was applied to analyze the responses to the 17 Likert-scale items used in this study. PCA, according to Brown (2009), shows what patterns emerge in the variance of data. Setting the eigenvalue at 1.0, this analysis found three factors underlying the relationships between the participants' responses, accounting for 70.57% of total variation. We labeled these factors Current English Learning, Importance of English for Career, and Desired English Proficiency (see Table 1). This study chose 0.60 of the correlation coefficients as a point to decide which loading should be interpreted.

² PCA is a type of factor analysis. According to Brown (2010, p. 22), there are at least three uses for factor analysis in language research: (a) "reducing the number of variables in a study," (b) "exploring patterns in the correlations among variables," and (c) "supporting a theory of how variables are related." The current study used PCA to reduce the 17 Likert-scale items into three factors.

TABLE 1
Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax Rotation

	Suggested Factor Name			η^2
	Current English Learning	Importance of English for Career	Desired English Proficiency	
Current English proficiency (L)	.839	.195	.146	.76
Current English proficiency (S)	.808	.018	.121	.67
Current English proficiency (W)	.770	.285	.119	.69
Current English proficiency (R)	.730	.387	.090	.69
Extent of studying English currently	.671	.121	.109	.48
Importance of English (S)	.069	.830	-.003	.69
Importance of English (L)	.094	.824	.051	.69
Importance of English (R)	.152	.783	.187	.67
Importance of English (W)	.162	.774	.120	.64
Necessary English proficiency (S)	.050	.128	.908	.84
Necessary English proficiency (L)	.071	.117	.887	.81
Necessary English proficiency (W)	.037	.038	.860	.74
Necessary English proficiency (R)	.125	.066	.856	.75
Desired English proficiency (W)	.409	.059	.780	.78
Desired English proficiency (L)	.334	.121	.766	.71
Desired English proficiency (S)	.289	.075	.747	.65
Desired English proficiency (R)	.424	.054	.741	.73
% of variance explained by each factor	20.96%	15.96%	33.65%	70.36%

Note. L = listening; S = speaking; R = reading; W = writing

The PCA determined that the students' desired level of English proficiency and their perceived level necessary for successful performance in their future workplace are within the same factor, which suggests that the level of proficiency they hope to achieve is closely related to what they believe they will need for their careers. That is, the students are practical in considering their future career when they set their English proficiency goal. (For more details of this finding, see Section 4.4 where we compare their current, desired, and necessary levels.)

The Cronbach alpha index of internal consistency showed the reliability of the data across all these factors: Current English Learning ($\alpha = .864$), Importance of English for Career ($\alpha = .834$), and Desired English Proficiency ($\alpha = .944$). The next three sections deal

with each factor: Section 4.2 discusses Current English Learning, Section 4.3 examines Importance of English for Career, and Section 4.4 explores Desired English Proficiency.

4.2. Current English Learning

To understand the relation between future career goals and English needs, we categorized the desired careers of the 123 students into six groups: a cook in a restaurant or a hotel in Korea ($n = 39$), a cook in a restaurant or a hotel abroad ($n = 18$), an employee in a private culinary company ($n = 16$), going to graduate school in Korea ($n = 12$), going to graduate school abroad ($n = 21$), and miscellaneous ($n = 17$). The determination rate for their desired careers was 3.00 (standard deviation [SD] = 1.01) on average, which suggests that the respondents were fairly determined to pursue their chosen future careers.

Table 2 presents the students' self-reported current English proficiency and amount of effort they exerted on English learning at the time of the study.

TABLE 2
Participants' Perception of Their English Proficiency and Study Habits at Time of Survey

	Current Level of English Proficiency	Current Extent of Studying English	Why do you not study English harder? (for those who rated their studying at 3 or less)					
			R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
Restaurant or hotel (in Korea) ($n = 39$)	2.36	2.39	13	0	13	2	5	0
Restaurant or hotel (abroad) ($n = 18$)	2.69	2.44	12	0	3	0	1	0
Private culinary company ($n = 16$)	2.64	2.31	5	0	3	0	8	0
Graduate school (in Korea) ($n = 12$)	2.90	2.67	3	0	3	0	4	0
Graduate school (abroad) ($n = 21$)	2.69	2.52	10	0	6	0	3	0
Miscellaneous ($n = 17$)	2.68	2.65	8	0	0	4	3	0
Total ($n = 123$)	2.60	2.47	51	0	28	6	24	0

Note. Reason 1 (R1): Because I'm lazy.

Reason 2 (R2): Because I'm content with my current English proficiency.

Reason 3 (R3): Because I don't know how to learn English effectively.

Reason 4 (R4): Because my future job doesn't need it.

Reason 5 (R5): Because I'm so busy with the other work that my major requires.

Reason 6 (R6): Miscellaneous

The means of the six groups' ratings of their current English proficiency on the five-point scale ranged from 2.36 (restaurant or hotel in Korea) to 2.90 (graduate school in Korea). However, a one-way ANOVA showed no significant difference among the six groups ($F(5, 117) = 1.32, p = .26$), showing that their perceptions of their current levels of English proficiency were not different. As for their ratings of the extent to which they studied English currently, the range was from 2.31 (culinary company) to 2.67 (graduate school in Korea), but again the difference was not statistically significant ($F(5, 117) = .47, p = .80$).

Most of the students did not report studying English very hard. Out of 123 students, only 14 rated this item 4 or 5 (i.e., the range of studying hard). That is, the other 109 students were asked to answer the subsequent question of why they currently were not studying English harder. The reasons they gave for not studying English harder were not that they did not feel a need for more English (i.e., no one chose *Because I'm content with my current English proficiency* and only six chose *because my future job doesn't need it*); most of them chose *because I'm lazy* ($n = 51$), *because I don't know how to learn English effectively* ($n = 28$), and *because I'm so busy with the other work that my major requires* ($n = 24$).

4.3. Importance of English for Desired Career

Table 3 shows the participants' perception of the importance of English skills for their desired future careers.

TABLE 3
Importance of English for Desired Future Career

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total
Restaurant or hotel (in Korea) ($n = 39$)	4.13	4.18	3.46	3.38	3.79
Restaurant or hotel (abroad) ($n = 18$)	4.78	4.72	4.17	4.00	4.42
Private culinary company ($n = 16$)	3.81	4.19	3.88	3.81	3.92
Graduate school (in Korea) ($n = 12$)	4.08	4.42	3.83	4.25	4.15
Graduate school (abroad) ($n = 21$)	4.67	4.71	4.10	4.05	4.38
Miscellaneous ($n = 17$)	4.06	4.18	3.65	3.41	3.82
Total ($n = 123$)	4.26	4.37	3.79	3.73	

Note. Ratings are on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = not important at all to 5 = very important.

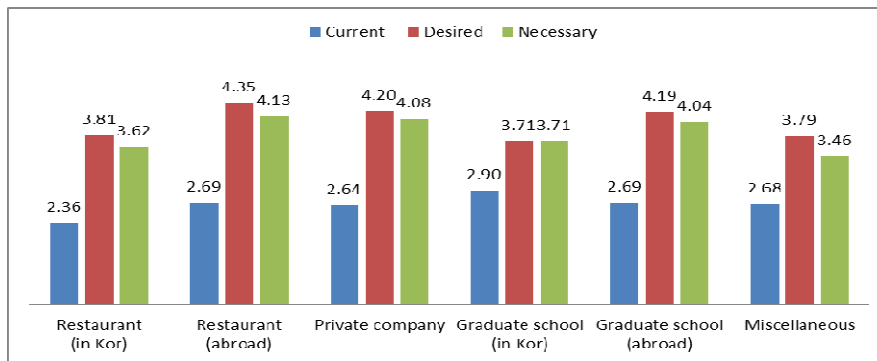
As Table 3 shows, the highest rating of the importance of English was given by the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel abroad (mean total = 4.42), followed by the group that was hoping to go abroad for graduate study (mean total = 4.38). The lowest rating was from the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel in Korea (mean total = 3.79). A one-way ANOVA (alpha level = .05) showed a significant difference in the six groups' ratings of the importance of English ($F(5, 117) = 4.06, p < .01$), suggesting that the perceived importance of English learning differs by the students' prospective future careers. A post-hoc multiple comparisons test (the post-hoc Bonferroni procedure) revealed that the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel in Korea gave significantly lower ratings than the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel abroad ($p = .01$) and the group hoping to go abroad for graduate study ($p = .02$).

The results also indicate that these students considered listening and speaking skills more important (mean totals = 4.26 and 4.37, respectively) than reading and writing skills (mean totals = 3.79 and 3.73, respectively), consistent with the previous studies showing that Korean college students prefer learning spoken language skills (i.e., listening and speaking) over written language skills (i.e., reading and writing) (Joh, 2002; Song & Park, 2004). However, a slightly different pattern was observed with the two groups of students planning to go to graduate school. Note that they were the only two groups who did not give the lowest ratings to writing skills. In particular, the students planning to go to graduate school in Korea put more importance on the productive skills (speaking: 4.42; writing: 4.25) than the receptive skills (listening: 4.08; reading: 3.83). These results likely reflect the growing importance for Korean graduate students of publishing papers in international journals and presenting work at international conferences. The results suggest that the perceived importance of the different English skills also differs by the students' prospective future careers.

4.4. Desired Levels of English Proficiency

Figure 1 shows the current, desired, and necessary levels of overall English proficiency (i.e., the total means of the participants' ratings of the importance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing), demonstrating clear differences in the students' perceptions of their current, desired, and necessary levels of English proficiency depending on their intended future career.

FIGURE 1
Levels of English Proficiency by Future Career Type



These results indicate that the respondents' current proficiency level at the time of the study (range = 2.36 to 2.90) was far from their desired level (range = 3.71 to 4.35) as well as from what they believed to be the necessary level (range = 3.62 to 4.13), while the desired and necessary levels were quite close. These results suggest that (a) the students have a *lack* of English proficiency (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), as the gap between the current level and desired/necessary levels shows, and (b) the desired level is at the level or slightly above the level that the future career requires.

As Figure 1 shows, the highest ratings for both the desired level of English proficiency and the necessary level came from the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel abroad (mean totals = 4.35 and 4.13, respectively). Meanwhile, the lowest rating for desired level came from the group of students planning to study in graduate school in Korea (mean total = 3.71) and the lowest ratings for necessary level came from the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel in Korea (mean = 3.62) and the miscellaneous group (mean = 3.46). A one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference in ratings of the necessary English proficiency ($F(5, 117) = 2.67, p = .03$) among the six groups, suggesting that perceived necessary levels of English proficiency differ by the students' prospective future career.³

It is also noteworthy that there is a correlation between the perceived importance of English and the desired/necessary levels of English. For example, the restaurant abroad group, which put the highest importance on future English proficiency (see Table 3),

³ However, we did not find a significant difference in ratings of the desired English proficiency ($F(5, 117) = 2.01, p = .08$).

had the highest desired and necessary levels of English proficiency: 4.35 and 4.13, respectively. In sharp contrast, the restaurant in Korea group, which put the least importance on future English proficiency (see Table 3), had one of the lowest desired and necessary levels of English proficiency: 3.81 and 3.62, respectively.

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 then show the current, desired, and necessary levels, as perceived by the six groups, of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

FIGURE 2
Levels of English Proficiency by Future Career Type: Listening

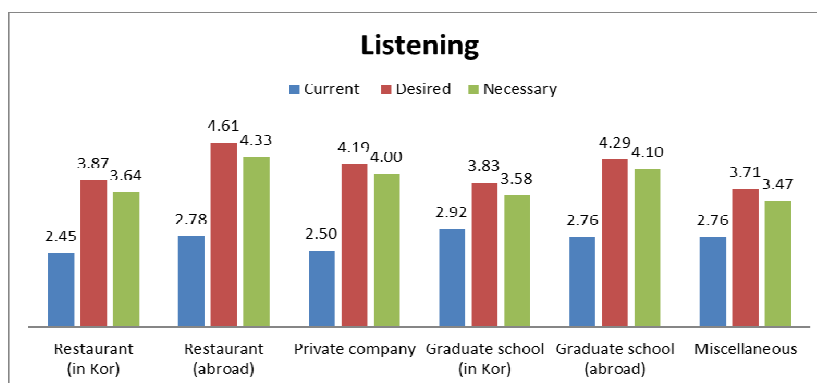


FIGURE 3
Levels of English Proficiency by Future Career Type: Speaking

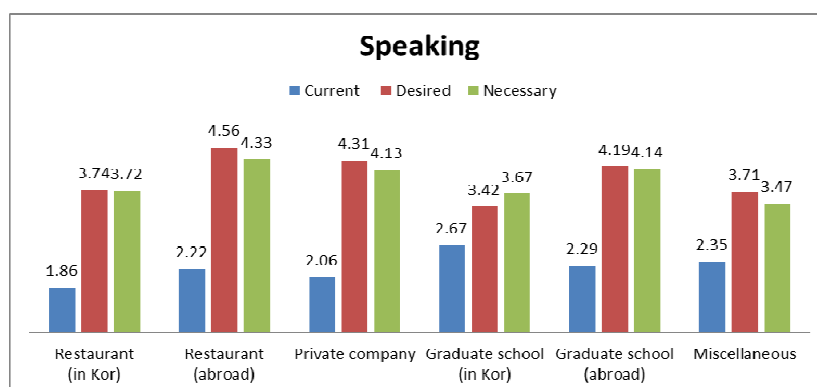


FIGURE 4
Levels of English Proficiency by Future Career Type: Reading

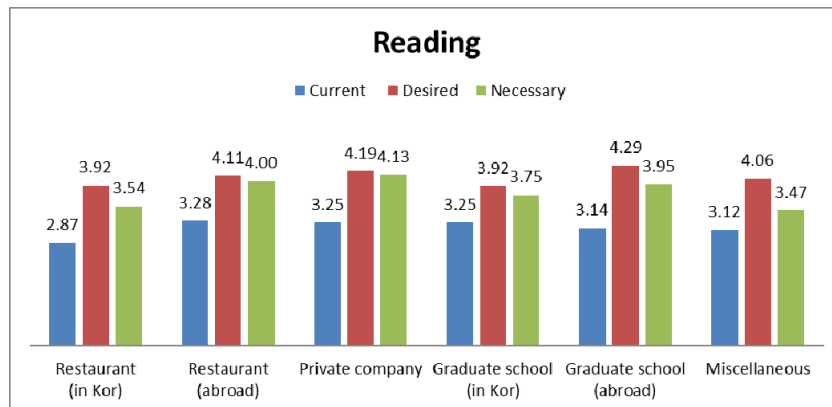
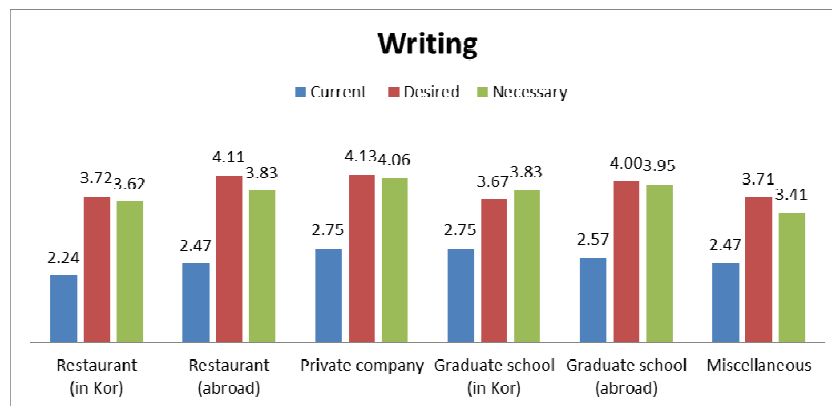


FIGURE 5
Levels of English Proficiency by Future Career Type: Writing



Separate one-way ANOVAs showed significant differences in ratings of the desired English proficiency among the six groups in listening ($F(5, 117) = 2.95, p = .02$) and speaking ($F(5, 117) = 3.62, p < .01$), but not in reading ($F(5, 117) = .58, p = .72$) and writing ($F(5, 117) = .97, p = .44$). The same pattern also appeared with the ratings of the necessary English proficiency among the six groups, showing significant differences in listening ($F(5, 117) = 3.42, p < .01$) and speaking ($F(5, 117) = 2.96, p = .01$), but not in reading ($F(5, 117) = 2.16, p = .06$) and writing ($F(5, 117) = 1.58, p = .18$).

= .17). These results suggest that the kind of English skills (in particular, listening and speaking) that the students want to learn is relevant with their desired career.

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 show that the gap between the desired level and the current level was the biggest for speaking skill (from 0.75 for the graduate school in Korea group to 2.34 for the restaurant abroad group) and the smallest for reading skill (from 0.67 for the graduate school in Korea group to 1.15 for the graduate school abroad group). Likewise, the gap between the necessary level and the current level was the biggest for speaking skill (from 1.00 for the graduate school in Korea group to 2.11 for the restaurant abroad group) and the smallest for reading skill (from 0.50 for the graduate school in Korea group to 0.88 for the private culinary company group). These results suggest that the students in general perceive that they lack English speaking proficiency, but to different extents depending on their future intended career.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The two research questions that this study aimed to address were as follows: (a) Do Korean culinary college students show differences in perceived need of learning English depending on their desired future careers? (b) Do Korean culinary college students show differences in current, desired, and necessary levels of English proficiency depending on their desired future careers?

To address the first research question, we divided the 123 students into six future career groups and looked at whether their English needs were different across the groups. We showed that the six groups were statistically different from each other ($p < .01$) in terms of perceived importance of English learning; the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel abroad provided the highest rating, while the group of students planning to work for a restaurant or hotel in Korea produced the lowest rating. That is, the students whose desired careers are heavily associated with English tend to more strongly want to learn English. Further, we found that the types of English skills they consider important were highly dependent on the types of English skills necessary for their desired careers.

As for the next question, we found that the six groups did not differ in their perceived current English proficiency. However, we found that they did differ in their perceptions of the desired level and the necessary level of English proficiency (in listening and speaking, in particular). That is, their perception of the desired and

necessary levels of English proficiency was related to their desired careers. Again, this suggests that the English proficiency levels they need to arrive at hinges on their desired careers to some extent.

However, although the participants perceived English as important for their future careers, and the gap between their perceived current English proficiency and desired/necessary English proficiency was large, most of them (109 out of 123) did not study English hard for various reasons (e.g., laziness; not knowing effective English learning methods). This finding suggests that their college could do more to support their English learning.

All in all, this study with culinary college students in Korea shows that students with different desired future careers differed in two respects, i.e., the degree of their perceived need for English learning and their perception of the desired and necessary levels of English proficiency (in listening and speaking, in particular). The study's results therefore support the well-known observation that Korean college students' motive for learning English are closely associated with their desired future careers (Chong & Kim, 2001).

The results of this study have several pedagogical implications. First, because career is one of the strongest motives for learning English, we need to develop diverse college English courses to prepare students for their diverse future careers. For the culinary students in this study, for instance, such courses would teach actual English usage in the kinds of workplaces in which these learners hope to work, such as hotels or restaurants either abroad or in Korea, or diverse culinary companies. Students want to take courses that are attuned to their future needs. To develop such courses, educators would need specific, detailed information about the English needs in a variety of fields, which would require cooperation between workplaces and college English programs (Jeon, 2002). When the courses are limited in number, we may develop particular courses for at least those who need English the most (e.g., the restaurant abroad group).

Second, although students perceive that English is important for their future careers, it is often the case that they do not study English hard, for several reasons; this study's participants reported reasons such as being lazy and not knowing effective English learning methods. To address this issue, we may need further college English programs to support the English learning of students with a variety of majors. If the reason is laziness, robust interventions may be needed, such as increasing the required number of English classes. If the reason is not knowing effective English learning methods, universities and colleges should ensure that students have access to appropriate

facilities and resources to support their learning. For example, many language education institutes provide information about effective English learning.

This study is meaningful in that it is an original study looking at the English needs of culinary college students in Korea. However, this study has some limitations. First, the study's purpose was to understand the participants' perceptions rather than to produce accurate information about the necessary level of English proficiency in different careers; however, such information would be important to developing discipline-specific English programs. Further studies should work with employees and employers in workplaces to identify the gaps between college students' proficiency and the level of proficiency actually needed in their desired careers. Second, as one of the anonymous reviewers point out, this study focuses on English proficiency needs but lacks the needs of specific English skills such as communicating with customers and writing emails. We acknowledge that identifying such needs is quite conducive to curriculum design, and further studies should address identifying these needs. Third, we only looked at the culinary students at a particular university. To gain a clearer picture of the English needs of culinary students, a further study with far more students from different universities may be necessary.

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APPENDIX

Proficiency Self-evaluation Tool (Kim et al., 2013)

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↑	_____
↓	_____
↓	_____
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Applicable levels: Tertiary

Kitaek Kim
 Department of English Language Education
 Gyeongin National University of Education
 Sammak-ro 155, Manan-gu, Anyang-si
 Gyeonggi-do, 13910, Korea
 Phone: 031-470-6324
 Email: kitaek@ginue.ac.kr

Kum-Jeong Joo
 Department of English Language Education
 Seoul National University
 Gwanak-ro 1, Gwanak-gu
 Seoul, 08826, Korea
 Phone: 02-880-7670
 Email: kumjeong@hawaii.ac.kr

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