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Meanings of Communicative Competence in Different Learning Contexts

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This study surveyed L2 learners' needs for different components of communicative competence. It aimed to determine what abilities the learners strongly need to achieve communicative competence in different learning contexts. It also examined gender differences in the learners' need for phonological competence. A total of 359 students participated in this study, divided into three learner groups: high school, vocational college, and university students. The data were collected via a questionnaire, which was based on Bachman's (1990) framework of language competence. The study drew some important findings: (a) The vocational trainees expressed a stronger need for illocutionary competence than the high school students and for sociolinguistic competence than the high school and the university groups; (b) The high school and the university groups equated grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences in their needs with lesser attention to sociolinguistic competence; (c) To the high school and the university groups, pragmatic competence was assessed higher than organizational competence; (d) Female students showed greater sensitivity to pronunciation ability than did male students. On the basis of these results, pedagogical implications are discussed, along with some helpful suggestions.

[communicative competence/needs analysis]

I. INTRODUCTION

For several decades there has been constant endeavor to develop the concept of communicative competence, coined by Hymes (1972) in reaction to Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence. The emergence of the notion of communicative competence was motivated by Hymes' belief that Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, which involved knowledge of language, did not go far enough to illustrate

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sociocultural aspects of language. Hymes' conceptualization of communicative competence gave great impetus to the further development of communicative competence, thus yielding several different models: Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) model; Bachman's (1990) model; Celce-Murcia, Dorney, and Thurrell's (1995) model, among others. These models have been critically reviewed by many L2 professionals, who manifested different perspectives on the conceptualization of communicative competence.

The present study, however, does not focus on criticizing various communicative competence models, nor does it intend to put forward a newer model of communicative competence. Rather, it investigates how L2 learners perceive the concept of communicative competence on the basis of an existing model of communicative competence. The main purpose of the study is to determine what abilities the learners strongly need to achieve communicative competence in different learning contexts. This purpose basically stemmed from McGroarty's (1984) assertion that communicative competence can have different meanings, depending on learning contexts. In other words, some components of communicative competence may be more heavily weighted in some learning situations than in others (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). In addition, this study pays further attention to gender differences in the need for phonological competence: whether there is any difference between males and females in their need for pronunciation ability.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Models of Communicative Competence

While there are many competing models of communicative competence available in language pedagogy, this study focuses on three major models: Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983); Bachman (1990); Celce-Murcia et al. (1995).

Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) model, which has been cited extensively in the ESL or EFL contexts, encompassed four different components: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Grammatical competence, which parallels Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, concerns knowledge of grammatical rules and lexical items and mastery of accurate pronunciation, while discourse competence signals the ability to connect sentences cohesively and systematically. Sociolinguistic competence, on the other hand, pertains to the sociocultural knowledge of the target language. This type of competence, according to Brown (2007), requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used:

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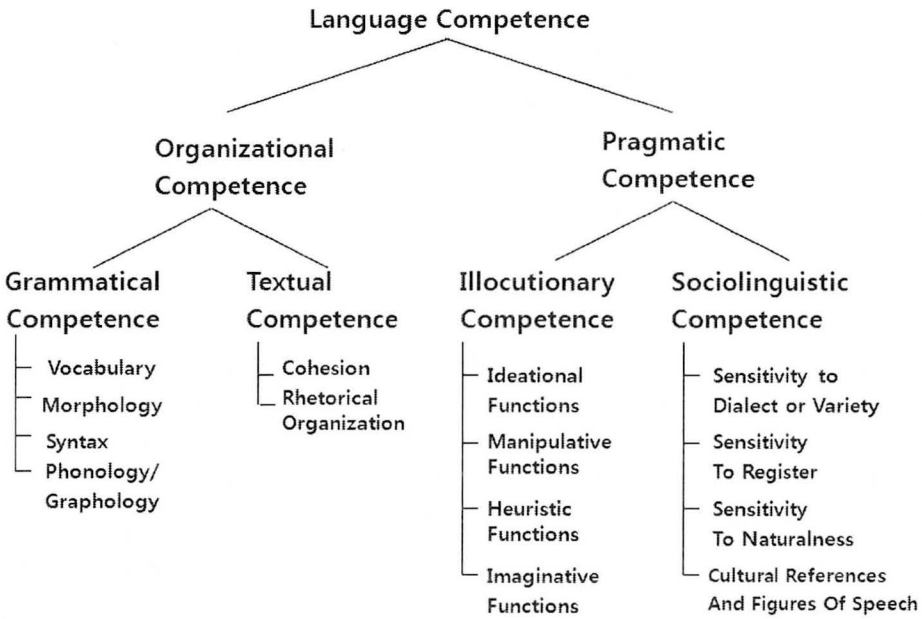
the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction. The last component, strategic competence, is described as the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

A more advanced model of communicative competence was put forward by Bachman (1990). One major feature of his model is that it is more hierarchical and elaborate than Canale and Swain's (1980) model. Since the present study adopts Bachman's model as a research framework, his model named "language competence" is illustrated here in detail. The components of his model are schematized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Components of Language Competence (Bachman, 1990)



As shown above, language competence is divided into two overall categories: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence further comprises two sub-categories: grammatical competence and textual competence, the latter corresponding roughly to Canale's (1983) discourse competence. Grammatical competence covers the knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology at the sentence level, whereas textual competence pertains to the knowledge of the

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conventions for joining utterances together to form a text, which is a unit of language consisting of two or more sentences that are structured according to rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization (Bachman, 1990).

Pragmatic competence in Bachman's model, on the other hand, encompasses two subcategories: illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence, the two of which were under the category of sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Sawin's model (1980). Illocutionary competence, according to Bachman (1990), refers to the ability to perform a wide range of functions through language use: ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative functions. Sociolinguistic competence, which is culturally related, covers the following abilities: sensitivity to dialect or variety, to register (the degree of formality), and to naturalness, and the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech. Bachman underlined strategic competence, arguing that it serves an executive function in determining the most effective means of achieving communicative competence. He treated it as a separate component from the other components. This is in contrast to Canale and Swain's model in which strategic competence was treated simply as one of four components of communicative competence.

Arguing that Bachman's (1990) study was an attempt to recast the construct of communicative competence within the context of language assessment, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed a framework containing pedagogically relevant components of communicative competence: discourse, linguistic, actional, sociocultural, and strategic competences. These components share many similarities with the components of Bachman's model, even though they provided more detailed content specifications for each component (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). In their model, discourse and strategic competences have their more or less straightforward equivalents in Bachman's model (1990). Their linguistic and sociocultural competences are akin to Bachman's grammatical and sociolinguistic competences, respectively. The notion of actional competence they coined corresponds roughly to Bachman's illocutionary competence, though their notion involves more detailed description of speech acts and language functions (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995).

2. Critical Reviews of Communicative Competence Models

The last few decades have witnessed many critical reviews of the theoretical frameworks of communicative competence in the ESL or EFL context. For example, Ryu (1996) reviewed Chomsky's linguistic competence (1965), Hymes' model (1972), and Canale and Swain's model (1980) from the perspectives of three different language learning hypotheses: comprehensible input and comprehensible output and interaction

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hypotheses. Drawing on the findings of the SLA theories, he concluded that interaction hypothesis, as opposed to input and output hypotheses, is likely the best way to develop the learner's communicative competence, saying that interaction makes a true meaning of communication possible. However, he did not provide any empirical support for the claim, nor did he discuss how each component of communicative competence can be developed under the framework of interaction hypothesis.

Ryu (1996) is not alone in underscoring the importance of interaction. Kim (1999), after reviewing the ramifications of functional paradigms of communicative competence, maintained that the fragmented approaches to dynamic and complex communicative phenomena have not provided a clear-cut answer of how to develop culturally authentic face-to-face communication skills. As an alternative, he proposed interactional competence based on interactive practices as an indicator of communicative competence development in learning another language. While his claims are intuitively appealing, they do not build upon empirical findings. Without empirical verification, as McGroarty (1984) pointed out, the theories are not directly relevant to pedagogy.

The fragmented approaches to communicative competence were also criticized in Sung's (1999) comprehensive review of communicative competence. He contended that most theoretical frameworks and research on communicative competence rely on excessive fragmentation of language into microskills and strategies. According to his findings, the teacher indeed did not fragment language components into parts but tried to teach learners in a holistic way. He criticized positivistic view of communicative competence in which communicative competence is operationalized as knowledge and skills by abstracting many different rules and principles in the domains of linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic competences. Such an approach, he argued, never reaches the goal of teaching.

Lee and Lee (2002) also reviewed different models of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Savignon (1983), and Bachman (1990). On the basis of these models, they identified which aspects of communicative competence can be applied in a Korean EFL classroom. They underlined the listening section on the College Scholastic Aptitude Test on the one hand and communicative activities in the elementary classroom on the other. They further claimed that in order to develop a model of communicative competence for Korean elementary and secondary English education, there is a need to consider Bachman's illocutionary competence focused on the role of language functions. This claim seems to be based on the fact that Korean EFL education has concentrated on the aspects of language functions as a way of enhancing students' communicative competence since the Korean 6th National Curriculum (Lee & Lee, 2002). Their points taken together imply that the components of

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communicative competence should be emphasized differently, depending on the learning contexts and learning objectives.

3. Previous Studies on the Perceptions of Communicative Competence

On the basis of communicative competence models, research has been carried out on how teachers and/or learners perceive or view the concept of communicative competence. McGroarty (1984), for example, examined how varied the applications of communicative competence can be in three distinct settings: (a) vocational schools; (b) university teaching situations; and (c) elementary and secondary schools. She found that the communicative skills vary considerably, depending on the settings: (a) Occupational students need various types of listening comprehension; (b) University teaching assistants need to produce phonologically acceptable and fluent connected discourse; (c) Students in elementary and secondary schools need more diverse language skills, some related to literacy. These findings taken together imply that the application of any theoretical model of communicative competence is relative rather than absolute (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). These findings, however, were not drawn from her own empirical research but from a review of data from observational and correlational studies and from needs analyses conducted by curriculum designers.

Recently, Nazari (2007) attempted to explore how high school EFL teachers conceptualize the term 'communicative competence', drawing on Dubin's (1989) notions of autonomous communicative competence (a narrow definition which is akin to Chomsky's linguistic competence) and ideological communicative competence (a broad definition which incorporates the socio-cultural aspects of language). Based on the interviews with the EFL teachers in an Iranian high school, he concluded that teachers have an indistint view about the concept of communicative competence without distinguishing between the broader and narrower meanings of communicative competence. After observing the EFL classes taught by the interviewed teachers, he further found that their in-class activities tend toward the narrow, autonomous meaning of communicative competence.

On the other hand, Sung (1999) investigated an ESL teacher's view of communicative competence. He found that the teacher tied her understanding of communicative competence to socolinguistic aspects of language, especially function of language. In other words, the teacher considered communicative competence as the students' ability to make meaning (Sung, 1999). While he seemed to move back and forth between sociolinguistic and illocutionary competences without distinguishing the two, his study made it clear that a teacher in the ESL context gives priority to illocutionary competence

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in Bachman's framework, under which it pertains to a speaker's ability to convey his/her intended meanings by performing the functions of language.

The discussion so far has shown that different models reflect different perspectives on the notion of communicative competence. The main reason different models have been discussed in this section is that this study employs a model of communicative competence to assess the extent to which Korean EFL learners need various elements constituting communicative competence. The present study employs Bachman's model of language competence for several reasons. First and most importantly, it is the most appropriate model to uncover the research questions of the present study, which will be described in the following section. That is, most of the research questions are based on Bachman's taxonomy. Second, the definitions of sub-divided components in his model are clear enough to be utilized as a content base in the questionnaire. It is believed that his model serves a useful framework which contributes to the analysis of learners' perceptions of different components of communicative competence.

III. METHOD

1. Research Questions

The present study addresses the following research questions.

1) Are there any differences among high school, vocational college, and university groups in their needs for grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences?
2) Which component does high school, vocational college, and university groups each need most among the five components (grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences)?
3) Which overall category does high school, vocational college, and university groups each need more, organizational or pragmatic competence?
4) Are there any differences between males and females in their needs for phonological competence?

The first three questions involved the learners' needs for different components in different learning environments. The last question is related to an examination of gender differences in pronunciation ability. This research question is based on the assumption that females are likely to be more sensitive to pronunciation than males. An investigation of this question is related to the concept of communicative competence in one way or

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another, since, as discussed earlier, phonological competence is one important sub-component of communicative competence.

2. Participants

A total of 359 students in Kyongsang province participated in this study, divided into three different learner groups: high school students (130; 36.2%), vocational college students (126; 35.1%), and university students (103; 28.7%). The high school students were enrolled at four different high schools, whereas one vocational college participated in this study. The vocational college is not a regular college but a job-related specialized school supported by the government. Thus, the vocational trainees were all engineering majors. On the other hand, the university students were English majors or those who were taking English as an elective at a university.

In terms of gender, males (233; 64.9%) outnumbered females (126; 35.1%): 87 males and 43 females in the high schools; 126 males and no females in the vocational college; 20 males and 83 females at the university. It is not surprising that the vocational trainees were all males because they all were majoring in engineering, which is generally popular with male students. The students' academic grades were various: 86 high school freshmen, 35 sophomores, and 9 juniors in the high schools; 98 freshmen and 28 sophomores in the vocational college; 2 freshmen; 60 sophomores, 19 juniors, and 22 seniors at the university. There were 29 students (8.1%) who had been to English speaking countries (11 high school students; one vocational college student; 17 university students). Their period of stay ranged from 0 to 60 months.

While the enhancement of learners' communicative competence has long been the main goal of English instructional programs in Korea, the different learner groups under study had their own context-specific goals: The high school students gave a top priority to passing the entrance exam for a university; The vocational college aimed to prepare students for employment and thus its curriculum was based on industrial needs, together with a great deal of work experience; The university under study aimed to train students to become professionals in the use of English with its general English program concentrated on English conversation.

3. Instrument

The research tool employed in this study was a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was based on the constructs of Bachman's (1990) model of language competence. It was composed of fourteen discrete items followed by a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire items were divided into two overall categories: organizational

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competence (from item 1 to item 5 in the questionnaire) and pragmatic competence (from item 6 to item 13). Organizational competence was broken down into two sub-categories: grammatical competence (from item 1 to item 3) and textual competence (items 4 and 5), while pragmatic competence, into two sub-categories: illocutionary competence (from item 6 to item 9); and sociolinguistic competence (from item 10 to item 13). Strategic competence covered only one item (item 14) in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire also included questions concerning demographic information about the participants such as school name, grade, gender, major, and the period of stay in English speaking countries. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha, calculated at .91.

4. Procedure and Data Analysis

The questionnaire survey was administered in and out of the classroom in spring, 2010, with the cooperation of teachers and professors. The participants were asked to read the questionnaire carefully and choose a number from 1 to 5 on a five-point Likert scale, by assessing the extent to which the students need each element: (1) strongly don't need it; (2) don't need it; (3) neutral; (4) need it (5) strongly need it. The researcher ensured that they should indicate the degree of needs in their current situations (in the high school situation, in the vocational college situation, or in the university situation) in order to develop communicative competence. A Korean version of the questionnaire was employed to avoid possible confusion and misunderstanding because some students, especially low-level students, were likely to have trouble capturing the meanings of the questionnaire items, in case that an English version was used. The same questionnaire was given to the three learner groups. Data collected from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using the SPSS package.

IV. RESULTS

As pointed out earlier, the first research question was to test whether there are any differences among high school, vocational college and university groups in their needs for grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to address this question. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics including mean scores and standard deviations for each learner group's needs for each component. The results of one-way ANOVA tests on the differences among the learner groups in each component are presented in Table 2.

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TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics on the Differences between the Learner Groups in Each Component

		N	Mean	SD
Grammatical	High school	130	4.05	0.70
	Vocational	126	4.00	0.90
	University	103	4.10	0.63
	Total	359	4.05	0.76
Textual	High school	130	3.92	0.85
	Vocational	126	4.03	1.00
	University	103	3.90	0.73
	Total	359	3.95	0.87
Illocutionary	High school	130	3.82	0.82
	Vocational	126	4.11	0.86
	University	103	4.03	0.60
	Total	359	3.98	0.78
Sociolinguistic	High school	130	3.38	1.02
	Vocational	126	3.81	0.99
	University	103	3.44	0.60
	Total	359	3.55	0.92
Strategic	High school	130	3.92	0.99
	Vocational	126	4.06	1.08
	University	103	3.99	0.82
	Total	359	3.99	0.98

TABLE 2

One-way ANOVA on the Differences between the Learner Groups in Each Component

		SS	*Df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Grammatical	Between groups	.539	2	.269	.468	.627
	Within groups	205.132	356	.576		
	Total	205.671	358			
Textual	Between groups	1.196	2	.598	.781	.459
	Within groups	272.402	356	.765		
	Total	273.597	358			
Illocutionary	Between groups	5.733	2	2.867	4.760	.009**
	Within groups	214.399	356	.602		
	Total	220.132	358			
Sociolinguistic	Between groups	13.770	2	6.885	8.389	.000***
	Within groups	292.175	356	.821		
	Total	305.945	358			
Strategic	Between groups	1.260	2	.630	.660	.517
	Within groups	339.671	356	.954		
	Total	340.930	358			

**p<.01, ***p<.001

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There was no statistically significant difference among the three learner groups in their needs for grammatical, textual, and strategic competences, respectively. However, statistical differences were revealed in the case of illocutionary competence ($F = 4.760$; $p = .009$) and sociolinguistic competence ($F = 8.389$; $p = .000$), respectively.

In order to test whether there are any differences between the learner groups for illocutionary and sociolinguistic competences, multiple comparisions were performed, using Scheffe tests, as presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Scheffe's Multiple Comparisons on the Differences between the Learner Groups in Illocutionary and Sociolinguistic Competences

	(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	*p*
Illocutionary	High school	Vocational	-.28990*	.09702	.012*
	High school	University	-.21232	.10237	.118
	Vocational	University	.07757	.10309	.754
Sociolinguistic	High school	Vocational	-.43458*	.11326	.001***
	High school	University	-.06240	.11950	.873
	Vocational	University	.37219*	.12034	.009**

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p≤.001

The post-hoc tests yielded statistically significant differences only between the high school and the vocational college groups in the case of illocutionary competence, but the differences were evident between the high school and the vocational groups and between the vocational college and the university groups in the case of sociolinguistic competence. More specifically, the vocational college students (M=4.11) expressed more needs for illocutionary competence than the high school students (M=3.82) and for sociolinguistic competence than the high school and the university groups, respectively (vocational college: M=3.81 vs. high school: M=3.38; university: M=3.44). These results make it clear that the vocational college was differentiated from the high school and the university groups.

When it comes to the second research question, one-way ANOVA was also run to determine the component each learner group needs most among the five components (grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences). Descriptive statistics and the results of one-way ANOVA are listed in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively. One thing which should be noted here is that the reason the number of responses remains the same across the five categories in each learner group (High school: 130; Vocational college: 126; University: 103) in Table 4 is that each learner group gave the equal number of responses for the five categories.

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TABLE 4

Descriptive Statistics on the Differences between the Five Components in Each Group

		N	Mean	SD
High School	Gramatical	130	4.05	.70
	Textual	130	3.92	.85
	Illocutionary	130	3.82	.82
	Sociolinguistic	130	3.38	1.02
	Strategic	130	3.92	.99
	Total	650	3.82	.91
Vocational	Gramatical	126	4.00	.90
	Textual	126	4.03	1.00
	Illocutionary	126	4.11	.86
	Sociolinguistic	126	3.81	.99
	Strategic	126	4.06	1.08
	Total	630	4.00	.97
University	Gramatical	103	4.10	.63
	Textual	103	3.90	.73
	Illocutionary	103	4.03	.60
	Sociolinguistic	103	3.44	.60
	Strategic	103	3.99	.82
	Total	515	3.89	.72

TABLE 5

One-way ANOVA on the Differences between the Five Components in Each Learner Group

		SS	*Df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
High School	Between groups	34.828	4	8.707	11.192	.000***
	Within groups	501.788	645	.778		
	Total	536.616	649			
Vocational	Between groups	6.463	4	1.616	1.724	.143
	Within groups	585.759	625	.937		
	Total	592.222	629			
University	Between groups	28.443	4	7.111	15.352	.000***
	Within groups	236.231	510	.463		
	Total	264.675	514			

***p<.001

The one-way ANOVA tests yielded statistically significant differences between the five categories in the high school and the university groups, respectively. This finding

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again suggests that there exist some similar features between the high school and the university groups, distinct from the results of the vocational college group.

Where significant differences were obtained, Scheffe post-hoc tests were processed to identify which components were significantly different from one another in the high school and the university groups, respectively, as summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Results of Scheffe's Multiple Comparisons between the Components in Each Learner Group

	Component (I)	Component (J)	Mean diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	*p*
High school	Gramatical	Textual	.13590	.10940	.819
	Gramatical	Illocutionary	.23205	.10940	.344
	Gramatical	Sociolinguistic	.67436*	.10940	.000***
	Gramatical	Strategic	.13590	.10940	.819
	Textual	Illocutionary	.09615	.10940	.942
	Textual	Sociolinguistic	.53846*	.10940	.000***
	Textual	Strategic	.00000	.10940	1.000
	Illocutionary	Sociolinguistic	.44231*	.10940	.003**
	Illocutionary	Strategic	-.09615	.10940	.942
	Sociolinguistic	Strategic	-.53846*	.10940	.000***
University	Gramatical	Textual	.19903	.09484	.355
	Gramatical	Illocutionary	.06553	.09484	.976
	Gramatical	Sociolinguistic	.65777*	.09484	.000***
	Gramatical	Strategic	.10680	.09484	.867
	Textual	Illocutionary	-.13350	.09484	.739
	Textual	Sociolinguistic	.45874*	.09484	.000***
	Textual	Strategic	-.09223	.09484	.918
	Illocutionary	Sociolinguistic	.59223*	.09484	.000***
	Illocutionary	Strategic	.04126	.09484	.996
	Sociolinguistic	Strategic	-.55097*	.09484	.000***

**$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

As seen in the table, the five components were compared with one another in each learner group. In the high school group, statistically significant differences were found in four comparisons: between grammatical and sociolinguistic competences; between textual and sociolinguistic competences; between illocutionary and sociolinguistic competences; between sociolinguistic and strategic competences. The table clearly shows that the high school students' needs for sociolinguistic competence were weaker than their needs for the remaining competences. This in turn suggests that the high

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school students had similar degree of needs for grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences.

The exactly same pattern was evident in the university group, since the university students also revealed a weaker need for sociolinguistic competence than the other four competences, the four marking a similar degree of the students' needs. These results taken together clearly revealed that the high school and the university students attached similar weight to grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences, with lesser attention to sociolinguistic competence, to promote communicative competence.

The third research question, which pertained to two overall categories, organizational and pragmatic competences, was to identify which one of them each learner group needs more. According to descriptive statistics in Table 7 below, pragmatic competence marked students' higher needs than organizational competence across the learner groups. T-tests were calculated to investigate whether the apparently higher needs are statistically significant.

TABLE 7

T-tests on the Differences between the Two Overall Categories in Each Learner Group

Groups	Categories	N	Mean	SD	*T*	*p*
High school	Organizational	130	3.60	.86	4.092	.000***
	Pragmatic	130	4.00	.70		
Vocational	Organizational	126	3.96	.85	.463	.644
	Pragmatic	126	4.01	.89		
University	Organizational	103	3.74	.52	3.681	.000***
	Pragmatic	103	4.02	.58		

***p<.001

Results of t-tests yielded statistically significant differences between organizational and pragmatic competences only in the high school and the university groups such that pragmatic competence was stronger than organizational competence by the high school students (M=4.00 vs. M=3.60) and by the university students (M=4.02 vs. M=3.74). Here again, the high school and the university groups manifested a similar tendency.

T-tests were also processed to answer the last research question as to whether there is any difference between males and females in their need for phonological competence. This research question involves item 3 in the questionnaire: the ability to command English pronunciation. The results of the t-tests are presented in Table 8.

Statistically significant differences were found between males and females in their need for pronunciation ability, such that the female students needed it more than the male students. This finding lends support to the widely held claim that women are more sensitive to pronunciation than men (Labov, 1972).

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TABLE 8

Results of T-tests on the Gender Differences in the Need for Phonological Competence

Groups	N	Mean	SD	*t*	*Df*	*P*
Males	233	3.81	1.094	-3.338	323.454	.001***
Females	126	4.15	.811			

***$p \leq .001$

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study has drawn some important findings. In connection with the first research question, it was found that the vocational college students expressed a stronger need for illocutionary competence than the high school students and for sociolinguistic competence than the high school and the university students. There can be two plausible interpretations for these findings. First, the vocational trainees lacked sociolinguistic competence, as compared with the other learner groups. Second, they might feel that language functions and sociocultural knowledge are crucial for their communicative success in their occupational contexts and thus they required the two kinds of competences more.

The curriculum of the vocational school should be designed differently from other regular schools, reflecting the learners' language needs specific to their vocational setting. While it is true that Korean EFL education has centered on the aspects of language functions as a way of enhancing students' communicative competence since the Korean 6th National Curriculum (Lee & Lee, 2002), the results of this study suggest that the vocational course should further the development of the students' knowledge of how communicative functions are performed to convey the intended meanings and cultural knowledge including dialects and register. This is in keeping with Lee and Lee's (2002) suggestion that there is a need to consider illocutionary competence focused on the role of language functions to enhance the learners' communicative competence.

Results of the second research question showed that the high school and the university groups attached similar degree of weight to grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences, considering sociolinguistic competence as secondary in their needs. This implies that they required more knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and more knowledge of cohesive devices, and more knowledge of language functions and speech acts, coupled with verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, to accelerate communicative competence. To attain this, the model of the English curriculum in high school and university should highlight the elements of grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences, as presented in Figure 2.

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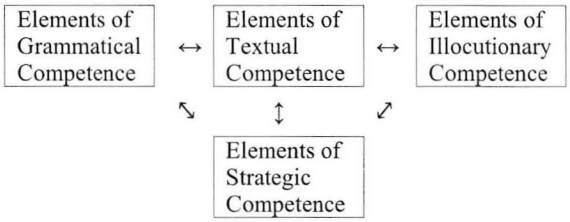
FIGURE 2

Components of Communicative Competence in High School and University



This model should not be taken to mean that sociolinguistic competence should be excluded in the high school and the university contexts, but rather mean that the four components in Figure 2 deserve special emphasis. It is crucial that language teachers in high school and university should teach all of these components by integrating them into the course rather than teach each component separately, since the four components are not mutually exclusive but rather interact with each other.

In order to make effective integration, an utterance should be expressed accurately at the sentence level and the well-formed utterances should be connected appropriately and cohesively at the discourse level. Going one step further, each utterance should be expressed in such a way as to convey the speaker's communicative intent to promote illocutionary competence. Strategic competence, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in this model, following Bachman's (1990) model, since it serves an executive function of making the final decision on wording, phrasing, and other productive and receptive means for negotiating meaning (Bachman, 1990): A variety of strategies should be activated to compensate for deficiency in grammatical, textual, and illocutionary competences. It follows that an upgrade in one aspect of competence facilitates the development of another aspect, ultimately promoting the overall development of communicative competence.

Such an integrative approach to communicative competence is in line with Sung's (1999) claim that teacher should teach the components of communicative competence in a holistic way rather than fragment them into parts. Indeed, Bachman (1990) himself also took a similar position, saying that in language use, these components all interact with each other and this interaction between the various competences characterizes communicative language use.

The results of the third research question, which centered around the issue of organizational versus pragmatic competence, revealed that the high school and the university students needed the functional aspects of language more than the forms of language to promote the development of communicative competence. Judging from this

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finding, the curricula in high school and university should attach heavier weight to the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, together with the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context, than those abilities in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form texts (Bachman, 1990).

The finding that the vocational college students differed from the high school and the university students in their views of communicative competence lends support to the McGroarty's (1984) assertion that communicative competence can mean different things for different groups of students. It strongly suggests that curriculum designers and instructors of occupational English programs should take into consideration the specific communicative needs of their students (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; McGroarty, 1984).

In this vein, efforts should be made to provide with the vocational trainees sociocultural knowledge covering language variety, register, and cultural knowledge specific to their occupational environment. They, compared with the high school students, should spend more time improving their illocutionary competence, which can be important for their job performance. On the other hand, the finding that statistically significant differences did not exist between the high school and the university groups may be due to some similarities between the two groups in what they studied: The high school students under study focused on the fields oriented in humanities, and the university students were majoring in English language and literature.

The results of the last research question regarding the influence of gender on pronunciation ability demonstrated that the female students required phonological competence more than the male students, regardless of their education levels. The females seemed to be more conscious or more sensitive to pronunciation ability than the males. This finding is in keeping with the findings of the previous studies. For instance, Thompson (1991) found, from a study on Russian immigrants' acquisition of L2 pronunciation, that women reported greater concern and awareness about their English pronunciation than did men. Similarly, Korean female students might think that commanding good pronunciation is an important yardstick to seem like a fluent or educated speaker of English.

In order to meet this need, the teacher should be aware of the female students' more need for pronunciation ability. Since it is not desirable to give unequal opportunities to practice pronunciation between the females and the males in the regular classroom, it may be a good idea to help the female students, at what education levels they may be, to promote phonological competence through extracurricular activities. One important way to do this is to encourage them to make the best of an electronic dictionary or Internet

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dictionary which provides modeled articulation of words. The learners' different needs for the components of communicative competence found in this research should be reflected in classroom practice and curriculum development, depending on different learning contexts.

This study is subject to some limitations. Above all, the university participants were limited to English majors, failing to be representative of the whole population of university students. In a future study, it would be interesting to examine the learners' perceptions of the concept of communicative competence in more diverse learning contexts. The exploration of learners' perceptions of the concept of communicative competence in this study will provide helpful insights into the area of needs analysis, helping to understand which components of communicative competence should be accentuated in the different learning contexts.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire (Korean Version)

[설문지] 학교명: _____ 학년: _____ 전공 : _____
성별: 남 / 여 영어권 국가 체류 경험: _____ 개월

아래 설문지는 여러분들이 영어 의사소통능력을 함양하기 위해 아래 각각의 항목들이 어느 정도 필요한지 필요성의 정도를 묻는 설문지입니다. 여러분의 현재 상황 (고등학교/직업학교/대학교)에서 아래 각 항목이 어느 정도 필요한지 필요한 정도를 우측에 있는 12345 중에 하나를 선택하여 체크해 주세요. 1 에서 5 로 갈수록 필요성의 정도가 높다는 것을 의미합니다.

1 매우 필요하지 않다 2 필요하지 않다 3 보통이다
4 필요하다 5 매우 필요하다

1. 영어 단어를 많이 아는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
2. 영문법 지식을 많이 아는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
3. 영어발음을 잘 구사할 수 있는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
4. 영어의 문장과 문장을 짜임새 있게 연결할 수 있는 능력 1 2 3 4 5

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5. 서술문, 설명문 등에서 인과관계, 대조, 비교, 예문제시 등의 방법을 사용하여 주제문을 영어로 체계적으로 잘 전개할 수 있는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
6. 어떤 사실을 영어로 잘 전달하거나 정보를 주고받는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
7. 제안하기, 요청하기, 명령하기 등을 포함한 다양한 기능들을 영어로 잘 표현하고 전달하는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
8. 수업이나 학습과 관련된 것(질문하고 답하기 등)을 영어로 잘 표현하는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
9. 영어의 유머/농담이나 은유적 표현까지 잘 사용하는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
10. 영어 사투리까지 잘 파악하고 사용할 수 있는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
11. 영어의 문어체와 구어체 차이점 등을 잘 파악하고 사용할 수 있는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
12. 원어민들이 실제 사용하는 표현들을 적합하게 자연스럽게 잘 사용하는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
13. 영어권의 문화에 관한 배경지식을 많이 아는 능력 1 2 3 4 5
14. 영어 의사소통에 도움되는 다양한 전략들을 많이 알고 사용하는 능력 1 2 3 4 5

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Secondary and Tertiary Education Levels

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