



**Preparing Students for Professional Communication in Transnational
Education: A Contrastive Analysis of Korean and International English
Employment Interview Materials**

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Abstract:

Employment interviews are an important form of professional communication, yet little research has compared how Korean and internationally developed interview preparation materials represent interview communication. This study employs a qualitative contrastive content analysis of Korean and international employment interview questions. Drawing on Kearsley's (1976) framework of question forms and Candlin's (1976) framework of pragmatic functions, interview questions were analyzed according to their grammatical structure and communicative purpose. The findings indicate that while both corpora rely predominantly on open-ended questions, Korean materials emphasize factual information and qualification confirmation, whereas international materials place greater emphasis on explanation, reflection, and professional self-presentation. These patterns suggest different pedagogical conceptions of employment interview communication. The study argues that effective interview preparation should move beyond teaching question types toward developing learners' awareness of the communicative purposes and professional expectations embedded in interview questions. The findings contribute to employment interview pedagogy and curriculum development for multilingual professional communication within transnational higher education.

Keywords: Transnational Education, Employment Interviews, Graduate Employability, Pragmatic Functions

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1. Introduction

Employment interviews are widely recognized as one of the most important forms of professional communication in contemporary recruitment processes. Beyond evaluating applicants' qualifications, interviews require candidates to demonstrate communicative competence, interpersonal skills, and the ability to present themselves effectively within organizational and cultural expectations. As Korean graduates increasingly pursue employment in multinational corporations and internationally oriented organizations, success in employment interviews has become an essential component of career preparation. Although Korea's youth labor market has gradually recovered following the COVID-19 pandemic, competition for high-quality employment remains intense. In March 2025, the youth unemployment rate reached its highest level in four years, highlighting the continuing importance of career preparation and graduate employability among university students (Jung & Kim, 2025).

Career education has therefore become an increasingly important component of higher education in South Korea. Career development scholars have long emphasized employment interview preparation as an essential element of career education (Herr et al., 2004). Likewise, many Korean university students view English interview preparation as a means of improving employment opportunities and frequently seek additional guidance through university English programs (Drolet, 2013). Consequently, employment interview education should prepare

students not only to answer questions in English but also to communicate effectively in authentic professional settings.

Although employment interviews are often viewed as language-learning tasks within English education, they are more accurately understood as communicative events in which applicants and interviewers negotiate meaning through culturally and professionally appropriate communication styles. Interview success depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on pragmatic competence, interactional appropriateness, and the ability to recognize the communicative intent underlying interview questions. These communicative demands become even more significant as graduates seek employment in multilingual and internationally oriented organizations, where successful communication requires adaptation to diverse linguistic, cultural, and organizational expectations.

Recent scholarship on multilingual professional communication similarly emphasizes that effective workplace interaction depends upon speakers' ability to adapt their communication styles across diverse linguistic and cultural environments rather than conforming exclusively to native-speaker norms (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Studies of international recruitment have likewise questioned assumptions of a single universal interview style, demonstrating that appropriate professional communication is negotiated within specific organizational and intercultural contexts (Bonelli & Zhu, 2025).

Despite extensive research on employment interviews, previous studies have primarily examined interviewer decision-making, applicant evaluation, and interview effectiveness (Posthuma et al., 2002; Macan, 2009). Comparatively

little attention has been devoted to the communication styles represented in employment interview preparation materials, particularly within Korean EFL contexts. Moreover, few studies have compared the form and pragmatic function of interview questions found in Korean instructional materials with those presented in internationally developed interview resources. Because employment interview communication is realized primarily through questions, examining both their structural forms and communicative functions provides an appropriate basis for comparing how instructional materials prepare learners for professional interview interaction across educational contexts.

Drawing upon classical theories of question form and communicative function (Candlin, 1976; Kearsley, 1976), together with contemporary perspectives on professional communication and multilingual workplace communication, the study examines the grammatical forms and pragmatic functions represented in interview questions. The resulting patterns are subsequently interpreted to explore the broader communication styles reflected in Korean and international interview preparation materials.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communication Styles in Cross-cultural Employment Interviews

Communication styles vary across cultures, professional communities, and organizational contexts, influencing how individuals exchange information, establish relationships, and accomplish communicative goals. Research in intercultural communication has consistently demonstrated that differences in directness, politeness,

turn-taking, self-presentation, and information organization affect how messages are produced and interpreted during professional interaction (Hall, 1976; Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Such differences become particularly significant in employment interviews, where applicants are expected not only to provide accurate information but also to communicate competence, professionalism, and credibility.

Employment interviews are therefore shaped by interactional expectations that extend beyond linguistic accuracy. Applicants must determine how much detail to provide, how directly to answer questions, how to present achievements, and how to balance confidence with humility. These expectations are influenced by cultural conventions, organizational norms, and professional practices, meaning that communication considered appropriate in one context may not necessarily be interpreted in the same way in another (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 1999).

Earlier intercultural communication research frequently explained these differences through broad cultural frameworks such as Hall's (1976) distinction between high-context and low-context communication. While such models continue to provide useful conceptual insights, more recent research argues that communication styles should not be viewed as fixed characteristics of national cultures. Rather, communicative practices are dynamic, context-dependent, and negotiated according to the participants, organizational expectations, and interactional purposes involved (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Holmes, 2015).

These observations have important implications for employment interview preparation. If interview communication varies across cultural and professional contexts, learners should be prepared for a range of communicative expectations rather than a single standardized interview model. Understanding differences in communication styles therefore provides an important foundation for examining how interview preparation materials represent different approaches to employment interview interaction.

2.2 Question Forms and Pragmatic Functions

Employment interviews are conducted primarily through questions. However, interview questions serve purposes that extend beyond simply requesting information. They organize interaction, guide the flow of conversation, establish institutional roles, and provide applicants with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, experience, judgement, and professional competence. Consequently, analyzing interview communication requires attention not only to the grammatical forms of questions but also to the communicative functions they perform.

Early studies of institutional discourse challenged the assumption that questions should be classified solely according to grammatical structure. Candlin (1976) argued that questions fulfil a wide variety of communicative purposes and therefore cannot be adequately understood through structural categories alone. Similarly, Kearsley (1976) proposed that questions perform multiple discourse functions, including requesting factual information, eliciting explanations, encouraging evaluation, prompting reflection, and clarifying understanding. Together, these studies established an important distinction between question form and question function, demonstrating that similar grammatical structures may perform different communicative purposes depending on the interactional context.

This distinction is particularly relevant to employment interviews. A grammatically similar question may invite applicants to describe previous experiences, explain decision-making processes, justify professional choices, or reflect upon workplace situations. Consequently, successful interview performance depends not only on recognizing the grammatical form of a question but also on understanding the communicative purpose that underlies it. Applicants who recognize these pragmatic expectations are better able

to organize information strategically and provide responses that address interviewers' intended objectives.

For employment interview preparation, this distinction has important educational implications. Instruction that focuses primarily on memorizing model answers or practicing isolated question types may overlook the communicative purposes embedded within interview interaction. Preparing learners for diverse interview contexts therefore requires attention to both the structural forms of interview questions and the pragmatic functions they perform.

Accordingly, the present study adopts Candlin's (1976) distinction between question form and communicative function as its primary analytical framework. By comparing both the grammatical forms and pragmatic functions represented in Korean and international employment interview materials, the study examines how different instructional resources conceptualistic employment interview communication and prepare learners for a range of professional interview contexts.

2.3 Preparing Learners for Multilingual Professional Communication

The increasing internationalization of higher education and the global labor market has transformed communication competence into an essential component of graduate employability. Graduates entering multinational organizations are expected not only to possess disciplinary knowledge but also to communicate effectively with colleagues, clients, and employers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, employment interview preparation should equip learners with the ability to communicate across a range of professional contexts rather than preparing them for a single culturally bounded interview model.

Contemporary research on professional communication emphasizes that workplace interaction extends beyond linguistic accuracy. Effective communication requires individuals to explain ideas clearly, justify decisions, respond appropriately to unfamiliar situations, and adapt their communication to different audiences and organizational contexts (Bhatia & Bremner, 2014; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Within multilingual workplaces, English frequently functions as a shared means of communication among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. Accordingly, successful communication depends on communicative effectiveness, pragmatic awareness, interactional flexibility, and the ability to negotiate meaning rather than strict adherence to native-speaker norms (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

These perspectives have important implications for employment interview preparation. If communication styles and interview expectations differ across professional and cultural contexts, learners should be prepared to recognize diverse questioning styles, interpret communicative intentions, and adapt their responses appropriately. Interview preparation therefore involves developing flexible communication strategies rather than rehearsing fixed answers or following a single interview convention.

Recent research further argues that successful communication in multilingual workplaces requires linguacultural competence, integrating linguistic proficiency with pragmatic awareness, intercultural understanding, and adaptive communication strategies (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Such competencies enable professionals to recognize differences in communication styles, adjust their discourse to diverse interactional contexts, and establish effective professional relationships across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Viewed collectively, this literature suggests that effective employment interview preparation should expose learners to a wider range of question forms, communicative functions, and interactional styles than those represented in a single national or cultural context. Preparing learners for multilingual professional communication therefore requires instructional materials that reflect the diversity of contemporary international employment practices rather than a single standardized interview model.

2.4 Employment Interview Preparation in Transnational Education: Research Gap

The rapid internationalization of higher education has substantially expanded the role of Transnational Education (TNE) in preparing graduates for increasingly global and multilingual workplaces. International branch campuses, joint-degree programs, and other cross-border educational initiatives aim not only to provide academic knowledge but also to develop graduates' capacity to communicate effectively across linguistic, cultural, and professional boundaries (Knight, 2013; Healey, 2018). Within these educational contexts, graduate employability has become an important measure of institutional effectiveness, with communication competence consistently identified as one of the most highly valued professional skills by employers.

Employment interview preparation therefore represents an important component of employability education. Preparing students for interviews requires more than teaching appropriate vocabulary or rehearsed responses; it also involves developing the ability to recognize diverse communication styles, interpret different types of interview questions, and respond effectively across a range of professional contexts. These competencies are particularly important for graduates seeking employment in multinational organizations and internationally oriented workplaces.

Despite the importance of employment interview preparation, existing research remains fragmented across several disciplines. Human resource management research has primarily examined interviewer decision-making, applicant evaluation, and personnel selection processes (Posthuma et al., 2002; Levashina et al., 2014). Studies within applied linguistics and English language education have focused largely on language proficiency, communicative competence, or classroom instruction, while pragmatics research has investigated how questions function within discourse and institutional interaction (Candlin, 1976; Kearsley, 1976). Although each of these bodies of literature contributes valuable insights, they have generally developed independently and have rarely been integrated into a framework for employment interview preparation within transnational higher education.

Furthermore, relatively little research has systematically compared employment interview preparation materials developed in different educational contexts. In particular, few studies have examined how Korean and internationally published interview materials differ in their use of question forms, pragmatic functions, and communication styles, or considered how these differences may influence learners' preparation for multilingual professional communication.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a contrastive analysis of Korean and international employment interview preparation materials by examining the forms, functions, and communication styles represented in interview questions. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to employment interview pedagogy, curriculum development, and graduate employability within transnational higher education by providing evidence-based guidance for instructional materials that better prepare learners for contemporary international employment contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Two analytical dimensions guided the investigation: question form and pragmatic function. These analytical dimensions provided the empirical basis for interpreting broader communication styles during the discussion of the findings. A contrastive design was selected because it allows systematic comparison of pedagogical materials developed in different educational and cultural contexts. This approach makes it possible to identify differences not only in the grammatical structure of interview questions but also in the communicative assumptions embedded within interview preparation materials.

Although the instructional materials analyzed in this study were published between 2016 and 2018, they remain appropriate because the purpose of this study is not to evaluate current interview textbooks but to compare the communicative models embedded in Korean and internationally developed interview preparation materials during a formative period of English interview education in Korea.

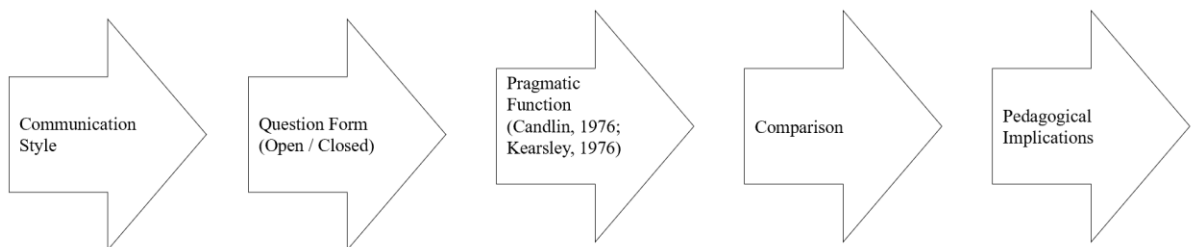


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

3.2 Data Sources

Two sets of employment interview preparation materials were selected for comparison. The Korean corpus consisted of employment interview preparation textbooks commonly used by Korean university students preparing for domestic and

international employment. The primary textbook analyzed was designed for students seeking positions with international airlines and multinational employers. The textbook organized interview questions into twelve situational categories, including personal background, teamwork, customer service, overseas experience, and scenario-based interviews.

The international corpus consisted of interview preparation materials produced by a Canadian government-sponsored employment agency and commonly used in North American career preparation programs. These materials emphasized competency-based interviewing, behavioral interviewing, career goals, and problem-solving questions.

Only interview questions intended for applicant preparation were included in the analysis. Explanatory text, vocabulary exercises, and model answers were excluded to ensure comparability between the two corpora.

Table 1. Summary of Data Sources

Corpus	Source	Purpose	Questions
Korean (KE)	Korean employment interview textbook	International employment preparation	163
International (IE)	Canadian employment interview guide	Career preparation	105

3.3 Analytical Framework

Two analytical dimensions guided the analysis of employment interview questions: question form and pragmatic function. Together, these dimensions enabled systematic comparison of the structural and communicative characteristics of interview questions across the Korean and international corpora.

Question Form:

The grammatical form of each interview question was classified according to the taxonomy proposed by Kearsley (1976) and further informed by Mahood (2014).

Questions were initially categorized as open or closed, with additional attention given to directive forms (e.g., *Tell me about yourself*), WH-questions, and yes/no questions. This classification enabled comparison of the structural characteristics of interview questions across the two corpora.

Pragmatic Function:

Questions were also classified according to their communicative purpose. Following Candlin (1976), question functions included eliciting new information, clarification, explanation, confirmation, evaluation, and elaboration. This analytical dimension moved beyond grammatical structure to examine the communicative purposes represented in employment interview discourse.

Rather than serving as an independently coded analytical category, communication style was interpreted from the combined patterns of question forms and pragmatic functions identified across the two corpora. This interpretive perspective informed the discussion of broader communicative orientations reflected in Korean and international interview preparation materials.

Table 2. Analytical Framework

Analytical Dimension	Purpose	Primary References
Question Form	Examine grammatical structure	Kearsley (1976); Mahood (2014)
Pragmatic Function	Identify communicative purpose	Candlin (1976)

Note. It was interpreted from the combined patterns of question forms and pragmatic functions and is discussed as an interpretive finding in Section 4.

3.4 Data Analysis

Interview questions from both corpora were independently coded according to question form and pragmatic function before being compared across the two datasets.

Quantitative comparisons were conducted by calculating the frequency of each question type within the Korean and international materials. These frequencies provided an overview of structural differences between the two corpora.

The quantitative findings were then supplemented with qualitative analysis to interpret broader communication styles represented by the interview questions. Rather than treating question forms as isolated grammatical structures, this stage examined how combinations of question types reflected different assumptions about professional communication and applicant performance.

Finally, representative interview questions from both corpora were compared to illustrate how similar communicative purposes were realized through different linguistic forms and interactional expectations.

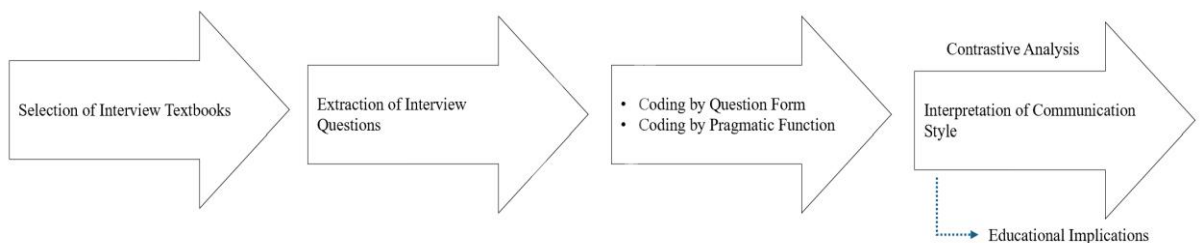


Figure 2. Data Analysis Procedure

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the contrastive analysis of Korean (KE) and internationally developed (IE) employment interview preparation materials. The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the characteristics of the Korean interview corpus were examined and reorganized into analytically comparable categories. Second, the grammatical forms of interview questions were compared. Third, the pragmatic functions represented by the interview questions were analyzed. Finally, learner response data were

examined to explore how Korean university students interpreted and responded to different interview question types. These findings provide the empirical basis for the discussion of professional communication, Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), and transnational education presented in Section 5.

4.1 Characteristics of the Korean Interview Corpus

The Korean employment interview textbook contained 163 interview questions organized into twelve situational chapters, including self-introduction, personality, educational background, overseas experience, teamwork, customer service, motivation, and scenario-based interviews. While these instructional units reflected the pedagogical organization of the textbook, they were not directly comparable with the organization of the international interview materials.

To facilitate systematic comparison, the interview questions were reorganized into five broader communicative categories based on their primary interview purpose. These categories included Personal Background, Experience and Qualifications, Career Motivation, Behavioral and Situational Questions, and Organization-Related Questions. This reclassification reduced overlap among textbook chapters while preserving the communicative intent of individual questions. It also provided a common analytical framework for comparing Korean and international interview materials despite differences in textbook organization.

4.2 Distribution of Question Forms

Following the reclassification process, all interview questions were coded according to grammatical question form using the analytical framework described in Section 3.

Questions were first classified as either open or closed before further analysis of their communicative functions.

A total of 163 interview questions were identified in the Korean corpus and 105 interview questions in the international corpus. As shown in Table 4.1, both corpora relied primarily on open questions. However, noticeable differences emerged in their relative proportions.

Table 3. Distribution of Question Forms

Question Form	Korean (KE)	%	International (IE)	%
Open	125	76.7	89	84.8
Closed	38	23.3	16	15.2
Total	163	100	105	100

The Korean materials contained a larger proportion of closed questions than the international materials, whereas the international corpus relied more consistently on open-ended questions. Representative examples illustrate this difference. Korean materials frequently included questions requiring confirmation or short factual responses, whereas international materials more often invited applicants to describe experiences, explain decisions, and construct extended professional narratives.

Although open questions predominated in both corpora, the higher proportion of closed questions in the Korean materials indicates a greater emphasis on confirmation-oriented interaction, while the international materials more consistently encouraged elaboration and extended discourse. These quantitative differences provided the foundation for the subsequent analysis of pragmatic function.

4.3 Pragmatic Functions of Interview Questions

While the comparison of question forms revealed structural differences between the Korean (KE) and international (IE) interview materials, grammatical form alone does not fully explain how interview communication is organized. Following Candlin's (1976) framework, the interview questions were therefore analyzed according to their pragmatic functions, that is, the communicative purposes they were intended to achieve rather than their grammatical structures alone. This analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of how interview questions guide applicants' responses and shape professional interaction.

Across both corpora, the dominant communicative purpose was information elicitation. However, the analysis revealed noticeable differences in the types of information sought and the communicative behaviors expected from applicants.

The Korean interview materials primarily employed questions that requested factual information or confirmation of previous experiences. Many questions focused on educational background, qualifications, language proficiency, previous employment, and personal characteristics. These questions generally encouraged applicants to provide concise and accurate information while demonstrating their suitability for employment.

By contrast, the international interview materials more frequently required applicants to explain previous experiences, reflect upon workplace situations, justify decisions, and construct coherent professional narratives. Rather than requesting isolated facts, these questions encouraged applicants to organize experiences into meaningful accounts that demonstrated problem-solving ability, teamwork, leadership, and professional judgment. Table 4 summarizes the dominant pragmatic functions identified in the two corpora.

Table 4. Dominant Pragmatic Functions in Korean and International Interview Materials

Pragmatic Function	Korean Materials	International Materials
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Confirmation	High	Moderate
Information Elicitation	High	High
Explanation	Moderate	High
Reflection	Low	High
Narrative Construction	Low	High
Professional Self-presentation	Moderate	High

As shown in Table 4.2, both corpora relied heavily on questions designed to obtain information from applicants. However, differences became increasingly apparent beyond this shared function. The Korean materials more frequently emphasized confirmation-oriented questions that verified applicants' qualifications or previous experiences. In contrast, the international materials more consistently encouraged explanation, reflection, and narrative construction.

These differences can be illustrated through representative interview questions. For example, questions such as “Have you ever worked as part of a team?” primarily seek confirmation of experience before additional information is requested. Conversely, questions such as “Tell me about a time when you worked successfully in a team.” require applicants to construct a coherent narrative describing a specific experience, explain their actions, and demonstrate the competencies expected by the interviewer.

Similarly, questions asking applicants to describe difficult situations, explain workplace decisions, or discuss previous accomplishments require considerably greater communicative engagement than questions requesting factual information alone. Such questions invite applicants to interpret experiences, evaluate outcomes, and present themselves as competent professionals capable of reflective thinking.

Overall, the findings indicate that the principal distinction between the two corpora lies not simply in grammatical question form but in the communicative expectations embedded within the interview questions themselves. Whereas the Korean materials more frequently represented employment interviews as exchanges of factual information,

the international materials more consistently portrayed interviews as opportunities for applicants to demonstrate professional competence through explanation, reflection, and narrative self-presentation. These findings provide the basis for the subsequent analysis of communication style presented in the following section.

4.4 Interpreting Communication Styles from Interview Question Patterns

The preceding analyses of question forms and pragmatic functions provide a basis for interpreting the broader communication styles represented in the two corpora. Although communication style was not analyzed as an independent coding category, the combined patterns of interview questions reveal clear differences in how professional communication is conceptualized within the instructional materials.

The Korean interview materials generally represent employment interviews as structured question-and-answer exchanges in which applicants are expected to provide accurate, relevant, and complete information. Many questions focus on confirming qualifications, educational background, work experience, and personal characteristics. This pattern reflects an instructional emphasis on responding appropriately to anticipated interview topics.

By contrast, the international materials present employment interviews as interactive professional conversations in which applicants are expected not only to answer questions but also to explain decisions, describe workplace experiences, justify actions, and construct coherent professional narratives.

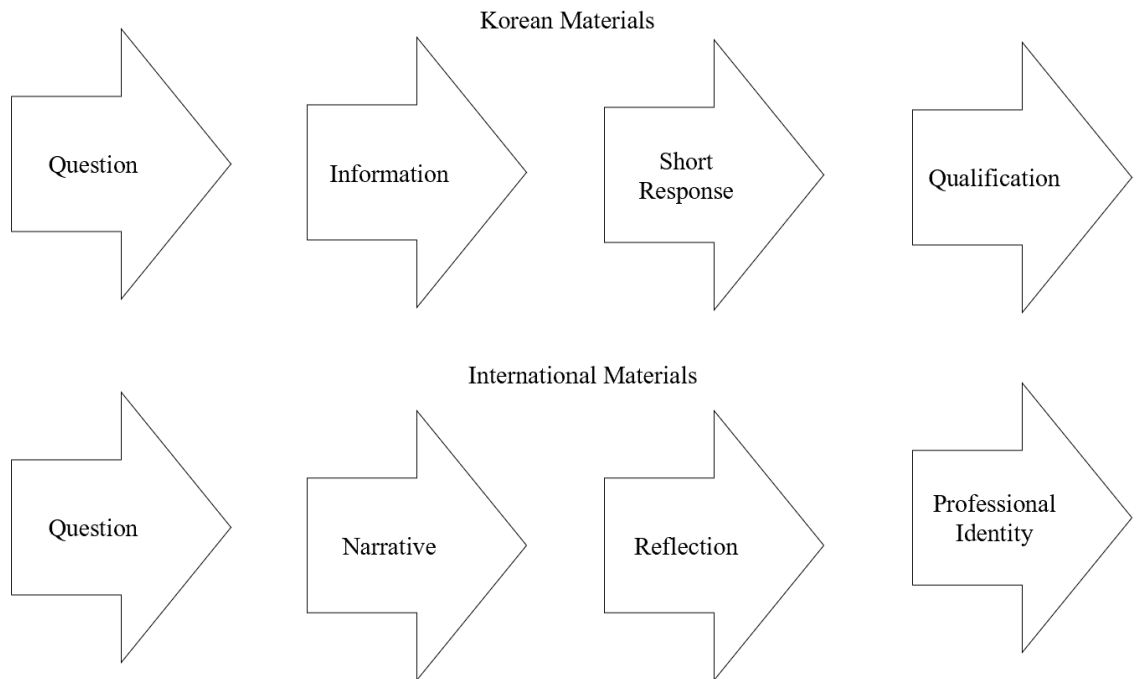


Figure 3. Communication Styles Represented in Interview Questions

4.5 Communicative Orientation of the Two Corpora

Beyond differences in question forms and pragmatic functions, the overall organization of the two interview corpora reveals distinct communicative orientations. These orientations are reflected not only in the types of questions included but also in the ways interview preparation is structured within each instructional resource.

The Korean employment interview textbook contained 163 questions originally organized into twelve instructional situations and subsequently regrouped into five broader analytical categories to facilitate comparison with the international materials. The largest proportion of questions was classified as Job-related Questions (46 questions), followed by Hobbies and Interests/Stress (35 questions), Personal Data/Small Talk/Personality (32 questions), Travel/School Life (32 questions), and Scenario Questions/Self-presentation (18 questions). This distribution suggests that the Korean

materials emphasize preparing applicants for a broad range of anticipated interview topics while maintaining a strong focus on employment-related knowledge and personal qualifications.

The preceding analyses demonstrated that both corpora rely primarily on open-ended questions; however, important differences emerge in the communicative expectations embedded within those questions. The Korean materials more frequently emphasize obtaining factual information, confirming qualifications, and eliciting descriptions of applicants' backgrounds and experiences. Although opportunities for explanation and self-presentation are present, these functions generally appear within clearly defined instructional categories.

In contrast, the international interview materials more consistently organize interview questions around workplace situations that require applicants to explain decisions, describe previous experiences, evaluate outcomes, and demonstrate professional judgement through extended responses. Rather than treating interview topics as isolated categories, the international materials more frequently integrate multiple communicative purposes within individual interview questions.

These differences should not be interpreted as indicating that one approach is inherently superior to the other. Rather, they represent different pedagogical approaches to preparing learners for employment interviews. The Korean materials provide broad coverage of common interview topics and emphasize systematic preparation across multiple interview situations, whereas the international materials place greater emphasis on explanation, reflection, and experience-based responses as evidence of professional competence.

Overall, the findings indicate that differences between the Korean and international interview materials extend beyond grammatical question forms to broader patterns of communicative organization.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Question Forms

The comparison of Korean (KE) and international (IE) employment interview materials revealed that both corpora relied predominantly on open-ended questions. At first glance, this similarity may suggest that the two instructional approaches promote comparable communicative practices. However, a closer examination indicates that grammatical form alone provides only a partial explanation of interview communication. Rather than reflecting identical pedagogical objectives, the shared preference for open-ended questions masks important differences in the communicative expectations placed upon applicants.

Open-ended questions have long been recognized as a defining characteristic of contemporary employment interviews because they enable interviewers to evaluate applicants' reasoning, communication ability, behavioral competencies, and interpersonal skills more effectively than closed questions (Campion et al., 1997; Levashina et al., 2014). Unlike closed questions, which primarily verify factual information, open-ended questions require applicants to organize information, explain experiences, and demonstrate judgement through extended discourse. Consequently, the predominance of open-ended questions in both corpora reflects the interactive nature of contemporary employment interviews rather than a preference for a particular interview format.

Despite this overall similarity, the Korean materials contained a higher proportion of closed questions than the international corpus. While the numerical difference was not substantial, it nevertheless suggests a relatively stronger emphasis on confirming applicants' qualifications, educational backgrounds, work experiences, and other objective characteristics before inviting more elaborated responses. Such an approach is consistent with structured interview practices in which factual information provides the foundation for subsequent evaluation (Campion et al., 1997).

The international materials, by contrast, demonstrated a more consistent reliance on open-ended questioning throughout the interview process. Rather than serving primarily as prompts for factual description, many questions required applicants to explain previous decisions, describe workplace experiences, and interpret professional situations. These findings are consistent with research showing that competency-based interviews increasingly evaluate applicants through behavioral evidence rather than factual credentials alone (Levashina et al., 2014).

Importantly, the findings of the present study suggest that grammatical form should not be interpreted independently of communicative purpose. As discussed in Section 4, questions sharing the same grammatical structure frequently performed different pragmatic functions depending on the interactional context. This observation supports Candlin's (1976) argument that communicative meaning cannot be explained solely by grammatical form but must also be understood through the function that language performs within interaction.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that grammatical instruction alone is insufficient for preparing learners for English-medium employment interviews. Traditional interview preparation frequently focuses on recognizing question types and memorizing appropriate responses. While such approaches may assist learners in

identifying common interview topics, they do not necessarily develop the communicative flexibility required for authentic professional interaction. Applicants must not only recognize whether a question is grammatically open or closed but also understand the communicative purpose underlying each question and adapt their responses accordingly.

This distinction becomes increasingly important within multilingual professional environments, where communication requires individuals to explain, negotiate, justify, and adapt their discourse according to organizational and interactional expectations (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015; Bhatia & Bremner, 2014).

Accordingly, the differences identified in question forms should be interpreted not merely as variations in textbook design but as indicators of broader pedagogical assumptions regarding interview communication. Whereas the Korean materials continue to provide valuable systematic preparation across a wide range of interview situations, the international materials place relatively greater emphasis on communicative performance within authentic workplace contexts.

5.2 Interpretation of Pragmatic Functions

While the comparison of grammatical question forms provides useful structural information, it does not fully explain how communication is accomplished during employment interviews. As Candlin (1976) argues, the communicative value of a question lies not solely in its grammatical form but also in the function it performs within interaction. Consistent with this perspective, the pragmatic function analysis presented in Section 4 demonstrated that the principal differences between the Korean (KE) and international (IE) interview materials lie not in the grammatical structure of interview questions but in the communicative purposes they are intended to achieve. This

distinction has important implications for understanding both interview communication and English-language interview preparation.

Both corpora sought information from applicants; however, the nature of the information requested differed considerably. The Korean materials more frequently emphasized questions designed to verify applicants' educational backgrounds, employment histories, language abilities, and personal qualifications. Such questions primarily required applicants to provide accurate factual information regarding themselves and their experiences. Consequently, the interview was frequently represented as a structured process of confirming qualifications across a broad range of anticipated topics.

The international materials, in contrast, are more consistently employed questions requiring applicants to explain previous experiences, interpret workplace situations, justify decisions, and demonstrate professional judgement. Rather than simply confirming whether an experience had occurred, interviewers sought evidence of how applicants approached problems, interacted with colleagues, resolved conflicts, and reflected upon outcomes. This finding is consistent with research on behavioral and competency-based interviewing, which suggests that employers increasingly evaluate applicants through demonstrated competencies rather than factual credentials alone (Campion et al., 1997; Levashina et al., 2014). Consequently, the communicative objective extends beyond information gathering toward evaluating professional competence through discourse.

The findings therefore suggest that pragmatic competence plays a central role in successful interview performance. Applicants must recognize not only the literal meaning of an interview question but also the communicative intention underlying it. For example, a question such as *"Tell me about a time when you experienced conflict within*

a team" does not simply request a description of a disagreement. Instead, it invites applicants to demonstrate conflict-management skills, collaboration, self-awareness, and reflective judgement. The effectiveness of the response therefore depends upon recognizing the communicative purpose of the question rather than merely responding to its literal wording. This interpretation is consistent with Candlin's (1976) view that successful communication depends upon understanding language as purposeful social action rather than as isolated grammatical structures.

This observation is particularly relevant for English language instruction. Traditional interview preparation frequently emphasizes vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and memorization of model responses. While these instructional practices remain valuable, they may not adequately prepare learners for interview situations in which communicative intent extends beyond literal interpretation. Learners who recognize only the surface meaning of interview questions may produce grammatically accurate responses that nevertheless fail to demonstrate the competencies interviewers seek to evaluate. As Levashina et al. (2014) note, modern employment interviews increasingly assess behavioral competencies through applicants' explanations and interpretations of previous experiences rather than through factual recall alone.

The findings also suggest that interview preparation should move beyond topic-based instruction toward function-oriented communication. Rather than organizing interview practice exclusively around topics such as personal background, hobbies, or previous employment, instructional materials should explicitly address why interviewers ask particular questions and what forms of professional evidence applicants are expected to provide. Such an approach encourages learners to develop greater pragmatic awareness while promoting more flexible and authentic communication during interviews.

Importantly, these differences should not be interpreted as deficiencies within either instructional approach. The Korean materials provide systematic preparation across a comprehensive range of commonly encountered interview situations and remain valuable for developing foundational interview knowledge. The international materials, however, place relatively greater emphasis on demonstrating professional competence through explanation, reflection, and experience-based communication. Together, these approaches represent complementary pedagogical emphases rather than competing instructional philosophies.

From this perspective, pragmatic function represents an important bridge between grammatical competence and professional communication. Understanding what interview questions are designed to accomplish enables learners to respond more strategically, organize experiences more effectively, and communicate professional competence more convincingly. Such pragmatic awareness is increasingly recognized as an essential component of professional communication in multilingual environments, where communicative success depends upon achieving shared understanding and accomplishing interactional goals rather than simply producing grammatically accurate language (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). The discussion therefore naturally extends beyond pragmatic analysis toward broader issues of professional communication within international workplaces, which are considered in the following section through the perspective of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF).

5.3 Implications for Transnational Education and Graduate Employability

The findings of this study extend beyond employment interview preparation and contribute to broader discussions concerning communication within transnational

education (TNE) and graduate employability. As universities increasingly prepare graduates for participation in international labour markets, employment interviews represent one of the earliest professional contexts in which students must apply English not simply as an academic subject but as a practical medium for professional communication. This reflects the evolving role of higher education in preparing graduates for multilingual, multicultural, and globally connected workplaces (Knight, 2013; Healey, 2018).

Transnational education has expanded considerably over the past two decades, creating learning environments in which students, faculty members, employers, and institutions interact across multiple linguistic, cultural, and organizational contexts (Knight, 2013; Wilkins & Urbanovič, 2014). Within these environments, graduates are increasingly expected to communicate effectively with colleagues, supervisors, and clients whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from their own. Consequently, communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy to encompass pragmatic awareness, interactional flexibility, intercultural understanding, and the ability to negotiate meaning in diverse professional settings (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Jackson & Dean, 2023).

Viewed from this perspective, employment interviews function as more than recruitment procedures. They are authentic communicative events in which applicants demonstrate not only their qualifications but also their ability to participate effectively in professional discourse. Success therefore depends upon recognizing the communicative purpose underlying interview questions, organizing relevant experiences coherently, and responding appropriately to the interactional expectations of interviewers. As demonstrated throughout this study, effective interview performance requires applicants

to integrate grammatical knowledge with pragmatic competence and professional communication skills.

The present findings therefore suggest that interview preparation within transnational education should move beyond topic-based instruction towards developing learners' awareness of communicative purpose. While familiarity with commonly occurring interview questions remains valuable, students also require opportunities to analyze why interviewers ask particular questions, what competencies those questions are intended to evaluate, and how professional experience can be communicated persuasively across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Such an approach prepares learners not merely to answer rehearsed questions but to participate confidently in authentic professional interaction.

These findings also have important implications for curriculum design. Interview preparation courses have traditionally emphasized vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and the memorization of model responses. Although these elements remain essential, they represent only part of the communicative competence required within contemporary international workplaces. Increasingly, higher education institutions are expected to develop graduates who can communicate strategically, collaborate effectively across cultures, adapt to changing professional contexts, and present themselves confidently within multilingual organizations (Jackson & Dean, 2023). Accordingly, interview preparation should explicitly integrate linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, professional communication, and intercultural communication into a coherent instructional framework.

Importantly, the findings do not suggest replacing one instructional approach with another. Rather, they indicate the value of integrating complementary pedagogical perspectives. The systematic topic coverage evident in the Korean materials provides

learners with a strong organizational framework for interview preparation, while the greater emphasis on explanation, reflection, and experience-based communication found in the international materials supports the development of communicative competencies increasingly expected in global professional environments. Together, these complementary strengths suggest a more balanced model for employment interview preparation within transnational education.

More broadly, the study contributes to discussions of graduate employability within international higher education. Contemporary employability encompasses not only disciplinary knowledge but also communication, critical thinking, adaptability, intercultural competence, and the ability to function effectively within multilingual professional environments (Jackson & Dean, 2023). Employment interviews therefore represent an important educational opportunity through which these broader competencies can be developed before students enter the workforce.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that differences between Korean and international employment interview materials extend beyond grammatical question forms to encompass pragmatic functions and broader communicative orientations. By integrating perspectives from employment interview research (Campion et al., 1997; Levashina et al., 2014), pragmatics (Candlin, 1976), Business English as a Lingua Franca (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013), and transnational education (Knight, 2013; Healey, 2018), this study provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how interview preparation can support graduate employability in international contexts. Rather than advocating one instructional approach over another, the findings suggest that combining the systematic preparation characteristic of the Korean materials with the communicative emphasis evident in the international materials offers a balanced pedagogical model for preparing learners to

communicate effectively in multilingual and multicultural professional environments. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on professional communication within transnational higher education while offering practical implications for curriculum development and English-language interview instruction.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how Korean and international employment interview preparation materials conceptualize interview communication through the question forms and pragmatic functions they present to learners. Although both corpora relied predominantly on open-ended questions, important differences emerged in the communicative purposes those questions were designed to achieve. Korean materials primarily emphasized factual information, qualification verification, and structured responses, whereas international materials more consistently encouraged explanation, reflection, justification, and professional self-presentation. These patterns suggest that interview preparation involves not only learning what questions may be asked but also understanding the communicative expectations that underlie professional interaction.

By interpreting communication style through the combined analysis of question forms and pragmatic functions, this study demonstrates that employment interview materials represent broader pedagogical conceptions of professional communication. Rather than viewing interviews as isolated question-and-answer exchanges, international materials more frequently frame interviews as opportunities to construct coherent professional narratives and demonstrate workplace competence through discourse.

These findings have important implications for English language instruction and transnational higher education. As graduates increasingly seek employment in

multinational organizations and internationally oriented workplaces, interview preparation should extend beyond linguistic accuracy and memorization of model responses to include pragmatic awareness, interactional flexibility, and the ability to communicate professional competence effectively across cultural contexts. Integrating these communicative dimensions into interview preparation may better equip learners for authentic professional communication in multilingual environments.

Future research could extend this analysis by examining additional interview preparation materials from other educational contexts, investigating how learners respond to different pedagogical approaches, and exploring the relationship between instructional materials and actual interview performance.

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