

Enhancing TVET Education Through Communication Skills (2015–2025): A Systematic Review of Workplace Needs

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ABSTRACT

As Malaysia advances towards industrialisation, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a central role in preparing a skilled workforce. While TVET graduates are recognised for their technical expertise, employers consistently report deficiencies in communication skills, which limit workplace performance and career growth. To inform educational improvement, this review synthesises studies published between 2015 and 2025 to examine the importance of communication skills in Malaysian TVET workplaces and the functional conditions necessary for their effective application. Using the PRISMA framework, a systematic literature review of 400 articles was conducted through Google Scholar and Elicit, with eight empirical studies meeting the inclusion criteria. Data drawn from 148 field experts and 10 academic experts across engineering, construction, hospitality, cosmetology, and agriculture reveal three dimensions of importance: (i) organisational benefits, (ii) operational efficiency, and (iii) employability and career progression. Five functional conditions were also identified: general language proficiency, technical vocabulary, genre-appropriate communication, sensitivity to regional variations, and non-verbal competence. The findings confirm communication as integral, not supplementary, to TVET workplace success. However, gaps remain in linking communication skills to measurable performance outcomes and embedding them systematically in curricula. Addressing these gaps is vital for enhancing graduate employability, advancing Malaysia's TVET Policy 2030, and achieving sustainable socio-economic development.

Keywords - TVET, Communication skills, Workplace, Importance, Functional conditions

INTRODUCTION

As Malaysia is heading towards becoming an industrialised nation, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a pivotal role in producing a skilled workforce capable of meeting the demands of various industries (Amin, Suhaimi, Nazuri, 2023). In 2019, it was reported that approximately 1.99 million foreign workers were registered in the country under the Temporary Visiting Work Permit, equivalent to 8.71% of the total labour force in Malaysia (Suhaili & Mohamad, 2021). This high reliance on foreign workforce is due to a less qualified potential local workforce (Azmi & Salleh, 2021). Realising the urgency of this situation, the government, in line with UNESCO's 2022-2029 Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Successful and Just Transitions' strategy, has launched Malaysia's National TVET Policy 2030. The policy emphasises that through the implementation of a comprehensive TVET program, graduates who are relevant to current job opportunities and prepared to adapt to future employment changes can be produced. A strong TVET system not only addresses the issues of foreign workforce dependency but also helps the country achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by supporting employment and productivity in a sustainable and efficient manner (Dasar TVET Negara 2030, 2024). This will help the country eradicate poverty and improve the standard of living (Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) in Malaysia: Selected Works, n.d.).

TVET is jointly defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and International Labour Organization as aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, knowledge and attitudes relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Mirabel, Diale & Sewagegn, 2022). In Malaysia, TVET is operationalised through various institutions under the Ministry of Education Malaysia, which include the Malaysian Technical University (MTUN), comprising UTHM, UNiMAP, UTeM, and UMP, as well as Polytechnics, Community Colleges, Vocational Colleges, and Technical Secondary Schools. These institutions collectively contribute to equipping individuals with the technical content knowledge that is supposed to match the industry's needs (Suhaili & Mohama, 2021). However, despite increased attention to TVET programs, graduates often struggle with communication skills necessary for the workplace (Jamaludin, Alias, DeWitt, Ibrahim., 2020).

Following this issue, local academics have conducted studies regarding the importance of communication skills. Ramamurthy, DeWitt and Alias (2021) and Bassah and Noor (2023) reported that although employers highly seek after TVET graduates for their technical skills, the industry often comments on their lack of soft skills and communication skills, which hinders them from communicating effectively. This review aims to consolidate and synthesise the existing research on communication skills within the Malaysian TVET landscape between 2015 and 2024, emphasising their importance in the workplace and the functional conditions necessary for their effective application. By examining the current state of knowledge, this review identifies existing gaps and outlines key communication competencies that should inform the revision of curriculum content to ensure it corresponds effectively to contemporary industry demands. This aligns with the Mid-Term Review of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan and the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025, which emphasise the critical need to cultivate communication skills in developing future-ready talent, fostering adaptability, innovative thinking, and problem-solving capabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has long been recognised internationally as an employment-driven system designed to prepare individuals for direct entry into the workforce. As global labour markets evolve, employers increasingly prioritise communication, language, and interpersonal competencies alongside technical expertise. Research from Europe, Australia, and parts of Africa consistently reports that inadequate workplace communication is a major factor contributing to skill mismatches and reduced employability among TVET graduates, despite strong technical training (Ismail & Mohammed, 2015; Satchwell, 2016). International frameworks such as the OECD Education 2030 agenda similarly highlight the need to embed transversal competences, including communication, literacy, and situational language use, into vocational curricula to ensure alignment with contemporary workplace expectations (OECD, 2017).

Across these studies, communication and language-based courses are increasingly conceptualised as integral, not peripheral components of vocational programme development procedures. Scholars argue that vocational communication is inherently contextualised, shaped by authentic workplace genres such as incident reporting, client interaction, technical presentations, and safety documentation (Satchwell, 2016). Consequently, the development or revision of TVET curricula must incorporate structured mechanisms for industry consultation, including employer advisory boards and needs analyses, to ensure that language and communication modules reflect actual communicative events and discourse practices encountered in the workplace (Rajab & Hamzah, 2020).

In Malaysia, the centrality of employer involvement is even more pronounced, given persistent concerns regarding TVET graduates' English proficiency and workplace communication performance. Studies demonstrate that Malaysian employers view communication skills, particularly spoken English, clarity of expression, and situational appropriateness, as key determinants of job performance, productivity, and career progression (Suhaili & Mohamad, 2021; Suhaili et al., 2025). Research also shows that industry stakeholders consistently highlight deficiencies in workplace communication as barriers to advancement, thereby underscoring the need for greater alignment between communicative competencies taught in TVET institutions and the communicative demands of Malaysian industries (Bassah & Noor, 2023). Recent curriculum studies

similarly call for the integration of communication skills across technical subjects and Final Year Projects, rather than treating English as an isolated support course (Husin et al., 2024).

Given the substantial body of existing empirical work involving employer perspectives, this study deliberately adopts a literature-based rather than interview-based approach. Instead of conducting additional employer consultations, it synthesises findings from prior studies where employers' expectations, critiques, and recommendations have already been extensively documented. This approach enables the identification of recurring communication-related gaps and priorities that should inform the revision of communication and language-based courses within Malaysian TVET curricula, ensuring stronger correspondence between programme content, industry needs, and the job-oriented aims of the TVET system.

Existing systematic literature reviews on Malaysian TVET and communication skills are limited to Kamaruzaman et al. (2025), who examined the essential future generic skills required by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The study synthesised findings from eight articles published between 2020 and 2025, retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The review identifies three major themes: soft skills and employability (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem-solving), digital and technical competencies (e.g., digital literacy and 4IR technologies), and the integration of transversal competencies (e.g., lifelong learning and career adaptability). The paper highlighted the urgent need for innovative pedagogical strategies and stronger collaboration between educators, policymakers, and industry players to ensure TVET graduates are future-ready and aligned with global labour market demands

Secondly, a literature review focusing on the hospitality sector in post-pandemic Malaysia was conducted by Dzia-Uddin, Anuar, Atan and Minghat (2024) to explore the significance of communication skills for TVET hospitality graduates. The review analysed 93 articles published between 2019 and 2023, using content analysis to extract relevant insights. The authors found that communication skills, encompassing written, oral, non-verbal, listening, and digital forms, have become increasingly critical for employability, career advancement, and workplace success in the hospitality industry. The review emphasized the industry's evolving expectations and highlighted methods such as role-play, team-building, and workplace simulations to develop these competencies. It also revealed a gap in communication proficiency among graduates, suggesting that higher education institutions should reinforce soft skill development within TVET curricula

Lastly, Suhaili and Mohamad's (2021) review discussed how communication skills, particularly English proficiency, are among the top five criteria employers seek when hiring fresh graduates. Drawing on national policies and empirical studies, the paper highlighted the challenges in teaching English in technical institutions, including a limited pedagogical focus and insufficient teacher fluency. It also outlined the negative impact of language barriers on job performance, workplace adaptation, and long-term career prospects. The authors advocate for a stronger emphasis on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and workplace communication to close the skill gap between TVET graduates and industry expectations.

A gap in these literature reviews is that the articles emphasise the importance of communication skills; however, the functional conditions for communication skills in TVET workplaces have not been explored. Therefore, this study aims to address the gap by exploring the importance of communication skills in TVET workplaces and the functional conditions that support these skills from the perspective of field experts.

METHODOLOGY

This systematic literature review (SLR), guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, investigates research on communication skills within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Malaysia. A total of eight studies published between 2015 and 2025 were included in the final review. The selection of these ten years was deliberate and grounded in the need to capture recent developments and discussions on communication skills in light of the ongoing implementation of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015–2025 and the recently introduced Malaysia's National TVET Policy 2030.

To ensure comprehensive and inclusive coverage, the Identification phase utilised Elicit and Google Scholar as the primary search engines. A deep search strategy was employed to capture a broad spectrum of publications, including both indexed and non-indexed sources. Boolean searches using combinations of the keywords “Malaysia”, “TVET”, “communication skills”, and “workplace” were conducted to maximise the retrieval of relevant publications. A total of 404 articles were shortlisted for the next screening phase.

In Phase 2: Screening, duplicate entries were removed. Titles and abstracts were then screened to assess relevance to communication skills in the Malaysian TVET context. Articles that were unrelated to communication, TVET, or Malaysia were excluded at this stage.

In Phase 3: Eligibility, full-text articles were assessed against a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were published between 2015 and 2025, and written in either Malay or English. The review focused exclusively on the Malaysian context; therefore, studies on Malaysia were included, regardless of the country of publication or the authors' nationality, provided that Malaysian data were utilised. Conversely, studies conducted by Malaysian researchers using foreign data were excluded. No restrictions were placed on the vocational field as studies across disciplines, such as engineering, hospitality, and tourism, were considered, as long as they focused on communication skills within Malaysian TVET.

Studies that only mentioned communication in passing or lacked substantive analysis were excluded. Where communication was embedded within broader constructs such as soft skills or generic skills, only studies with a clear and focused discussion on communication were included. For example, if a study addressed teamwork, problem-solving, and communication, only the communication-related findings were extracted. In contrast, studies focused solely on unrelated skills such as numeracy, technical problem-solving, or adaptability were excluded. Additionally, review articles, theoretical papers, and conceptual papers were excluded to avoid duplication and to maintain a focus on primary, empirical research.

In the final Inclusion phase, a total of eight articles met all criteria and were retained for analysis. Tables I and II below present a summary of the data collection process, selection criteria and shortlisted articles for the review process.

Table I Summary of Data Collection Process

Phase	Description		Google Scholar (n)	Elicit (n)
Identification	Keywords:Communication skills TVET Workplace Malaysia		The first 100 outputs	The first 304 most relevant data
Screening	[+] TVET, Vocational	[-] general education, training, general workplace	-19	-45
	[+] communication skills [+] proficiency	[-] no direct mention of communication skills	-23	-151
	[+] published between 2015-2025	[-] year of publication: prior to 2015, no year,	-9	-50
	[+] Malaysia	[-] location of study: outside Malaysia, comparing Malaysia and other countries, not mentioned	-2	-15
	[+] issues/focus: workplace	[-] issues/focus: pedagogical	-31	-26
		[-] issues/ focus: trainees' general abilities	-9	-9

		[-] non-Malaysian/ foreign workers	-0	-1
		[-] bibliometric analysis, review,	-2	-2
	[+] with at least one employer as part of the respondents		-0	-1
Eligibility	Eligible article		5	4
		[-] redundancy	-1	
Included	Articles included in this paper		8	

Table Ii List of Articles Shortlisted in The Review

No.	Year	Authors	Source of paper
1	2025	Suhaili, Razak & Deni	Google Scholar
2	2023	Bassah & Noor	Google Scholar & Elicit
3	2023	Ohueri, Habil & Liew	Elicit
4	2022	Bassah	Google Scholar
5	2021	Ramamurthy, DeWitt & Alias	Google Scholar
6	2021	Kiong, Puad, Kamis, Heong, Shafie & Bedor	Elicit
7	2020	Subramaniam, Abdullah & Portorojo	Google Scholar
8	2020	Masduki & Zakaria	Elicit

Details of the Reviewed Articles

The eight studies examine the importance of communication skills in at least 10 fields, which include engineering, construction, automotive, printing, agriculture, cosmetology, electrical and electronic, fashion technology, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and hospitality and culinary. 148 respondents were field experts, while 10 were academic experts. While seven of the studies looked at the performance of tertiary level or graduates' performance, only one looked at the students of the Upper Secondary Vocational Education Program (USVEP). Table III below provides the list of fields and the number of experts interviewed.

Table Iii List of Fields and Number of Experts Interviewed

No.	Field (experts)	No. of field experts	No. of Academic experts
1.	Agriculture	1	-
2.	Automotive	6	-
3.	Cosmetology (beauty salon entrepreneur)	1	6
4.	Construction (construction managers, site supervisors, architect, labourers)	15	2
5.	Engineering (engineers, HR of engineering companies,	113	2
6.	Electrical and electronic	1	-
7.	Fashion technology	1	-
8.	heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)	1	-
9.	Hospitality and culinary	1	-

10.	Printing	2	-
11.	Unspecify	6	-
TOTAL		148	10

Importance of Communication Skills in The Tvet Workplace

The importance of communication skills in TVET has been consistently emphasised by industry stakeholders, highlighting its relevance across organisational, operational, and individual dimensions. From the review, the importance of good communication skills in the TVET context can be categorised into three key areas: (i) organisational gains through effective communication, (ii) efficiency in daily technical and collaborative tasks, and (iii) employability and career advancement.

Organisational Gains Through Effective Communication

In relation to organisational gains, Suhaili, Razak, and Deni's (2025) interviews with employers in the printing, agricultural, and engineering industries in Sarawak revealed that good English communication skills are considered essential in shaping and strengthening a company's corporate image. Employers emphasise that employees who can communicate clearly and professionally reflect positively on the organisation. Effective communication was seen not only as a tool for transmitting information but also as a strategic asset that enhances how the organisation is perceived externally.

Suhaili, Razak, and Deni (2025) further stated that maintaining and sustaining a business is closely linked to the presence of strong communication skills. Their study found that effective communication plays a central role in fostering and preserving positive relationships with both suppliers and clients, which are essential for operational continuity. In business environments, employees equipped with strong communication skills, particularly those who can actively listen to customers, understand their needs, and respond promptly to their concerns, are well-positioned to contribute to positive customer experiences (Ramamurthy, DeWitt & Alias, 2021). Kiong, Puad, Kamis, Heong, Shafi, and Bedor (2021) interviewed teachers and beauty salon entrepreneur found that it is important for the cosmetology trainees to be able to communicate appropriately to ensure the viability of the business as customers will only return if they received good customer service and this include not only the treatment but also when the trainees display the emphatic communication. This is further verified by Bassah and Noor (2023), who cited their respondent saying, "We need competent employees, but they must also be able to impress customers with their speaking abilities. Plus, we need them to be presentable at all times. Not only in their appearance but also regarding their oral skills" (p.6)

Finally, the internationalisation of clients and other stakeholders was also identified as a key factor underpinning the importance of good communication skills, especially in languages such as English. As highlighted by Suhaili, Razak, and Deni (2025), employers acknowledged that the ability to engage with international partners in a professional and competent manner is increasingly necessary, particularly in industries with global exposure. This further reinforces the view that communication competence is not only central to local workplace functioning but also to engaging with broader transnational networks

Efficiency in Daily Technical and Collaborative Tasks

The review shows that communication skills play a crucial role in enhancing efficiency in daily technical and collaborative tasks. Subramaniam, Abdullah, and Portorojo (2020) found that both written and oral communication are integral to task completion. Ninety respondents from five different engineering industries that participated in the study agreed that graduates with good communication skills are able to perform their tasks effectively.

This is further supported by Suhaili, Razak, and Deni's (2025) interviews with employers from the printing, agricultural, and engineering industries in Sarawak, which revealed that clear and effective communication was one of the most valued competencies among TVET graduates, particularly in task coordination roles. These professional competencies enable individuals to transmit and receive essential information, deliver instruction, ask questions, participate in team discussions, structure appropriate responses to different

professional contexts and anticipate challenges in the working environment (Masduki & Zakaria, 2020; Suhaili, Razak, & Deni, 2025).

In addition to the above, communication skills also help workers adjust to various work tasks and environments. Suhaili, Razak, and Deni (2025) presented that since machines' manuals, applications, and technical specifications are commonly presented in English, proficiency in this language makes it easier for workers to order supplies, operate equipment, and provide instructions using the language (Suhaili, Razak, & Deni, 2025).

In contrast, Ramamurthy, DeWitt, and Alias (2021) and Ohueri, Liew, and Habil (2023) concluded in their studies that failing to convey the intended message to a team can increase the likelihood of miscommunication and slow down productivity. This is based on the views of 17 construction experts (architects, construction managers, site supervisors, and construction labourers), five automotive experts, and three communication experts from Malaysian public universities, who stated that ineffective communication in the industry leads to low productivity, cost overruns, time delays, and poor quality output. Engineering industry experts and academic professionals reported that misunderstandings can lead to mistakes (Masduki & Zakaria, 2020), which in turn result in project delays (Ramamurthy, DeWitt, & Alias, 2021).

Employability, Achievement and Career Advancement

In the TVET context, the ability to communicate technical information effectively is a core skill expected of graduates (Ramamurthy, DeWitt, & Alias, 2021). It significantly enhances graduates' attractiveness in the job market as graduates with good communication skills are more marketable (Subramaniam, Abdullah and Portorojo, 2020). It was also observed that many graduates, despite possessing the technical capabilities required by employers, struggled to present themselves professionally due to communication gaps, ultimately resulting in missed job opportunities (Suhaili, Razak, and Deni, 2025). A cosmetology trainee, for example, may lose the opportunity to work in a spa due to an inability to communicate properly, as cited by Kiong, Puad, Kamis, Heong, Shafie, and Bedor (2021). A spa owner-representative in the study was quoted as saying, "Because if they (cosmetology students) want to work, the employer will judge from their first impression, which is on how they communicate" (p. 265).

The importance of good communication skills spans from acing a job interview to career progression and advancement, as quoted by Bassah and Noor (2023), "These abilities (presentation skills) carry considerable weight in evaluating their (the staff's) achievement." Being able to communicate effectively in the workplace equates to the credibility of trainees or staff (Kiong, Puad, Kamis, Heong, Shafie & Bedor, 2021), which ensures returning customers. Possessing good communication skills enables all TVET trainees and staff, including those from the engineering field, to effectively compete in the industry (Masduki & Zakaria, 2020). Conversely, the lack of communication skills poses a significant barrier to employment and career progression.

All in all, the review confirms that communication skills are not merely supplementary but integral to TVET graduates' success, spanning organisational reputation, efficiency in technical and collaborative tasks, and individual employability and career growth. Evidence from multiple studies demonstrates that strong communicative competence supports business sustainability, enhances workplace productivity, and enables graduates to access and advance in their careers. Conversely, communication deficiencies undermine these outcomes, resulting in lost opportunities, inefficiencies, and reduced competitiveness.

Functional Conditions for Effective Technical Communication

Through the analysis, five primary functional conditions for effective TVET communication at both the learning and workplace institutions have been identified which are (i) good general language proficiency, (ii) lexical competence of field-specific terminology, (iii) genre-based linguistic appropriateness, (iv) understanding and acceptance of regional variations and, (v) competence in using and interpreting nonverbal cues.

Good general Language Proficiency

A fundamental functional condition for effective technical communication in Malaysian TVET is general language proficiency. Ohueri, Liew and Habil (2023) found that low proficiency level serves as a language barrier and has a significant impact in the context of the construction process in Malaysia. Masduki and Zakaria (2020) reported that high proficiency in the English language is necessary for engineers to minimise miscommunications and conflicts, which in turn will reduce costly mistakes. Research shows that insufficient proficiency often manifests as speaking anxiety, which significantly hinders trainees' ability to articulate technical content.

Lexical competence of field-specific terminology

A second critical prerequisite is lexical competence in field-specific terminology. Ramamurthy, DeWitt, and Alias (2021), in their interview with five human resource personnel of the automotive industry, found a lack of technical vocabulary as the prominent challenge faced by TVET graduates in the workplace. The problem ranges from not knowing the names of parts and tools to not understanding the manuals. Ramamurthy, DeWitt, and Alias (2021) reported that a lack of technical vocabulary severely affected workplace communication. Employers noted that they had to dedicate significant time to teaching terminology rather than focusing on task completion. This makes the trainees struggle even more when working in well-established automotive companies. This functional condition not only affects the engineering industry, but it also spans the construction industry. Ohueri, Liew and Habil (2023) reported “among the major communication challenges of construction workers is the issue of lack of technical knowledge” (p.121).

Genre-based linguistic appropriateness

The second key functional condition for effective technical communication is genre-based linguistic appropriateness, which refers to the ability to use language that aligns with the expectations, tone, and structure of specific communicative genres. In technical and vocational contexts, professionals are often required to produce a variety of documents such as tenders, quotations, proposals, emails, and online chat messages. Each of these genres carries distinct linguistic and pragmatic norms that must be adhered to in order to ensure clarity, professionalism, and purpose alignment (Suhaili & Mohamad, 2021). These genres demand above-average language proficiency to avoid ambiguity and ensure the accurate transmission of technical and procedural information to all stakeholders (Suhaili, Razak, & Deni, 2025). Failure to meet genre-specific expectations may result in misinterpretation, delays, or compromised credibility. Therefore, cultivating genre-sensitive language use is essential for maintaining communicative precision and operational efficiency in technical environments.

Understanding and acceptance of regional variations

The influence of dialect and regional variation is another important factor to be considered. While Ramamurthy, Dewitt and Alias (2021) observed that local dialects hinder communication in automotive technical workplaces, Suhaili, Razak, and Deni (2025) present a more nuanced perspective. Their study found that Sarawakian employers accepted local varieties of English, provided that accuracy was maintained in task execution, especially when linked to corporate branding or external communication. This divergence suggests that tolerance for non-standard English usage is often context-dependent. In TVET practices. This reinforces the importance of preparing trainees for intelligibility and contextual appropriateness rather than aiming exclusively for native-like norms.

Competence in using and interpreting nonverbal cues.

Apart from the above, Kiong, Puad, Kamis, Heong, Shafie, and Bedor's (2021) findings reported that non-verbal aspects, such as body language and facial expression, are important in the field of cosmetology to ensure consultations happen effectively. The students not only have to watch out for their nonverbal communication but also should be able to read the customer's expression. Customers' satisfaction with the service provided can be observed through their facial expressions and body language. The ability to read these expressions will help trainees adjust their approach, thereby ensuring the customer returns for further

treatment. The importance of nonverbal communication cuts across technical fields such as engineering. Apart from cosmetology, the same is observed in the engineering field. Masduki and Zakaria (2020) reported that their respondents stressed the importance of nonverbal communication, as it reduces misunderstandings. Tone of voice has been explicitly mentioned.

In conclusion, the analysis of functional conditions underscores the layered nature of effective communication in technical settings. Beyond general language proficiency, TVET trainees must acquire technical vocabulary, genre-sensitive communication strategies, and the ability to navigate regional language variations. Importantly, the findings also highlight the centrality of nonverbal communication, where body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions contribute significantly to workplace interactions, from customer service in cosmetology to technical collaboration in engineering. These conditions demonstrate that communication in TVET contexts is multifaceted, requiring mastery of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Therefore, effective integration of communication training within TVET curricula is crucial, ensuring that graduates are not only technically competent but also communicatively agile in addressing the complex demands of contemporary workplaces.

Gaps, Relevance and Conclusion

While numerous studies highlight the importance of communication skills in Malaysian TVET, notable gaps remain in the literature that deserve closer examination. There is a clear need for empirical research that directly links specific communication competencies to measurable workplace performance outcomes. Although surveys and anecdotal reports indicate that employers value communication skills (Suhaili & Mohamad, 2021), very few studies rigorously demonstrate how these competencies contribute to productivity gains, error reduction, improved safety communication, or enhanced customer satisfaction. Future research should therefore quantify the impact of communication training, particularly in technical language, workplace documentation, and interpersonal communication, on key performance indicators across different TVET sectors.

From a curriculum perspective, the findings of this review underscore the importance of embedding structured, discipline-specific communication training within TVET programmes to strengthen TVET's role as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth. Malaysia's National Dual Training System, for instance, could be further enhanced by integrating modules focused on technical vocabulary development, job-specific genres (such as SOPs, maintenance logs, quality reports, and safety briefings), customer service and client-interaction discourse, as well as industry-standard presentation and pitching skills (Yusvana, 2025). Such components are crucial not only for workplace communication but also for enabling graduates to articulate expertise, troubleshoot issues collaboratively, and interact confidently with supervisors, clients, and cross-functional teams.

These language and communication enhancements would also support broader national objectives under the 12th Malaysia Plan and the MADANI vision by empowering graduates to navigate job interviews, workplace hierarchies, and entrepreneurial contexts more effectively. Strengthened communicative competence, particularly in bilingual or multilingual settings can facilitate social mobility and contribute to long-term community resilience, especially among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In conclusion, the findings of this review demonstrate that communication skills function as indispensable competencies across multiple dimensions of the TVET workplace, reinforcing their place as core curricular components rather than supplementary add-ons. At the organisational level, strong communication enhances professional image, builds trust with stakeholders, and supports global industry engagement. Operationally, accurate and efficient communication ensures seamless coordination, adherence to safety protocols, and reduction of costly misunderstandings. At the individual level, communicative competence directly shapes employability, career advancement, and workplace adaptability. Collectively, these insights affirm that language-focused communication training is a foundational requirement for TVET graduates to excel in dynamic, industry-driven environments, and must therefore be systematically and explicitly embedded within TVET curricula.

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