

Undergraduates' Readiness and Confidence in Workplace English Communication: The Influence of English Learning Background, Workplace Exposure and Self-Perceived Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

Effective workplace communication in English has become an essential employability skill in today's globalised labour market. Despite increasing emphasis on communication skills development in higher education, concerns remain regarding graduates' preparedness for professional communication. This study examined undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace communication tasks, and the relationship between selected influencing factors and workplace communication readiness. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed involving 70 undergraduate students from a local university. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring workplace English communication readiness, workplace communication confidence, English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS. The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated a high level of workplace English communication readiness ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.88$) and a high level of confidence in performing workplace communication tasks ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.91$). Written communication tasks, particularly email writing and email responses, recorded the highest confidence levels, while oral presentations received the lowest confidence rating. Correlation analysis indicated that English learning background ($r = .373$, $p = .001$), workplace exposure ($r = .248$, $p = .038$), and self-perceived English proficiency ($r = .438$, $p < .001$) were all significantly related to workplace English communication readiness. Self-perceived English proficiency demonstrated the strongest relationship with readiness. The findings suggest that higher education institutions should strengthen workplace-oriented communication training, particularly in spoken communication, while increasing opportunities for authentic workplace experiences to enhance graduate employability and workplace preparedness.

Keywords: workplace English communication, workplace readiness, communication confidence, self-perceived English proficiency, workplace exposure, graduate employability, undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

As English has become a key language of communication across many professional fields, it has become increasingly important for graduates to acquire not only technical knowledge but also the ability to communicate fluently across a wide range of social and work settings (World Economic Forum, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). Workplace communication skills are closely associated with graduate employability, career advancement, and professional success (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2023). Consequently, higher education institutions have placed significant emphasis on developing students' communication and employability skills through curricular and experiential learning opportunities (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). Nevertheless, concerns regarding students'

readiness for workplace communication continue to persist, as employers frequently report gaps between graduates' academic preparation and their ability to communicate confidently and effectively in professional settings (Ali et al., 2025; Azhari & Satimin, 2024). Previous studies have highlighted the roles of language proficiency, educational experiences, and workplace exposure in shaping communication competence (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). However, limited research has examined how these factors influence undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication and the extent to which they feel confident in performing workplace communication tasks. In this study, workplace English communication readiness refers to undergraduates' perceived preparedness to communicate effectively in professional settings. While readiness is related to communication confidence, self-perceived proficiency, and communication competence, it is conceptually distinct. Confidence refers to individuals' belief in their ability to perform workplace communication tasks, whereas self-perceived proficiency refers to individuals' assessment of their own English language ability, and communication competence reflects the effective application of communication skills in workplace contexts. Accordingly, readiness serves as the primary construct examined in this study. Therefore, this study examines undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace communication tasks, and the factors influencing such readiness.

Background of the Study

In today's globalised and interconnected economy, English has become one of the most widely used languages for workplace communication across industries. Employees are increasingly expected to communicate effectively in English when interacting with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As organisations continue to expand their global reach, effective workplace communication is no longer viewed as an additional advantage but as a fundamental employability skill that contributes to professional effectiveness, career progression, and organisational success (World Economic Forum, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026).

Recognising the growing importance of workplace communication skills, higher education institutions have placed increasing emphasis on preparing graduates for the demands of professional environments. Beyond developing disciplinary knowledge, universities are expected to equip students with the communication skills required to participate in meetings, deliver presentations, write professional correspondence, collaborate with colleagues, and engage in workplace discussions. As a result, graduate preparedness for workplace communication has become an important concern among educators, employers, and policymakers seeking to enhance graduates' employability and workplace effectiveness (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026).

Despite these efforts, concerns regarding graduates' communication abilities continue to be reported across various employment sectors. Employers consistently identify communication skills as one of the most desirable attributes among job applicants, yet many graduates are perceived to experience difficulties communicating confidently and effectively in professional contexts. Recent evidence suggests that employers often value practical communication abilities, such as clarity of expression, confidence during interactions, adaptability, and appropriate professional conduct, more highly than grammatical accuracy alone (Ali et al., 2025). However, graduates frequently report uncertainty when communicating in spontaneous workplace situations, including meetings, discussions, and presentations. Ali et al. (2025) and Satimin and Azhari (2024) reported that this mismatch between workplace expectations and graduates' communication preparedness may negatively influence employability outcomes and workplace performance.

Previous studies suggest that workplace communication readiness is influenced by multiple factors, including educational experiences, opportunities for authentic language use, workplace exposure, and individuals' perceptions of their own language ability (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) explained that experiential learning opportunities such as internships, industrial training, work-integrated learning, and part-time employment have been found to contribute positively to students' professional development by exposing them to authentic workplace communication practices and expectations. Such experiences allow students to apply their language skills in

real-world contexts, develop greater confidence in professional interactions, and gain a better understanding of workplace communication demands.

Although existing studies have emphasised the importance of employability skills development and workplace learning experiences, there remains a need for further empirical investigation into how educational experiences, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency collectively contribute to undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication. While these factors have often been examined separately, limited attention has been given to understanding their combined influence on students' perceived preparedness to use English effectively in professional settings (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026).

Therefore, this study examines undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace communication tasks, and the factors that influence such readiness. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to provide insights that may assist higher education institutions in strengthening workplace communication preparation and enhancing graduate employability in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Problem Statement

Despite continuous efforts by higher education institutions to develop graduates' communication skills, concerns regarding workplace communication preparedness remain prevalent. Employers continue to report that many graduates experience difficulties communicating effectively in professional contexts, particularly when required to participate in workplace discussions, presentations, meetings, and other communication tasks that demand spontaneous interaction and professional judgement (Ali et al., 2025; Satimin & Azhari, 2024).

Although graduates may demonstrate adequate English language knowledge, possessing language proficiency does not necessarily indicate readiness to communicate effectively in workplace settings. Preparing students for workplace communication involves more than developing linguistic ability; it also requires individuals to feel prepared to apply their communication skills in authentic professional environments. Consequently, concerns remain regarding whether undergraduates are sufficiently ready and confident to perform workplace English communication tasks upon graduation.

Furthermore, existing studies have largely focused on English proficiency, communication competence, employability skills, or employers' evaluations of graduates' communication abilities. Comparatively less attention has been given to examining workplace English communication readiness from undergraduates' perspectives. As a result, there remains limited understanding of how prepared students perceive themselves to be for workplace communication and how confident they feel when carrying out common workplace communication tasks.

In addition, although educational experiences, workplace exposure, and perceptions of language ability have been identified as important contributors to professional development, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their combined relationship with workplace English communication readiness among undergraduates (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). Therefore, there is a need to investigate undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace communication tasks, and the influence of English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency on such readiness.

Research Objectives

RO1: To determine the level of undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication.

RO2: To determine the level of undergraduates' confidence in performing common workplace English communication tasks.

RO3: To investigate the relationship between English learning background, workplace exposure, self-perceived English proficiency, and undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to assess undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication. Specifically, the study seeks to determine undergraduates' perceived level of preparedness to communicate effectively in professional settings and to examine their confidence in performing common workplace communication tasks. In addition, the study investigates the relationship between selected factors, namely English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency, and undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication. By examining these aspects, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on students' preparedness for workplace communication and contribute to a better understanding of the factors associated with workplace English communication readiness among undergraduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace English Communication and Graduate Employability

English has become the dominant language of international business, professional networking, and cross-border communication. As organisations increasingly operate in globalised and multilingual environments, employees are expected to communicate effectively in English when interacting with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and stakeholders from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, English communication skills have become a critical component of graduate employability and workplace success (World Economic Forum, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Tsitiridou, 2026). Employers increasingly seek graduates who can communicate clearly, confidently, and professionally across various workplace situations, making communication competence an essential employability attribute rather than a supplementary skill.

The importance of workplace communication extends beyond demonstrating language proficiency. Modern workplaces require employees to convey ideas effectively, collaborate with team members, participate in meetings, negotiate solutions, manage workplace relationships, and communicate professionally through multiple communication channels. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) argued that employability increasingly depends on graduates' ability to apply both disciplinary knowledge and transferable workplace skills within authentic professional contexts. Their study further highlighted the importance of experiential learning opportunities in developing work-ready graduates.

Communication skills consistently rank among the most desired competencies in graduates. Ting et al. (2017) found that Malaysian employers considered communication skills and English proficiency as related but distinct attributes, emphasising that graduates with strong communication abilities may remain employable even when their English proficiency is not exceptional. Similarly, Wahi (2014) reported that employers valued all four language skills, particularly writing, due to the extensive communication demands associated with contemporary workplaces. These findings suggest that employability depends not only on graduates' knowledge of English but also on their ability to utilise English effectively in workplace-related situations.

Several studies have also reported that communication deficiencies may negatively influence graduate employability. According to Kamil and Muhammad (2021), weak English communication skills may hinder graduates' performance during recruitment processes and reduce their ability to engage effectively in workplace interactions. Likewise, Chan (2021) observed that new graduates often experience challenges when transitioning from academic to workplace communication because workplace discourse requires greater adaptability, audience awareness, and communicative competence than academic communication contexts.

Collectively, these studies suggest that workplace English communication is closely associated with graduate employability, professional effectiveness, and career advancement. As communication demands

continue to evolve within increasingly globalised workplaces, graduates are expected to possess both linguistic competence and the ability to communicate confidently across various professional situations.

Conceptualising Workplace English Communication Readiness

Workplace readiness has attracted increasing attention in higher education and employability research as institutions seek to prepare students more effectively for professional environments. Peersia et al. (2024) define workplace readiness as the extent to which graduates possess the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and professional attributes required to function successfully in the workplace. Within the context of this study, workplace English communication readiness refers specifically to undergraduates' perceived preparedness to communicate effectively and appropriately in English when engaging in professional workplace interactions.

Although often related to English proficiency and communication competence, workplace English communication readiness represents a distinct construct. Readiness concerns individuals' perceptions of their ability to apply communication skills effectively in authentic workplace contexts rather than merely possessing language knowledge. Chan (2021) noted that many graduates encounter workplace communication demands that differ substantially from the communication experiences typically encountered in universities. As a result, students may possess adequate language knowledge while simultaneously feeling unprepared to communicate confidently in professional settings.

Workplace communication readiness can be regarded as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic competence, communication confidence, professional awareness, adaptability, and situational judgment. According to Zuraina Ali et al. (2025), workplace-ready graduates are expected to communicate effectively across diverse professional situations, demonstrate confidence during workplace interactions, and adapt their communication according to audience expectations and organisational requirements. Such graduates are generally more capable of participating in discussions, presenting ideas, responding to workplace challenges, and maintaining professional relationships.

Research further suggests that communication readiness influences workplace participation and performance. Individuals who perceive themselves as communication-ready are generally more willing to contribute during meetings, seek clarification when required, engage in collaborative discussions, and communicate proactively with colleagues and supervisors. Conversely, individuals who perceive themselves as insufficiently prepared may demonstrate communication avoidance behaviours despite possessing adequate linguistic knowledge. Such findings suggest that workplace communication readiness is influenced not only by communication ability but also by individuals' perceptions of their preparedness to apply these abilities effectively.

As employers continue to prioritise communication-related competencies, understanding undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication has become increasingly important. Examining readiness provides valuable insights into how prepared students feel to meet the communication demands of contemporary workplaces and may help identify areas requiring further developmental support within higher education.

Workplace English Communication Tasks in Professional Settings

Workplace communication involves a broad range of spoken and written activities that support organisational functioning, collaboration, and professional interaction. Employees are expected to communicate effectively through multiple channels and adapt their communication according to varying workplace situations. Consequently, workplace communication competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy and requires the ability to communicate appropriately, professionally, and strategically.

Written communication constitutes one of the most frequently performed workplace activities. Employees are often required to compose emails, prepare reports, document procedures, produce meeting minutes, draft proposals, respond to enquiries, and communicate information to different stakeholders. These communication tasks require employees to demonstrate clarity, audience awareness, appropriate tone,

accuracy, and professionalism. Wahi (2014) reported that employers viewed writing as one of the most important skills required of graduates because written communication remains fundamental to organisational operations.

In addition to written communication, workplace environments require extensive oral communication. Employees participate in meetings, contribute to discussions, present information, negotiate solutions, provide explanations, respond to enquiries, and interact regularly with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and stakeholders. Chan (2021) emphasised that workplace communication frequently involves complex communicative situations that require employees to interpret workplace discourse, adjust communication styles appropriately, and respond effectively to dynamic interactional demands.

Effective workplace communication also encompasses interpersonal communication tasks. Employees frequently engage in conflict management, collaborative decision-making, problem-solving discussions, feedback exchanges, and relationship-building activities. These situations require not only language skills but also interpersonal awareness, empathy, professionalism, and adaptability. According to Zuraina Ali et al. (2025), employers increasingly prioritise graduates who can communicate clearly, confidently, and appropriately in workplace settings over those who merely demonstrate grammatical accuracy.

Given the diversity and complexity of workplace communication tasks, graduates are expected to possess a range of communication abilities that support effective participation in professional settings. Familiarity with these communication demands may contribute significantly to graduates' perceptions of workplace communication readiness.

Confidence in Workplace English Communication

Confidence represents an important psychological factor that influences individuals' willingness to communicate in workplace settings. Although English proficiency provides the linguistic foundation for communication, confidence determines whether individuals are willing to utilise their language abilities when engaging in workplace interactions. Consequently, communication confidence has emerged as an important component of workplace communication preparedness.

Confidence in workplace English communication refers to an individual's belief in their ability to communicate effectively when performing workplace-related communication tasks. Such confidence influences one's willingness to participate in meetings, ask questions, contribute ideas, deliver presentations, engage in discussions, and communicate with various workplace stakeholders. According to Zuraina Ali et al. (2025), confidence in spoken English is frequently viewed as a key indicator of workplace readiness because confident individuals are generally more willing to communicate and participate actively in workplace interactions.

The distinction between confidence and proficiency has been emphasised in previous research. Ting et al. (2017) argued that while proficiency reflects language ability, communication confidence reflects an individual's willingness and readiness to utilise those abilities. Employers often report that graduates who possess adequate grammatical knowledge may nevertheless experience difficulties communicating effectively if they lack confidence in professional interactions. Similarly, Zuraina Ali et al. (2025) found that employers frequently value confidence, adaptability, and communication effectiveness alongside language proficiency.

Communication confidence may also affect workplace participation and professional development. Individuals with higher confidence are generally more likely to engage in networking, contribute ideas during meetings, seek clarification when required, and develop professional relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Conversely, low confidence may result in communication avoidance, reduced workplace participation, and greater reliance on written communication as a substitute for interpersonal interaction. Therefore, communication confidence remains an important aspect of workplace communication and warrants separate examination when assessing workplace English communication readiness among undergraduates.

English Learning Background

English learning background refers to the cumulative language-learning experiences that individuals acquire throughout their educational journey. These experiences may include formal English instruction, participation in English-medium educational environments, language enrichment activities, English-related extracurricular programmes, private language tuition, and exposure to English beyond the classroom through media consumption and social interaction.

Previous research indicates that language-learning experiences influence both linguistic development and communication behaviour. Students who have experienced frequent exposure to English are generally more familiar with language use in diverse contexts and may develop stronger communication abilities and greater confidence in using the language. Conversely, limited exposure to meaningful English communication opportunities may restrict students' ability to develop communicative competence and reduce opportunities for authentic language practice.

English learning background is particularly relevant in multilingual societies where students experience varying levels of English exposure across educational and social environments. Such differences may contribute to variations in communication confidence, language use habits, proficiency perceptions, and communication preparedness. Chan (2021) noted that students' previous communication experiences influence their ability to identify and respond to workplace communication needs, suggesting that prior learning experiences play an important role in preparing graduates for workplace communication demands.

Given the potential influence of prior language-learning experiences on communication development, English learning background is considered an important variable that may contribute to workplace English communication readiness among undergraduates.

Workplace Exposure

Workplace exposure refers to students' involvement in authentic workplace environments before entering full-time employment. Such exposure may occur through internships, industrial training, work-integrated learning programmes, volunteer work, part-time employment, and other professional experiences that allow students to engage with workplace practices and expectations.

Experiential learning literature consistently highlights the value of authentic workplace experiences in preparing students for professional employment. Through exposure to workplace communication practices, students gain opportunities to apply classroom learning in real-world settings and develop a better understanding of workplace expectations. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) found that experiential learning activities, particularly internships and workplace learning opportunities, contributed substantially to graduate employability development by providing opportunities for skill acquisition and professional experience.

Workplace exposure may also enhance communication readiness by providing students with opportunities to perform workplace-related communication tasks. During internships and other workplace experiences, students may be required to participate in meetings, compose emails, communicate with supervisors, collaborate with colleagues, and engage in professional discussions. Such experiences promote familiarity with workplace discourse, communication expectations, and professional norms.

Chan (2021) further argued that workplace learning enables students to identify communication challenges, develop communication strategies, and understand workplace communication requirements more effectively. Consequently, students with greater workplace exposure may be more likely to perceive themselves as prepared to communicate effectively in professional settings. Workplace exposure therefore represents an important experiential factor that may influence workplace English communication readiness.

Self-Perceived English Proficiency

Self-perceived English proficiency refers to individuals' personal evaluation of their ability to use English

across the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Unlike objective measures of proficiency that rely on standardised assessments, self-perceived proficiency reflects individuals' beliefs regarding their own language capabilities.

The concept is particularly relevant because individuals often make communication decisions based on how competent they believe themselves to be rather than solely on their objectively measured proficiency levels. Li and Zhang (2021) argued that English proficiency encompasses linguistic, academic, and intercultural dimensions that collectively influence language use and communication effectiveness. Similarly, Chakiso et al. (2025) described proficiency as the ability to utilise English effectively across multiple language domains.

Research has consistently demonstrated positive relationships between perceived language competence and communication behaviours. Students who perceive themselves as proficient users of English are generally more willing to communicate, participate actively in discussions, and engage in workplace interactions. In contrast, those who perceive themselves as less proficient may avoid communication opportunities despite possessing adequate language ability.

Employer perspectives further suggest that language proficiency contributes to workplace effectiveness when combined with confidence, adaptability, and communication competence. Ting et al. (2017) reported that employers often distinguish language proficiency from communication skills, while Zuraina Ali et al. (2025) observed that employers value graduates who can apply their language abilities effectively across diverse workplace situations. Therefore, self-perceived English proficiency may influence how prepared students feel when approaching workplace communication demands.

Relationship Between English Learning Background, Workplace Exposure, Self-Perceived English Proficiency and Workplace English Communication Readiness

Previous literature suggests that workplace English communication readiness is shaped by multiple educational, experiential, and individual factors rather than by language proficiency alone. Among these factors, English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency appear particularly relevant because each contributes to the development of communication competence and communication confidence.

Students with richer English learning backgrounds are more likely to have experienced diverse communication opportunities that facilitate language development and communication practice. Similarly, students who have participated in workplace-related experiences gain exposure to authentic workplace discourse and communication expectations, enabling them to develop greater familiarity with professional communication environments. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) as well as Chan (2021) emphasised the importance of experiential and workplace-based learning in strengthening employability and workplace communication development.

Self-perceived English proficiency may further influence workplace communication readiness because individuals who believe they possess adequate language abilities are more likely to feel prepared to communicate in professional contexts. Such perceptions may contribute to greater communication confidence and increased willingness to participate in workplace interactions. Studies examining employability and workplace communication consistently suggest that communication preparedness is influenced by both actual and perceived communication capabilities.

Although previous studies have investigated these factors independently, limited research has examined their combined relationship with workplace English communication readiness from the perspective of undergraduates. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate whether English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency are significantly related to workplace English communication readiness among undergraduates. In doing so, the study aims to contribute empirical evidence that may help higher education institutions strengthen workplace communication preparation and graduate employability initiatives

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design to examine undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to measure undergraduates' levels of workplace English communication readiness and confidence, as well as examine the relationship between selected influencing factors and readiness using numerical data. Quantitative research is particularly suitable when researchers aim to describe patterns, measure variables, and investigate relationships among variables through statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The study adopted a cross-sectional design whereby data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. Cross-sectional surveys are widely used in educational and social science research because they enable researchers to collect data efficiently from a target population and examine existing conditions, perceptions, and relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment (Fraenkel et al., 2022). Given that the present study aimed to assess undergraduates' current perceptions of workplace English communication readiness, confidence, and related influencing factors, a cross-sectional survey design was deemed appropriate.

Participants and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in a local university. A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit respondents who met the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers intentionally select participants who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

To ensure respondents were able to provide informed responses regarding workplace English communication, participants were required to fulfil the following inclusion criteria:

1. be currently enrolled as undergraduate students; and
2. have completed at least one English language course at the tertiary level.

A total of 70 undergraduate students participated in the study. Although relatively modest, the sample size was considered adequate for conducting descriptive statistical analyses and exploratory correlational analyses aimed at identifying relationships among variables within the study context (Fraenkel et al., 2022).

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to measure undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace English communication tasks, and factors influencing workplace communication readiness. The questionnaire was developed based on literature related to workplace English communication, graduate employability, workplace readiness, communication confidence, workplace exposure, English learning background, and self-perceived English proficiency (Chan, 2021; Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Ting et al., 2017; Zuraina Ali et al., 2025).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections.

Section A collected respondents' demographic information.

Section B measured undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication using ten items.

Section C assessed undergraduates' confidence in performing common workplace English communication tasks through task-based items reflecting typical workplace communication situations.

Section D examined factors influencing workplace English communication readiness, namely English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency.

Items in Sections B and D were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items in Section C were measured using a five-point confidence scale ranging from 1 (Not Confident at All) to 5 (Very Confident). Higher scores indicated higher levels of workplace communication readiness, communication confidence, or perceived strength of the influencing factors.

Reliability Analysis

Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, one of the most widely used indicators of internal consistency reliability in social science research (Taber, 2018).

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient based on the study dataset. All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above .80, indicating good to excellent internal consistency. According to Taber (2018), Cronbach's alpha values of .70 and above generally indicate acceptable reliability for educational and behavioural research instruments. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered sufficiently reliable for measuring the constructs investigated in this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Prior to participation, respondents were provided with information regarding the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, issues of confidentiality, and the anonymity of responses. Respondents were required to indicate their informed consent before proceeding with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire link was distributed electronically to eligible undergraduate students through appropriate communication channels. Data collection was conducted over a specified period, and all completed responses were screened to ensure completeness before being included in the final analysis. Responses containing substantial missing data were excluded from the dataset to maintain the quality and accuracy of the analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is widely used in educational and social science research for managing, analysing, and reporting quantitative data due to its efficiency in performing descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

To address

Research Objective 1 (RO1) and **Research Objective 2 (RO2)**, descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed. The mean scores were used to determine the levels of undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication and their confidence in performing workplace English communication tasks.

To address **Research Objective 3 (RO3)**, inferential statistical analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between English learning background, workplace exposure, self-perceived English proficiency, and workplace English communication readiness. Composite mean scores were first calculated for each construct before correlation analysis was performed.

Because the variables were measured using composite scores derived from multiple Likert-scale items and were treated as continuous data, **Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r)** was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables and

workplace English communication readiness. Statistical significance was determined at the .05 level ($p < .05$).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organised according to the research objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to determine the levels of workplace English communication readiness and confidence in performing workplace communication tasks. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships between English learning background, workplace exposure, self-perceived English proficiency, and workplace English communication readiness.

Respondents' Demographic Profile

A total of 70 undergraduate students participated in this study. The respondents consisted of both male and female students from different age groups, with most respondents aged between below 20 years and 25 years old. The respondents also reported varying levels of workplace exposure, including internship experience, part-time employment, both internship and part-time employment, and no workplace exposure. This diversity provided an appropriate sample for examining workplace English communication readiness and its related factors.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Table 4.1 presents the reliability coefficients obtained for each construct.

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace English Communication Readiness	10	.979
Workplace Communication Confidence	12	.970
English Learning Background	5	.849
Workplace Exposure	5	.924
Self-Perceived English Proficiency	5	.937

The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .849 to .979, indicating good to excellent internal consistency among the questionnaire items. Since all values exceeded the minimum recommended threshold of .70, the instrument was considered reliable for measuring the intended constructs.

Research Objective 1 To Determine the Level of Undergraduates' Readiness for Workplace English Communication descriptive statistics were computed to determine respondents' readiness for workplace English communication. Table 4.2 presents the mean scores for each readiness item.

Item-Level Analysis of Workplace English Communication Readiness

Item	Mean
I am ready to use English in professional workplace settings.	3.91
I can communicate effectively in English with colleagues at work.	3.84

I am prepared to participate in workplace discussions conducted in English.	3.87
I am able to understand work-related instructions given in English.	4.04
I am ready to handle workplace communication tasks in English independently.	3.87
I feel prepared to adapt my English use to different workplace situations.	3.84
I am ready to communicate with supervisors in English.	3.89
I am prepared to use appropriate workplace English etiquette.	3.97
I can manage work-related problems using English communication.	3.89
Overall, I consider myself ready for workplace English communication.	4.08

The findings show that respondents reported generally positive perceptions of their workplace English communication readiness. The highest mean score was recorded for the item "Overall, I consider myself ready for workplace English communication" ($M = 4.08$), followed by "I am able to understand work-related instructions given in English" ($M = 4.04$). The lowest mean scores were obtained for "I can communicate effectively in English with colleagues at work" and "I feel prepared to adapt my English use to different workplace situations" ($M = 3.84$). Nevertheless, all items recorded mean scores above 3.67, indicating a high level of readiness.

Overall Workplace English Communication Readiness

N	Mean	SD	Level
70	3.99	0.88	High

The overall mean score for workplace English communication readiness was 3.99 ($SD = 0.88$), indicating a high level of readiness among the respondents. This finding suggests that the respondents generally perceived themselves as prepared to communicate effectively in English within workplace settings.

Research Objective 2

Descriptive statistics were also calculated to determine respondents' confidence in performing various workplace English communication tasks.

Item-Level Analysis of Workplace English Communication Confidence

Item	Mean
Giving oral presentations in English	3.59
Participating in meetings conducted in English	3.94
Writing emails in English for work purposes	4.13
Responding to emails written in English	4.10
Speaking to supervisors in English	3.86
Communicating with colleagues in English	4.01

Communicating with clients or customers in English	3.89
Making phone calls in English	3.87
Explaining work-related ideas in English	3.95
Handling workplace discussions in English	3.99
Handling misunderstandings in English at the workplace	3.84
Using English in formal workplace situations	3.96

The highest mean score was recorded for "Writing emails in English for work purposes" ($M = 4.13$), followed by "Responding to emails written in English" ($M = 4.10$). Conversely, "Giving oral presentations in English" recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.59$). These findings suggest that respondents were generally more confident performing written workplace communication tasks than oral presentations.

Overall Confidence in Workplace English Communication Tasks

N	Mean	SD	Level
70	3.92	0.91	High

The overall mean score for workplace communication confidence was 3.92 ($SD = 0.91$), indicating a high level of confidence among the respondents in performing workplace English communication tasks.

Descriptive Statistics of Factors Influencing Workplace English Communication Readiness

To provide further insights into the factors examined in Research Objective 3, descriptive statistics were computed for English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency.

English Learning Background

Item	Mean
I have received sufficient English instruction throughout my education.	4.29
My previous English courses prepared me for workplace communication.	4.04
I have had many opportunities to practise English during my studies.	4.39
My English learning experiences have helped build my workplace communication skills.	4.23
I was exposed to English frequently in my earlier education.	4.25
Overall Mean	SD
4.24	0.75

The findings indicate that respondents generally reported positive English learning experiences. The highest mean score was recorded for having many opportunities to practise English during their studies ($M = 4.39$).

Workplace Exposure

Item	Mean
My workplace experience has improved my English communication skills.	3.89
I had opportunities to use English during my internship or part-time work.	3.94
Workplace exposure increased my confidence in using English.	4.00
I frequently communicated in English during my workplace experience.	3.91
My workplace required me to use English for communication.	3.84
Overall Mean	SD
3.92	0.92

Overall, respondents indicated positive workplace communication experiences, particularly in terms of increased confidence gained through workplace exposure.

Self-Perceived English Proficiency

Item	Mean
I consider my overall English proficiency to be good.	3.81
I am satisfied with my English speaking ability.	3.70
I am satisfied with my English writing ability.	3.70
I can understand spoken English in professional contexts.	3.79
I can express my ideas clearly in English.	3.69
Overall Mean	SD
3.74	0.80

The findings show that respondents generally perceived their English proficiency positively. However, the mean scores for self-perceived proficiency were lower than those recorded for English learning background and workplace exposure.

Research Objective 3

To Investigate the Relationship Between English Learning Background, Workplace Exposure, Self-Perceived English Proficiency, and Workplace English Communication Readiness

Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between English learning background, workplace exposure, self-perceived English proficiency, and workplace English communication readiness.

Pearson Correlation Between Influencing Factors and Workplace English Communication Readiness

Variable	r	p-value	Strength	Interpretation
English Learning Background	.373	.001	Moderate Positive	Significant
Workplace Exposure	.248	.038	Weak Positive	Significant
Self-Perceived English Proficiency	.438	< .001	Moderate Positive	Significant

Significance level: $p < .05$

The findings revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between English learning background and workplace English communication readiness ($r = .373$, $p = .001$). This suggests that respondents with richer English learning experiences tended to report higher levels of workplace communication readiness.

A weak positive but statistically significant relationship was found between workplace exposure and workplace English communication readiness ($r = .248$, $p = .038$). This indicates that respondents who had greater workplace exposure tended to demonstrate slightly higher levels of workplace communication readiness.

The results also revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between self-perceived English proficiency and workplace English communication readiness ($r = .438$, $p < .001$). Among the three factors examined, self-perceived English proficiency demonstrated the strongest relationship with workplace English communication readiness. This finding suggests that respondents who perceived themselves as more proficient users of English were generally more likely to report higher levels of workplace communication readiness.

Overall, the findings indicate that English learning background, workplace exposure, and self-perceived English proficiency were all significantly associated with workplace English communication readiness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Undergraduates' Readiness for Workplace English Communication

The findings revealed that undergraduates demonstrated a high level of workplace English communication readiness ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.88$). This finding suggests that respondents generally perceived themselves as prepared to communicate in English within workplace environments. Among the readiness items, respondents reported the highest level of agreement for the statement "Overall, I consider myself ready for workplace English communication" ($M = 4.08$), followed by their ability to understand work-related instructions given in English ($M = 4.04$).

The findings support the view that workplace communication readiness extends beyond language knowledge and includes individuals' perceptions of their ability to use English effectively in professional contexts. As discussed by Peersia et al. (2024), workplace readiness involves the extent to which graduates possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and attributes necessary to function successfully in professional environments. Similarly, Chan (2021) argued that graduates require not only linguistic competence but also preparedness to respond to authentic workplace communication demands.

The relatively high readiness scores may reflect the increasing emphasis placed on employability skills and communication development within higher education institutions. Consistent with Jackson and Bridgstock (2021), universities increasingly provide curricular, co-curricular, and experiential opportunities that help students develop communication skills relevant to future employment.

However, some readiness items recorded slightly lower mean scores, particularly those involving interaction with colleagues and adapting language use to different workplace situations. Although these scores remained within the high range, the findings suggest that students may feel less certain when workplace communication requires flexibility, interpersonal interaction, and spontaneous responses. This indicates that readiness may vary across different workplace communication contexts.

Undergraduates' Confidence in Workplace English Communication Tasks

The findings showed that respondents demonstrated a high overall level of confidence in workplace English communication tasks ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.91$). Nevertheless, notable differences were observed across communication tasks.

The highest confidence levels were reported for writing emails in English for work purposes ($M = 4.13$) and responding to emails written in English ($M = 4.10$). This suggests that respondents felt particularly comfortable performing written workplace communication tasks. A possible explanation is that contemporary students are highly accustomed to written digital communication through learning management systems, online learning platforms, email correspondence, and social media interactions.

These findings align with previous literature indicating that students often demonstrate greater confidence in written communication because such communication allows time for planning, revision, and self-correction before messages are transmitted. In contrast, workplace communication situations that require immediate responses often generate greater communication anxiety (Chan, 2021).

The lowest confidence level was reported for giving oral presentations in English ($M = 3.59$). Similarly, respondents reported comparatively lower confidence when communicating with clients, speaking to supervisors, handling misunderstandings, and making phone calls. These tasks share common features, namely spontaneous interaction, immediate language production, interpersonal pressure, and reduced opportunities for message planning.

The findings support Zuraina Ali et al. (2025), who reported that employers frequently value communication confidence, adaptability, and clarity in workplace interactions. Although respondents generally perceived themselves as ready for workplace communication, the results suggest that confidence in oral communication remains an area requiring further development. This observation further supports Ting et al. (2017), who argued that communication skills and English proficiency should be viewed as separate yet complementary dimensions of graduate employability.

Relationship Between English Learning Background and Workplace English Communication Readiness

The findings revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between English learning background and workplace English communication readiness ($r = .373$, $p = .001$). This indicates that respondents with stronger English learning backgrounds tended to report higher levels of workplace communication readiness.

The findings suggest that exposure to English throughout students' educational experiences contributes positively to workplace communication preparedness. Respondents generally reported that they had received sufficient English instruction, had numerous opportunities to practise English, and benefited from English learning experiences that developed workplace communication skills.

This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that language-learning experiences play an important role in shaping communication competence and communication confidence. Students who experience sustained English exposure throughout their educational journey are more likely to develop familiarity with English communication practices and become more comfortable using English in professional contexts (Chan, 2021).

The findings therefore support the argument that English learning background contributes to workplace communication readiness by providing students with the linguistic foundation and communication experiences necessary to engage in workplace interactions.

Relationship Between Workplace Exposure and Workplace English Communication Readiness

The findings showed a weak positive but statistically significant relationship between workplace exposure and workplace English communication readiness ($r = .248$, $p = .038$). Although significant, workplace exposure recorded the weakest relationship among the three factors examined.

A possible explanation is that respondents experienced varying levels of workplace engagement. While some students participated in internships or part-time employment that required frequent English communication, others reported limited workplace exposure or workplace environments where English was not consistently required. Consequently, workplace experiences may not have contributed equally to all respondents' communication development.

Nevertheless, the significant relationship supports previous research emphasising the value of experiential learning and workplace-based experiences. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) highlighted the role of internships, work-integrated learning, and professional experiences in developing employability skills and workplace competence. Similarly, Chan (2021) argued that authentic workplace experiences enable students to understand workplace discourse, develop communication strategies, and identify communication challenges more effectively.

Therefore, although workplace exposure was not the strongest predictor of readiness, it remains an important contributor to workplace communication development.

Relationship Between Self-Perceived English Proficiency and Workplace English Communication Readiness

Among the three independent variables, self-perceived English proficiency demonstrated the strongest relationship with workplace English communication readiness ($r = .438$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that students who perceived themselves as more proficient users of English also tended to report higher levels of workplace communication readiness.

The result suggests that students' perceptions of their own language abilities influence how prepared they feel when approaching workplace communication demands. Individuals who believe they possess adequate English proficiency may be more willing to participate in discussions, communicate with supervisors, express ideas, and perform workplace communication tasks confidently. This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that communication behaviour is often influenced by individuals' perceptions of competence rather than objective ability alone. Li and Zhang (2021) emphasised that English proficiency supports effective communication across reading, writing, listening, and speaking domains, while Zuraina Ali et al. (2025) noted that employers frequently associate effective workplace communication with adaptability, confidence, and functional language use. Consequently, students who perceive themselves as proficient users of English are likely to feel more comfortable handling workplace communication demands.

The findings therefore suggest that self-perceived proficiency functions not only as a linguistic factor but also as a

psychological factor influencing workplace communication readiness.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Higher Education Institutions

The findings suggest that higher education institutions should continue strengthening workplace

communication development initiatives. While students generally demonstrated high readiness and confidence, lower confidence in oral communication tasks indicates a need for increased exposure to authentic workplace communication situations. Universities may therefore benefit from integrating workplace simulations, presentations, meetings, and professional interaction activities into academic programmes.

Implications for English Language Educators

The findings indicate that language educators should place greater emphasis on spoken workplace communication. Particular attention should be given to presentation skills, workplace discussions, negotiation, professional interactions, and communication under pressure. Classroom activities that replicate workplace communication situations may help bridge the gap between language knowledge and communication performance.

Implications for Industry and Employers

The significant relationship between workplace exposure and communication readiness highlights the importance of internships, industrial training, and work-based learning opportunities. Employers can contribute to graduate preparedness by involving students in authentic communication tasks and providing opportunities to communicate in English within professional contexts.

Implications for Curriculum Development

Curriculum designers should consider embedding workplace communication outcomes across different disciplines rather than confining communication development to standalone English courses. Cross-disciplinary communication activities may provide students with greater opportunities to develop communication skills relevant to their future professions.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved only 70 undergraduate students from a single institutional context. The study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, meaning the findings reflect respondents' perceptions rather than objective measures of workplace communication ability. Third, the cross-sectional design captured respondents' perceptions at a single point in time and therefore could not examine changes in workplace communication readiness over time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may employ larger and more diverse samples to improve the findings. Researchers may also consider including objective measures of English proficiency to complement self-perceived assessments. Qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus group discussions could provide deeper insights into students' workplace communication experiences and perceived challenges. In addition, future studies may investigate workplace communication readiness across different academic disciplines, institutions, or employment sectors.

CONCLUSION

This study examined undergraduates' readiness for workplace English communication, their confidence in performing workplace communication tasks, and the factors associated with such readiness. The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated high levels of workplace English communication readiness and confidence. Self-perceived English proficiency emerged as the strongest factor associated with workplace communication readiness, followed by English learning background and workplace exposure. Although students generally felt ready to communicate in workplace settings, lower confidence in oral communication tasks suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on developing spoken workplace communication skills. Overall, the findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on workplace English

communication readiness and provide useful insights for educators, institutions, and policymakers seeking to enhance graduate employability and workplace preparedness.

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