

Communication Barriers in the Workplace from the Employers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies demonstrate that employers face various communication problems or language barriers with foreign workers, which can affect the productivity and safety of workers. The issue of communication barriers worsens when previous studies have found that foreign workers lack confidence in communicating, lack knowledge, do not understand instructions or tasks given, and have poor time management to complete tasks. In relation to this, this study seeks to investigate the issue of communication barriers involving foreign workers with employers in the workplace. This study aims to identify the variables that influence the use of language among foreign workers and employers and analyze the relationship between the variables and communication barriers. Based on the questionnaire, this study successfully obtained 50 respondents, representing employers in the manufacturing and service sectors in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor. The respondents consisted of managers, engineers, executives, supervisors and production leaders. The data was analyzed statistically descriptively. The results show that two variables, namely perception and experience factors are positively and significantly related to the issue of communication barriers in the workplace. While the other five variables, namely communication problems, education, safety, discrimination and work instructions recorded a moderate mean score with the aspect of communication barriers. This study has contributed to the employer's view of foreign workers in Malaysia from the aspect of communication barriers. The findings of this study can help employers to improve effective communication with foreign workers in various sectors in Malaysia. In this way, work productivity and marketability can be improved among foreign workers.

Keywords: communication barrier, foreign worker, language use, variables, employer

INTRODUCTION

The employment sector in Malaysia shows a high dependency on foreign workers. As of 2023, the number of foreign workers in Malaysia was estimated at 2.7 million. The top five countries supplying workers to Malaysia are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Myanmar, and India. Foreign workers in Malaysia can be divided into two categories: expatriate workers (those with high-level skills in technical, professional, and managerial fields), and lower-level workers, i.e., unskilled workers involved in various sectors such as construction, manufacturing, services, plantations, agriculture, as well as mining and quarrying (Intan Suria & Sity, 2016). The number of skilled workers in Malaysia is approximately 10% (Rohani Abdul Rahim et al., 2019). This means the vast majority—about 90%—of foreign workers in Malaysia are unskilled or lack work experience (Azreen et al., 2022). Therefore, this study focuses on unskilled workers, particularly those employed in the manufacturing and service sectors in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

Numerous studies have claimed that the influx of foreign workers has led to various social, economic, and security challenges. Additionally, the workplace environment affects the productivity of sectors and companies, particularly those employing foreign workers (Siti Hanisah & Nurazwa, 2020). Other issues related to labour

productivity include worker error rates, cooperation with other workers, absenteeism, and the duration of tasks, all of which contribute to decreased productivity in the manufacturing industry (Mutia & Sikalieh, 2014). Furthermore, studies have found that employers face various communication problems or language barriers with foreign workers, which can affect productivity and worker safety. For instance, Hamzah Abdul Rahman, Chen Wang, Lincoln C. Wood, and Shu Fung Low (2012), Ananthan (2014), Muhammad Izzuddin (2015), Muhamad Farhan Rosli and Kharizam Ismail (2018), Salleh et al. (2021), Khairul Firdaus, Lim, and Siti Aishah (2021), and Nurhana, Nik Hasnaa, and Asnul (2023) have reported language barrier issues among foreign workers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Nepal in the construction and agricultural sectors. Other research on language barriers in the workplace has been conducted by Ahmad Arifin and Shehda (2018), as well as Farhana and Nur Sabrina (2019). Past findings indicate that communication barriers have negatively affected productivity in construction and agriculture, particularly in terms of time, cost, and work quality. The findings also highlight misunderstandings due to cultural factors and low levels of language proficiency. These communication barriers among foreign workers have impacted productivity and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), particularly in construction and manufacturing sectors. As Ananthan (2014) stated, “The language barrier consequently leads to other problems such as delay and safety matters.”

Moreover, most previous studies have focused mainly on foreign workers as research subjects. In reality, communication problems in the workplace not only involve foreign workers but also employers, who are the ones giving work instructions. Thus, this study aims to examine the issue of communication barriers from the employers' perspective. This is because communication issues should involve both employers and employees to provide more comprehensive picture. In this regard, Ali Mohamed (as cited in Salleh et al., 2021) emphasized that, “All employees must be treated equally and with dignity, whether they are foreigners or locals, and all forms of mistreatments are prohibited by international and domestic legislation.” In other words, this statement suggests that all workers should be treated fairly, regardless of whether they are foreign or local. Therefore, this study seeks to uncover employers' perspectives on communication barriers involving foreign workers. Specifically, the study aims to identify variables that influence effective language use in the workplace and analyze the relationship between these variables and communication barriers. The variables studied cover various aspects such as communication problems, perceptions, experience, education, and workplace safety.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies involving employers have been conducted in various contexts, such as communication barriers, perception, productivity impacts, education level, workplace and safety. For example, communication barriers become more problematic when studies have found that foreign workers often lack communication confidence, have limited knowledge, do not understand instructions or assigned tasks, and demonstrate poor time management in completing their duties. Additionally, Nurhana, Nik Hasnaa, and Asnul (2023) reported that communication barriers are a major issue among foreign workers in Malaysia. Their understanding of Malay is weak, limited to only basic daily vocabulary for work purposes. This makes it difficult for them to understand Occupational Safety and Health concepts due to their low proficiency in the local language. Wong and Rashad (2015:2) also stated a similar issue: “Language barrier has been a problem amongst foreign workers in the construction industry in Malaysia, especially between the supervisors and the foreign labourers in the construction site.” They added that foreign workers often come from underdeveloped countries and work in Malaysia to improve their standard of living. However, language often becomes a major obstacle as they are not required to learn Malay and typically have low proficiency in English. In this regard, Khairul Firdaus, Lim, and Siti Aisyah (2021) noted that communication barriers among foreign workers are caused by low confidence in communication, lack of knowledge, and weak time management in completing tasks in the required language. Furthermore, in some situations, employers are forced to use nonverbal and sign language to communicate with foreign workers. According to Muhammad Izzuddin (2015), sign language has limitations because construction procedures are quite complex and require detailed explanations for each scope of work. Therefore, sign language alone cannot fully resolve the communication problem among foreign workers.

Next, there are several studies on employers' perceptions of foreign workers. For example, Shiau et al. (2018) examined employers' perceptions of the importance of employability skills in the manufacturing industry. A total of 182 employers from the manufacturing industry in Batu Pahat, Johor Bharu were randomly selected.

Data were obtained through questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. The results showed that communication skills were deemed the most important by employers. The independent variables in the study were gender, company size, and type of manufacturing sector, while the dependent variable focused on the perceived importance of employability skills in the sector. The findings revealed that perceptions of employability skill importance were not significant based on employer gender or sector type. However, company size showed a significant relationship. This study indicated that employers must understand the needs and demands of the manufacturing industry and improve their skills before entering the job market. Another study was conducted by Dehghanpour Farashah and Bloomquist (2019) to identify key qualifications among foreign workers from the employers' perspective and to investigate factors influencing employer perceptions. This study contributed to understanding that the hiring of foreign workers is not only driven by current needs and qualifications but also by language fluency and the ability to adapt to the local socio-cultural environment and lifestyle. There was also a report on employers' perceptions of foreign workers conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2006. Data were collected through interviews with 35 participants on their experiences with foreign workers from both positive and negative aspects. The sectors involved included environmental services, engineering and manufacturing, construction and trade, transportation, retail sales, hospitality and tourism, public sector, and finance and telecommunications. The results showed that employer attitudes toward foreign workers ranged from negative to very positive. Most employers held a neutral stance on hiring foreign workers due to their cost-effectiveness as labour. The main advantages of hiring foreign workers over locals were that foreign workers were perceived as physically stronger and having a more positive attitude. The study identified three types of foreign workers: unskilled workers intending to remain unskilled, skilled workers temporarily working in unskilled positions while improving their English for better job opportunities, and skilled workers who were employed in roles that matched their qualifications to fill job vacancies in the UK.

Another study on the impact of hiring foreign workers on organizations was conducted by Nur'ain et al. (2017), focusing on Cadbury Confectionery Malaysia. The study aimed to identify factors influencing the hiring of foreign workers and the implications for organizational productivity. The findings revealed that availability, education level, and workplace environment had a positive relationship with organizational productivity. In contrast, acceptance of job terms showed a negative relationship. The researchers suggested that future studies should explore other factors that might influence productivity, such as work experience and wage levels in other industrial sectors.

A related study on the relationship between foreign worker performance and their education level and workplace situation was conducted by Yap and Nurazwa Ahmad (2021). The study aimed to enhance understanding of foreign workers and their working capabilities or skills. The researchers suggested that, to improve organizational performance, only workers who are qualified in terms of education and skills should be hired. The study gathered data from 364 respondents in the manufacturing sector in Johor Bharu. The findings indicated that the workplace environment was the main factor influencing foreign worker performance, while education level did not show a significant relationship with job performance. In conclusion, the main factors influencing job performance were workplace environment, readiness, and the background of foreign workers.

A more recent study by Azreen et al. (2022) involved nine site supervisors with experience working with foreign workers in the construction sector. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The questions focused on foreign worker practices at the workplace, safety perceptions, non-compliance, and reasons for not adhering to safety procedures. The results showed that foreign workers considered safety regulations impractical. They often complained that the safety equipment was uncomfortable and unsafe to use at work. Almost all informants reported that foreign workers were stubborn and did not follow safety rules. Foreign workers were also described as arrogant and overly confident about the work environment. They claimed to be used to performing tasks easily without injuries, leading them to disregard workplace safety.

Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that issues involving foreign workers encompass various factors such as employability, skills, environment, education level, productivity, language proficiency, and safety. However, not many studies have focused on communication barriers among foreign workers from the employers' perspective. This study aims to explore employers' views or perceptions regarding communication barriers in the workplace among foreign workers, based on various variables.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a questionnaire survey method to gather information regarding language use in the workplace between employers and foreign workers. The questionnaire approach enables researchers to collect large amounts of data efficiently, save time, and apply it in diverse contexts (Schleef, 2014:43). The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Respondents

In the context of employment, there are two important components: non-management employees and management employees. Non-management employees include positions such as production specialists, clerks, general workers, and so on, while the rest fall under the category of management-level employees (Zafir & Fazilah, 2007). This study focused on management-level employees. In this study, the management level is categorized as "employers," which includes both the principal employer and immediate employer (Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994). The principal employer refers to the owner, developer, contractor, or subcontractor. Meanwhile, the immediate employer refers to labor contractors in the private sector and department heads in the public sector. In other words, immediate employers are employed by or work under the principal employer. In this context, the immediate employer functions as a supervisor, who oversees general workers, typically comprising both local and foreign workers. Employers may include managers, assistant managers, engineers, executives, supervisors, and team leaders.

This study collected responses from 50 immediate employers from various sectors: 29 from the manufacturing sector and 21 from the services sector. The job categories of the respondents across both sectors are as follows:

Table 1 Respondents sector and position

Sector	Position
Manufacturing	managers, assistant managers, engineers, executives, supervisors, and team leaders
Services	group leader, operations executive, and production leader

Table 1 above shows that the respondents representing employers held various positions such as managers, engineers, executives, supervisors, and team leaders. In general, all respondents were responsible for supervising foreign workers in the workplace.

Questionnaire

The set of research questionnaires was divided into two sections, namely Section A: Respondent Demographics and Section B: Language Use in the Workplace. The respondent demographics consist of several variables, namely gender, age, ethnicity, education level, sector, company name, and position. Meanwhile, Section B focuses on questions related to language use between employers and foreign workers in the workplace. The questions in this section are divided into seven workplace language-use aspects, namely: communication barriers, the importance of education, safety, experience and language improvement, discrimination, instructions, and perception. Each aspect contains 5 questions, bringing the total to 35 questions. The responses are based on the Likert scale, which is commonly used, especially in language attitude studies, due to its simplicity and accessibility to respondents (Chengchen & Li, 2022).

The data collection process was carried out by distributing the questionnaire in the form of a QR code to be scanned by the respondents. The researcher took the initiative to generate a QR code from a Google Form link so that the questionnaire could be accessed quickly and easily. The distribution of the QR code to respondents was carried out over a three-week period in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor. This method was used to make it easier for respondents to answer the questionnaire at any time without disrupting their working hours. The use of Google Form enabled respondents to complete the questionnaire conveniently using smartphones while ensuring systematic data collection.

All collected data were entered into Excel for coding and classification. The scoring method according to the Likert scale was four points: *Disagree*, *Somewhat Disagree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*. The “Uncertain” scale was excluded to avoid neutral or vague answers from respondents (Mohammad Fadzeli & Mohammed Azlan, 2024). Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 29.0 (IBM) software. This software was used to examine and analyze the respondents’ answer choices through percentage frequency values and mean scores. These values were calculated through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The study hypothesizes a significant relationship between the variables and the aspect of communication barriers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of research findings draws on respondent demographics and aspects of language use between employers and foreign workers. The aspects of language use are divided into three categories, namely: verbal communication, written communication, and work productivity. Each category, for example, verbal communication, consists of several variables such as communication barriers, discrimination, perception, and instructions. The category of written communication is represented by a single variable, which is safety. Meanwhile, work productivity involves the variables of education and work experience.

Respondent Demographics

The following table presents the distribution of respondents based on the identified variables.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents

Respondent Demographics	Variables	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	34	68
	Female	16	32
Age	20-39 years old	47	94
	40-59 years old	2	4
	60 years and above	1	2
Ethnic	Malay	54	90
	Chinese	2	4
	Indian	3	6
Level of Education	Primary school	1	2
	Secondary school	8	16
	University	41	82
Sector	Services	21	42
	Manufacturing	29	58
Total		50	100

Male respondents exceeded females, with a ratio of 34:16 (34 males to 16 females). Respondents aged between 20-39 were the most involved in this study, totaling 47 people (94%). The remaining two respondents were aged 40-59 and one respondent was aged 60 and above. The ethnicity category showed that the Malay group had the highest number, with 54 respondents (90%), followed by the Chinese (2 people) and Indian (1 person). Next, the majority of respondents in this study were university graduates, totaling 41 people (82%), while 8 were secondary school graduates and one was a primary school graduate. The employment sector showed that workers from manufacturing were more numerous compared to service workers, with a ratio of 29:21. Among the

manufacturing sectors involved in this study were Top Glove, Samsung, Smarttex, TNB, and Intel, located in the Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor area. Meanwhile, the service sector was represented by Mydin, Shopee, Jakel, and Petron.

Social Variables in the Workplace

The following is a descriptive statistical analysis of communication barriers in the workplace from the employers' perspective. The analysis is divided into three components: variables, mean scores, and levels.

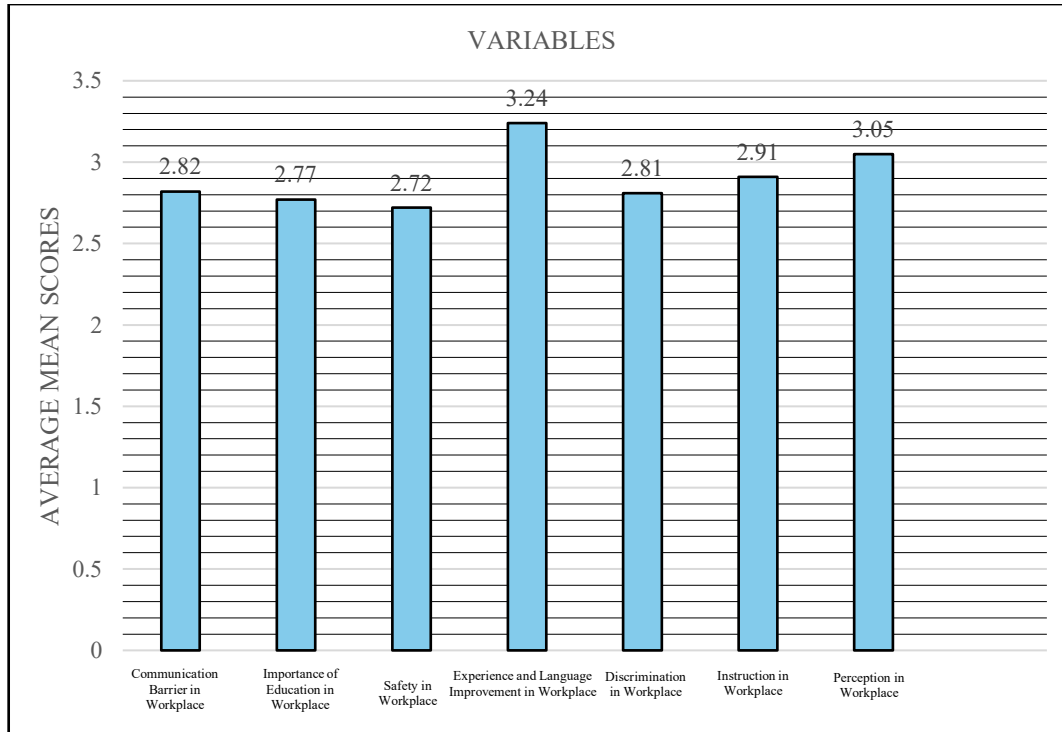


Figure 1 Social variables in the workplace

Figure 1 shows that two variables recorded high mean scores, namely language perception (3.05) and experience and language improvement factor (3.24). Meanwhile, five other variables were classified at a moderate level, namely communication barriers (2.82), education factor (2.77), safety factor (2.72), discrimination factor (2.81), and instructions (2.91). This indicates that the majority of respondents agree that perception and experience are important factors that can influence communication barriers in the workplace.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the use of spoken or verbal language between employers and foreign workers. As previously explained, there are four variables related to oral communication, namely communication problems, discrimination, instructions, and perception.

Table 3 Communication barriers

No.	Communication Barriers in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Foreign workers have limited understanding of the Malay language.	50	2.92
2	Foreign workers communicate less with supervisors/employers.	50	2.70
3	Supervisors/employers find it difficult to give instructions in Malay to foreign workers.	50	2.68
4	Misunderstandings often occur between supervisors/employers and foreign workers at the workplace.	50	2.86

5	Communication problems occur due to cultural factors.	50	2.94
	Valid N (listwise)	50	2.82

Communication barriers are one of the factors that affect work productivity. This is as reported by several previous researchers, such as Ananthan (2014), Muhammad Izzuddin (2015), Muhamad Farhan and Kharizam Ismail (2018), Salleh et al. (2021), Khairul Firdaus, Lim and Siti Aishah (2021), and Nurhana, Nik Hasnaa and Asnul (2023). The findings show a similar result, where the mean scores for all questions in the table above recorded a moderate level. There were two questions that recorded scores above 2.92, namely ‘Foreign workers have limited understanding of Malay’ and ‘Communication problems occur due to cultural factors. These two questions indicate that communication barriers occur because foreign workers have limited understanding of the Malay language due to cultural factors. Employers also agreed that foreign workers communicate less, find it difficult to give instructions in Malay, and misunderstandings frequently occur regarding work-related matters.

Table 4 Discrimination

No.	Language Discrimination in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Supervisors/employers prefer to assign tasks in Malay to foreign workers.	50	3.12
2	Supervisors/employers prefer to assign tasks in English to foreign workers.	50	2.56
3	Supervisors/employers prefer to assign tasks (scope of work) to local workers rather than foreign workers.	50	2.96
4	Supervisors/employers prefer to assign tasks (scope of work) to foreign workers rather than local workers.	50	2.48
5	Supervisors/employers assign tasks according to the language proficiency of foreign workers.	50	2.92
	Valid N (listwise)	50	2.81

Generally, discrimination is defined as the unfair treatment of individuals (workers) based on specific characteristics such as ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs (Migrants and Discriminations in the UK, 2020). In the context of employment, a study conducted by Zainal et al. (2016) found that discrimination against foreign workers occurs both directly and through public perception. For example, direct discrimination involves ineffective legislation, authority, and human trafficking. Meanwhile, perception-based discrimination arises from claims that foreign workers contribute to increased crime rates in Malaysia. The study by Nurul Azita, Norazah, and Abdul Khalim (2012) found that communication barriers in the construction sector occur due to difficulty in understanding work instructions, safety regulations, and safety signs or warnings at the workplace. Findings by Salleh et al. (2021) also showed that communication barriers, discrimination, and miscommunication are significantly correlated with productivity among foreign workers. This study, however, attempts to identify discrimination by employers against foreign workers when assigning tasks at the workplace. Table 4 presents the existence of discrimination related to language barriers. The first two questions refer to the tendency of supervisors or employers to assign tasks in either Malay or English. The results clearly show that respondents were more inclined to use Malay, with a score of 3.12 compared to 2.56. The following questions concern the preference between local and foreign workers in the context of task instructions. The majority of respondents preferred local workers over foreign workers. This is due to the fact that foreign workers have difficulty or are unable to understand work instructions because of their weak proficiency in Malay or English. The findings show that the scope of work is influenced by the level of language proficiency of foreign workers. The better their language skills, the more extensive the work scope they receive.

Furthermore, previous studies have proven the existence of communication barriers between employers and foreign workers, particularly in relation to giving instructions. This can lead to safety and productivity implications. Therefore, it is crucial for foreign workers to master the local language in order to overcome

communication barriers. In line with the setting of this study — the workplace — the questions were designed to examine the tendency of employers to give instructions in either Malay or English. The findings in Table 5 reveal that employers are more inclined to give instructions in Malay, with a score of 3.06. In contrast, instructions in English recorded only 2.58. Consistent with this, employers agreed that instructions in Malay are easier to understand, with a score of 3.16, while instructions in English were found to be difficult for foreign workers to understand, recording a score of 2.64. In terms of language choice, employers were more likely to use colloquial language, which is easier for foreign workers to understand. These findings indicate that the Malay language is more suitable for use in the workplace, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Table 5 Work instructions

No.	Instructions in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Supervisors/employers give more instructions in Malay at the workplace.	50	3.06
2	Supervisors/employers give more instructions in English at the workplace.	50	2.58
3	Instructions in Malay are easier for foreign workers to understand.	50	3.16
4	Instructions in English are easier for foreign workers to understand.	50	2.64
5	Supervisors/employers use colloquial language (everyday language) with foreign workers.	50	3.10
	Valid N (listwise)	50	2.91

A study on employers' perceptions or attitudes toward foreign workers was conducted by Dehghanpour Farashah and Blomquist (2019). The purpose of this study was to obtain statistical evidence on the factors influencing employers' perceptions of foreign workers. The findings revealed that employers considered foreign workers' commitment to the country they work in to be more important than their skills, level of education, or language proficiency.

In the context of this study, employers' perceptions were measured based on the language preferences used in the workplace. Table 6 shows that three questions recorded high scores, exceeding 3.0. All of these questions indicate that the Malay language is more suitable for communication with foreign workers and that employers tend to prefer using Malay over English. In fact, many employers agreed that the longer foreign workers stay in Malaysia, the better their Malay language proficiency becomes.

Table 6 Perceptions

No.	Perceptions in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	English language is more suitable to use with foreign workers in the workplace.	50	2.60
2	Malay language is more suitable to use with foreign workers in the workplace.	50	3.12
3	The longer foreign workers reside in Malaysia, the more fluent they become in using Malay language.	50	3.60
4	Supervisors/employers often use Malay to communicate with foreign workers.	50	3.22
5	Foreign workers often use English to communicate with their supervisors/employers.	50	2.70
	Valid N (listwise)	50	3.05

Written Communication

Written communication refers to the use of notices or signboards in written form at the workplace. In this regard, studies have reported that foreign workers in the construction sector often face safety risks. Shepherd et al. (2021) stated that existing research in the United States has identified several challenges faced by foreign workers in the construction sector, including an unpleasant work environment, cultural differences, the role of language, and a lack of safety training. In relation to this, the present study discusses safety issues in terms of the display of safety notices and emergency training at the workplace. Table 7 shows that safety notices are more frequently written in English compared to Malay, with a mean score of 2.98. Employers also believe that safety notices in English are easier to understand than those in Malay. This response is consistent with emergency training instructions, where English-language instructions are also considered easier to comprehend than Malay. These findings suggest that language use does not pose a significant issue concerning workplace safety. Moreover, English remains the dominant language used in the context of notices and safety training at the workplace.

Table 7 Safety aspects

No.	Safety in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Safety signage/notices in Malay are easier for foreign workers to understand.	50	2.40
2	Foreign workers find it easier to understand safety signage/notices in English.	50	2.72
3	Signboards/notices/instructions are more often written in English than Malay.	50	2.98
4	Foreign workers easily understand instructions in Malay during fire/emergency drills.	50	2.64
5	Foreign workers easily understand instructions in English during fire/emergency drills.	50	2.86
	Valid N (listwise)	50	2.86

Work Productivity

Many past studies have claimed that language and work productivity among foreign workers is an important issue, especially in the construction sector. One of the factors that can influence work productivity is the education level of foreign workers. Generally, the manufacturing sector does not require a high level of education, particularly for operator positions. However, most local workers tend to be selective about jobs that match their education level (Mohd Arif Marhani et al., 2012). Consequently, this has led employers in the manufacturing and construction sectors to hire unskilled foreign workers to fill these positions (Nur'ain et al., 2017). In another study, Nurhafiffi and Rahimi (2023) suggested several strategies to improve the skills of foreign workers in the construction sector, namely education level, training, and mentoring.

Table 8 Education

No.	Education in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Most foreign workers cannot read.	50	2.92
2	The low education level of foreign workers makes it difficult for them to learn the local language.	50	2.88
3	Supervisors/employers will promote foreign workers if they have a high level of education.	50	2.70

4	Supervisors/employers are more inclined to hire foreign workers with higher education.	50	2.34
5	Supervisors/employers need to provide basic Malay language learning modules to improve the language skills of foreign workers.	50	3.00
	Valid N (listwise)	50	2.77

The data in Table 8 shows that the majority of study respondents agree that most foreign workers cannot read and have a low level of education, with scores ranging between 2.88 and 2.92. Generally, this study found that education level is not an issue in the service and manufacturing sectors because promotions are not influenced by workers' education levels. However, many respondents agreed that basic Malay language learning modules should be provided to foreign workers.

Next, an equally important aspect in the context of employment is work experience. According to a report by the Ministry of Human Resources, the majority of foreign workers in Malaysia have no prior work experience (Azreen et al., 2022). Based on Table 9, the findings of this study show that most respondents agree that foreign workers are not given formal training, either in their home countries or in Malaysia. In this regard, most respondents agree that foreign workers should be provided with job-related training. In the context of language use, the majority of respondents agree that proficiency or skills in Malay can enhance the work experience of foreign workers. Overall, almost all questions regarding the aspect of workplace experience recorded scores above 3.0. This suggests that mastery of the local language has an impact on or influences a person's work skills.

Table 9 Work experience

No.	Experience in the Workplace	N	Mean
1	Foreign workers do not receive formal job training either in their own country or in Malaysia.	50	3.02
2	Foreign workers need to be given formal job training either in their own country or in Malaysia.	50	3.42
3	Foreign workers' experience is influenced by limited access to learning the Malay language.	50	2.92
4	Work experience among foreign workers affects their fluency in Malay.	50	3.32
5	Attending Malay language classes can improve work skills.	50	3.52
	Valid N (listwise)	50	3.24

Correlation

The following table displays the correlation relationships that exist between variables and various aspects of language use in the workplace.

Table 10 Correlation

Social Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IEW	1						
SW	.020	1					
ELIW	.245	.426**	1				
DW	.256	.626**	.531**	1			

IW	-.042	.698**	.408**	.691**	1		
PW	-.035	.564**	.399**	.525**	.725**	1	
CBW	.455**	.112	.276	.275	-.053	-.026	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

IEW: Importance of Education in the Workplace

SW: Safety in the Workplace

ELIW: Experience and Language Improvement in the Workplace

DW: Discrimination in the Workplace

IW: Instructions in the Workplace

PW: Perceptions in the Workplace

CBW: Communication Barriers in the Workplace

Based on the table above, the correlation analysis between the importance of education in the workplace and communication barriers in the workplace shows a Pearson correlation coefficient value of $r = .455$. This value indicates a statistically significant positive relationship at the significance level of $p < 0.01$. Therefore, the greater the emphasis placed on the aspect of education in the workplace, the lower the communication barriers experienced among workers in the workplace. This relationship suggests that education in the workplace can help improve understanding, communication skills, and cooperation among workers. Thus, these two variables have a positive relationship with each other. However, other variables such as safety in the workplace, experience and language improvement, discrimination in the workplace, instructions in the workplace, and perceptions in the workplace do not show a significant relationship because the p-values obtained exceed 0.01, indicating no relationship with communication barriers in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to issues related to communication barriers in the workplace. As previously stated, most past studies in Malaysia have focused only on language problems among foreign workers. This study, however, attempts to explore communication barrier issues involving foreign workers from the employers' perspective. The study has shown quantitative evidence that the aspect of education has a positive relationship and can affect the issue of communication barriers in the workplace. However, other aspects are also significant in the communication problems involving employers and foreign workers in the manufacturing and service sectors, including safety, experience, perception, and discrimination. To improve work productivity and the employability of foreign workers, further studies should be conducted in other sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and plantations so that communication barrier issues can be addressed more effectively. Indeed, most foreign workers consider proficiency in Malay or English to be unimportant because they only perform repetitive labour jobs, which do not require a high level of language skills. However, this perception is inaccurate because many studies have shown that without a good understanding of a language, it can affect safety, productivity, and time management aspects. In this regard, the government needs to establish language policies suitable to the level or ability of foreign workers so that communication barrier issues in the workplace can be resolved more effectively.

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