Helping Non-English Speakers Speak English in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Technology, globalization and internationalization of organizations have made it easier for the modern labor force, which is one core factor of production, to exhibit all features of mobility. Consequently, employers today are increasingly relying on employees from multicultural backgrounds to fill diverse positions in the organizations. Language differences are among the features that characterize the cultural diversity in these organizations. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that majority of the employees absorbed into many workforces have limited language proficiency, a skill that is considered critical in determining the success of any operation in the competitive and product-intensive nature of the modern markets. The discussion confirms that programs aimed at proving English proficiency lessons to the non-English speakers in the workplace are insufficient in the absence of supportive organizational culture and inclusivity of the lesson beneficiaries in the decision regarding the choice of the best model of teaching or training. This paper explores the mechanisms through which the non-English speaking employees can be helped in the workplace. The aim of the paper is to provide a consortium of strategies that employers can use in facilitating the inclusion of non-English speakers in the workplace. The solutions offered in this paper are developed from the challenges presented to the non-native English-speaking employees in the workplace.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Diversity, Language, Learning english, Non-native english speakers.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern business environment has transformed drastically, as competition and diversity in consumer demands continue to characterize the supply and demand forces in various industries. As such, organizations have resorted to capitalizing on globalization through internationalization of their activities and processes (Chen and Mujtaba, 2007; Udechukwu and Mujtaba, 2007; Khilji *et al.*, 2014; Huang *et al.*, 2015; Cavico *et al.*, 2016; Mujtaba and Johnson, 2016). Besides, Ordoñez and Tennyson (2017) explain that globalization has enhanced the movement of labor across the vast geography of the world. As such, diversity is an inevitable feature in the workforce of majority of the competitive organizations.

The practice of imposing a particular language on employees within the workplace has been outlawed, as there is no legitimate reason that proportionately justifies the advantages that accrue from imposing such languages for the employees. Discriminatory language practices within the workplace have for a long time discouraged employees from expressing their ideas (Riccucci, 2002). With consideration of the levels of English that may be required for different positions within the workplace, many organizations have adopted English learning lessons as a solution to the linguistic challenges presented to non-native English speakers. Training remains a pivotal pillar in the efforts to incorporate the linguistic minorities within the workplace (Udechukwu and Mujtaba, 2007; Mujtaba and Pohlman, 2010; Ping *et al.*, 2014; Huang *et al.*, 2015). Several learning techniques have since been developed to support this claim. However, the successful realization of the value added by the diversity brought by the non-English speakers in the workplace can only be realized upon the inclusion of effective people management. The English speaking employees and management play a central part in determining the speed with which non-English speakers cope with the day-to-day challenges of the workplace. Scott and Byrd (2012) emphasize that some organizations also grapple with the shortcomings of effective oral communication with workers who are none-native English speakers.

The outline above asserts the role of communication in the workforce. This paper attains its course from the outline, hence analyzing the strategies that organizations can employ to ensure that the non-English speakers can communicate in English in the workforce. While at it, the discussion includes the challenges faced by organizations in promoting the integration of non-English speakers in the workforce, further providing recommendations to enable organizations overcome these challenges. Despite the unique challenges presented by non-English speaking employees in the workforce, organizations that harness these challenges to their advantage through implementing strategies for ensuring that these employees speak English stand a better chance of realizing a competitive advantage in their respective markets.

1.1. Language Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity makes our life interesting and companies can use it toward their success on a global scale. With diversity on the rise, many professional are attempting to incorporate their skills into a workforce that will promote efficient communications skills that will complement their lack of English fluency (Udechukwu and Mujtaba, 2007; Mujtaba *et al.*, 2012; Cavico *et al.*, 2016). To date some companies have implemented English-only environment but companies must take special note and become more accommodating if they want to continue promoting an inclusive and diverse environment. Many managers may not know that companies can be held liable for discrimination if they are not careful with the implementations of English-only rules and policies in their departments or firms (Mujtaba *et al.*, 2012). Rules requiring employees to only speak English at all times can violate the law. To foster a trusting environment that encourages effective communication, employees must be notified when they are expected to speak English for the safe and efficient operation of the business (Workplace Fairness Staff, n/d). A person who feels they

are being discriminated could file a complaint in Canada or the United States if the reasoning is not bona-fide occupational requirement (Treash, 2009).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has been against an English-only workplace rule. English-only rules adopted by companies may institute national origin discrimination (Parliman and Shoeman, 1994). Companies must remember that not only is it important to remember that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Acts prohibits employers from refusing to hire, discharge or discriminate against individuals based on national origin and other factors, they can pose sanctions for discriminating based on the national origin or citizenship status of an employee (Gill, 1994).

The career development of a workforce with English as a second language face issues that include barriers to employment which include discrimination, the inability to access resources that will support their career path, language, religion, and cultural differences (Pope, 2012). What managers and companies have to take into consideration is that the diversity of the workforce will continue to increase as the "world is becoming smaller" every day. Not only will foreign speakers increase their additions to the American and English-speaking workforce, women will continue to work themselves into key positions within companies who value diversity (Udechukwu and Mujtaba, 2007; Mujtaba and Kaifi, 2010; Mujtaba and Pohlman, 2010; Murphy *et al.*, 2010; Mujtaba, 2013; Khilji *et al.*, 2014; Ping *et al.*, 2014). The Department of Labor estimates that by 2050, minorities will make up at least half of the population. Employers must create action plans and strategies that will not only foster diversity but also drive diversity to their advantage while taking the strengths, skills, and dedication of this workforce to implement the changes needed in their companies. Modern employees will socialize with those that speak the same first language as them as well as those who speak a very different language, and this is where companies can shift their diversity engagement efforts toward inclusion and teaching English to non-English speakers (Roberts, 2010).

Organizations need to be creative yet proactive to their need of managing diversity and encouraging the inclusion of different cultures, languages, values, ideals, and challenges. When a company promotes diversity from within it encourages the acceptance of equality and conflicts are reduced (Mujtaba, 2010). Having employees network with others will increase the exposure for both parties which in turn will create an environment of inclusion and understanding of how they can work best to achieve the company goals, mission, and vision. In addition to incorporating networking into the employees work, training is also a vital component for helping Non-English speakers communicate more effectively in the workplace.

The training component of any company is the most important and common component and can assist in the effort of increasing awareness, reduction of prejudice, and the effective and efficient communication of all parties. It can also assist in the behavioral skills of employees (Jayne and Dipboye, 2004) with not only colleagues of other cultures but also those who speak languages other than English. When looking to encourage the inclusion of value-added skills that may be provided by those with a less fluency of the language without disregarding them for their limited English skills, creating teams that do not usually collaborate and have different strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds will make everyone learn and bring more than if they had done it individually. It is important that management encourage quality and inclusive interactions in order to get committed employees.

In a pursuit of a fully diverse and inclusive community the organization must define their plan. Actions that promote communication in language other than English when not in deterrence of the safety of the project should be encouraged. All parties will benefit from the immersion into other languages, cultures and the diversity incorporated. They must confront the language barriers, the inclusivity of other languages while establishing clear outlines of when for business needs and the safety of all involved, English should be the only language spoken. These guidelines should follow suit for all parties to avoid discrimination.

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Effective and efficient communication will not happen overnight and will need to have an environment that will foster it. It is essential for all employees to comprehend and establish communication efforts. Employees hired for their specified positions should be afforded the ability to network with non-English-speaking coworkers in order to immerse themselves in the professional atmosphere. By communicating on a frequent basis within the group, they will be able to bridge the communication gap that formal training affords by not addressing the professional communication aspect of socialization in the workplace (Pope, 2012).

2. DISCUSSION

The face of successful businesses in the modern world is denoted by the diversity of its workforce. Diversity in the workplace reflects the current dynamics of the global social outlook in which different cultures have intermingled, and multiple languages are spoken by employees, suppliers and customers of the same department. Diversity, Mujtaba (2010) elucidates, has made it an interesting time to be in business. Despite this, the author warns that this diversity can be a pitfall for many managers, who are required to demonstrate their ability to lead employees drawn from diverse backgrounds.

Having established that many organizations are global and multicultural in nature, Thomas (2008) posits that it is impossible to expect all employees to speak a common language, such as English. In validating this claim, the author adds that the expectation pegged on employees to speak one language identifiable by the company marginalizes the potential impact of the international talent available at the organization and its diverse clientele. Besides, Christiansen and Chandan (2017) echo these sentiments by arguing that organizations that insist on one common language limits the mono-lingual staff, as they are left ill-equipped to express their capabilities in order to assist the organization compete effectively in the globalized environment.

Increasing diversity continues to define the melting pot of majority of the modern workplaces. Today, more employers face issues related to language differences in the workplace, with Thomas (2016) illustrating that it is no longer viable for employers to assume that qualification is based primarily on the ability of a worker to write or speak certain languages. On the other hand, it has become an obligation for employers who hire non-English speaking employees to ensure that these employees receive unparalleled safety training that guarantees their comprehension regardless of the linguistic backgrounds. Unique challenges still exist for employers whose supervisors are unable to incorporate and accommodate non-English speaking employees in the workplace.

In the increasingly global economy, many companies that hire individuals who can communicate in foreign languages often perform better. To ascertain this observation, Gardenswartz (2009) cited a survey by *Forbes Insight* whose findings established that foreign language skills have become more vital in the business platform. In addition, Lieberman *et al*. (2004) postulate that language abilities are integral tools in enabling employees and executives to advance their careers. With multilingual foundations present in the organization, MacRae and Furnham (2017) guarantee speedy overseas/global expansion as well as heightened boost of the personal and corporate success.

The significance of language proficiency in the organization has been underscored by the Information Resources Management Association (2017) which demonstrated that high degrees of multilingualism in the organization reduces the prevalence of mistakes, thus enhancing the efficiency, quality and productivity of the organizations. In addition, the effectiveness of the employees in the modern workplace is determined by the safety that characterizes the work environment subjected to these employees. Language proficiency is essential in promoting safer work environments, which is a core topic of discussion for many firms that operate manufacturing facilities in which foreign-born workers are employed.

Whereas the better part of this discussion has focused on the benefits of multilingualism in the workforce, it is significant to highlight the challenges encountered by the minority language speakers in the workplace. According to Alhaysony (2016) English has been positioned as the most important language for international exchange. For employees in many global organizations, English remains the primary business language to communicate with colleagues and customers drawn from the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Inasmuch as multilingualism is significant for the organization, Hughes (2015) explains that having a common language that can be used to communicate improves the efficiency of the organization and limits the possibilities of uncoordinated flow of information. This is the premise upon which English has been described as the universal language for international exchange.

Despite the recognition of English as the universal language, Sicola (2014) explains that not all people have the ability to speak English. The author further argues that the inability of a person to speak English does not translate to inadequacy of skill or talent, rather the limitation in language proficiency. Language barrier is the most unique and visible challenge that employees who cannot speak English bring to the workplace. The language barrier can generate a situation in which team members have difficulties in communicating. Besides, the language barrier can lead to the misinterpretation of the employee's tone or intent of communication by the customer.

Cultural miscues are expected and inevitable for people who are non-English speakers (Alhaysony, 2016). While analyzing organizations that adopt English as the primary language, Sicola (2014) concluded that many employees of these organizations exhibit inadequate knowledge in cultural and linguistic differences, hence assuming that all employees should consider English as a common thing in the work environment. This mindset adopted by many English speaking employees limits the efforts made by the non-English speakers to communicate in the workplace.

As evidenced, English is spoken by many people across the world. However, it is equally evidenced that many employees have limited proficiency of English. The stereotyping of the non-English speakers in the workplace has heightened language barrier, which Christiansen and Chandan (2017) linked to increased lapses in employee productivity. Despite the ability of an employee to perform well in completing individual tasks, the inability of the employee to communicate with managers and co-workers when a problem arises can significantly affect the productivity of the worker. Employee productivity, Hughes (2015) adds, borders on the remuneration aspect, which contributes to the employee morale. Therefore, language proficiency has a long chain that is intertwined with productivity, compensation and morale, which MacRae and Furnham (2017) listed as elements of employee retention and turnover.

It is imperative, therefore, for organizations to understand the difficulties that highly-skilled and valuable non-English speaking employees encounter in their bid to communicate with their colleagues, customers and managers in the organization. Besides, it is important for the organization to balance between the employee retention and employee turnover through adopting employee development programs that target the improvement of language proficiency among the employees who are identified as non-English speakers. There are practical solutions to these problems, most of which are embedded in the theories of how to overcome language barriers in the organization. On one hand, the organization must ensure that the culturally unique employees are accommodated within the workforce amidst the challenges they encounter (Ozbilgin, 2009). On the other hand, the organization must ensure that the non-English speaking employees gradually improve their language proficiency to communicate effectively in English in order to minimize the risk of prevalence of mistakes owing to communication challenges.

The first step to ensure that non-English speakers speak English at the workplace is to build communication bridges that enable these employees to attain their optimal potential. Training with the aim of improving oral

communication should be systematic and targeted. This approach focuses on working on the elements of vice projection, pacing and problem sound. The intensity of language training programs should incorporate a focus on the specific oral presentation skills and the sound issues presented to the non-English speaking employees. As Mujtaba (2010) explains, organizational training programs aimed at improving cultural awareness should envisage a non-intrusive and highly effective structure.

The traditional methods for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) have been implemented by many academic institutions and organizations. According to this traditional system, employees would attend English classes during the evening hours that accommodate the working adults. This is one of the most effective methods of ensuring that the English literacy levels of employees are enhanced. Considering its effectiveness, organizations should invest in systematic adoption of ESL for employees. There are different methods of training that can be used to facilitate the learning of English by non-English speakers.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Pilati (2015) writes, there was a large wave of immigrants arriving into the U.S. from developing countries. Majority of these immigrants lacked the employability skills owing to their inadequate proficiency in English. This was the platform upon which vocational English training was adopted, as it was a strategy to enhance the vocational skills of immigrants in a bid to expedite their readiness for employment. Organizations can adopt vocational English training, which is taught on a need-be basis by vocational instructors or a team of ESL experts. There are several modern applications of vocational English learning. For organizations, fostering partnerships with community colleges could help in bridging the gaps in communication among the non-English speakers. Vocational English learning features a shift from the sequential learning towards integrated learning. A core advantage of vocational learning of English is that it is more efficient, as the instructions are provided by bilingual teachers in the native language of the non-English speaking employees. Companies like Publix Super Market Inc. in the state of Florida have provided incentives and tuition reimbursement programs for their non-English speaking employees.

Other than vocational learning, organizations can adopt the immersion method to ensure that non-English speakers speak English in the workforce. This is a method that is based on the manner in which children learn language, which is through listening and imitation (Fleming *et al.*, 2009). Vocational learning has been adopted in many public elementary and secondary schools to teach foreign languages. In the organizational context, the non-English speaking employees can be taught English through listening and imitating. However, this method consumes time, and limits the ability of the employees to express fully. Besides, there is no bilingual instructor to provide guidance on the imitations by the non-English speaking employees.

Work-based literacy programs are language training methods that teach literacy tailored to the needs of specific employers or group of employers (Sicola, 2014). This method of language training differs from the traditional ESL methods, as it occurs in the workplace. As such, the learning objectives of the non-English speakers are organized around the needs of the employer. This method particularly focuses on imparting the employee with the basic ways of communicating with colleagues, customers and the management. The employers can use the integrated work-based methods of English learning to ameliorate a particular problem, which mostly borders on the employee productivity, coordination of the workforce activities and elimination of the possible barriers to effective interaction among the employees.

These are some of the universal strategies employed by companies to ensure that the non-English speakers acquire knowledge that guarantees their progression towards language proficiency. More specifically, organizations can offer on-site English courses during workdays and enroll the employees in these programs. It is necessary that the human resource professionals inquire from the employees how they want their lessons to be conducted rather

than impose a teaching method on them. The inclusion of the employees in such decisions is essential in promoting the connection that the employees have with the organization, as it limits the barriers of expression that often hinders the interaction of the minority in the workplace (Kochman, 2011).

Lesson plans directed towards improving the language proficiency of non-English speakers in the workplace should envisage simple phonics, phrasal verbs, idioms and common sentences. One main challenge of adopting on-site English courses is that it is costly to the organization. This program requires the organization to recruit and hire a private tutor for each employee of a foreign language. This means that if an organization has ten diverse non-English speakers, it has to recruit and hire ten private tutors to conduct the on-site English courses for these employees. Organizations should overcome the cost barriers by looking at the overall benefits that increases from an organization that has effective communication (Harvard Business Review, 2009). These processes, regardless of their cost, should improve the employee productivity and enhance the overall efficiency of the organization.

In the US, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have stipulated that each organization is obliged to provide safety training for its employees. Borrowing from the arguments presented by Nedelko *et al.* (2017) language plays a critical role in determining the success of the safety training programs adopted in workplaces. The OSHA's policies outline the standards that have been set for organizations to provide safety training for non-English speaking employees. Recently, Alhaysony (2016) explains, the OSHA produced an emphasis program that was aimed at ensuring employees are provided training in their native language. There are potential discrimination issues that arise in the workplace owing to the decision by organizations to offer safety training programs in languages that are comprehensible to certain people. Therefore, the recommendations by the OSHA can be used in developing a proper mechanism for ensuring that non-English speaking employees are accommodated within the safety nets of the organization.

Majority of the OSHA standards require employers to instruct employees in specific ways. The general treatment of the training requirements by the OSHA is anchored on the basis of performance, thus deferring the employer to fashion the training in a manner that enables the accomplishment of the goals of training. For this reason, organizations that have non-English speaking employees in the workplace are not obliged to have special documents or teaching methods to train its employees. Instead, these organizations can tailor the information in ways that are understandable to the employees.

English literacy in the workplace is a challenge that cannot be overcome by merely ensuring that the employees are able to learn how to speak and write English. While validating this statement, Milana and Nesbit (2015) argue that employees who cannot speak English should be provided training in languages that are best understood by the employee. In facilitating this function, organizations should ensure that the intent of the standards of the job specification is met in the language used to provide instructions to the employee. One pitfall related to this strategy is the highly subjective nature of the exercise. To overcome this pitfall, Alhaysony (2016) explains that it is important that the organization employees language educators do not hold employees to high standards of English, given that they use English as a second language. Organizational training on language should focus on educating employees on the fact-specific topics regarding the operational hazards and routines in the workplace. In most cases, non-English speaking employees experience difficulties in memorizing the specific facts to ascertain the occurrence of training. Frequent and regular training is necessary to keep such employees updated, as this goes a long way in minimizing the risks of complications in understanding the structural communication patterns in the organization.

In many organizations where English speakers outweigh the number of non-English speakers, studies have established that a common misconception exists that stereotypically labels the minorities as less qualified.

According to Sicola (2014) the efforts made by such organizations to incorporate non-English speaking may be affected by the inability of these employees to communicate their inadequacies and dissatisfaction with the strategies for fear of victimization by colleagues and supervisors. In many instances, these fears often leave the programs dedicated to improving language proficiency for non-English speakers implemented without adequate monitoring and genuine feedback from the potential beneficiaries. It is imperative that the organization evaluates the validity and compliance of the linguistic training strategies through acquiring feedback from the non-English speaking employees to whom these programs are dedicated.

The challenge of monitoring these programs to determine their effectiveness can be overcome by determining the methods through which the employer communicates the workplace rules and policies to the employees. Today, equality in instructions provided to the employees stretch beyond the safety practices to include the procedures and policies regarding workplace operations. Therefore, organizations should ensure that a consistent mechanism is established for monitoring the effectiveness of job instructions given either through the native language of the non-English speaking employee or through the English language learnt through the training programs adopted by the organization. In cases where an employee performs better when given job instructions in the native language compared to instructions provided in English, then the training is considered insufficient to the learning needs of the employee. Regular monitoring of the employees enables the organization to evaluate the effectiveness of the language training programs, thus replace, upgrade or improve these programs based on the findings of the monitoring process.

The diversity that distinguishes the modern day working environments is often depicted in teamwork and group exercises within the workforce. Training, being the most effective method of ensuring that non-English speakers speak English, is anchored more on the technical aspects of language development. The emotional and environmental aspects play an equally vital role in ensuring that non-English speakers are incorporated in the workforce. Therefore, organizations must strive to ensure that employees are aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds that align colleagues to certain linguistic challenges.

As is demonstrated by Thomas (2016) the challenges presented by diverse employees in the workplace are not related to their skill set or competency levels. Instead, these challenges relate to the organizational culture that makes it intrinsically difficult for these employees to establish relationships with their workmates and advocate for their ideas in the workplace. These challenges include the inability to read between the lines, limited awareness and consciousness on the quality of delivery and hesitations in seeking clarification due to stigmatization of incompetence pegged upon the non-English speakers by the English speakers within the workplace.

With the above recommendations setting the tone for establishment of training methods to overcome the linguistic barriers presented to the non-English speaking employees, Robbins and Judge (2013) contend that the lack of a support system underscores the challenges that these employees encounter in the workplace. In expounding more on this observation, the authors cite examples of native English speakers seeking guidance from colleagues as well as sharing their challenges on issues such as preparing reports for managers or dealing with demanding clients. On the contrary, the non-English speaking employees struggle to acquire guidance to the variety of challenges that denote the normal working environment, a factor that exposes them to high risk of underperformance.

Even as organizations race towards incorporating ESL programs to cater for the learning needs of the non-English speaking employees, the role of the managers in empowering these employees cannot be undermined. It is for this reason that Robbins and Judge (2013) argue that the task of trust-building is a central feature of the managers' role in empowering a diverse workforce. Organizations need to create methods that are separate from the

traditional learning requirements to breed a culture of trust among the employees. This is evidenced by Christiansen and Chandan (2017) in the quotation of the findings of the Harvard Business Review article authored by Andy Molinsky and Ernest Gundling, who outlined the methods through which managers can build trust within cross-cultural teams.

Managers should be proactive, as opposed to reactive, in approaching the issue of building trust within cross-cultural workplaces (Geffen, 2010). The role of the manager is to create an enabling environment that promotes cross-cultural collaboration. Communication is a key aspect of the suitable environments that define effective cross-cultural collaboration. Therefore, managers are advised to develop appropriate mechanisms that encourage employees to communicate their ideas and provide feedback while soliciting advice. This will enable the non-English speakers to have a definite approach to overcoming their day-to-day challenges, as well as promote their participation in the organizational decision-making processes.

As evidenced by Sicola (2014) the prevalent old ideas have been the foundation upon which non-English speaking people have been discriminated against in the workplace. The challenges of these employees are compounded by the lack of awareness among the majority English speaking employees on the value of diversity. Organizations can incorporate non-English speaking employees into the workplace through employing managers who value diversity of thought.

The study by Robbins and Judge (2013) illustrates that such managers have the ability of cultivating working teams that acknowledge and recognize the strategic value of new ideas brought about by diversity, hence challenging the assumptions that bear the stereotypical thinking of workplaces that do not value diversity of thought. Therefore, this strategy is a wholesome approach that encompasses the role of organizational leadership in empowering minorities to express their ideas, as these ideas have opportunities that may be beneficial to the organization.

In most instances, managers are tasked with setting the tone for organizational behavior and implementation of the organizational culture. The success of the English training programs, just like the incorporation of cross-cultural teamwork in the organization, depends on the ability of managers to cultivate these functions in the workplace. As Christiansen and Chandan (2017) observe, this is top-down initiative that trickles from the position of influence within the organization. However, managers have no mandate in shaping the individual perceptions that employees have towards their non-English speaking colleagues. This is perhaps the biggest hurdle that organizations encounter in their bid to incorporate the minority linguistic groups in the workplace.

Minimal research has been conducted to provide solutions for the inevitable resistance that individual employees display towards the minorities. However, having a strong organizational culture defined by solidarity and morale is a method that Nedelko *et al*. (2017) identified as significant in bridging cultural gaps in an organization. In many organizations that have effective cross-cultural workforces, the native English speakers are required to frequently engage with their non-English speaking colleagues in formal and informal ways. This has proven to be helpful in avoiding the condescending attitude that limits the non-English speakers from expressing their ideas. Besides, the native English speakers can accommodate their non-native counterparts by demonstrating that they attach value to the opinions and ideas presented by them (non-English speaking employees) in the workplace.

As Thomas (2008) elucidates, organizational learning is one way through which employees can understand these diversities. Human resource managers should develop more activities that improve the interactions among the employees, as this will negate the stereotypical mindset that labels non-English speakers in the workplace as less intelligent or unskilled. Besides, organizations should consider hiring leaders and managers with emotional

intelligence, which enables them to identify and mitigate any issues that arise from the challenges encountered by the minorities within the organization.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It has been established in this paper that organizations which hire diverse workers who can communicate in foreign languages often perform better. Language abilities are integral tools in enabling employees and executives to advance their careers. High degrees of multilingualism in the organization reduce the prevalence of mistakes, thus enhancing the efficiency, quality and productivity of the organizations. However, the discussion explains that the inability of a person to speak English does not translate to inadequacy of skill or talent, rather the limitation in language proficiency. Organizations must understand the difficulties that highly skilled and valuable non-English speaking employees encounter in their bid to communicate with their colleagues, customers and managers in the organization.

Organizations should build communication bridges that enable non-English employees to attain their optimal potential. This paper further recommends the adoption of non-intrusive and effectively structured organizational training programs, which are aimed at improving cultural awareness. In addition, organizations should consider implementing the traditional methods for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). With this method, employees would be required to attend English classes during the evening hours that accommodate working students. Alternatively, the paper recommends that organizations should adopt vocational English training, which is taught on a need-be basis by vocational or ESL instructors. Organizations should also consider adopting the immersion method to ensure that non-English speakers speak English in the workforce. In addition, the organization should consider work-based literacy programs, which are language training methods that teach literacy tailored to the needs of specific employers of group of employers.

Best practice demands that the human resource professionals inquire from the employees how they want their lessons to be conducted rather than to impose a teaching method on them. According to the discussion, this would limit the barriers of expression that often hinders the interaction of the minority in the workplace. The discussion refers to the OSHA guidelines in concluding that organizations that have non-English speaking employees in the workplace are not obliged to have special documents or teaching methods to train its employees.

Organizational training on language should focus on educating employees on the fact-specific topics regarding the operational hazards and routines in the workplace. Besides, the organization should evaluate the validity and compliance of the linguistic training strategies through acquiring feedback from the non-English speaking employees to whom these programs are dedicated. Organizations should ensure that a consistent mechanism is established for monitoring the effectiveness of job instructions given either through the native language of the non-English speaking employee or through the English language learnt through the training programs adopted by the organization.

4. CONCLUSION

Human resource professionals are presented with the challenge and opportunity of integrating the multiethnic nature of employees to deliver the optimal performance of the workforce. One of the biggest challenges in this integration process is language barrier. The challenge of language barrier in the workforce is often not articulated effectively, as majority of the human resource professionals have directed their focus on other aspects of diversity such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, culture, religion, and ethnicity.

This discussion is anchored on the basis of the difficulties that employees encounter in their quest to understand English. This paper concludes that training in itself is not adequate to ensure that the non-English speakers are effectively integrated in the workplace. Instead, the success of these efforts is dependent on the inclusion of the non-English speakers and the native English speakers in the management of the organizations with diverse linguistic workforces. Even more, many organizations grapple with the underlying shortcomings of oral communication with workers for whom English is a second language.

In conclusion, this discussion reaffirms the position that despite the unique challenges presented by non-English speaking employees in the workforce, organizations that harness these challenges to their advantage through implementing strategies for ensuring that these workers speak English stand a better chance of realizing a competitive advantage in their respective markets.

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