

English-Only Rules in the Workplace: Improving Communication Methods among Non-Native
English Speakers

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I have adhered to the university policy regarding academic honesty in completing this
assignment

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Abstract

The increase of a diverse workforce in the United States has become somewhat of a constraint to US companies that want to accommodate a diverse and innumerable culturally diverse workforce. Some businesses are lenient when accepting their workforce to use a language other than English in the workplace, while other companies are strict when enforcing English-only rules and policies in the workplace. This paper will examine why English-only rules have become prevalent in the U.S. workplace and the reasons they are being imposed with greater frequency. Using previous literature, one can conclude that English-only rules have been frequently utilized in workplace policies, while establishing them as true business necessity. This paper will focus on the English-only rules or policies in U.S. companies and what type of policy changes companies can implement to better communicate with their employees who are non-native English speakers. This study will also be able to provide some forms of communication methods that can be implemented for companies that have employees who are non-native English speakers. The selected method that will be used for this research question is a qualitative design approach. The interest lies in determining the improvement of communication for non-native English speakers based on actual employee experiences whose first language is not English, to present their experiences with the use of English in their workplace and allow for a fundamental change in understanding and communicating in a language other than English.

Keywords: English-only, languages in the workplace, discrimination, ethnicity, language rules, EEOC, Title VII, communicating in the workplace, employment laws

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Introduction

The increasing numbers of diverse workers in US companies has vastly expanded in recent years. There has been a great increase in companies that have been faced with communication conflicts among their workers. An English-only rule in the workplace is an issue that has become more prevalent in the U.S. workplaces due to a diverse workforce that has increased in recent years in the United States. While the issue may have been introduced in the late 20th century, after a great increase in the arrival of diverse immigrant workers in the United States, English-only rules has become a great concern to U.S. companies in dealing with the issue in a non-discriminatory matter. According to a statement provided by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), during the past 10 years, the EEOC received an average of about 180 charges per year challenging English-only policies. The EEOC states that it has also filed about two to three lawsuits per year challenging English-only policies. The EEOC also states that “the issue arises relatively infrequently” (EEOC, 2008, p. 4). This topic is of great importance in the employment area for U.S. companies, as the language necessity of requiring English in the workplace becomes a topic of discussion for business owners when implementing policies in their workplace, to their existent diverse workforce and for future arrivals of diverse workers.

Statement of the Problem

With the increase of English-only policies being implemented in the workplace, non-native English speakers are faced with communication shortages. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, “there were 25.3 million foreign-born persons in the U.S. labor force...” in 2013 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014, p. 1). The English-only debate leads to more conflicts in the way that current non-native English speaker employees receive important

information in reference to employment policies, benefits, as well as other pertinent information for employees. The way that US companies decide to communicate with their employees affects the non-native English speaker's workforce, thus creating an exclusion for this particular group when obtaining the necessary information that all other employees whose native language is English are obtaining.

English-only rules are becoming more prevalent in the present day workplace. According to Cantu (1998), the English-only movement began or became the most prevalent in the mid-1980, where English was the official language in the halls of government (p. 48-50). With closer than thirty years in difference, English-only rules continues to be an issue that is most common in terms of national origin discrimination with many cases filed with the EEOC, it is something that will continue to be highly disputed. It is a topic that crosses borders, is highly discussed and controversial as this topic ties in to the current debates on immigrants and the requirement that they learn and speak one language, that language is English.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate workers experiences and through their narratives and interviews, explore what concerns them the most when it comes to communication in the workplace in regards to materials or the way communication techniques are used. Learning from their experiences and to hear any issues they have faced when working in companies with English-only policies, will also provide a view as to how those companies are perceived by the workers who make up the group of the non-native English speakers. Improvements may be suggested as to what companies may need to fix and make a priority to change the manner that important employee information is communicated to employees whose native language is not English. This study leads the researcher through an applied research

framework. According to Merriam (2009), “applied research is undertaken to improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline” (p. 3). The goal of this study is to make recommendations for policy writers/implementers and decision makers within the companies to follow to improve processes and implement changes in the workplace. This qualitative research study is important and needed for several reasons. The goal is to focus on qualitative findings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how language in the workplace affects workers who are non-native English speakers. Another important reason that this study may be necessary is due to the increased diverse workforce, as this will be the reason that this issue will be relevant and current for the present and future.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to provide a pathway to make changes in the workplace. As current workplace and diversity is increasing in the US workplace, it demands a need and necessary adaptation to changes in regards to communication. As Del Valle (2003) stated, “how the nation responds to these exciting demographic changes remains to be seen” (p. 3). During the course of recent years, companies in the U.S. have come to deal with the demand of demographic changes. Del Valle (2003) also discussed that the “changes in the demographics of the workforce will be especially critical to the future of the labor movement...” (p. 153). It is my intention to outline some recommendations using previous literature as well as any information gathered from my study regarding changes in communication techniques with employees who are non-native English speakers. These recommendations will include changes in communication via literature, materials and presentations given to the employee in the workplace, to be presented to non-native English speakers, in other languages aside from English. The significance of the study also directed towards Human Resources professionals and

to add to the field or profession of Human Resources to improve practice, policy and decision-making.

Theoretical Perspective

This study will utilize a qualitative methods research approach, which entails the following: Creswell (2014) states that a “qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Policies are written and established in order to conform and set a procedure or to set order. There are policies that most people would find problematic when these are introduced. Policies can work for the improvement of setting order in the daily lives of people or they may be set for people to view them as a topic of controversy. Using the qualitative approach for this study will allow me to explore the way that people have conformed and adapted to English-only policies, as well as any recommendation to be made.

Research Method

The research design most appropriate for this study would be an ethnographic research design. According to Creswell (2014) ethnography is a design where “the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group” and the data collection often involves interviews (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Another way that the researcher anticipates in conducting this qualitative study and obtaining most of the necessary information needed to find any suggestions is through narrative research. This design inquiry according to (Creswell, 2014), will allow the researcher to study the lives of individuals through the individuals providing life stories (p. 13). Thus, this research might be considered a narrative ethnography employing in depth interviews.

Definition of Key Terms

English-only policies – Employer policies may vary, according to the type of business with some employers requiring mandatory use of the English language for employees and to speak only English all the time during work hours, others may be lenient in allowing employees to communicate in other languages other than English when employees are on break. One example of said policy is the City of Altus, Oklahoma, which adopted a policy requiring employees to communicate in English only when conducting work communication, with the exception of when the use of another language was essential (Peikes & Burns, 2006). English-only policies may be designed in a myriad of ways taking into consideration the business needs for the particular company.

Business necessity- Defense to a disparate impact case based on the employer's need for the policy as a legitimate requirement for the job (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012 p. 800).

National origin discrimination- National origin discrimination involves treating people (applicants or employees) unfavorably because they are from a particular country or part of the world, because of ethnicity or accent, or because they appear to be of a certain ethnic background (even if they are not) (eeoc.gov).

National origin –Individual's, or her or his ancestor's, place of origin (as opposed to citizenship), or physical, cultural, or linguistic characteristics of an origin group. (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012, p. 804).

Title VII –Title VII prohibits discrimination in hiring, firing, training, promotion, discipline, or other workplace decisions on the basis of an employee's or applicants race, color, gender, national origin, or religion. Included in the prohibitions are discriminations in pay, terms

and conditions of employment, training, layoffs, and benefits (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012, p. 110).

EEOC –(The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) is the lead agency for handling issues of job discrimination and deals with most matters of employment discrimination arising under federal laws, including age, disability, and genetic information and family medical history (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2012, p. 104).

Foreign-born-The foreign born are those who reside in the United States but who were born outside the country or one of its outlying areas to parents who were not U.S. citizens (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014)

Delimitations

This study is capable of providing an improvement plan in the way companies communicate with their employees who are non-native English speakers. It may be able to assist the Human Resources department of a company in conducting employee new hire orientations, which may include benefits information and employee handbooks, which includes company policies. This study might also provide the Human Resources department a framework for best practices for implementation to accommodate the needs for the diverse workforce that is part of their company. Are there assumptions of a qualitative/ narrative ethnography for us to take into account? How does one learn from this form of study and what forms of data represent knowledge?

Limitations

Due to time restrictions that this study is set around, only a small group of participants may be able to participate, limiting the generalizability of answers that are provided by non-native English speaker. Another limitation is that if a company has an English-only policy set in

place, the employee may see this a set back or determinant for discouraging answers. The data collection and recommendations from this study may not help in changing a company's view or removal of said policy, if the company has a set English-policy in effect. A company must be disposed in accepting changes and processes within their company.

Summary

With the changing labor force in the United States, the need to change or improve communication techniques for communicating with employees who are non-native English speakers is relevant. Much previous literature exists regarding English-only policies in the U.S. Workplaces. Not much research exists on improving or changing or proposing recommendations the way that employers communicate with their employees who are non-native English speakers. The study conforms to a qualitative methods approach, utilizing employee narratives and interviews, thus, excising an ethnographic research design.

Literature Review

English-only policies in the workplace is an issue that has become more prevalent in the U.S. workplaces due to a diverse workforce that has increased in recent years in the United States. While the issue may have been introduced in the late 20th century, after a great increase of diverse immigrant workers in the United States, English-only rules has become a great concern to U.S. companies in dealing with the issue in a non-discriminatory matter. According to statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, “in 2013, the labor force participation rate of the foreign born was 66.4 percent, compared with 62.7 percent for the native born” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014, p. 2). This topic is of great importance in the employment area for U.S. companies, as the language necessity of requiring English in the workplace becomes a topic of discussion for business owners when implementing policies in their workplace, to their existent diverse workforce and for future arrivals of diverse workers.

English-only rules in the workplace have increased with the necessary and demanding adaptation of diverse cultures in the workplace. English may be the “official” or “unofficial” language of the United States. According to a blog post provided by USA.gov, the United States does not actually have an “official language”, but some states list English as their official language (USA.gov, 2014). With the increase and influx of cultures in the U.S., we have to adapt and recognize the myriad of languages that exist. Each language makes up a component of the melting pot that we currently have. As we accept and adapt to different ethnicities and different cultures, we need to accept the use of languages in everyday life, in particular in the workplace where most adults spend the majority of their day. The researcher has chosen to base my study on the assimilation theory, as this theory can be the basis to accepting a different language other than English to be used at the workplace. According to Alba & Nee (1997),

“assimilation has to come to be viewed by social scientists as a worn-out theory which imposes ethnocentric and patronizing demands on minority people struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity” (p. 827). Alba & Nee (1997), hold that this assimilation theory, “that this social science concept offers the best way to understand and describe the integration into the mainstream experienced against generations by many individuals and ethnic groups, even if it cannot be regarded as a universal outcome of American life check paraphrase (p. 827). In their study they “attempt to redefine assimilation in order to render it useful of the new immigration” (p. 827). According to Alba & Nee (1997) in “general terms, assimilation can be defined as the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance of an ethnic racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it” (p. 863). They also argue that “language acculturation in the United States appears to be overwhelmingly one-sided” (p. 864). The theory of one language to an acceptable dual language communication in the workplace will diminish discrimination claims.

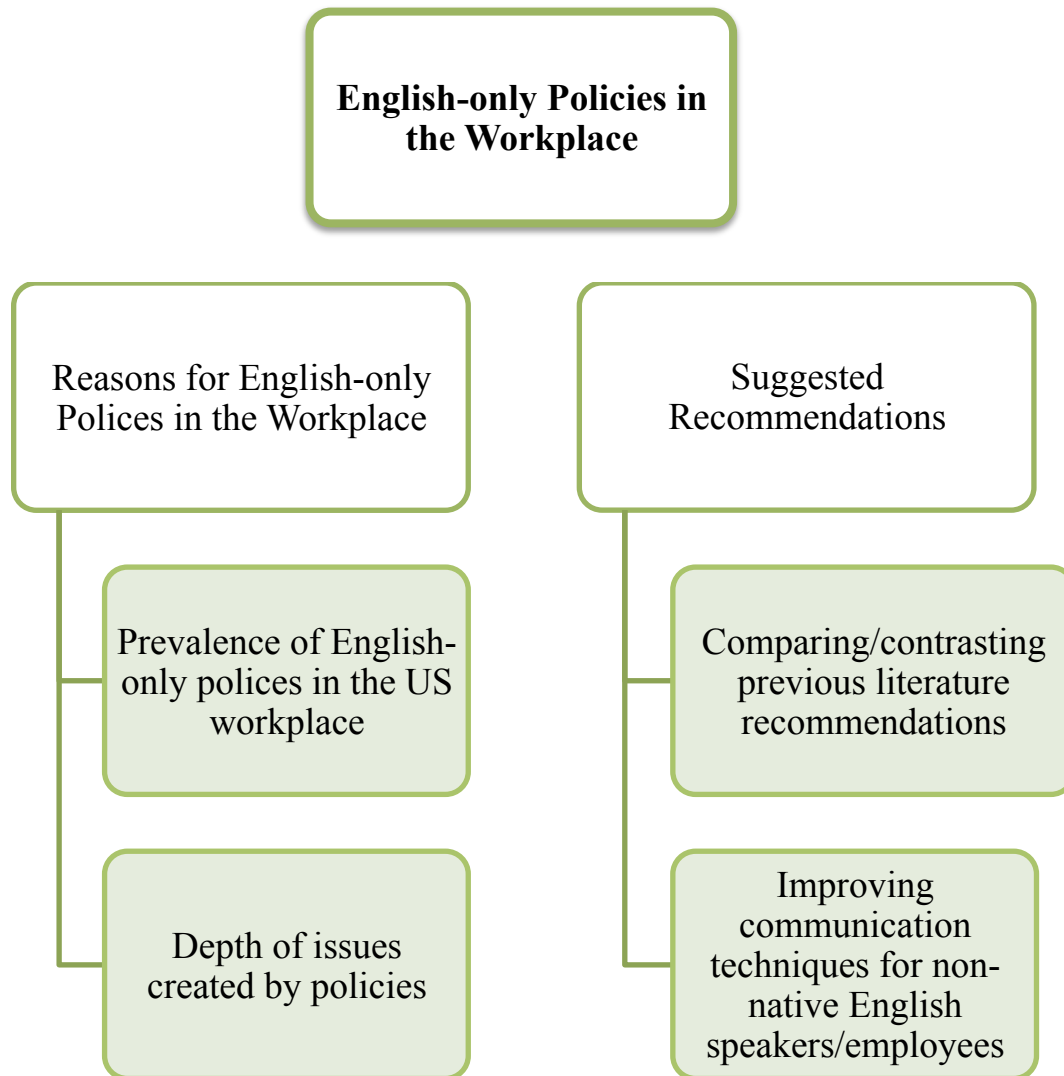


Figure 1. The literature map of this research study.

Prevalence of English-only Rules

English-only rules are becoming more prevalent in the present day workplace. With the increased number of diverse applicants applying for employment within the U.S., we can deduce that the number of companies adopting English-only policies will increase. Not only is this an issue in the present employment arena, but one that has increased over time. In his paper, Cantu (1998), references James Crawford (1992) in discussing the history the English-only movement which began or became the most prevalent in the mid-1980, where English was the official

language in the halls of government (p. 48-50). With closer than thirty years in difference, English-only rules continues to be an issue that is most common in terms of national origin discrimination with the many cases filed with the EEOC, it is something that will continue to be highly disputed. It is a topic that crosses borders, highly discussed and controversial as this topic ties in to the current debates on immigrants and the requirement that they learn and speak one language, that language is English.

Selection of Sources

In selecting sources for the present paper, it is important to gather some historical data on English-only rules in the workplace. Peer-reviewed sources are available and contributions to Hispanic and law journals are the most readily available. When locating sources, most of the research on the sources is geared towards English-only rules and the Hispanic ethnic group or workforce population in the U.S. companies. In this paper it is the hope to include a broad national origin ethnic groups other than the Hispanic workforce, but English-only rules are geared more towards the Hispanic ethnic group, as this is the group that prevails when looking at the increasing number of applicants from a different ethnic group in the U.S. workforce and will continue to prevail in numbers with years to come.

Criteria of Evaluating Sources

Evaluation of the sources to incorporate and to limit the amount of non-peer reviewed source is the focus. There are many newspaper articles available as this is a trending topic among the employment area of the U.S. It is a workplace issue that businesses across the U.S. may have to deal with. It is an issue that existed in the past and continues to exist with the more diverse ethnic groups migrating into the U.S.

English-only Rules in the Workplace

Reasons for English-only rules in the workplace come across companies due to the liability business owners would face in part because of lack or poor communication between employees. According to Angiello (2001), “Hispanics have challenged the “English only” rules that companies claim are necessary for workplace safety and rapport” (Angiello, 2001, p. 4). Cantu (1998) interviewed Executive Director of English First, Jim Boulet Jr. whose group attempts to influence policies, which requiring money. Cantu (1998) views on these groups is that he sees them as exploiting the English-only movement, and in this interview he was able to provide three fundamental reasons for insisting on one language in the workplace “The first is employee health and safety,” he says. “If you’re working in a steel mill, you don’t want to think before yelling, ‘Watch out’ (Cantu, 1998, p. 50). The second is for effective supervision, and the third is workplace unity” (Cantu, 1998).

In interviewing other contributors to this article, Cantu discussed the issue with Juan A. Figueroa, president and general counsel of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education fund (PRLDEF), who believes the workplace issue has its origins in the English-Only movement. “Before it was English-only, then bilingual education. Now this is the latest manifestation,” he says (Cantu, 1998, p. 52). This source allows the reader to learn more about the reasons for the push for English-only rules in the workplace. Not only the reason, but to get an idea of some of the historical movements or stages of the English-only rules. Another source discusses some more reasons as to why having English-only rules in the workplace are necessary. According to Moreno (2012) employers have developed three general types of business necessity justifications: workplace harmony among co-workers, customer satisfaction, and workplace management with emphasis on safety and efficiency concerns (Moreno, 2012, p. 203). Not only

is the concern regarding safety in the workplace but now opens up the door as to the working relationships among co-workers and customer satisfaction which ultimately affects the bottom-line of the particular business.

English-only Rules and Employment Law

When English-only discriminations cases are no longer able to be mediated within a company that is when it escalates to greater debate and into an EEOC complaint, which eventually may lead into the court system leaving it to the judge's discretion to decipher whether or not it constitutes a discrimination case. According to Cameron (1997), in the real life cases of Hector of *Garcia v. Gloor* and Pricilla of *Garcia v. Spun Steak Co.*, two employees who were discharged from their place of employment for speaking Spanish, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth and Ninth Circuits, "respectively each held that a private employer's English-only rule could not be considered discriminatory" (p. 1351). Garza (2000) also incorporates these same employees' cases into her writings noting the two cases, Fifth's Circuit *Garcia v. Gloor* and Ninth's Circuit *Garcia v. Spun Steak Co.* "the two most influential cases regarding disparate impact" (Garza, 2000, p. 381). Cameron (1997) says, "in our times, the U.S. Citizens seem obsessed with passing laws that, far from preserving bilingualism, direct everyone to speak English only" (Cameron, 1997, p. 1352). Cameron (1997) references that although a First-Amendment challenge to such a rule for state government employees was recently before the United States Supreme Court, in his opinion, it did little to resolve either U.S. feelings about bilingualism in general or the validity of such rules for private sector employees in particular (Cameron, 1997, p. 266). Once again this demonstrates that even if the cases are disputed and elevated to the court level it is hard to decipher each case for English-only rules in the workplace.

Cameron (1997) asserts that “this is unfortunate because English-only rules constitute precisely the type of national origin discrimination that violates Title VII, which is supposed to secure equal opportunity with respect to the terms, conditions, and privileges of employment of all workers, regardless of “race, color religion, sex, or national origin” (Cameron, 1997, p. 1352). He questions not whether English-only rules are national origin discrimination, but why courts have consistently refused to find them so (Cameron, 1997, p. 1354). He blames this on “racial dualism” – the tendency to view civil rights discourse in terms of Blacks and Whites only (Cameron, 1997, p. 1354). His argument is that racial dualism is problematic not only because it limits judges’ understanding of national origin claims, but also because it makes Latinos and their problems in the workplace invisible (Cameron, 1997, p. 1354). As all the sources have discussed, this problem has become more prevalent among the Hispanic national origin workforce.

Not only does the problem exist for those who are not English speakers, but according to some sources, it will take into account all groups of non-English speakers with different levels of the English language comprehension. In Garza (2002) analysis, she introduces the concept “spectrum of language competence,” which she explains as “a spectrum that includes countless citizens with multiple levels of English language comprehension” (Garza, 2002, p. 383). According to Garza (2002), “it ranges from “minimal conversation skills to complete fluency in two languages” (Garza, 2002, p. 383). Obtaining case information on cases that have been filed with the Supreme Court and other federal courts that involve language discrimination allows Garza to observe judges motivations on decisions. Garza (2002) notes “Justice Kennedy reasoned that the term “bilingual” is a simple word for a more complex phenomenon with many distinct categories and subdivisions” (Garza, 2002, p. 384). Further,

Another federal court has recognized that there is a particular variation for degrees of language fluency and she deduces that these cases indicate that it is possible for judges to arrive at an understanding of the sociological complexity of bilingualism (Garza, 2002, p. 384).

Garza (2002) assures “that there is a recognition that there exist various levels of linguistic abilities, judges can reasonably presume that those persons lowest on the spectrum of linguistic abilities should be afforded greater protection under the law” (Garza, 2002, p. 385). Due to this conflict that occurs rather frequently, she proposes a model. She calls this proposed model a “sliding scale for the language spectrum” and this methodology would protect language minorities on a sliding scale by assuming that people with lesser English skills are most in need of protection from discrimination on the basis of national origin” (Garza, 2002, p. 385). Garza (2002) concludes that the proposed sliding scale approach “appreciates the nexus between language and national origin, as well as the existence of a plethora of individuals along the language spectrum” (Garza, 2002, p. 386).

An underlying issue can now be understood, which is the great numbers of people immigrating to the United States annually, daily. The topic comes up when looking at the reasons for English-only rules in U.S. workplaces, it’s all due to the fact that the U.S. workplace has increased its diversity. Beard (2013) gives the reader an insight of one of the causes of English-only rules. He begins with the discussion of how “each year hundreds of thousands of immigrants move to the United States hoping to take advantage of the economic, societal, and educational opportunities this country has to offer” (Beard, 2013, p. 1495). Although there is a widespread opposition, the number of immigrants to the United States is increasing all the time, and according to Beard (2013), “with more immigrants, more contact between native English speakers and those who speak English as a second language is inevitable” (Beard, 2013, p.

1495). Beard's (2013) paper focuses on the "conflicts caused by the differences in languages of those two groups, particularly the problems caused by accent preferences and English-only rules" (Beard, 2013, p. 1495). Beard (2013) sections and focuses his research into four parts. Part I lays out the legal framework for national origin cases, Part II tells the stories of several plaintiffs who challenged English-only rules and accent-based hiring decisions, Part III argues that many courts are doing a great disservice to the goals of Title VII in the way they treat these claims and part IV explores the harm caused by English-only rules and accent preferences based on the link between language and accent and one's national origin (p. 1495).

When policies of English-only rules are implemented in U.S. workplaces, it is important to look at the way some policies take shape in these companies. It is important to look at the way they are written to decipher if they are discriminatory or not. Some companies will argue the business necessity reason. According to Rodriguez (2006), "English-only rules in the workplace have taken a variety of forms" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1690). Rodriguez (2006) points out that "some rules govern only official work time; others cover any and all conversations in the workplace" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1690). Rodriguez (2006) argues that "rules regulating language use implicate a complex web of social relationships that intersect in society's workplaces: relationships between individual customers and workers" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1690). In this paper the main focus is "how English-only mechanism imposes significant social costs that justify resisting the English-only impulse" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1691). In part I of her article Rodriguez (2006) establishes the social cases for a multilingual workplace where she discusses more in detail "the English-only phenomenon", part II Rodriguez (2006) assesses the Title VII litigation that has grown up around English-only workplace rules over the last two decades and lay out the flaws in the federal courts' understanding of the impact of English-only rules"

(Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1695-1696). In Part III, Rodriguez (2006) “considers whether Title VII should play any role at all in managing debates over pluralism in the workplace, and establish why state and local legislation would be more consistent with the conceptual framework (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1696).

Theoretical Construct

Throughout the research process there are several variables that consistently surface regarding English-only policies and rules in the workplace. These variables can relate to the workers who are non-English speakers and their experiences in the workplace. These may include the struggle to learn English in order to and assimilate or to avoid social exclusion altogether as they adapt to their new employability qualifications and skills in the US workplace.

The non English-only workplace: the non English-only workplace, there may be workers from a myriad of backgrounds whose native language is not English. The employees in *Garcia v. Spun Steak Co.*, generally spoke to each other in Spanish, which may have seemed appropriate and fine due to that it primarily employed bilingual Hispanic workers (Beard, 2013, p. 1501). The workplace that may identify with several ethnic groups of workers, may consider allowing the use of the native language as a form of communication among employees. Beard (2013) included in his paper a section of lawsuits in which he selected stories regarding English-only rules. Beard (2013) included a portion of the letter that a bilingual Spanish and English speaking city of Atlas, Oklahoma employee wrote to the city’s Street Commissioner upon learning that an English-only rule was going to pass. The city worker’s response included: “There has never been a time that because I spoke Spanish to another Spanish speaking individual, I was unable to perform our job duties and requirements” (Beard, 2013, p. 1502). It

is important to include this information as a form of descriptive participant experience and reasoning for a non-agreement with English-only rules.

English-only rules. In order to better understand workplaces that implement English-only rules, it helpful to include a brief description of the types of English-only rules that foreign born workers may be exposed to. This type rule or policy in the workplace, entails for employers to adopt English-only rules that prohibit workers from speaking languages other than English under certain circumstances (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1690). According to Rodriguez (2006), English-only rules in the workplace is “part of a larger trend that has emerged in recent years in workplaces across the country” (p. 1690). With the increase of companies adopting English-only rules, this rule can be adopted and implemented exclusively to fit the organization’s culture and type of business. Rodriguez (2006) points out that “English-only rules in the workplace have taken a variety of forms”. These rules vary among companies where some may govern “only official work time and others may cover any and all conversations in the workplace” (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1690).

Social exclusion. Most of the literature of English-only rules available can one way or another be tied to the social exclusion theory. Social exclusion as Cheung (2012) asserts, can be referred to as,

The denial of access to resources, benefits, and opportunities for contribution and self-realization, and the denial of is likely to result in discrimination, deprivation, and polarization among people (as cited in Wacquant, 2008, p. 471).

Social exclusion theory can be tied in looking at different components in the workplace and in law proceedings involving English-only rules or policies. Although Moreno (2012) asserts the modern workplace is the most “promising arena” for diverse individuals to meet and develop meaningful relationships, Moreno (2012) views the English-only rules at work, from a

social exclusion point of view. Moreno (2012) states that “even with increased tolerance for linguistic diversity, there is no doubt that language differences complicate social dynamics and cooperation in the workplace and at school” (p. 201). She also includes employers are faced with small number of options to encourage communicative cooperation without a common language. The two options that employers can select according to Moreno (2012) are: to encourage English-language acquisition by non-English speakers or implement an English-only rule, which may be successful if the employees speak some English. The latter option has increased with employers as it may be easier to just implement at no cost the company.

Previously in this research paper, the researcher included litigation cases that have involved English-only rules. Cameron (1997) found some related themes throughout his research “that the law so ignores the plight of Latinos in the United States that we are virtually invisible” (p. 1356). This type of view can be closely assimilated to the social exclusion theory. Not only is this exclusion demonstrated in legal proceedings, but most prominently in the actual setting where the most English-only cases are situated. Beard (2013) asserts that by “forcing employees to cover their accents and native languages, employers are attacking the national origin identities of those employees” (p. 1496). The harm that English-only rules cause non-native English speakers as Beard (2013) recommends that courts should recognize the plaintiff’s assertions, that these rules create hostile work environments (p. 1521). The social exclusion theory can most unequivocally define and descriptively provide the type of marginalization and alienation that perhaps the participants of this study might have experienced.

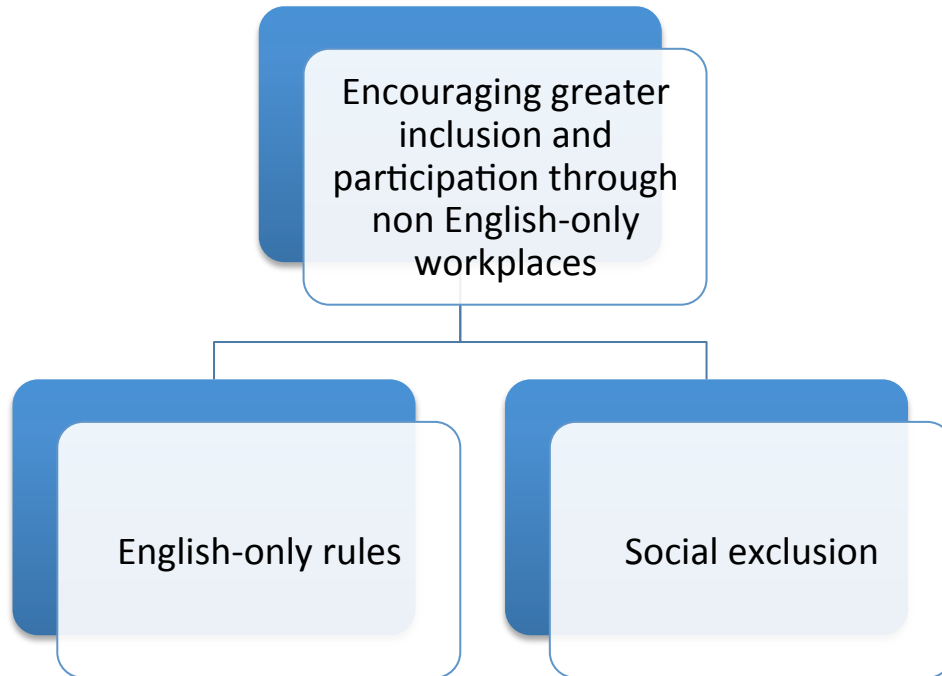


Figure 2. The theoretical construct of the non English-only workplace.

Summary

When looking at the research that has been already searched for and interpreted into writings from scholars, most of the sources indicate English-only rules in the workplace with employees who are of Hispanic descent. With the research found thus far, locating sources that includes other national origin groups will be helpful in deciphering as to whether the English-only rule is truly a business necessity. It will be important to gather data from the EEOC that specifies this particular occurrence through its cases. The English-only debate will be a topic that will in fact continue to rise with the diverse workforce continuing to grow in the U.S. It will be imperative to locate sources that indicate that English-only rules can be eliminated or sources that recommend solutions towards working to improve communication with employees who are non-native English speakers.

Research Methods

One of the objectives of this study to understand the depth of the problem that English-only policies are creating for the workforce who are non-native English speakers. This study will aim to seek improvements and recommendations to the workplace. For U.S. companies this is adapting to the changing labor force, which now includes a diverse background of non-native English speakers. The foreign-born workers adaptation to business policies within their company as well as benefit information, makes it an even harder process if the material is presented in English only. Efforts made by U.S. companies to change their techniques for communicating with their diverse workforce, will enable them to maintain a competitive edge.

This is a qualitative study with a narrative ethnographic approach. In the ethnographic research design, according to Merriam (2009), culture has been variously defined, “it essentially refers to the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people” (p. 27). This study will be conducted through participant interviews; it will explore and study the beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns of the non-native English speakers. According Creswell (2014) this is defining of the element participants meaning. Merriam (2014) states that through

The entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or that writers express in the literature (p. 186).

As the researcher of this study, who can indirectly relate to the views and perspectives of the potential participants, as a non-foreign-born worker, but at one point in time was labeled as a non-native English speaker. Relating this study to the assimilation theory discussed in the prior chapter, the researcher can relate some of the personal encounters and individual experiences and

relate to this study. As Merriam (2009) concerning ethnographers, “they want to convey the meanings participants make of their lives, they do so with some interpretation on their part” (p. 28).

This section will include the type of questions that will guide this study as well as the population that will be considered for this study. One important aspect that a researcher must take into consideration and that will guide throughout this project is ethical consideration in respecting the participants. Finally, the researcher will outline the research design, interview instrument and data analysis strategy for this study.

Research Questions

The researcher seeks to gain any policy changes and improvements regarding communication methods among employees who are non-native English speakers. The following questions and propositions were guided by literature analysis.

Research question one (RQ1): Will presenting materials in languages other than English, improve employee morale in the workplace?

Proposition one (P1): Presenting information in the employee’s native language may help employee morale, as the employer is recognizing the need to have literature in languages other than English.

Research question two (RQ2): Should company policies and other employee information be presented in a language other than English?

Proposition two (P2): To help alleviate any miscommunication and lack of communication, employers need to present important employee information in the employee’s native language.

Research question three (RQ3): If a company implements English-only policies in the workplace, does it affect the employee performance in any way?

Proposition three (P3): It will affect employee performance, as the employee will not be able to express themselves in the workplace, for fear of retaliation from the employer against the employee.

Setting

It is best to speak to non-native English speakers that have been employed in companies that have established policies and other formal presentation of employee information. Qualified participants can be found through a referral method from participants. In order to find participants who may fit the qualifications for this study, it best to recruit near areas where established companies are located. The researcher will only be working in the District of Columbia's downtown area, where recruitment may take place in the early evening hours, around 5-6 PM timeframe, during a weekday. This is the time that most businesses may close and their workers may be leaving the businesses. The researcher may recruit near the waiting areas of public transportation so that the researcher may not violate any trespassing rules. In recruiting participants, the researcher will allow participants to refer other participants that may be available.

Population

The qualification of participants in this study will be adult whose native language is another language other than English. The participants must be over 30 years of age, and must have been employed three years or more in an established company, which offers benefits and whose companies have established workplace policies. The age range for participants will range from 30 years of age and above, participant of this age range tend to focus more on policies and

benefit information than those that are younger in age. In this study will involve a chain or network sampling. According to Merriam (2009) “Snowball, chain, or network sampling is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling”. In this type of sampling, the researcher will have to establish the criteria needed in order to qualify a participant by, and my participants in turn can refer me to another participant that may meet the qualifications set forth for this study. According to Merriam 2009), “selecting respondents on the basis of what they can contribute to the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon under study means engaging in purposive or theoretical sampling” (p. 105). The researcher will interview 6-8 qualifying participants.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the constraints of time, the recruited applicants are limited to the District of Columbia metropolitan area, which includes the states of Maryland and Virginia. The metropolitan area is made up of a diverse groups of national origins and races, but the study may include participants who are mostly Hispanic. The participant in this study has the right to question and gain information as to what the study involves and how their responses will be utilized in the study. The respondents also have the right to stop their participation and retract their answers at any given moment before the conclusion of the study. The participants may be concerned as to how their information will be used and whether their employer or other person this information will be shared with. Some risks that participants may become concerned or experience with the type of questions are social or emotional feelings. Since the type of questions asked are a type of narrative experiences they have had in the past or have experienced presently may touch emotional feelings as well as social adaptation of their own individual. Before starting the research, the researcher completed the online training through the NIH Office

of Extramural Research and obtained the NIH Research Ethics & IRB Certificate, the researcher understands the duties of a researcher and the respect that must be demonstrated towards the participants. According to the Belmont principle, respect for persons is primarily applied by requiring that all human subjects research participants provide voluntary informed consent and the three fundamental aspects of informed consent are: voluntariness, comprehension and disclosure (NIH Office of Extramural Research). The researcher will make sure that the participant understands that his or her participation is completely voluntarily and that there are no individuals, including myself who will be influencing their participation. For the comprehension aspect, the participant must have the capacity to answer and understand the questions they are being asked to answer. For the disclosure aspect, it is my responsibility to fully explain the study and its component to the participant, as well as assure the participant the extent of confidentiality that will be applied to their responses. If the participant has any further questions or concerns they will be directed to speak to the research supervisor and Professor, Dr. Kelley Wood at Trinity Washington University. Throughout the entire project the researcher will keep in the forefront the three ethical principles that constitute the basis for the Human Subjects Regulation: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

Research Design

This section in support of the theoretical framework is one of the most important crucial sections of this paper. In the following account the researcher will outline the step-by-step approach that will be taken to conduct the research for this proposed study. After the researcher has identified the participants that will be interviewed, the researcher will go over the structured questions, to make sure that the type of questions, and the way that they are worded, that these questions can be understood by the group of participants. The researcher will plan to meet the

participants in a public area, quiet enough from distractions and interruptions. This type of meeting place may be as quiet as a library setting or a minimal noise setting for example a coffee shop. In the initial meeting with the participants the researchers will thank the participant for taking time to meet for a question and answer session and brief discussion about the research. Depending on the number of participants it may take anywhere from thirty minutes to one hour for the duration of the meeting. In the beginning, the researcher will provide the participants with a summary of what the research topic is, and the importance that this study's purpose will serve. The researcher will also mention to them how their answers, recommendations and questions will be utilized within the study. After briefing the participant on the study, they will be asked whether they would like to continue with the interview session. It will be stated that their participation is completely voluntary and that they may decide to stop the meeting or retract their answers or information provided anytime during the study. The researcher will ensure that the participant understands that any information that they provide will be maintained confidential and will be reassured again a promise of confidentiality.

If the participants agree to continue with the interview, the researcher will provide the participant an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D or E). The researcher will ask the participant whether they would like to sign the Informed Consent Form in English or Spanish. The participant will sign the forms in the language that they have selected, and the researcher will retain a copy and the other copy will be given to the participant to maintain for their records. To protect the participant's identity, the use of pseudonyms will be utilized. Merriam (2014) offers suggestions on how to take advantage of the time that a researcher spends with the informant, she suggests "a slow-starting interview, which can be moved along by asking respondents for basic descriptive information about themselves, or the phenomenon under study

(p. 106). The researcher will conduct the interview and will observe any gestures, emotions, confusion among each question asked. To assist in the data collection the researcher will utilize a phone as a recorder. As an interview protocol to follow, one of the following components “instructions for the interviewer to follow so that standard procedures are used from one interview to another” (Creswell, 2014, p. 194), is one that the researcher will try not to deviate from.

Interview Instrument

The way that the interview questions were developed were to first begin with demographic questions so that the participant is able to give answers that they already know. Since the researcher will be gathering the participant’s details about their experiences and collect any recommendation for improvement, it is imperative that the researcher include open-ended questions which will illicit narratives from the participants that will allow to gather information that the researcher may not have received from other types of questions. The semi-structured questions were developed so that the participant is able to think about their past experiences or present experiences and to get their thoughts going on this particular topic. Communication among employees is very important for the company and for the benefit of themselves. These questions will be able to provide any recommendations that non-native English speakers may have regarding information that is delivered to all employees within the company.

Examples of open-ended questions:

Tell me about your experiences in the workplace as a non-native English speaker.

What difficulties or issues have you encountered?

What types of assistance have you had and how might communication have been improved in the situation?

Examples of semi-structured questions:

How would you describe your level of English comprehension: beginner, intermediate advanced?

If you were employed at a company that adopted an English-only policy in the workplace, would this change how you view the company?

Do you feel most comfortable when employee information such as workplace safety, company policies or benefits are explained in your native language?

Would you participate in a benefit or comment more frequently at meetings, if material were presented to you in your native language?

Data Analysis Strategy

After completion of the interviews with each participant, the data analysis and interpretation of the data collected is crucial to decipher its meaning to apply it to the research study. Creswell (2014) provides a good descriptive and imagery as to what the purpose of the data analysis for qualitative data. The intent according to Creswell (2014) “is to make sense out of text and image data and it involves segmenting and taking apart the data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). He then compares it to “peeling back the layers of an onion” (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). Creswell (2014) also suggests a linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to top and outlines seven steps to include in this section (Creswell, 2014, p. 196-201). During the process of my data collection the researcher will look and examine the different themes that come up during the study, the researcher will begin to organize and prepare the data analysis by placing similar data together and grouping them. The use of analytic memos will assist with the grouping of the data. The researcher will look for recurrent themes and answers for the questions that are included in the study. During the coding of the data, similar information collected can be categorized by a term or topic. The next step is to take all of the topics to create categories. The analysis and the deciphering of the different themes will be used for when the researcher completes the qualitative narrative to discuss the findings.

According to Merriam (2009) “coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (p. 173). Sorting through the data as a researcher is important to begin during the interview process. The following paragraphs will detail each level of analysis that will occur for this study.

Analytic memos are used so that the researcher is able to reflect on the data obtained as interviews are conducted. These memos help the researcher complete notes, note elements that stand out, as well as leading to theme and categorize the data collected.

First level analysis selecting a first cycle coding method for analyzing the data takes some reflection. According to Saldaña (2014), “depending on the nature and goals of your study, you may find that one coding method alone will suffice, or that two or more are needed to capture the complex processes or phenomena of your data” (p. 47). The researcher in this study utilized an emotion and theme-ing data coding.

Second level analysis in order to organize and reanalyze data already coded in the first cycle, a secondary method is needed. According to Saldaña (2009) “the primary goal during second cycle coding, if needed, is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes” (p. 149). The researcher in this study has utilized an axial coding.

Third level analysis as a final step is to establish validity and reliability of the data obtained. There are several strategies that promote validity and reliability. Merriam (2009) outlines eight different strategies that researcher may utilize. They are: triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, researcher’s position or reflexivity, peer review, audit trail, rich, thick descriptions, and maximum variation (p. 229). The researcher has utilized

the two strategies to establish validity and reliability of the data: triangulation and researcher's reflexivity.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher has discussed the research method that will be followed for this study. The researcher has discussed the research questions that will guide through the research. The population and setting of the participants that will participate in the study has been included as well as the any ethical considerations that will help make this study as ethical as possible. In the research design the researcher has discussed the approach and step-by-step outline of how the interview with each participant will be followed in a uniformed manner. Finally, the researcher has discussed the way that the interview questions were developed as well as what the data analysis strategy and interpretation that will take place concurrently as the data is collected. This data analysis will occur in four stages of analysis including: analytic memos, first and second cycle of coding and triangulation which will be discussed more in depth in the following Findings chapter.

Findings

This qualitative study was designed to elicit responses from worker who are non-native English speakers and whose primary language is Spanish. This study's objective was to find out through participants responses and narratives why English-only policies in the workplace should be eliminated and a better and improved manner of communication style should be implemented. Communication methods among non-native English speakers is important so that all employers of a particular organization understand and have full knowledge of the pertinent employee information. This study will allow to hear from workers who are non-native English speakers about improvements on communication methods for employee information and literature pertinent to the workplace, and that can be implemented in companies that have employees who are non-native English speakers. Selecting a coding method that adapts to this study was not a daunting task. The researcher selected a two data analysis technique for the coding and analysis of the data. The data analysis included in this study are: analytic memos, first and second cycles of coding, and triangulation.

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews with participants employed within diverse fields within U.S. companies. We begin with a brief introduction of each participant. The paper then discusses the data analysis strategy used for this study. The findings chapter then utilizes a three-level coding process, supporting the need for better communication methods for employees in the workplace who are non-native English speakers.

Participants

In this study a total of six participants employed in various fields and organizations allowed for a glimpse of their interactions and experiences at work. The six individuals who participated native language is Spanish. Utilizing the participant narratives responses filled with

emotional findings and it tied into the social exclusion theory. The social exclusion theory includes “the denial in access to resources, benefits and opportunities” (Cheung 2012, as cited in Wacquant, 2008). The researcher in this study selected participants were through a chain or network sampling. Participants that were interviewed were asked to suggest other participants and the researcher was able to obtain more participants. Of the participants that completed the interview 33% had resided in the United States more than 25 years in the United States. The other 50% have resided in the United States between 10-25 years. And 17% one participant has resided 10 years or less (see Figure 3). The participants consist of three females and three male participants. Participants are referred to by a pseudonym to protect their privacy. A brief description of the participants follows.

Ana is a late thirties Hispanic female who immigrated to the United States in 1994 has held various positions starting from cleaning jobs to governmental and county jobs such as letter sorter for USPS and currently a school bus driver.

Zoila is a mid-forties Hispanic female who has worked in the restaurant and food service industry since 1994. She currently holds a food service position in a school.

Carl is a late fifties Hispanic male who has resided in the United States for 21 years. He has worked at various non-profit organizations in the DC area. He currently is a Senior Accountant for a non-profit.

Idalia is a late fifties Hispanic Female who has resided in the United States for 37 years. She has always held cleaning jobs and is currently working as a cleaner in a governmental building.

Romulo is a late 60's Hispanic male who has resided in the United States for 25 years. He has worked various positions from constructions jobs to his current position as busser working in the hospitality industry.

Marcelo is an early 30's Hispanic male who has resided in the Unites States for 9 years. He has held various cleaning and construction jobs. He currently works as a floor technician.

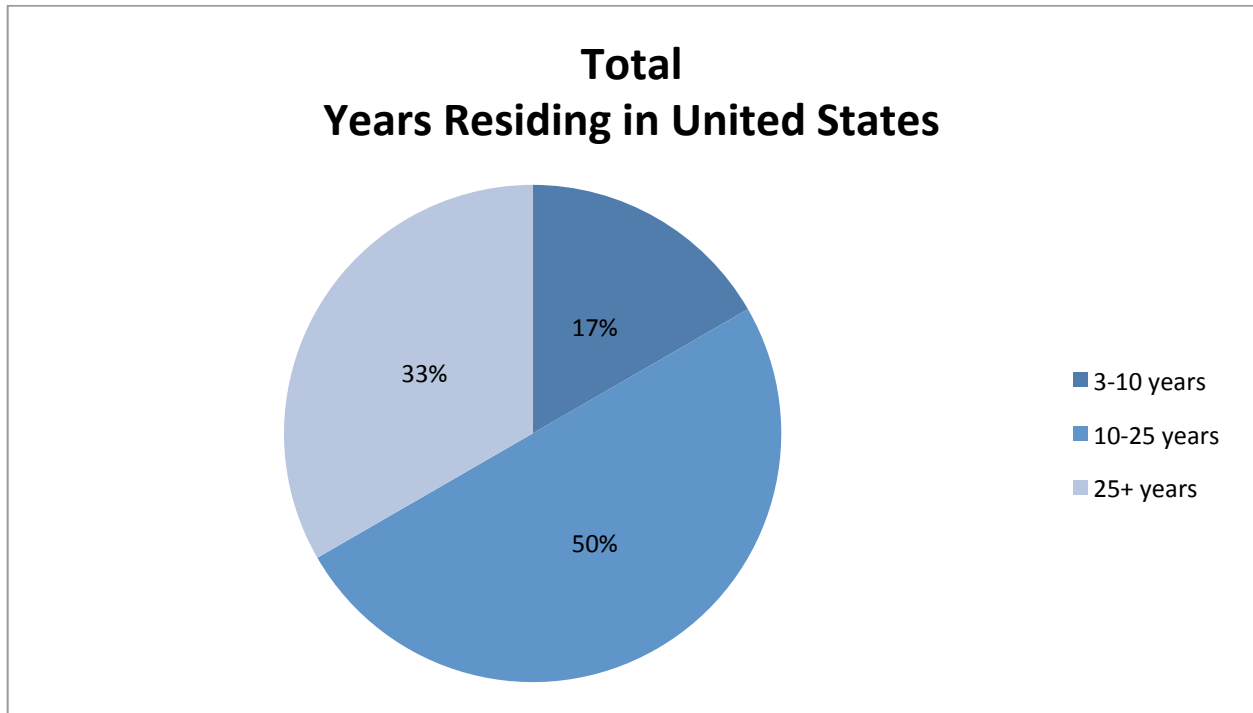


Figure 3. Participants total years residing in U.S.

Data Analysis and Coding

The data analysis is an important task for any qualitative study. The gathering of data through interviews, narratives, and observations involves all sorts of data breakdown. According to Merriam (2009), “data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data” (p. 175). The data collected may be categorized into several categories and themes, but it is important and a challenge for the researcher to “construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across your data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 181).

Analytic memos. The researcher used analytic memos to help in the coding and analysis of the data. The analytic memos may include determinant phrases or expressions that may help determine a definite coding. According to Saldaña (2009), “the purpose of analytic memo writing is to document and reflect on your coding process and code choice” (p. 32). Analytic memos allowed the researcher to extract phrases and statements by the participants that allowed me identify further research possibilities. For example one participant mentioned an incident at work where one co-worker who is a non-native English speaker suffered an injury at work, but due to his limited understanding of the benefits offered and his rights as a worker at this company, a benefit which may have helped him recuperate at home such is workers compensation insurance, was not claimed by the injured worker. These type of situations would allow for another study that would research employee benefits comprehension and use by workers who are non-native English speakers. The use of analytic memos also allows according to Saldaña (2009) for the establishment of connections between the researcher and the social world the researcher is studying (p. 34).

Primary level coding. The researcher in this study identified after the interviews that most of the participant’s responses elicited emotional responses and which became more prominent with each question. Some of the participants felt a sense of embarrassment in expressing their responses while others felt a sense of feeling of exclusion. The need to have two types of primary coding is necessary to capture the in-depth context obtained. According to Saldaña (2009) “the actual number of codes, categories, themes and/or concepts you generate for each project will vary and depend on many contextual factors...” (p. 19). According to Saldaña (2009) in selecting the appropriate coding method appropriate for the study, it depends “on the

nature and goals of your study, you may find that one coding method alone will suffice, or that two or more are needed to capture the complex processes or phenomena in your data” (p.47).

The researcher identified the Emotion Coding and Themeing Data as the primary coding. Saldaña (2009) also reiterates that “depending on the nature and goals of study, you may find that one coding method alone will suffice, or that one or more are needed to capture the complex processes or phenomena in your data” (p. 47). The participant’s responses elicited at the time of the interview emotions, but the need to capture what each unit of data means is necessary through themeing.

Emotion coding. As the interviews were conducted, the researcher initially deducted the need to include a coding that could best capture the rich narratives and the forms they were used to be expresses during the interviews. The use of an affective coding method which “investigates subjective qualities of human experiences” (p. 86) was more adapt to include in this study. The researcher selected the Emotion coding which “labels the feelings participants may have experienced” (p. 86). According to Saldaña (2009) Affective coding methods investigate subjective qualities of human experience (e.g., emotions, values, conflicts, judgments) by directly acknowledging and naming those experiences” (p.86). From the initiation to the conclusion of this study, the participants interviews and descriptive narrative where filled with various emotions.

According to Saldaña (2009) the use of “emotion codes alone can be applied to data very similar in context” (p. 87). In the following Table 1, the researcher identifies the type of emotion that participants elicited during the interviews. The researcher has also provided a circumstance that links each emotion felt at that particular time. Some of the emotions demonstrated by most of the participants are as follows:

Table 1. *Emotions and circumstances/cause linkage.*

Emotion demonstrated during Interview	Circumstance/Cause Linked → Emotion
Sense of Accomplishment	Of understanding the basic necessary daily information to get their jobs done
Embarrassment	Not comprehending basic information
Uncertainty	Of material presented to the worker if it is of importance for present or future needs
Anger	No attempt for non-native English speaker to know or learn about information needed
Resentment	Literature information not presented in native language
Hopelessness	No improvements for English language comprehension improvement
Content/Satisfied	Participant felt content with the level for English they have gained
Unworthiness	No opportunists for growth within company

Themeing data coding. Another first cycle coding method used will be themeing of the data. According to Saldaña (2009) “a theme is a *phrase* or *sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*” (p. 139). By having the assimilation theory in the forefront, based on the participant responses the researcher has deducted and condensed the gathered responses into the following themes:

Selection: work v. school/no/some formal schooling – when the participants were asked to describe some of the learning methods used to learn their current level of English proficiency most of the participants shared that they have had some formal level of learning English for example attending classes or utilizing a program for home use designed for English learning. Participants showed some level of displeasure when talking about this topic. Most of the participant’s responses included that when selecting between attending school or working, they had to choose work as they needed to survive, and they needed to provide for their children and themselves. Most expressed that if they could, they would have rather tried to attend school to

learn English which eventually might lead to better employment and attainment of a proficient English level.

Time: improving English comprehension – Participants responded that since immigrating to the United States, they were satisfied with their level of English. Almost all participants had seen significant level and satisfactory level of comprehension. All participants mentioned that they understood English and were capable enough to follow instructions at work hearing them in English. Two of the participants felt comfortable with reading English, while the other four participants were not comfortable with their reading level.

Utilization: of Spanish at home – All participants utilize Spanish at home with their children. They all stressed the importance of speaking Spanish to their children so that their children learn Spanish and maintain the level of comprehension intact. All participants spoke some words in English to their children sometimes at home.

Negative: experiences in the workplace- All of the participants responded to the question regarding experiences in the workplace involving negative experiences or difficulties as a non-native English speaker. One of the respondents who is an Office worker commented that his negative experience was more regarding the listening and the speaking of English. The participants who worked in labor or hospitality jobs, commented more on understanding safety policies as well as learning customer service in English. The participant who is a bus driver was more concerned with explaining and getting across the correct information, due to her sensitive and crucially important position of working with children, safety is always a concern for her.

Employers: assume that employees that are non-native English speakers understand- Two of the participants expressed that most of the management staff assume that they understand instructions and policies in English. The respondent that no level of effort was placed on behalf

of their organization to inform the group of employees who are non-native English speakers about employee information.

Lack of comprehension: in understanding employee information regarding benefits and safety- Five of the participants expresses their frustration in their lack of comprehension in understanding information regarding benefits as well as safety policies. They responded that the way they deal with this is because they use common thinking or assume by way of matching with other processes that have already been established which they are familiar with.

Utilizing the assimilation theory the themes can be categorized into the following:

Assimilation – “is the varied processes and paths that immigrants have undertaken to incorporate into the United States” (Immigration in America, 2011).

Table 2. *Assimilation experiences.*

Assimilation experiences
Work vs. school – no/some formal schooling
Time: Improving English comprehension
Employers assume that non-native English speakers understand

Table 3. Experiences of non-assimilation.

Non-assimilation experiences
Use of Spanish at home
Negative or difficult experiences at work
No comprehensive understanding of benefits or safety policies at work

Second level coding. In order to organize and reanalyze the data already coded in the first cycle, a secondary method is needed. According to Saldaña (2009), “the primary goal

during Second Cycle coding, if needed, is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes” (p. 149). This study will use Axial coding as the secondary level coding. The cause of emotions with the experiences of assimilation and experiences of non-assimilation, the researcher is able to create a two separate identities with which employees who are non-native English speakers can relate to while working in company or organization within the United States.

Identity one: Assimilation of non-native English speakers in U.S. workplaces leads to the workers feeling a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment allowing for improved employee morale at work. A sense of accomplishment for the participants who have at least learned to comprehend the basics to assist them in their job functions and responsibilities, allowing for more productive on their behalf.

Identity two: Non-assimilation of non-native English speakers through English-only policies that exist within U.S. workplaces this is where the non-assimilation exists leading to low employee morale, anger, resentment, hopelessness, unworthiness, uncertainty and embarrassment leading to these groups of worker feeling like outcasts.

In conclusion, the workers who are non-native English speakers can at one point assume both identities craving the need for more employee information to be communicated in their native language of Spanish at work.

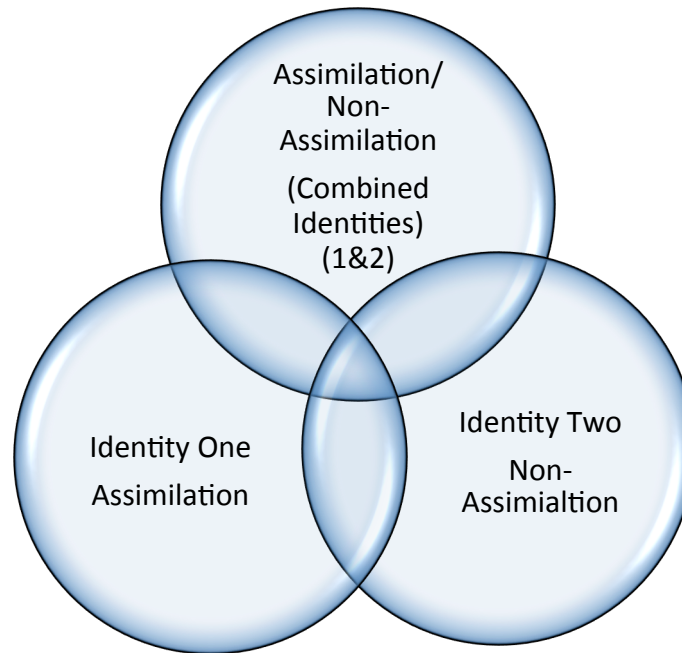


Figure 4. Identities of workers who are non-native English speakers

Triangulation. As final step to check this qualitative study's validity, the researcher has followed the most steps to include valid and reliable findings. According to Creswell (2014) it is imperative that the researchers includes a series of validity strategies to demonstrate to the reader the accuracy of the findings (p. 250). The method of triangulation allows for the examination of different data sources of information and use it to build a comprehensive and coherent justification of themes (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Following the methods of triangulation the researcher can conclude the following:

During the primary level coding the researcher gathered the different themes present after interviewing participants which allow the data to be coded using both emotion coding and theming of data coding. The coding of data using the two primary level coding allowed for emotions and theme of data to be linked to the second level of coding. The second level of analysis consisted of axial coding in which two identities were found to allow assimilation and non-assimilation identity of the workers who are non-native English speakers. Both the emotions

and theming of the data overlap with the assimilation or non-assimilation of these groups of workers.

Another strategy that the researcher has included as a form of validity and reliability for this study is the bias that the researcher brings in to the study. The self-reflection and narrative provides a rich description of the interpretation of findings and the way that they are shaped due to the researcher's cultural background (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

From the initiation of this study, it was determined that as the researcher of a topic that I can relate to closely, as my cultural background is of Salvadorean descent. Since both my parents immigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, they have always held jobs in hospitality or commercial cleaning businesses. My siblings and I have been fortunate enough to have almost always have access to medical health insurance as well as other benefits that both parent have been eligible for themselves and as well as for their dependents. They have signed up for the basic benefits that they need, but as I am now working in the Human Resources profession myself, I just realized that they both have not taken full advantage of their comprehensive benefits package. I have witnessed the struggle that both have experienced with the lack of an advanced English level comprehension, especially in the workplace. This study has validated the researcher's belief that communication styles need improvement for communication skills among employees who are non-native English speakers.

Summary

In the data analysis process the primary level coding used for this study were emotion coding and theming of data coding. Axial coding was the method selected for the secondary level coding. Through the data analysis, as part of the validity and reliability process, the researcher provided two narratives, one of data triangulation and another regarding the researcher's cultural background relating to the study. After completion of this stage of the

study, the researcher has gained understanding of the data and will proceed with the discussion of the results and make recommendations.

Discussion

In this section the researcher will cover a discussion on the main themes and concepts that resulted from this study. The research questions that helped guide this study will be discussed. But first the researcher will cover a brief overview of the previous chapter, the Findings for this study. Some final conclusions will be included to end this chapter with a narrative with recommendations that resulted from this study for the participants and their respectively group.

In the Findings chapter the researcher identified through the primary coding that emotion coding and themeing of data the participants emotions along with the cause of such emotion can be deduced that the workers who are non-native English speakers can identify or assume two separate identities or a combination of both. The assimilation allows for the employee to feel a sense of accomplishment, adaptation and acceptance on behalf of society. The non-assimilation is where the employee feels resentment, anger, resentment, hopelessness, unworthiness, uncertainty and embarrassment leading low employee morale. This non-assimilation occurs when the employee does not understand employee information such as policies and benefit information, as well as communication from their superiors. This leads to negative experiences at work, which may lead to low employee morale. The researcher was able to tie the information gathered from this study and help support the some of the information that was found in the literature review regarding assimilation of people that immigrated to the United States prior to the new wave of immigration to describe their integration into the mainstream.

Research Questions

The research questions that follow helped guide this study and provided the support for the need for this study and the particular group chosen for participation. It is the intent for the

researcher to answer these questions that lead to an answer or will establish the need for communication improvements in the workplace. The questions were created to provide the background information that is assumed of the participants who are employees in U.S. companies that are non-native English speakers and whose native language is Spanish.

Research question one (RQ 1): Will presenting materials in languages other than English, improve employee morale in the workplace?

From participant responses it can be concluded that obtaining employee information in Spanish as well as receiving verbal communication in Spanish could help employee morale among non-native English speakers in the workplace. As Ana Aguilar expresses “Hispanics would be more productive if they understood the policies clearly, in terms of what they had to do” (Ana Aguilar, 2015). The morale at work would improve significantly as this would assure to these workers the things that were not clear prior to their receipt in their native language.

Research question two (RQ 2): Should company policies and other employee information be presented in a language other than English?

Employee information such as company policies should be presented in a language other than English. Organizations should determine the need for literature in a secondary language if they have a majority of employees that speak a specific language. In the case of each participant in these various organizations they all expressed that they were part of this majority of workers who speak Spanish as their primary language. All participants expressed their concern in missing important information for lack of not fully understanding the information that was presented to them. Two of the participants, Idalia and Romulo expressed that their managers or supervisors assumed that the non-native English speakers understand what was being presented to them in terms of workplace safety. Both participants stated that what they did is to complete

daily tasks as they know it and piece spoken information as it related to their normal job duties and responsibilities. Almost all of the participants expressed the lack of gaining of important employee information and for their employer's motivation for the particular group of employees to gain access to employee information.

Research question three (RQ3): If a company implements English-only policies in the workplace, does it affect the employee performance in any way?

Gathered information in the literature review suggested that English-only policies in the workplace suggested a form of discrimination against national origin, but some employers argued that English-only policies in the workplace were a due to a business necessity. The researcher asked the participants of this study if a company that they worked for were to adapt an English-only policy, would this change their view about the company. Two of the participants responded that English-only policies would not change their view on the company, as one participant stated that currently in her job nobody speaks Spanish. One participant said that it would affect her view on the company and that she would seek employment elsewhere. The other participants responded that this would change their view of the company but that they were more accepting and said that they would remain at the company. The English-only policy would be a motivating for them to stay at the employment and motivate them to learn English, it would be the "push" that they need to learn English and gain a full understanding of it. The English-only policy may hinder four of the participants, as this would be another concern for them to deal with in their daily work.

Conclusions

From this study, the researcher has deducted that workers that are non-native English speakers can assimilate with two separate identities or a combination of both identities that allow

for assimilation and non-assimilation in the manner of communication in the workplace. The study has reiterated the importance for need of creating a clear communication with employee whose primary language is Spanish. The identities that each employee takes on will depend on the culture and manner in which each company sets its communication styles and the importance it places on this to assure that each employee understands. A framework of improved communication methods can be implemented as a way for best practices in which companies can learn from each other. Each company should be able to define and capture a new way of communicating with employees whose native language is Spanish. The Human Resources department of any company should be prepared to have any employee information ready as it currently is working with a diverse workforce which will only continue to thrive if they are better prepared and informed.

Recommendations and Implications

The recommendations that are crucial to be implemented in any organization that employs a majority of workers that are non-native English speakers, it is necessary to include literature, trainings and other pertinent employee information in their native language. As a means of best practices for a human resources department it is important to know the level of satisfaction and understanding that each employee has within the company. This can be completed through employee surveys, employee meetings that extend the level of comprehension of important employee information to non-native English speakers. It is important to take the extra step to assure that employees understand information such as employee benefits information or employee safety procedures. If needed more bilingual staff should be hired in order to explain and clarify information to those employees in need. With the increase and importance of the diversity and inclusion in organizations in the present day, it is necessary to

establish a feeling of welcome so this group of workers feel motivated to perform their best. Through the elicited responses from the participants of this study, it clearly is defined that the need for more comprehension is lacking and that companies need to realize that the complex employee benefits and employee policies are needed to be explained to these groups thus leading to an improved communication techniques. Improved communication techniques can include: literature in Spanish, supplemental visual aids which includes: videos, trainings, surveys, forms, employee appraisals, benefits forms and summaries. These are some of the employee information form an exhaustive list, which is necessary to have in Spanish.

Future research might investigate the depth of the issues that English-only policies at work create, an exploration of how the company is affected as well as productivity would be useful concerning this issue. Another research proposition could look more closely at the different levels of English language comprehension and how each groups works and how it affects them in the workplace.

Summary

The study for statement of the problem included in this study is English-only policies and the communication shortages companies are faced with when they employ workers who are non-native English speakers. This creates an exclusion for this group of employees to obtain the pertinent employee information that other employees who are native English speakers receive. The significance of this study is to provide a pathway to make changes in United States workplaces and the company's techniques with communicating with employees who are non-native English speakers. The research questions that outlined this study are the following: will presenting materials in a language other than English improve employee morale? Should company policies and other employee information be presented in a language other than

English? If a company implements English-only policies in the workplace, does it affect the employee performance in any way? The study provided answers that may be assumed and reiterated the need to present employee material in Spanish. It can be concluded that this study filled with emotional findings that workers who are non-native English speakers can identify with two identities in the workplace, an identity of assimilation and an identity of non-assimilation, or both. Some of the implication that may already be established and that may create block for implementing new communication techniques in Spanish, are the already established companies which have adapted English-only policies in the workplace or that have a business necessity for it. It is with great optimism that researcher looks forward to that this study will be able to provide information that can be helpful in improving communication techniques among employees who are non-native English speakers. The workers make up a majority group in U.S. companies and are seeking to gain the same information that is available in English. This will help this group of hard-working employees thrive and be more productive, while being motivated to work hard to reach the mission and goals of their organization.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter English

March 1, 2015

Dear Participant,

My name is Sandra Mendez and I am a graduate student at Trinity Washington University. I am studying Administration with a focus on Human resources Management.

I am providing you this letter because I have obtained some pre-qualification and have determined that you are eligible to participate in my study. I would like to provide you an explanation in why I would like for you to participate in my study.

The research study will only include participants that have been working in the United States for three years or more and have worked in a company that offers benefits or that has established policies and work rules.

I have designed questions that will prepare you to think about how policies are written within companies. These questions will also let you think about past experiences which may be negative or positive experiences that are related with the communication styles and the way that policies and benefit information are delivered to those employees who are non-native English speakers.

Your participation in any phase of this study is completely voluntary and will not in any way affect your current employment or hinder your relationship with your employer. To reiterate, you may stop your participation at any time or you may decline to participate in the study. The study will be conducted during the time periods as follows: March 8, 2015 through March 14, 2015. There are minimal risks involved and this study is used for educational purposes only.

To protect your confidentiality, your name will not appear on any materials of the study and a pseudonym will be assigned to you. This survey will only be shared among myself, Sandra Mendez, and my Professor Dr. Kelley Wood, at Trinity Washington University. If you have any questions or concerns or if you would like to receive a final copy of this research study after completion, please feel free to contact me at (202) 492-0412 or mendezs@students.trinitydc.edu

This letter serves as a consent from you for your participation and will be kept in a personal locked file for a minimal of the three years after the completion of this study. If you have any questions about this research, please call Dr. Kelley Wood, my research supervisor for this project or the Business & Graduate Studies at Trinity Washington University at (202) 884-9640.

Please return this form to Ms. Sandra Mendez directly by March 9, 2015. Thank you for your time and cooperation. Sincerely, Sandra Mendez

Appendix B: Carta de Reclutamiento, Espanol

01 de marzo de 2015

Estimado participante,

Mi nombre es Sandra Mendez y soy una estudiante graduado en la Universidad de Washington Trinity. Estoy estudiando administración con énfasis en gestión de recursos humanos.

Te proporciono esta carta porque has obtenido una precalificación y se ha determinado que usted es elegible para participar en mi estudio. Me gustaría darle una explicación de por qué me gustaría que usted participara en mi estudio.

El estudio de investigación sólo incluirá a los participantes que han estado trabajando en los Estados Unidos durante tres años o más y han trabajado en una empresa que ofrece beneficios o que ha establecido políticas y reglas de trabajo.

He diseñado preguntas que le preparará para pensar sobre cómo las políticas están escritas dentro de las empresas. Estas preguntas también le permitirá pensar en experiencias pasadas, que pueden ser positiva o negativa experiencia s que están relacionadas con los estilos de comunicación y la forma esa información políticas y beneficios...

Su participación en cualquier fase de este estudio es totalmente voluntaria y no de ninguna manera afectara su empleo actual o dificultara su relación con su empleador. Para reiterar, usted puede dejar su participación en cualquier momento o usted puede negarse a participar en el estudio. El estudio se llevará a cabo durante los periodos de la siguiente manera: 8 de marzo, 2015 hasta 14 de marzo, 2015. Son mínimos los riesgos involucrados y este estudio se utilizara sólo para fines educativos.

Para proteger su confidencialidad, su nombre no aparecerá en los materiales de estudio y un distinto nombre será asignado a usted. Esta encuesta sólo será compartida entre yo, Sandra Méndez y mi profesor Dr. Kelley Wood, en la Universidad de Washington de Trinity. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud o si desea recibir una copia final de esta investigación y estudio después de la terminación, por favor no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo al (202) 492-0412 o mendezs@students.trinitydc.edu

Esta carta sirve como un consentimiento de usted por su participación y se mantendrá en un archivo personal bajo llave por un mínimo de tres años después de la realización de este estudio. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre esta investigación, por favor llame al Dr. Kelley Wood, mi supervisor de investigación para este proyecto o al departamento de negocio y estudios de posgrado en la Universidad de Washington de Trinity al (202) 884-9640.

Por favor devuelva este formulario a la Sra. Sandra Mendez directamente antes del 9 de marzo de 2015. Gracias por su tiempo y cooperación.

Atentamente, Sandra Mendez

Appendix C: Recruitment Script:

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening (Participant),

Thank you for taking the time to come in to meet with me at this time. This total time allocated for this interview will be between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

First, let me give you a brief background about myself and speak to you about the research and what this study is about. My name is Sandra Mendez and I am currently a graduate student completing this project as a degree requirement towards my Masters of Science Administration in Human Resources Management. I am researching on the recommendations and improvements in communication methods in the workplace among non-native English speakers.

If you would like to proceed with this study, please fill out the attached Informed Consent Form. Please retain one copy for your records.

At this time, I would also like to ask for your permission to tape record this interview. This will allow me to go back and analyze your responses. Any information that you share with me, will remain confidential.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your responses or stop the interview at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-492-0412 or by email at mendezs@students.trinitydc.edu

You may also contact my research supervisor Dr. Kelley Wood at 202-884-9640.

Again, thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and participating in this study.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form, English

Improving Communication Methods in the workplace among Non-Native English Speakers

My name is Sandra Mendez and I would like to invite you to participate in a research study examining the improvement of communication methods in the workplace among non-native English speakers, which will add to the knowledge related to human resources policies and processes. The data collected in this study will help fulfill the requirements for a Master of Arts/ Master of Science in Administration in Human Resources Management at Trinity Washington University. I am under the supervision of my faculty advisor Dr. Kelley Wood.

Participation Requires of You: To participate in an interview with the researcher, Sandra Mendez, answering a series of questions that have been previously developed. The interview time will last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. Your participation requires you to sign this Informed Consent Form.

Your Privacy: Your participation in this study and your responses will be kept confidential. Any reference to you will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from your responses. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher will have access to. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Risks to you: There are five acknowledged risks generally associated with participation in research studies such as this one: Physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who choose to participate in this study. There is no planned use of deception involved in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study; other risks might include the following:

You might experience anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked of them in this research study. If you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or you may contact my faculty advisor or the BGS Institutional Review Board, especially if your discomfort continues after the study. See the contact information on the page below.

You might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. The researcher will maintain your confidentiality throughout the study, and will destroy the records of your participation three years after the study is complete.

Benefits to You: There are not foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the degree requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

Informed Consent Form, continued:Improving Communication Methods in the workplace among Non-Native English Speakers

I acknowledge that the researcher has explained my rights, the requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. By signing below and providing my contact information I am indicating that I consent to participate in this study, that I am at least 18 years of age, and I am eligible to participate in this study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying me by email. If you have any concerns regarding your participation in this research study you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Kelley Wood, or the BGS Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees the ethical practice of research involving human participants conducted by students of the Trinity Washington University School of Professional Studies.

Signing this document acknowledges you understand your rights as a participant, which have been explained to you prior to signing this document. You may ask for a copy of this document for your own records.

Signed Name: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Phone Number, Email Address, or Postal Address: _____

Thank you for your participation, I appreciate your time.

Sandra Mendez
MSA in Human Resources Management
Trinity Washington University
Email Address: mendezs@students.trinitydc.edu

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kelley Wood
MSA Program
Trinity Washington University
(202) 884-9640, or
woodk@trinitydc.edu

BGS Institutional Review Board Committee
(202) 884-9640, or
BGS@trinitydc.edu with BGS IRB in the subject line.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form, Espanol**Apéndice C: Formulario de consentimiento informado**Mejorar los métodos de comunicación en el trabajo entre hablantes de inglés no nativos

Mi nombre es Sandra Mendez y me gustaría invitarte a participar en un estudio de investigación acerca de mejora los métodos de comunicación en el trabajo entre hablantes de inglés no nativos, que se sumarán a los conocimientos relacionados con los procesos y políticas de recursos humanos. Los datos recogidos en este estudio ayudará a cumplir los requisitos para una maestría / Master de Ciencias en administración en gestión de recursos humanos en la Universidad de Washington de Trinidad. Estoy bajo la supervisión de mi asesor Dr. Kelley Wood.

La participación requiere de usted: para participar en una entrevista con la investigadora, Sandra Mendez, respondiendo a una serie de preguntas que se han desarrollado anteriormente. El tiempo de la entrevista durará aproximadamente 30 minutos a 1 hora. Su participación requiere que firmar este formulario de consentimiento informado.

Su privacidad: Su participación en este estudio y sus respuestas se mantendrán confidencial. Cualquier referencia que será por seudónimo, incluyendo cualquier citas directas de sus respuestas. Este documento y cualquier nota o grabaciones que pueden identificarlo personalmente como un participante en este estudio se mantendrá en un lugar cerrado con llave que solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a. Sólo la investigadora y el supervisor de investigación podrían saber quién ha participado en este estudio. Tres años después de la realización de esta investigación estudio de toda la información de identificación personal serán destruidos.

Los riesgos para usted: hay cinco riesgos reconocidos generalmente asociados con la participación en estudios de investigación como ésta: física, psicológica, social, económico y legal. La investigadora prevé un riesgo mínimo para aquellos que decidan participar en este estudio. No hay prevista del engaño involucrados en este estudio. No hay previstos físicos riesgos asociados con este estudio; otros riesgos pueden incluir lo siguiente:

Usted puede experimentar ansiedad, malestar o las emociones negativas como resultado de responder a las preguntas de ellos en este estudio de investigación. Si usted experimenta una reacción negativa, usted puede optar por omitir la pregunta, de retirarse del estudio, o puede comunicarse con mi asesor de la Facultad o la Junta de revisión institucional BGS, especialmente si su malestar continúa después del estudio. Consulte la información de contacto en la página siguiente.

Puede tener implicaciones sociales, económicas o legales si compartes tus respuestas o su participación en este estudio con los demás. Si usted decide participar en este estudio, le animamos a mantener en secreto su participación en este estudio y sus respuestas. La

investigadora mantendrá su confidencialidad durante todo el estudio y a destruir los registros de su participación tres años después de completar el estudio.

Beneficios para usted: no hay beneficios directos previstos a usted con respecto a la participación en este estudio más allá de los conocimientos generales que está ayudando a promover los conocimientos relacionados con este tema de investigación, y la investigadora en completar los requisitos de grado. No hay ninguna compensación asociada con la participación en este estudio.

Reconozco que la investigadora ha explicado mis derechos, las necesidades de este estudio y los potenciales riesgos de participar en este estudio. Entiendo que no hay ninguna indemnización, o directamente se benefician de participar en este estudio. Al firmar a continuación y proporcionar mi información de contacto que estoy indicando que doy mi consentimiento para participar en este estudio, que tengo por lo menos 18 años de edad y yo soy elegible para participar en este estudio.

Usted podrá retirar de este estudio en cualquier momento puede notificarme por correo electrónico. Si tiene alguna preocupación con respecto a su participación en este estudio de investigación puede comunicarse con mi asesor, Dr. Kelley Wood o el BGS institucional Review Board (IRB), que supervisa la práctica ética de la investigación con participantes humanos llevada a cabo por estudiantes de la escuela de estudios profesionales Trinidad Washington University.

Firmar este documento reconoce que entiende sus derechos como participante, que le han sido explicadas antes de firmar este documento. Puede solicitar una copia de este documento para sus propios registros.

Firma : _____ Fecha: _____

Impreso nombre: _____

Dirección Postal, dirección de correo electrónico o número de teléfono: _____

Gracias por tu participación, te agradezco tu tiempo.

Sandra Mendez

MSA en gestión de recursos humanos

Trinity Washington University

Dirección de correo electrónico: mendezs@students.trinitydc.edu

Supervisor de investigación: Dr. Kelley Wood

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Comité de revisión institucional BGS

(202) 884-9640, o

BGS@trinitydc.edu con BGS IRB en la línea de asunto.

Appendix F: Survey Instrument

If the participant is more comfortable being interviewed in Spanish, the researcher, native speaker, will translate as she asks participants questions.

Demographics

1. What is your cultural background?
2. How long have you resided in the US?
3. How would you describe your level of English comprehension: beginner, intermediate advanced?

Probe 1: How long did it take you to arrive at your current level of English comprehension?

Probe 2: What learning methods did you use to learn your level of English proficiency?

4. What other language besides English do you speak?

Probe 3: Was learning the other language, just as easy or harder than learning English?

5. What language do you speak at home?

Probe 4: Do you speak this language to your children at home?

6. Are you comfortable with your level of speaking English?

Probe 5: When do you feel the most uncomfortable in your use of English?

7. If you were employed at a company that adopted an English-only policy in the workplace, would this change how you view the company?

Probe 6: Would you seek employment elsewhere?

Probe 7: What determinant factors would cause for you to leave this company?

Narrative Question

Tell me about your experiences in the workplace as a non-native English speaker. What difficulties or issues have you encountered? What types of assistance have you had and how might communication have been improved in the situation?

Professional Background/Experiences

1. What are the total number of years that you have been employed in the US?
2. In the past, have companies you have worked for, or are currently employed at, presented any materials regarding benefits and other important employee information in your native language?
3. Would you want materials to be presented in your native language?
4. Do you feel most comfortable when employee information such as workplace safety, company policies or benefits are explained in your native language?

Probe 1: If material is not presented in you native language, do you think that the company should?

5. Would you participate in a benefit or comment more frequently at meetings, if material were presented to you in your native language?

Probe 2: At the current moment, do you participate frequently in meetings or informational sessions at work?

6. What are some concerns that you have when materials are not presented to you in your native language?
7. What improvements would you suggest to a company, in the manner that it presents information to its employees, whose native language is not English?

Conclusion

1. Are there any questions or any other topic that you think I should include in my study or wish that would have covered more in depth?
2. If I have any further questions, or need further clarification, may I contact you?
3. Do you know any acquaintances, co-workers, friends, or family members that would qualify to participate in this study and who would be willing to participate?

Thank you for your participation!