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Cultural Perspectives on Communication in Community Leadership

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Abeer Anwar

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Walden University

2018

Abstract

Cultural Perspectives on Communication in Community Leadership

by

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MBA, DeVry University, 2009

BS Honors, University of the Punjab, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Management

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Abstract

Effective communication is important, particularly for the over 26 million immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds who have entered the U.S. workforce. The research problem addressed the disillusion of non-English speakers in the workplace because of the communication gap. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers in overcoming language and cultural communication challenges at work. The research question focused on how non-English speakers or English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace. The theoretical framework was based on the cultural approach to organizations and the transactional model of communication. A qualitative narrative inquiry design was used that employed sources of information including an interview questionnaire and existing literature. The target population was immigrant employees who are managers, assistant managers, and supervisors in New York City and Long Island who work in accounting, banking, finance, information technology, and marketing with at least 5 years' experience. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select 20 participants for semistructured interviews. The qualitative data were subjectively analyzed by using member checking and triangulation. Key findings indicated 6 themes: miscommunication, lack of appropriate terms, delays in work completion, loss of respect, inability to express oneself clearly, and the need to use alternative means of communication. Opportunity for contributions to social change can include increased understanding and utilization of effective management and communication strategies for dealing with non-English-speaking and ESL workers. This can also help to bridge cultural and language gaps.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Effective communication in the workplace is an issue, particularly for immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds (Akomolafe, 2013; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015). Communication affects the way that people behave, how they think, and even how they feel (Castells, 2013). It is a part of everyday life and necessary for continued interaction among individuals (Castells, 2013). Communication has several different functions within the workplace setting. It acts as a method of motivation, allows for the retention of control, ensures information dissemination, and permits the identification of social concerns of individuals (Lewis, Goodman, & Fandt, 2006). Also, the practice of communication has certain cultural boundaries, due to the variances in how people with diverse perspectives and behaviors give and receive messages. Appropriate care and attention should be given to ensuring that effective communication is present across cultures (Lewis et al., 2006).

With more than 26 million foreign-born persons reported in the U.S. labor force, American businesses face the challenges of language and cultural barriers, which can inhibit effective communication and subsequently hinder productivity and increase safety risks (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016). Information regarding how business leaders can improve, manage, and better communicate with non-English speaking workers is in the best interest of employers and business leaders who want to help bridge the cultural and language divide as more foreign-born workers enter America's workforce.

Certain methods of communication are universal, such as symbols, gestures, and even specific body language that allow people to communicate with one another

regardless of the country of origin or the culture by which one currently identifies (Castells, 2013). When individuals are speaking a second or third language, nuances can be lost, creating a situation in which one may misinterpret a message or how to accomplish a task (Castells, 2013). Consequently, when issues in communication arise, regardless of what those issues may be, messages get lost in translation. A certain amount of interference results in the failure to communicate (International Association of Communication Activists; ICACT, 2016). In such scenarios, the ill effects caused by the communication failure can be detrimental to the successful completion of the overall goal of that communication (Davis, 2016; Iglesias, Jimenez, Revuelta, & Moreno, 2014; Stern, 2015; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014).

Although research frequently covers communication barriers, most previous research concentrated on areas associated with healthcare and education. Researchers have sought to determine the way professionals can more effectively communicate with those they are tasked to serve or how such individuals can communicate more efficiently among one another to create an environment that is more conducive to providing services (Davis, 2016; Iglesias et al., 2014; Stern, 2015).

The primary focus of this qualitative narrative inquiry study is to explore and describe the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers. Also, I sought to share their experiences in overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace. Such communication problems are areas that researchers have overlooked within the context of this field of study. Through the exploration of this topic, it would be possible to understand the communication barriers present among non-

English speaking immigrant workers and reveal the way such barriers could be lessened, resulting in increasing overall productivity and efficacy for all.

Background of the Study

Globalization could decrease distance barriers by acculturating employees to a multicultural, multilingual workforce, which could, in turn, lead to best management practices and success (Akhavan, 2012; Sanzone, 2015). Global expansion demonstrates, with the proper knowledge and skill set, that such barriers can be overcome, allowing people and organizations alike to flourish. If the appropriate knowledge and expertise necessary to communicate within and between the two groups are not present, problems can arise (Parthab Taylor, Nicolle, & Maguire, 2013; Tian & Borges, 2011).

Poor communication can contribute to lost time at work, resource loss, rising overhead costs, and decreasing competitive advantage. In general, it can create a host of issues for an organization that would be resolved if no barrier was present because of either cultural or language differences (Parthab Taylor et al., 2013; Tian & Borges, 2011). In working to study the effects of communication and the associated barriers present within a targeted group of individuals, it can become possible to negate issues that may arise, allowing for the benefit of all involved.

Additional research has been undertaken regarding the difficulties that barriers due to poor language communication cause within the business world. Thus, many scholarly researchers have focused on education and the healthcare professions within the context of their explorations (Akhavan, 2012; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Free, Križ, & Konecnik, 2014; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013). These past studies offer general information on how to address communication barriers that may occur within the

workplace due to cultural differences (Free et al., 2014; Jameson & Rymer, 1994; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013; Sun, 2011; Tian & Borges, 2011). While these past studies can be helpful on a broad scale, they do little to target areas in which these communication barriers create issues that are cause for concern.

Akhavan (2012), Carr and Dekemel-Ichikawa (2012), Free et al. (2014), and Parthab Taylor et al. (2013) have explored communication barriers between teachers and parents or between medical staff and patients. Nonetheless, they have not considered such barriers within the workplace setting. They have also did not account for the context of both parties being on the same side concerning being tasked with the provision of goods or services. Instead, the researchers have concentrated on the issues that result from those on two different sides of the transaction. One side gives the goods or services, the other receives them (Free et al., 2014; Jameson & Rymer, 1994; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013; Sun, 2011; Tian & Borges, 2011). These studies leave several distinct gaps in the current body of research. For example, one scenario present within the extant body of literature regarding communication obstacles is the language barriers to communication within the workplace, and the means of addressing those barriers as they relate only to members of management communicating with employees (Lewis et al., 2006; Lockwood, 2015; Mujtaba, Cavico, & Muffler, 2012). Little information is present within the literature regarding other communication barriers that may arise within the workplace among non-English speaking employees such as among different departments, different offices, or different individuals within the same department (Chitakornkijasil, 2010).

Researchers have provided information regarding barriers that may arise in communication because of cultural and language differences and the difficulties that

educators face in communicating with students (e.g., Free et al., 2014). However, no information is present on the different barriers that may occur in communications between principal and other teachers, among teachers, or between teachers and parents (Free et al., 2014). Akhavan (2012) posited that barriers to communication are numerous in healthcare as an overall field, particularly in the nursing profession, and even from the position of midwives. None of the researchers have looked at communication barriers from the other side of the divide, from the patients' perspective, and few touch on the communication barriers that may arise among different healthcare staff members (Akhavan, 2012; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013). Some of the remaining researchers in this area offer methods that may be used to address general cultural communication issues. They advise others to apply those suggested solutions in the manner best suited to their communication barriers, leaving multiple areas that warrant further investigation (Dawood & O'Sullivan, 2012; Sun, 2011; Tian & Borges, 2011).

Problem Statement

Effective communication in the workplace is an issue, particularly for immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds (Akomolafe, 2013; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015). With more than 26 million foreign-born persons reported in the U.S. labor force, American businesses face the challenges of language and cultural barriers, which can inhibit effective communication and subsequently hinder productivity and increase safety risks (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016). Information regarding how business leaders can improve, manage, and better communicate with non-English speaking workers is in the best interest of

employers and business leaders who want to help bridge the cultural and language divide as more foreign-born workers enter America's workforce.

The general management problem is that language and cultural barriers hinder the ability of a business to recruit and successfully employ immigrant workers. The specific management problem is that some business leaders and managers lack understanding of the language barriers and cultural issues of immigrant workers from various backgrounds. An understanding of such issues would help employers increase recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of immigrant workers. Ultimately, better communication may help businesses remain competitive by maintaining a productive, safe, and healthy workplace environment. Although many researchers have explored language and cultural barriers for English as a second language (ESL) employees in business, healthcare and education, there is a gap in the literature on the experience of immigrant employees in the workplace.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study is to explore and describe the stories, experiences, and challenges of non-English speaking immigrant and ESL workers, in overcoming language and cultural communication in the workplace. In this study, I aim to understand and describe how communications and workplace culture influence the perspectives of each participant's worldview and understanding.

Communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics are created and shared. Communication itself creates culture (Wang, Lin, & Chu, 2011). As such, the relationship between communication and culture is a complex concept. This qualitative study may contribute to the literature by revealing various

approaches for decreasing the challenges associated with communication barriers in the workplace that immigrants face.

The aim of this study is to accomplish the task of understanding how non-English speaking immigrants experience language and cultural challenges by exploring various written and oral communication barriers that occur among employers and immigrant workers. To accomplish the task of understanding how non-English speaking immigrants experience language and cultural challenges, I asked the participants to recount details of the various communication barriers they felt that they have faced within the context of their work environment. I explored various written and oral communication barriers that occur among immigrants by recording the experiences of culturally diverse non-English speaking and ESL employees of American companies. By exploring these issues, it might be possible to understand the communication barriers present among non-English speaking immigrant workers and reveal strategies to remove the barriers and raise overall productivity and efficacy.

Research Question

The primary research question to be addressed within the context of the study is the following:

How do immigrant workers who are non-English speakers or ESL speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace?

Theoretical Foundation

Communication theories serve as the theoretical foundation on which this study lays its groundwork. Communication theories take their frame from a host of different researchers, all working to explore the methods of communication using a targeted

approach to the various aspects of communication present within the context of daily life (Heath & Bryant, 2012). These theories serve as a way of allowing the examination of the communication process and allow researchers to explore the similarities and differences present within the communication that occurs among individuals and groups, as well as within the context of organizational and mass media approaches (Heath & Bryant, 2012; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). The theory research process allows for the application of the knowledge of communication within the given construct of a setting or scenario (Stacks & Salwen, 2014).

To apply communication theory within the context of the research setting, the researcher must first identify "an area of communication interest" (Stacks & Salwen, 2014, p. 5). In this case, the exploration of non-English speakers or ESL speakers and the difficulties they face within the workplace setting as related to communication. Following this application, the identification of interpersonal interactions within this setting, combined with deductions and the application of knowledge, can allow for the use of reasoning and understanding to the communication process within the given setting (Stacks & Salwen, 2014). In the application of this process, it becomes possible to identify the shifts in communication, the language in use and its meaning, the uncertainty that creates barriers, and the means of addressing those barriers through the dynamics of communication (Stacks & Salwen, 2014). By viewing the collected experiences of participants in this regard, it was possible to analyze each of the areas of communication failure identified by the participants and in gathering and analyzing this information to be able to identify practical solutions within this specific setting.

Conceptual Framework

I based the conceptual framework for this study on two communication theories: the cultural approach to organizations (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988) and the transactional model of communication (Barnlund, 1970). Using specific communications theories and applying them as the conceptual framework of the study allowed me to utilize the lens of communication to explore each of the different barriers to communication that occur because of cultural differences within this target population. Thus, using the cultural approach to organizations and the transactional model of communication enabled the qualitative defining of each of these barriers, their characteristics, and whether those barriers are present across all the different cultures being investigated, or if some barriers are specific to certain cultures alone.

Cultural Approach to Organizations

Geertz and Pacanowsky (1988) developed the cultural approach to organizations theory. Geertz was an anthropologist whose work was originally with cultures in underdeveloped nations. Pacanowsky's background was in speech communication and the basis of his work stemmed from an interest in Japanese organizations. While the environment of an organization is constrained by the freedom of action belonging to the company (in other words, it controls corporate character and image), the culture is not what an organization has but what it does (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988). The theory is ethnographic and underlies the common meaning of what people do and say. The description traces threads of a tangled puzzle and starting with a state of confusion ends with a lessened state of confusion (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988). The researchers discussed metaphor, stating that metaphors are a starting point for understanding the

shared meaning that is part of the corporate culture. From shared meaning comes stories, which shed light on the culture of an organization, yet Geertz and Pacanowsky (1988) warned that interpreting stories might be too simplistic. The cultural approach to organizations theory has been applied to various studies involving corporate culture in a globally expanding business world (e.g., Collier, 2016; Gambetti, 2013; Liu, 2010).

Transactional Model of Communication

The transactional model of communication is a symbolic rather than physical model and functional model rather than the structural model (Barnlund, 1970). Barnlund's (1970) diagrammatic model demonstrates the complexity of human communication. Some of the principles of Barnlund's model are that communication is dynamic, continuous, circular, unrepeatable, irreversible, and complex. It is not a matter of a sender delivering a message to a receiver and the receiver, in turn, delivering a message back to the sender but instead a complex exchange involving decoding, encoding, public cues, private cues, and nonverbal behavioral cues (Barnlund, 1970). Among the different areas that were applied in this study, within the context of the transactional model of communication are communication noise, the communication cycle, and feedback, all of which address the process of communication (Adler & Proctor, 2010; IACACT, 2016).

Connection of the Theories to the Present Study

Part of the feedback described by the transactional model would involve different nonverbal communication and filters unconsciously communicated by ESL immigrant employees to native English-speaking employees as they simultaneously send and receive messages. These patterns often present barriers to open communication in a multicultural company and this is the focus of the present study. Additionally, the cultural approach to

organizations theory is an appropriate fit for this study; since it explores and understand experiences told by non-English speaking immigrant and ESL workers in overcoming language and cultural communication in the workplace.

Pompper (2014) argued that those who have used communication theories have not addressed questions of power and methodology regarding differences in social identity and that the social position of the research affects data analysis. In using the transactional theory of communication and the cultural approach to organizations theory, I was able to gain increased insight and understanding into what those barriers are and how researchers might address them.

Nature of the Study

This research uses a qualitative method of inquiry. This research approach was selected as the most effective design for this study because it can provide the most beneficial results. It allowed me to answer the research questions in their entirety. At the same time, it ensured that I could explore the nuances of the communication process in a manner that would not be possible using a quantitative study (Creswell, 2013, 2014). The design of this qualitative study is that of a narrative inquiry, based on the experiences of the participants as the primary data collected through semistructured interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative inquiry was first employed within the management science field and later in the knowledge management field; it has also been related to the information management field (Cleveland, 1989). Researchers in any field who use narrative inquiry emphasize learning by focusing on the life stories the study participants tell (Chase, 2013). Even if related to one individual, the narratives are considered valuable (OMICS

International, 2014), which makes narrative inquiry an appropriate method for exploring the experiences of non-English speakers in the workplace. Lenfesty, Reichling, and Schultz (2016) claimed that narrative thinking gives the researcher a storytelling vocabulary from which arise global meaning and sense making. The researcher can obtain data from field notes, interviews, journals, and other sources (Lenfesty et al., 2016). Further, a theoretical lens offers a structure toward advocating for particular groups, and the findings can give a voice to those who are not always acknowledged (Lenfesty et al., 2016). The participants in the study had extensive experience as employees who are culturally diverse and speak English as a Second Language.

I considered grounded theory design unsuitable for this study given the fact that I used communication theory as the conceptual framework within the context of this study; thus, no new theories need to be developed (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The ethnographical design was considered unsuitable for this study as it would only offer scientific descriptions of customs of individuals or cultures, but not provide an effective exploration among multiple non-English speaking cultures (Denzin, 2012). I dismissed case study because it would narrow the scope of the study to a particular organization, environment, or individual, thereby decreasing the effectiveness of the study and contributing to further gaps (Denzin, 2012). Finally, I considered a phenomenological study, but I ultimately discarded it in favor of narrative inquiry. Although such method addresses experiences, generally through face-to-face interviews alone, interviews regarding personal stories of communication challenges in the natural work environment of the participant (Frost, 2011), would provide rich data in fields where communication is essential to human interaction in the workplace (Reissman & Speedy, 2006).

Definitions

The following definitions can assist the reader in understanding the concepts employed within the completion of this study. Terms defined herein are those that may be unfamiliar or have multiple meanings. Presenting the single definition to be used within the study serves to increase its overall validity and reliability and works to reduce potential misconceptions that may otherwise arise within the readership.

Communication cycle: The communication cycle defines the three primary parts of communication, wherein there is a sender, a channel, and a receiver (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). It is modeled initially on the way a telephone operates; this cycle became the primary means through which the process of communication could be understood within the context of a research-based setting (IACACT, 2016).

Communication noise: Communication noise refers to any interference that may originate, causing difficulty in decoding the messages sent between two or more parties in an attempt to communicate with one another (IACACT, 2016).

Non-English-speaking workers: Within the context of this study in the United States, this term is used to describe all individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, typically those whose origins were from a different country (Imberti, 2007).

Transactional model of communication: The transactional model of communication is present when the sender and receiver take turns exchanging messages, with one sending a message, the other receiving it, then the second sending a message, and the first receiving it (Barnlund, 1970).

Assumptions

Within the context of this study, one can assume that individuals who do not speak English, or who do not speak English as their primary language in the workplace, have difficulties that arise as a result of communication barriers. This assumption is based on the challenges associated with the process of communication, from the subtleties related to nonverbal cues to the varied meanings related to words and phrases and the different nuances present from culture to culture (Argyle, 2013; Carbaugh, 2013). I further assumed that the experiences of individuals who are non-English speakers or ESL speakers served to shed light on these communication concerns by allowing for a reduced gap within the literature. Moreover, it is assumed the participants have sufficient experiences that the researcher could rely on with the collection of the participants' narratives. Their communication exchanges provided the information necessary to explore this topic in depth and would allow for the successful analysis of this area of concern.

I assumed that the individuals who were responding had recorded their experiences truthfully for the purposes of the study and all of their narratives were reported honestly, although I expected that a certain degree of bias was present regarding their perceptions. The above circumstances would necessitate a targeted exploration of the way communication failures occur within this group of individuals. The exploration might contribute to reducing future areas of concern and increasing the cohesion through which individuals operate within the workplace setting (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016). Although these assumptions are reasonable within the context of the study and considering the information contained within the extant body of

literature, it was still necessary to detail such assumptions to increase the overall validity and reliability of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this study was the exploration of the language and cultural challenges that immigrant workers within the United States experience during their workday and within the context of their work environment. To focus on these problems, I concentrated the scope of the study on an exploration of the experiences of immigrant workers and identified employees who are non-English speaking or who are ESL individuals. The experiences to be addressed were the written and oral communication barriers that these workers believed they have faced within the context of their work environment.

To complete such a task, I set certain delimitations for this study. Delimitations act as a means of limiting the influences that constrict the study capacity (Creswell, 2013). The delimitations present within this study included the populations chosen to explore the study, non-English speaking employees, and the choice to have the experiences reported by the participants as opposed to using a Likert-style scale or another methodology or design or instrument (Simon, 2011). Each of these delimitations helped to ensure an exploration of the area defined for the study, while at the same time ensuring that the study did not exceed its desired bounds, becoming so large as to be insurmountable (Simon, 2011).

Although I might have obtained more information from the workers and their employers regarding specific communication barriers that are felt within the workplace setting, the specificity of the research question and the time constraints of this study did

not allow for such an exploration. As such, I delimited the population of the study to employees, specifically tailoring the research question to include the population of the study and designing the study around the research question, as is appropriate. I also specified how the responses of those participants would be collected to ensure that the results obtained from the data collection kept the study within its scope, as opposed to exceeding it (Simon, 2011).

Limitations

The limitations of the study work to describe the potential weaknesses of the study itself (Creswell, 2014; Simon, 2011). One limitation is that the participants needed to convey their written and oral communication barriers that they have faced when English is not their primary language, which may create a challenging situation. Under such circumstances, it may have been difficult for these individuals to convey the information accurately, given that the same communication barriers that were giving them cause for concern may have been present within the context of the study itself.

Another limitation of the study was time. It would be more beneficial to obtain data over a long-standing period to gauge accurately both the presence of and the effects of the perceived communication barriers within the workplace setting. However, due to completion deadlines, the amount of time in which I had to collect these data was limited. This limitation could not be mitigated or negated, so instead, it must be acknowledged, with the recommendation that should this study bear fruit in terms of its conclusions, further research can be conducted without the same time constraints.

Significance of the Study

Immigrant workers who are not proficient in speaking English not only experience communication problems themselves but also with their fellow employees and employers (Hinds, Neeley, & Cramton, 2014; Kulkarni, 2015). The study may be significant in its creation of a foundation to explore the implications for management regarding communications issues in the workplace through a review of the issues as perceived by the workers within a given organization or for a given employer. Cultural language barriers are present daily in communication, and while some are easily overcome, others can create larger issues, up to and including preventing business transactions from going through (Kulkarni, 2015; Mujtaba et al., 2012). As such, it is necessary to work to identify those issues, in all their forms, and from all perspectives, to increase the overall benefit to the organization, while increasing the ease and efficacy with which workers can complete their given tasks. At the same time, in an expanding global society, ways to identify and overcome communication barriers from cultural diversity that affect social change may be determined.

Significance to Practice

This study has the potential to offer significance to practice in that identifying the cultural and language barriers present within the workplace for this specific group of individuals might make it possible to determine appropriate strategies. Such strategies may be used to approach the situation(s) identified and resolve them in a manner that provides a benefit to all parties involved. In working to identify and resolve issues faced by workers, companies can increase their overall efficacy and productivity, which in turn generate increased benefits for the organization (Krol, Brouwer, & Rutten, 2013;

Landsberg, 2015). In identifying and determining the practices that may ultimately resolve these language and cultural barriers, a healthier workplace environment may be created. Then, employees become happier and the workplace environment becomes improved. To improve the efficacy and productivity of the worker, it must be ensured that the environment becomes more effective in meeting the goals of the organization (Jaskiewicz & Tulenko, 2012; Rongen, Robroek, van Lenthe, & Burdorf, 2013). The better the organization or employer does, the better the employees themselves do, creating a culture of increased fulfillment to all parties involved.

Significance to Theory

The communications theories in the conceptual framework can aid in the examination of the communication process and allow researchers to explore the similarities and differences present within the communication that occurs among individuals, groups, and within the context of organizational and mass media approaches (Heath & Bryant, 2012; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). In identifying the different cultural and language barriers present within this particular body of workers, communications theories including the transactional model of communication and the cultural approach to organizations theory may be expanded to include this information. At this time, however, such information is lacking due to the gaps present within the current body of research. In detailing this information, the theories that have continued to evolve as methods of communication have developed will become more up to date, increasing their relevance within the context of the modern world (Heath & Bryant, 2012; Stacks & Salwen, 2014).

The continued evolution of the theories, adapting to the current state of the world, is necessary for them to continue to remain relevant. If the means and methods of

communication discussed therein are no longer aligned with the actual communication practices such theories will no longer be relevant, for they will describe something that no longer exists. Thus, by ensuring that the gaps in the extant body of literature are reduced, and by working to identify the current state of affairs regarding cultural and language barriers in the workplace setting for this group of participants, it is possible to ensure that the theories continue to remain relevant.

Significance to Social Change

If these language and cultural barriers can be identified for non-English speaking and ESL employees and immigrant workers, it is possible to increase the ease of individuals to do their jobs. If barriers to job duties are removed, not only would the company, management, and the employees benefit because of the same, but also the economy would benefit. With increased efficacy and productivity within the workplace environment, the organization itself can increase its output of the goods or services it offers (Jiang & Liu, 2015). This expansion would provide the organization with a competitive advantage, while at the same time providing it with ways to improve other areas, such as increasing the efficacies of its supply chain (Jiang & Liu, 2015; Mohan, Gopalakrishnan, & Mizzi, 2013).

The better an organization does, the better it is for the economy. It can provide growth within a specified community, growth that can expand to other areas as well, becoming regional or with an even wider presence, with the right initiatives and appropriate direction and leadership (Christensen & Raynor, 2013; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Tribe, 2016). As one organization takes off, so do others within the same area, as long as they are providing quality services and goods at competitive prices (Christensen

& Raynor, 2013; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Tribe, 2016). If consumers flock to one area to take advantage of the product or service being offered there, they are more likely to complete the remainder of their shopping in that same area, when possible (Christensen & Raynor, 2013; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Tribe, 2016). Thus, a boost can take place in all stores within the region while at the same time leaving the competitive advantage with the original entity (Christensen & Raynor, 2013; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Tribe, 2016). Communication is one of the most important aspects of productivity. When there are language and communication barriers, productivity suffers. Lifting these barriers would lead to social change and higher profits.

Summary and Transition

Research has shown that communication, and the presence or absence thereof, affects the way that people behave, how they think, and even how they feel (Castells, 2013). Consequently, when issues in communication arise, the ill effects resulting from those matters or barriers can be detrimental to the successful completion of the overall aim or goal of that communication (Davis, 2016; Iglesias et al., 2014; Stern, 2015; Tenzer et al., 2014). Still, to be able to negate such barriers and work to improve the current situation within a given organization, it is necessary to identify the barriers that are present. Researchers have conducted a significant amount of research within the field of communications research. Still, while much research has been conducted regarding the effects of communication barriers and issues within the education and healthcare fields, the extant body of literature fails to address the effects on non-English speaking workers or ESL workers (Akhavan, 2012; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Free et al., 2014; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013).

Effective communication in the workplace is a concern for all parties involved, employers and employees. There is an even greater difficulty present for immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds and for foreign-born employees who do not have English as their primary language (Akomolafe, 2013; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015). Every society and every culture have nuances of communication, nuances which do not always translate from one culture to another, creating barriers where none would be present among individuals of the same culture (Castells, 2013).

This concern is greatly compounded since the U.S. labor force is currently made up of more than 26 million foreign-born persons who are documented and reported. (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016). This number is far greater than reported with no clear indication as to how much larger it may be. American businesses face the challenges of language and cultural barriers, which can inhibit effective communication and subsequently hinder productivity and increase safety risks (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016).

To begin addressing such concerns, the study purpose was to explore and describe the stories and experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers and ESL workers in overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace. This study was aimed to understand and describe how workplace communications and culture formed the perspectives of each participant's worldview and understanding. To accomplish this task, I defined the following research question for resolution within the context of this study: How do non-English speakers or English as second language (ESL) speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace?

To address the research question, I laid the theoretical foundation for the study using communications theories, with the conceptual framework of the theory likewise molded through such theories. Still, in this case, the study involved the transactional model of communication, the communications cycle, and communications noise a term used to describe barriers to communication in general (Heath & Bryant, 2012; IACACT, 2015; 2016; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). The model, the communications cycle, and the concept of communication noise were all defined to ensure that no confusion would be present regarding these terms within the context of the study.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the nature of the study, offering insight on why I selected a qualitative narrative inquiry for the most appropriate research design and method for use (Creswell, 2013; 2014). The scope of the study was set forth, clearly marking the borders of the study using the scope in combination with the delimitations of the study, which included time, the sample population itself, the research question, and the study design. The limitations of the study were also presented, reviewing everything from the time constraints of the study to the potential for bias in the reporting of the instances of perceived communications barriers by immigrant workers who make up the sample population.

Many of the limitations were addressed, yet not all could be covered. In instances where the limitations of the study could not be covered, I provided information on why such limitations must remain or offered insight into the situation and the associated reasons that I could not address such limitations. In some instances, I made recommendations for ways in which such limitations might be reduced in future iterations of this study. This chapter concluded with why the study is significant, not only to its

significance in general, but also its significance to practice, to theory, and to the realm of social change.

Progress and improvements cannot be made without completing the first step toward the goal. In that same way, this study is significant because it serves as the first step on the path to reducing the cultural and language barriers present for the body of workers under study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the extant literature. It offers the search strategy used in the collection of information, giving more detail on both the theoretical foundation to be employed and the conceptual framework implemented. It also offers a review of the extant literature as associated with topics that are pertinent to the study of this topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The lack of effective communication in the workplace is an issue that creates a myriad of problems for immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds (Akomolafe, 2013; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015). With more than 26 million foreign-born persons reported in the labor force, American businesses face the challenges of language and cultural barriers, which can inhibit effective communication and subsequently hinder productivity and increase safety risks (Kulkarni, 2015; United States Department of Labor, 2016). The general problem is that language and cultural barriers hinder the ability of a business to recruit and successfully employ immigrant workers. The specific problem is that some business leaders and managers lack an understanding of the language barriers and cultural issues of immigrant workers. Ultimately, working to address these concerns may help businesses remain competitive by maintaining a productive, safe, and healthy workplace environment.

The purpose of the qualitative narrative inquiry study is to explore and describe the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers and ESL workers while looking at their experiences in overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace. The aim is to accomplish the task of understanding how non-English speaking immigrants experience language and cultural challenges by completing a study designed to explore various written and oral communication barriers that occur among employees and immigrant workers. To accomplish this task, I conducted a review of the extant body of literature, complete with information on the search strategy employed.

Literature Search Strategy

To obtain the literature necessary to complete the literature review a search of the school's online library was conducted to gain access to relevant academic journals and peer reviewed articles contained within the databases. Next, available books on the subject matter were reviewed while ensuring that physical literature on the topic was similarly included. Finally, relevant online data published through reputable sources using Google and Google Scholar were searched and was presented in the approved prospectus. In completing such a search, I used EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, ProQuest, Springer, PubMed, and Elsevier.

Among the many different academic journals accessed in the completion of this literature review were the *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, the *International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, the *International Journal for Equity in Health*, the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, the *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Children & Youth Services Review*, the *Journal of International Business Studies*, and the *Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*. Different search keywords included the following: *communication and culture*, *communication and business*, *business*, *cultural paradigms*, *work climate*, *inequalities*, *ESL*, *intercultural communication*, *effective communication*, *leadership and communication*, *business*, *leadership*, *communications theory*, *communications theory and business*, and *communication*.

To search the literature used in the completion of the literature review, I employed all keywords and keyword sets within each of the three areas (school database, print medium, and online). Relevant articles were bookmarked, either with physical bookmarks in the case of works found in print or via the browser for those found online.

Following the collection of articles and print media, I read all bookmarked content to determine which articles and works were relevant to the study and warranted inclusion. Those bookmarked that did not fit the topic being explored within the context of this study had their bookmarks removed.

I took notes on each article or work deemed appropriate for inclusion and used those notes throughout the process of creating the literature review to ensure that I included all pertinent information. In instances where an article or work was particularly relevant, the same three search methods were employed, pulling up the references used in those works to ensure that I excluded no relevant data. Most of the references used to complete this literature review were published between 2011 and the present to ensure the sources are current enough to be relevant to the topic at hand. Where necessary, however, information is included from the original sources, such as the creators of the constructs used in the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework employed within this study.

Theoretical Foundation

Transactional communication theory and cultural approach to organizations theory were selected to act as the theoretical foundation that serves to provide the groundwork for this study. Seeking out the origins of communications theory is not an easy task because it is created through the works of a host of different researchers, each working to explore their preferred area of interest, yet all exploring the process of communication (Heath & Bryant, 2012). Due to the way communications theory has evolved, there is some debate regarding its origins. There are those who indicated that communications theory started with Aristotle, in his documentation of what is now

known as Aristotle's Model of Proof (Bob Jones University, 2008). Others indicate that the start of communications theory is not quite so far back in history and cite its origins in the 1920s with Bell Laboratories and Nyquist's (1924) write up of the various factors affecting the speed at which a telegraph can transmit.

Hartley (1928) continued this trend in the investigation of communications through his work at Lucent Technologies and explored the way information is transmitted from one point to another and the role that technology plays in the process of making those actions occur. It is true that one could go as far back as Aristotle for his Model of Proof as the basis for the exploration of communication. Because that was not Aristotle's intention in the creation of his model of proof, I opted instead to set the origins of communications theory in the 1920s, wherein specific steps were taken to explore the communications process.

It was not until the late 1940s, however, that research into the field of communications started expressly using the term *communication* within the context of their work (Shannon & Weaver, 2015). Bell Laboratories served to provide the research that first expressly indicated it was exploring the concept of communication as a whole (Shannon & Weaver, 2015). In 1948, Shannon identified the different mathematical parameters that could be used to break down the potential meaning that the speaker was attempting to convey (Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Shannon (1948) carried out this work by reviewing the various possibilities of interpretation and identifying the interpretive meaning with the highest associated statistical significance. Work such as theirs allowed communications theory to explode as a field of study, sparking a high level of interest in the 1940s and beyond (Shannon & Weaver, 2015). Although communication as a concept

has existed since Aristotle, it was not until the 20th century that it became a serious discipline. Nyquist (1924), Hartley (1928), and Shannon (1948) were among the academics who developed communication models and theories.

To apply transactional communications theory within a research context, the researcher must first identify communication interest zones. In this case, that is exploring non-English speakers or ESL speakers and the difficulties that they face within the workplace setting connected to the communications process (Stacks & Salwen, 2014). The identification of the particular aspect of communication to be explored within the context of a research setting is all that is required to implement communications theory as the theoretical foundation of a given research study (Heath & Bryant, 2012; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). Communications theory allows for an exploration of all aspects of communication as long as the applications of that exploration are practical. Thus, it is argued that the broad context required for a theoretical foundation consisting of communications theory has been met within the context of the identified research topic for this study (Heath & Bryant, 2012; Kincaid, 2013; Stacks & Salwen, 2014).

By using communications theory through a specific communications model in applying the conceptual framework, I was able to utilize this study to explore shifts in communication. I was also able to look at the language employed within the context of this particular setting within this sample population. There, the uncertainty present in communication that works to create barriers, and even an exploration of the means of addressing those barriers through the process of dynamic communication and the application of communication strategies designed to mitigate such concerns (Kincaid, 2013; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). The interpersonal aspects of communication and the

communication differences that may arise are likewise able to be explored, looking at the shifts in communication that are present due to linguistic variation and cultural differences. In understanding the amalgamation of work that makes up communications theory as a whole, it becomes possible to gain increased insight and understanding of the communications model (Kincaid, 2013; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). That is, the model to be employed within the conceptual framework of the study, a process by which one of the many communication models that help to form the broad scope of communications theory is selected for application within the context of the research study.

Conceptual Framework

In applying certain models of communication in this study, the transactional model of communication and the cultural approach to organizations theory are both be employed as the conceptual framework for the study. These theories are useful for exploring the barriers faced by non-English speaking workers and ESL workers within the business world. They can also be used in defining those barriers, the characteristics associated with those barriers, and whether the identified barriers are present across all cultures or are culture specific (Barnlund, 1970; Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988; IACACT, 2016).

Barnlund (1970) first put forth the transactional model of communication. Within this communications model, there is a sender and a receiver, with both parties involved in the communications process, switching their roles as the communication occurs (Barnlund, 1970). The first party sends the message, where the second party receives the message, decodes the message, and responds to the message (Barnlund, 1970). The process then allows the party of the first part to switch to the role of receiver, obtaining

the message from the party of the second part and then tasked with decoding that message and responding as appropriately (Barnlund, 1970). While such a model seems simple, Barnlund indicated that the process of sending, receiving, decoding, and responding to the message, a process referred to as a feedback channel, is one that is constantly interrupted by *noise*. This noise can be anything, from the literal presence of other sounds coming from individuals or objects to differences in culture, knowledge base, awareness, and understanding of the subject being explored within the context of the communication medium (Barnlund, 1970). Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the transactional model of communication.

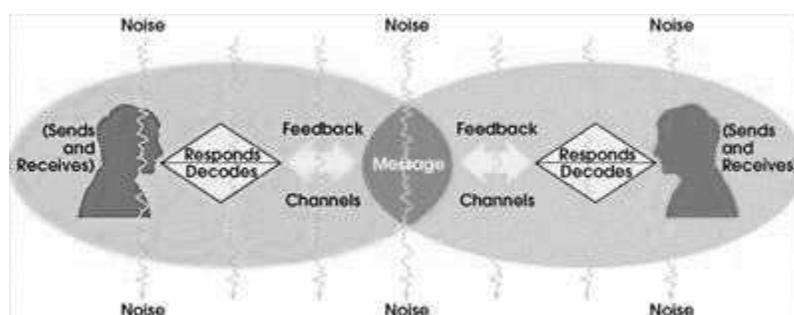


Figure 1. Transactional model of communication. Retrieved from CommunicationStudies.com (2011)

The barriers to communication within the context of this study are what Barnlund (1970) would have referred to as noise in the communication, with noise defined as anything disruptive to the transmission of the message between the sender and the receiver. This particular model of communication is ideally suited to the exploration of the concept and phenomenon being explored within the context of this study. It provides a framework identical to the topic being explored. At the same time, it provides the structure necessary through which it is possible to complete the exploration of the topic

and the analysis of the information collected from the participants. This visual representation of the transactional model of communication in Figure 1 can be applied to the exploration of the barriers faced by the participants; with each of the noise lines presented serving to represent a different barrier to communication. Such lines represent discrepancies in the receipt and decoding of the message, which can result in response to the message that was different from the expected or the desired result (Barnlund, 1970).

Geertz and Pacanowsky's (1988) work can increase the understanding of management relating to immigrant employees whose first language is not English. Still, Geertz and Pacanowsky noted that although the cultural approach has been adopted by managers who want to use it as a tool, it is not easy to micromanage cultural aspects of subordinates. Furthermore, such management might not be ethical. If the researcher is an ethnographer, the first rule of the method is nonintervention (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988). Therefore, managers should guard against undue influence on corporate culture.

In applying the transactional model of communication, it was possible to examine communication through the different viewpoints of communications theory that involve cultural identity, workplace communication, and managerial communication. Therefore, I could gain additional insight and knowledge into the specific barriers that are present within such communication (Pompper, 2014). Using Figure 1 as a visual representation, as each of the barriers is identified and removed, the process of communication, it can be argued, can flow more smoothly and more efficiently. Issues stemming from problems associated with the decoding and processing of messages between the sender and the receiver will thus be decreased (Barnlund, 1970; Pompper, 2014). In using the cultural approach to organizations theory, I gained a better understanding of organizational

culture as told through narratives of immigrants whose primary language is not English and use the best means possible to avoid bias (Geertz & Pacanowsky, 1988).

Literature Review

In dissertation research, the bulk of the material to be explored by the researcher is found within the literature review. It is an extensive and exhaustive exploration of the different topics associated with, related to, and providing proof of the necessity for the completion of the identified research topic. It also indicates the need for the study (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). To accomplish this task, the researcher must display an understanding of the basic topic covered by the study. He or she must also present that information in such a way that it is a baseline of knowledge for those who are reading the study, even though the topic may not be in their field of study (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). The literature review must be a synthesis of literature associated with and related to the topic at hand, while at the same time must be presented in such a manner so as even the layperson can gain additional knowledge of the topics and constructs being explored (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). This literature review starts with an exploration of what communication is, leads into an exploration into its use in the workplace, and allows for the identification of the correlation between communication and culture, before delving further into the topic being explored.

Communication

Communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics are created and shared (Wang et al., 2011). Research has shown that culture is created through the communication process, yet researchers have failed to explore fully exactly what communication is, other than to indicate that it is the

transmission of information among parties (Wang et al., 2011). While this definition is not a nonspecific one, it is not a significantly detailed explanation either, which necessitates a further exploration of what communication is to be able to understand its application within different settings and about various aspects of life and work.

The transactional model of communication (Barnlund, 1970) describes the process of communication in which two or more parties take on the role of either the sender or receiver(s) to convey a message between the different parties, with each party completing certain actions before reversing their roles. Still, more needs to be explored within the concept of communication. Without communication, it might be argued, the very foundation of all that is society could potentially cease to exist (Habermas, 2015). However, to be able to understand the essential nature of communication, it is first necessary to understand the different forms that communication between individuals may take.

Communication may be both verbal and nonverbal (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). Verbal communication refers to the process by which individuals use the spoken word to directly relate thoughts, concepts, and ideas between two or more parties (Heath & Bryant, 2011). This form of dialogue also allows for the ability to convey directions or tasks that must be completed (Heath & Bryant, 2011). Nonverbal communication refers to the gestures, the body language, the cues, and even facial changes that one of the parties involved in the communication process conveys, serving to add additional meaning to the message (Burgoon et al., 2016).

Nonverbal communication, broadly, is any means of communication that does not use the voice itself, including the use of sign language and gestures, for while sign

language is a language in and of itself, it does not use the voice to convey the message (Burgoon et al., 2016). Any instances of nonverbal communication documented by the study participants were likewise analyzed for situations in which nonverbal communication causes a misunderstanding. These instances are just as important as situations in which verbal communication results in a misunderstanding because both may be interrupted by noise, or barriers, many of which will have been erected because of cultural differences and differences in worldview (Barnlund, 1970; Habermas, 2015).

The process of communication allows for the evolution of society (Habermas, 2015). It is what works to create the different cultures around the world (Wang et al., 2011). Some of these different communication practices, verbal and nonverbal alike, are universal, such as *no*, the gesture for *no*, the "bathroom dance" done by children the world over, and so on. The way different concepts and ideas are conveyed, and the different weights given to those concepts and ideas vary among cultures. These, in turn, can cause an increase in the number of communication barriers that may be present. The variations are important, particularly when looking at the matter of cross cultural communication and the application of cross cultural communication within the more rigid structure of the workplace setting. An exploration of each of these different areas made it possible to understand how such an issue can arise and provide increased insight and understanding in exploring the narratives collected from the research participants that is discussed later in Chapter 4.

Communication Barriers

To better understand and explore the subject of communication, it is necessary to review studies allowing for identifying barriers for culturally diverse employees not

dissimilar from what was explored within the construct of the current study. The identified barriers presented within this section range from those that arise when a minority leader is attempting to communicate with nonminority individuals that may result in an international organization to the linguistic barriers stemming from crosscultural communication, among others. Presenting barriers before addressing the areas of communication and culture, communication and business, and communication and the workplace can allow an identification of broad barriers present in communication engagements around the world. Such a presentation can occur before focusing specifically on those in American organizations.

Flores and Matkin (2014) conducted a study to explore the different types of issues that minority leaders face within the workplace, showing a difference between those issues and those faced by white leaders. Among the various problems identified were their barriers of communication, a lack of support from those they were to be leading, discrimination due to racial differences, racism, and stereotyping based on racial profiles (Flores & Matkin, 2014). Each of these different issues might all lead back to the realm of communication. Many of these concerns arose from the communications that occurred within the context of the environment, shaping the perspectives of those who would otherwise be willing to accept the same information from a different racial or ethnic leader (Flores & Matkin, 2014). In essence, all aspects of culture, interaction, and society lead back to the communication process and how and when it was taught to the individual who is fulfilling either the role of the speaker or the role of the receiver (Habermas, 2015; Wang et al., 2011).

While Flores and Matkin (2014) could identify multiple barriers to communication affecting the effectiveness of minority leaders, the researchers were not able to offer any means to address the identified concerns. Instead, Flores and Matkin focused on the methods that such nonwhite leaders used to persevere in the face of such issues, including "developing a thick skin" (p. 5). While the identification of such issues is pertinent, the lack of a means to address such an issue serves to indicate a research gap, while at the same time providing conclusions that are neither relevant nor beneficial toward the resolution and removal of communication barriers.

Qiao's (2014) study explored the characteristics and barriers present in internal organizational communications during the time that an organization was undergoing transition. Qiao sought to identify the different barriers to the change that were present because of the barriers in communication found within a cross-cultural setting. Within this analysis, communication barriers were one of the items identified; however, the primary focus of the study was the application of Lewin's change model (Qiao, 2014). Despite the main focus on this model, the presence of communication barriers was a significant concern for the international organization. Such obstacles to communication can ultimately stymie change and even drag it to a halt, creating confusion, and reducing acceptance to and willingness to change. Qiao's study serves to indicate just how deeply the problem of communication barriers still runs within a cross-cultural setting, although globalization continues to allow multiple organizations of all sizes and within all fields to expand and grow.

Qiao (2014) was concerned about the successful use of change management practices instead of concentrating on the resolution of issues that may arise during such a

time. In this case, a concentration on addressing communication barriers would have been more effective regarding working to resolve the identified problems and increasing the likelihood that such change could occur effectively (Habermas, 2015; Qiao, 2014). As such, Qiao's study, like the previous study (Flores & Matkin, 2014), identified the presence of communication barriers and served to indicate many ways such communication barriers reduce the overall efficacy and productivity of the organization. Still, as previously, the research conducted failed to address the issue of communication barriers cross culturally in and of them.

Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) determined particular methods that may be employed by leaders to enable them to manage within the business setting despite language barriers that may be present, specifically focusing on "language-induced emotions in multinational teams" (p. 606). The study, like other studies, identifies the presence of cultural barriers regarding attempts to express one's emotions in a work-based setting from a linguistic standpoint (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Qiao, 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015). The researchers further indicated that such issues might be the most difficult for leaders to overcome, as opposed to other issues found within the business setting (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015).

The difficulty comes when the cultural perspective and the societal perspective, for the leaders, are firmly ensconced in their own culture and their societal perspective and worldview, creating a situation in which the hardest part of working to overcome these cultural barriers and language barriers is not the acknowledgment of their presence. Instead, it is the awareness of other cultures and worldviews to the point of being able to identify the point at which the two concepts meet and clash, determining an alternative

means of working to address the situation, and moving forward (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015). Within this particular context, however, the researchers were not addressing all culturally linguistic barriers, only those related to displays of emotion within the context of the workplace setting, an important distinction (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015).

Instead of providing a solution to address this matter, however, Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) suggested that leaders should instead work to control their emotions, reducing the need for such language to be used and, therefore, bypassing such an impediment altogether (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015). While such a conclusion technically addresses the problem defined, the removal of the language that created the cultural barrier does not address the problem directly. Rather, it ignores the situation as though it does not exist, which is the business equivalent of sticking one's head in the sand and hoping that if the problem is ignored, it will go away. While such an approach may work in some cases, when the underlying problem is the ability to communicate, no matter how much a person chooses to ignore a communication issue, the issue does not go away. It may even, in some cases, compound the situation, causing an even greater problem than that which was previously present for the individuals involved in the communication process and for the organization as a whole (Habermas, 2015).

Communication and Culture

Globalization has worked to decrease the number of barriers present within the world today, regarding increasing the ease in which individuals can interact with each other on a global scale and by reducing the number of barriers present in accomplishing this task (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2014). As globalization brings society together in a way not previously seen in the history of the world, it brings with it a host of issues. Some of

these are political, some are economic, yet one of the largest of these issues is the one involving communication (Asante et al., 2014; Carbaugh, 2013). As many business leaders well versed in the world of international business may express, to be truly successful within this field, knowledge of intercultural interactions is vital to ensuring the successful completion of any business transaction (Goman, 2011). As Wang et al. (2011) expressed the link between culture and communication is one that is inseparable. Culture shapes and influences communication, just as communication influences culture, a sentiment expressed by many other researchers (Asante et al., 2014; Carbaugh, 2013; Goman, 2011).

Kokab and Abid (2014) explored the concerns regarding the linguistic and cultural barriers that Pakistani leadership was facing due to the situation in East Bengal. The study stressed the high level of cultural barriers present in communication between East Bengal and Pakistan. Unlike other studies discussed herein that serve only to identify an issue that arises from cultural barriers to communication, these researchers offered up an identification of the different strategies that have been employed to effect a solution to the matter (Kokab & Abid, 2014). While it was originally thought that Bengali, the language that was creating the cultural barriers, should be simply banned, it was instead determined that the language should be accepted. Various strategies, including the use of translators versed in both languages, could be employed as a means of decreasing communication barriers (Kokab & Abid, 2014).

Kathriel (2012) sought to explore a similar situation in Israel, looking at the communal webs that are woven by the combination of communication and culture. Kathriel's research indicated that the distinctive cultural patterns found in communication

served to not only highlight and accentuate the formation and continuation of culture, but they also assisted in maintaining culture while offering up a framework for change. There are those who are unfamiliar with the nature and the interaction between communication and culture. As such, they will find the completion of a given activity, a business transaction, and even the communication process as a whole, to be complex. Not having a working knowledge of the culture of the individual to whom one is speaking increases complexity (Asante et al., 2014; Carbaugh, 2013; Goman, 2011; Kahtriel, 2012).

In light of increased awareness of the interconnected nature of culture and communication, some schools are taking the process a step further when it involves the teaching of a second language. Thanasoulas (2001) was one of the first researchers to explore whether the utilization of teaching culture in conjunction with a given foreign language would serve to benefit the students learning the language. Results of Thanasoulas' research indicated that while certain issues must be worked out regarding the delivery of such content, the presence of the content itself works to increase cross cultural communication, increase communication efficiency, and decrease cultural barriers (Thanasoulas, 2001). This researcher's findings have since been confirmed by other researchers, perhaps most notably by Wintergerst and McVeigh (2011) who determined that such applied concepts serve to increase communication efficiencies when teaching ESL students the English language.

The acknowledgment of the interconnected nature of culture and communication has gone far toward increasing awareness of modern culture and the effects of mass communication within the past several decades (Thompson, 2013). Thompson's (2013) work has played a large role in expanding the ability of advertisers to communicate more

effectively with alternative target audiences and enable organizations to expand their presence within international markets. However, the very fact of such an application provides additional proof of the close ties between culture and communication and cultural awareness and decreases communication barriers among individuals of different cultures around the globe (Asante et al., 2014; Carbaugh, 2013; Goman, 2011; Kathriel, 2012; Thompson, 2013).

Communication and Business

The importance of communication in the current knowledge-based economy cannot be underestimated (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014). Business leaders in today's society are aware of the vast need for awareness and knowledge of the culture of the individuals with whom they are communicating. Still, such knowledge is a large part of working to conduct successful business transactions at the international level. It is equally important to ensure that the application of that knowledge ties in with the appropriate vocabulary (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014). Although there are certain universal words and phrases, as has been discussed previously, of equal or greater consideration is that not all words have the same meaning or connotation that translates between cultures (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014). Idioms, metaphors, similes, and other nonliteral forms of communication should be avoided to prevent misinterpretation or other confusion that may arise, detracting from the translation of the message and preventing effective communication when used (Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014).

When exploring business communication, it is critical to the success of a transaction that the message the speaker attempts to convey is the one that is being

received (Guffey & Loewy, 2012). Business opportunities can be lost because something that is innocuous in one language may translate to something deeply offensive in another. By the same token, something that is heartfelt and meant to convey solidarity may, if improperly translated, mean something completely different. Perhaps the most notable example of this would be John F. Kennedy's language debacle. At one time, he meant to state that he was a person of Berlin to show solidarity with Germany, when instead the phrasing he used could have been translated as "I am a jelly-filled doughnut" (Hiskey, 2012, p. 1).

While research now reveals that native Berliners interpreted such a statement in the spirit in which he meant it, the majority of the world, or at least those who are aware of the speech, remember the alternative interpretation over the figurative one. Although this story has been debunked, the narrative of the president's breakfast faux pas received a higher level of attention than did the secondary reporting. Such confusion indicated that, in spite of the communication issues, the message was ultimately understood at the time, with no hard feelings (Hiskey, 2012).

Coming from the President of the United States, such a translated message is one that would be handled with the utmost decorum and tact by those involved: by the media, less so, as was shown (Hiskey, 2012). The average individual does not have the same power behind him or her as President Kennedy did. Still, if a business leader secured a deal to start manufacturing Tater Tots in the country, and instead used the term for a child in place of *tot* in the translation, the receptivity would be likely poor as a result.

Instances of organizations failing in communication have been rife throughout the years, some stemming from communication issues, in which the message was lost in

translation, while others arose due to cultural differences. Notable instances of such failures can be found in many of the largest corporations in the United States. When Gerber originally started selling its baby food in Africa in the 1950s, the same label used in the United States was used on the food sold there. Gerber did not find out until later that the image used on food products sold in Africa is meant to signify the type of food in the container, given the low literacy levels (Fromowitz, 2013). In essence, some consumers thought the containers held babies, as opposed to baby foods (Fromowitz, 2013).

Puffs facial tissues attempted to enter the German market in 1974, not realizing that their brand name translated to "whorehouse" in the common vernacular (Fromowitz, 2013). KFC, when entering the Chinese market, failed to realize that their slogan, "Finger-lickin' good" translated to "Eat your fingers off" (Brooks, 2013). Coors found their error in translation when they attempted to expand to Spain, where their American "Turn it Loose" slogan translated to "suffer from diarrhea," a far less pleasant consideration (Brooks, 2013). The Pampers problem was similar to Gerber's, wherein the image on the box did not convey its desired effect. When attempting to enter the market in Japan, Pampers used the same image on the box there as the American box, a stork delivering a baby in a cloth. Confusion arose when no one understood what the picture meant, for the Japanese birth myth told to children involves children coming from the peach fruit instead of being delivered by a bird (Brooks, 2013). Although the box was ultimately changed, it never became a popular brand due to the first failed attempt at market entry.

These stories may at first appear humorous to the layperson who would hear them. Such failures in communication resulted in a high cost for the organizations themselves. In some cases, the product was far less successful than it otherwise would have been within the market if the communication had been more effective (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014). In part, these issues were due to communication barriers and communication failings within the business world, but those barriers continued to the point of the products reaching the shelves, which would have, in turn, created very costly mistakes for those organizations.

Leaders do not want their organization remembered because it failed in its communication, creating a funny anecdote for those not of the culture in which the failure occurred. Rather, they want people to remember their marketing for their business savvy, their successes in communication, their products, and their efficiency. None of these are conveyed through the presence of such stories (Brooks, 2013; Fromowitz, 2013; Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014). These efforts and endeavors should serve as a cautionary tale for those who wish to conduct business in the international market. Without the appropriate communication, translation, knowledge of culture, and cultural awareness, the likelihood of success is dramatically decreased; creating a fiscal burden on the company that cannot be easily resolved (Brooks, 2013; Fromowitz, 2013; Goman, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2012; Vasile, 2014).

Communication and the Workplace

The matter of communication within the workplace setting is not dissimilar to that of communication within the business world or the relationships present between culture and communication. Due to the increased ease with which it has become possible to

move about the globe, it is not surprising to interact with many individuals from different cultures and countries in daily life. With the increased usages of outsourcing, it is possible that many of those daily interactions might occur when speaking with others in other countries (Akhavan, 2012; Asante et al., 2014). In light of these circumstances, communication within the workplace must be equally concise, though within an open work environment.

Idioms, metaphors, colloquialisms, any of these may not be understood, for the majority of such tools of language are not conveyed when translated into another language or translated by an individual whose primary language was not English. In keeping with this knowledge, an awareness of the effects of culture and communication within the workplace setting must be present as well (Guffey & Loewy, 2012). To this end, many researchers and many authors will recommend, to reduce confusion and increase efficiency within the workplace setting, that individuals should maintain their professional demeanor and use professional language, or business language. If so, such a construct is designed to reduce the potential for communication and decrease the likelihood for barriers in understanding (Guffey & Loewy, 2012).

Nonverbal communication methods were discussed previously, a topic that likewise affects the business world. By ensuring that the appropriate nonverbal messages are being sent to the workplace, such barriers are reduced there as well (Bonaccio, O'Reilly, O'Sullivan, & Chiochio, 2016). Nonverbal communications cover all of the messages that are being conveyed with or without our knowledge, addressing gestures, body language, posture, tension, carriage, eye contact, and a host of other considerations. By increasing one's awareness of culture and communication, the nonverbal means of

communication may likewise be addressed (Bonaccio et al., 2016). A prime example of this would be the use of the left hand. Because this hand is considered to be unclean, the use of the left hand within business transactions and dealings with the Middle East is one that should be avoided (Embassy of the UAE, 2016). Handshakes, written messages, eating with the left hand, and all other activities and interactions with other individuals should all be conducted with the right hand only, to prevent giving offense (Embassy of the UAE, 2016). In this consideration, it becomes possible to understand just how complex are the inner workings of communications.

The area of interpersonal communication within the workplace setting (DeKay, 2012) is largely unexplored, with the majority of the information known in this regard just being about the dissemination of people skills or "soft" skills. Much additional research must be conducted in this area. The basic knowledge present regarding interpersonal communication is that failure to be aware of and consider cultural considerations when speaking and interacting with others can lead to communication barriers within the workplace (DeKay, 2012, p. 449). Given that there is no easy way to explore the interactions between individuals within the workplace setting authentically without being one of the participants, an ethnography, which lends itself to the potential for additional bias, this area is simply one that is little explored (DeKay, 2012). It may be hypothesized, however, that the same barriers and issues that arise in business communication, in general, would likewise apply to interpersonal communication within the workplace setting.

Regarding the importance of interpersonal communication, in two studies, Hofhuis, van der Rijt, and Vlug (2016) found that when workgroups communicate with

openness and trust, productivity will flourish in diverse environments. Their studies with 91 and 256 participants identified the latter two qualities as possible mediators for workgroup communication. In a work climate that boasts many cultural backgrounds; such diversity connects to a sense of inclusion, knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, and group identification. Trust was the mediator of the work environment in study 1 regarding team inclusion, and trust also mediated workgroup identification and climate in study 2. Moreover, openness leads to knowledge sharing. Trust through increasing camaraderie was a key factor in several studies on overcoming barriers in a diverse workplace (Clayton, Issacs, & Ellender, 2016; Hofhuis et al., 2016; Ling, Dulaimi, & Chua, 2013; Sui Sum Bosco, 2016). Hofhuis et al. have also recommended that leaders make strong efforts toward diversity training and inclusiveness to enhance such openness and trust among the workforce team members.

Lockwood (2015) noted that communication issues were arising not only in person but in virtual teams within the workplace as well, in particular, the communications between managers of virtual teams and the team members themselves. Lockwood noted that virtual team managers might have an increased amount of difficulty in communicating with team members due to the increased communication challenges that arise within the virtual environment and within text-based media. Furthermore, some of those issues may be related to culture (Lockwood, 2015). Lockwood's solutions were highly generalized and did not concentrate specifically on the problems in communication within virtual teams. Still, the researcher did recommend that additional training practices be implemented as a means of addressing the cultural communication issues that arose within the workplace setting as a potential way to mitigate such issues.

Lockwood (2015) likewise recommended that further analysis of communication issues that arose within the virtual teams be conducted to identify the causality of the given problem. Such identification would allow for the means of being able to reduce the likelihood of future occurrences of the same or similar communication barriers within the team-based setting through identification and resolution (Lockwood, 2015). These recommendations could likewise be applied to team-based workplace environments that result from interactions with the real world in addition to the interactions among those in the virtual environment (Sostrin, 2011).

Construction is an industry that requires a full on-the-ground force of workers. Still, as a result of labor shortages in many countries, immigrant workers have been enlisted to sustain the industry (Ling et al., 2013). Often, communication challenges and mismanagement result from the mix of cultural characteristics of the diverse workers regarding attitudes toward work and how they handle conflicts and direction. Ling et al. (2013) conducted a mixed methods study on management strategies in Singapore. After surveying project managers who were experienced in handling such diversity, the researcher interviewed several of the managers to get more specific information on how they addressed the varying cultural styles of the workers.

Though they generalized among the varying cultures (e.g., Indian, Filipino, Thai, and Chinese workers), Ling et al. (2013) recommended several strategies. The strategies arose from the study to address communication problems in the construction industry: (a) taking care in giving contracts of employment, (b) giving skills tests in the lingua franca, (c) firmly supervising workers to prevent passive or bad attitudes, (d) rewarding workers who meet quality targets, (e) gaining trust through personal relationships, (f) engaging in

safety training with the ends of having workmanship of quality, (g) engendering team spirit through organized social activities, and (h) reducing disputes at the root. All of these strategies would aid in helping project managers meet the challenges of working with immigrants (Ling et al., 2013).

Similar to the construction industry, migration into English-speaking countries such as Australia has become the status quo for the medical profession. Excellent communication is especially important during an operation. Therefore, the addition of professionals from a multitude of cultures in the operating room can present challenges. In a qualitative phenomenological study, Clayton et al. (2016) interviewed 14 nurses who served different functions in an operating theater. The major theme that arose was difficulties in communication, which affected both the care of patients and the environment of the theater. Similar to Ling et al. (2013), social integration via regular activities improved communication, transferring the benefits to patient safety and a collegial working atmosphere (Clayton et al., 2016).

Finding the cause of cultural and language barriers in a diverse workplace can be simple, though the solutions may take more work. Levitt (2014) noted that some see globalization as an opportunity, yet others see it as a problem. In a qualitative study, the researcher interviewed 27 people in supervisory positions in a variety of fields (architecture through venture capital) and teamwork was conducted on all continents throughout the world. Levitt found that those in managerial positions tended not to view personal relationships and others' self-identities as important, which served to impede efficient teamwork. Different communication styles and cultural backgrounds often led to frustration (direct, low-context communication versus more indirect high-context

communication). Ethnocentrism always stood in the way of job satisfaction and positive intercultural workplace ties. Levitt recommended that supervisors examine their own cultural values and ethnocentrism so that they could appreciate others' cultures more. Because diverse teams will always have polarized value systems, managing them by recognizing others' self-identities should lead to better balance (Levitt, 2014).

Sostrin (2011) indicated that barriers are present within any multicultural team, stating that although certain barriers may be easily overcome, others may not be so readily addressed. As a means of attempting to suggest a resolution to such a concern, Sostrin suggested that all teams explore the different barriers that they find themselves facing as a result of cultural variations. These teams should address each consideration one at a time until all parties feel that a successful resolution has been attained, which is a logical approach to resolving any communication issues that may be faced within the workplace setting. Still, depending on the makeup and composition of the team, such a solution may be one that is long drawn out, causing decreased efficiencies in other areas of team operation. It should likewise be noted that this solution is more of a generic approach to the resolution of the issue, as opposed to a more targeted approach designed to address individual concerns or situations that may arise.

Akomolafe (2013) referred to the Invisible Minority, a group of individuals described as "foreign-born Americans who number in the millions. For the most part they are law-abiding, tax-paying, productive members of society but are nevertheless denied some of the most basic constitutional rights and privileges extended to native-born Americans" (p. 8). The researcher claimed, regarding advancing within a given organization to a position of higher power, one qualification is the need of the individual

to speak fluent English to communicate with coworkers (Akomolafe, 2013). Although such a requirement seems a logical one in a country in which the majority of domestic business transactions are conducted in English, the ability to assess this particular qualification or skillset is one that is highly subject to bias (Akomolafe, 2013).

Furthermore, there is a high level of difficulty in being able to establish a conclusive correlation between such a practice and nondiscrimination laws to those who have foreign accents due to the subjectivity of the matter (Akomolafe, 2013).

Akomolafe (2013) suggested that if the individual can successfully pass a TOEFL or TOEIC test, two tests that are used to display a mastery of the English language, he or she should not experience job discrimination for a foreign accent. Moreover, the researcher recommended that those who do pass the tests should lobby for such a position in an attempt to gain promotion. The solutions Akomolafe presented are strong ones, and there is a large degree of merit present in these solutions. Nevertheless, this researcher laid out no clear path regarding how the individual should work on applying that information within the context of his or her job without creating a different type of discrimination. In this kind of discrimination, the individual may not only lose out on the position but may be forced to change jobs as well.

Many of the immigrant employees to whom Akomolafe (2013) referred lack the skills to negotiate the cultural barriers of the workplace. Canagarajah (2016) noted that many immigrants are not professionals. They do not have the wherewithal to negotiate “scales of interaction” (p. 55) through education or lack of other resources. However, the researcher did acknowledge multilingualism at the grassroots as in the case of street

vendors and “considerable shuttling between scales,” stating that the context for communication can be oversimplified (Canagarajah, 2016, p. 55).

English Communication in the Workplace

The term *lingua franca* was originally used to refer to a pidgin language combination of Italian, French, Spanish, Greek, and Arabic that enabled cross cultural communication. Since that time, the meaning of the term has changed and is now used to refer to a language that is used as a bridge language, one that enables individuals from different cultures, with different primary languages, to communicate (Jenkins & Leung, 2013; Merriam Webster, 2016). Given that English is one of the most spoken languages in the world, and one of the most commonly used languages in business, it is unsurprising that this area of study, English communication within the workplace, has gained attention in recent years (Briguglio, 2015; Jenkins & Leung, 2013). Interpersonal communication within the workplace setting was a largely unexplored area of research in the past, yet with the increased push toward globalization, the area has come under greater scrutiny (DeKay, 2012).

It is not a matter of dispute that a great deal of communication occurs in English, particularly in the areas of international business and in multinational corporations. Nor is it surprising that such a trend associated with the use of English as the primary means of international communication will continue within the business world (Briguglio, 2015). In spite of the surety associated with such statements on the part of current researchers and analysts on English continuity, a good portion of the extant body of literature only explores the use of English within the business world as a broad topic. Researchers have failed to shift their focus to a more internal exploration of the use of English within the

workplace setting (DeKay, 2012). Still, in recent years, there has been somewhat of a shift (DeKay, 2012).

Cavaliere, Glasscock, and Sen (2014) called the English phenomenon the Englishnization of business. They posited that difference is present between globalization and internationalization, whereby they view globalization as an activity and internationalization as a mindset (Cavaliere et al., 2014). These phenomena both help and hinder doing business on a global scale, particularly when the standard language for doing business has become English. On the positive side, Englishnization, a term coined by the CEO of Ratuken, has made business easier by (a) introducing money/time savings, (b) making recruitment easier, (c) helping to narrow applicant selection, and (d) providing negotiating advantages. Conversely, Englishnization (a) leads to ethnocentrism, (b) conveys racism and a White Man's Burden mentality, (c) engenders backlash, (d) reignites colonialist tendencies, and (e) elevates a low-context individualistic culture. Cavaliere et al. concluded that lack of attention to internationalizing business points of view is akin to companies that ignored the importance of product quality "with a high probability of the same disastrous results" (p. 167).

English has become the main language in business in many non-English speaking countries, such as Japan (Moody, 2014). However, despite the push to focus on English as the business lingua franca with yearly TOEIC test requirements for promotions, one intern, whom Moody (2014) shadowed, found in reality that most employees conduct their daily conversations in Japanese and were likely to have few chances to speak English. Using humor (he was seen both as marginalized by his low status and wielding

star power because he was the only English-speaking employee), the intern was able to use his outsider (*gaijin*) status to achieve the goal of imposing on coworkers but accomplishing work. His style resulted in building relationships among the workers and rising above his marginalized state (Moody, 2014). Again, interacting in unique personal ways helps to build trust, which begins to eliminate barriers.

Within a multicultural workplace setting, certain communication challenges arise due to the use of English as a *lingua franca* without considering that issues, often loosely understood, may arise from slang, colloquialisms, metaphors, and similes. Challenges also include the variances that occur due to the difference between how languages are taught (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013). Slang, colloquialisms, metaphors, and similes are a part of the common vernacular, even though those who speak English as a primary language are often not fully aware of their use within the conversational context (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013). For a person who speaks English as a secondary language, however, difficulties may arise because these types of language structures are not easily translatable if they are translatable at all (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013). Failure to ask for clarification or the assumption that the message, complete with symbolic context, is understood results in communication failure due to misinterpretation, lack of understanding, and lack of awareness (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013).

While many people improve their use of a secondary language over time, the manner in which any language is taught is different from the manner in which it is spoken by a native language speaker (James, 2013; Richards, 1971). In spite of awareness of this discrepancy for more than 40 years, the practical application of this awareness is not commonly employed, creating further barriers to communication (Angouri & Miglbauer,

2013; James, 2013; Richards, 1971). This lack of awareness is not to state, however, that it is not taken into consideration at all. Instead, it indicates that a practical means of addressing language barriers within the workplace is not commonly explored.

Furthermore, although it is known that those who have taken a second language are less proficient than native speakers, allowances are not made to ensure that communication occurs smoothly within the workplace setting within the confines of most organizations (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; James, 2013; Richards, 1971). Aware of this discrepancy between the awareness of a given piece of knowledge and the application of that knowledge toward a resolution of a problem, certain researchers have started to explore the manner in which such concerns and considerations may be addressed.

Lu (2016) recognized the presence of this particular form of language barrier. To determine ways in which this consideration could be addressed, Lu conducted a case study within a business in Taiwan where English was used as a primary means of communication. The researcher sought to determine whether the use of role playing activities within a group-based setting could increase workplace communication (Lu, 2016). In creating and implementing these workplace activities, it was found that all parties, both native speakers and ESL speakers, were able to reduce barriers to communication within the workplace setting. In this case, all employees, both those acting out their parts and those who were in the audience awaiting their turns to engage in the activity, were able to see the areas in which the communication barriers arose (Lu, 2016).

Those business employees in Taiwan were able to practice their communication skills. They were able to learn how to communicate more effectively through the use of

body language, reflection on the experience, and increased awareness of the situation itself (Lu, 2016). This activity served to indicate that the matter is less one of a linguistic barrier and more so about the amount of time and attention given to the other party in the communication process. In actively working to try to understand the other person, instead of simply assuming that understanding in communication occurred, the participants were able to increase the overall effectiveness of their organization (Lu, 2016).

This lack of attention to the matter was further explored, not through the use of role playing, but instead as a result of a test designed to assess the competency of Malaysian students in the English language. The research took place in an organization whose primary form of communication was in English (Sarudin, Noor, Zubari, Ahmad, & Nordin, 2013). While knowing English was a requirement for working in the organization, the researchers wished to explore communication barriers within the workplace. In conducting their study, the researchers devised a 14-item survey questionnaire, the results of which were backed up with the use of interviews and discussion groups (Sarudin et al., 2013). The findings indicated that while the individuals may have been able to speak English, their grasp of the language was not extensive, creating interoffice communication barriers (Sarudin et al., 2013).

Sarudin et al. (2013) stressed the need for the creation of an international competency test in English to ensure that workers had the appropriate qualifications. The matter, however, is far from that simple, for the ability to provide answers on a test is far different from speaking the language and communicating using that language (Richard, 1971). Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) explored the same topic within Malaysian organizations and pointed out that what is needed is an understanding of the use of

English oral language communication skills. The researchers claimed that it is the responsibility of the human resources department to provide additional training options as needed. That way, no individual would experience discrimination, while at the same time communication challenges would decrease and the ability of workers to communicate with one another would improve (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012).

The process of providing training in speaking the English language is known as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) training and has become quite common in many Asiatic countries (Xie & Adamson, 2015). In spite of this process, English language training options are not offered by the majority of companies within the United States, given the assumption that all of America's inhabitants speak English. This assumption is one that could not be further from the truth. America was, at its time of founding, a melting pot, and its status has not changed to this day. It is often that individuals from all over the world makes their way to the United States, for reasons ranging from the completion of business deals to a desire to move to another country.

The reason itself does not matter. What is of concern is that these multicultural shifts mean that though English is a majority language spoken within the United States, it is by no means the only one. In America, as in other countries, English has become *lingua franca* (Jenkins & Leung, 2013). Thus, the awareness of a communication barrier stemming from the variances between the spoken word and the way that the language is taught means that the problems that are being addressed overseas are not being addressed, or not being addressed on a large scale within U.S. companies (Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015).

The problem stems from the fact that, while there has seemingly been a decreased focus on culture within the workplace setting, in theory, it is not a process that has a smooth transition (Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). Simply ignoring the problem of intercultural communication in the workplace does not make it go away. It also does not work to assume that because globalization is common, all people are versed in the culture, mannerisms, body language, or methods of communication as much as everyone else (Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). This matter is further exacerbated by the fact that while there are many theories regarding the best means by which to address the matter, there is limited evidence of the application of those theories to practice within U.S. businesses (Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015).

Communication and Leadership

Not all communication issues occur between customers and employees, or between employers and employees. Some of those concerns occur because of communication barriers between leaders and those they are tasked with leading, the other employees within the organization. Ellis (2013) indicated the importance of accountability by those in leadership positions, focusing on the realm of communication. Ellis's primary concern was communication and the removal of communication barriers from the leadership perspective and within leadership positions. Ellis claimed that the responsibility for the removal of such barriers should be placed primarily on the individual within the leadership position, but that equal blame should be laid on the leader and the other members of the communication interaction. As with the previous studies that have sought to explore the matter of addressing communication concerns and

barriers within the workplace setting, this researcher did not offer up any recommendations as to address the matter.

Other researchers have explored leadership-driven communication initiatives within a given workplace setting to identify the various obstacles present within these types of initiatives (Donahue, Miller, Smith, Dykes, & Fitzpatrick, 2011). Donahue et al. (2011) sought to explore one such program present at the Danbury Hospital. The researchers determined that communication issues do arise because of cultural issues and language barriers and that such barrier and issues are not limited to one single discipline (Donahue et al., 2011).

The process employed by the hospital as a communication initiative was referred to as the EMPOWER program, acting as a four-step process by which the administrators believed that communication barriers would be reduced (Donahue et al., 2011). This process consisted of the communicator/receiver employed by the hospital assessing the situation, identifying the cultural background of those involved in the communication, evaluating the best means of approaching the topic to be discussed, and implementing recommendations toward the completion of effective communication (Donahue et al., 2011). While the researchers explored the initiative implemented by the hospital in great depth, offering what appears to be a viable means by which to address such barriers and issues, they failed to indicate whether the program was successful in the actual reduction of communication errors (Donahue et al., 2011).

The method that was used in the present study is qualitative narrative inquiry. Most of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 were qualitative, yet I found only one study that used narrative inquiry. Boshier and Stocker (2015) gathered narratives from 19 nurses

on their use of English in the workplace in Taiwan, a non-English speaking country. The inquiry yielded rich results regarding understanding how and why English is used. The themes that emerged were professionalism care for patients, and advancement in one's position. Using English had benefits in conversing with health care professionals as well as international caregivers. It also was of significant benefit to keep up with medical literature for professional development. Boshier and Stocker found that nurses emphasized English more for communicating with foreign caregivers than they did for foreign patients or their family members. The researchers recommended the study results to be used in ENP course development and the use of English in places where it is considered a foreign language.

Summary and Conclusions

The lack of effective communication in the workplace is an issue that creates a host of concerns for those involved, and for immigrant workers with non-English speaking backgrounds, this issue becomes even more complex (Akomolafe, 2013; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015). I selected communication theory as the theoretical foundation that provides the groundwork for this study. Communication theory allows for the exploration of the basic means by which individuals communicate with one another, though there is some variation regarding when researchers believed that the theory came into existence. I selected the transactional model of communication as the conceptual framework for the model, a model that has its roots in communications theory itself. Barnlund presented this model of communication in 1970, a model that involves sending and receiving messages. While such a model might appear simple, Barnlund (1970) indicated that the process of sending, receiving, decoding, and

responding to the message, a process referred to as a feedback channel, is one that is constantly interrupted by what is known as noise. Noise can be anything, but it can specifically involve differences in culture, knowledge base, awareness, and understanding of the subject being explored within the context of the communication medium (Barnlund, 1970).

Among the other topics explored within the literature review, in addition to a thorough review of the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework were communication, communication barriers, communication and culture, communication and business, communication and the workplace, and communication and leadership. A thorough exploration of each of these topics serves to provide an understanding of this complex matter. The matter involves not only the issues that are present therein, but also some of the solutions suggested by researchers and the myriad ways that communication can fail. As a result, negative interactions can occur between culture and communication in the business environment, both domestically and internationally.

Although many studies have focused on communication in the business world and how culture and communication relate, there are fewer studies in the literature on the lived experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers in overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace. Globalization has resulted in diverse employees in not just business but also in many different fields from maintenance work to professional positions (Akhavan, 2012; Akomolafe, 2013; Levitt, 2014). Not only is communication through language important, but for immigrant employees, culture has major effects on how people communicate in interpersonal relationships (Guffey &

Loewy, 2012). One example is nonverbal communication in which common hand symbols in one language would be offensive in another (Bonaccio et al., 2016).

A common theme among many studies was identified as *trust*. Developing trust (often through encouraged camaraderie and diversity training) has been a prevalent theme in many studies that explore cultural and language barriers and how to overcome them (e.g., Clayton et al., 2016; Hofhuis et al., 2016; Ling et al., 2013; Reznickova, 2015). Due to ethnocentrism and stereotyping common in human nature all around the world, trust is indeed a characteristic that needs development to overcome the former negative traits common in the workplace as it transitions into a nonhomogeneous setting (Ling et al., 2013). One cannot take for granted that employees who have experienced the transformation from a monocultural workplace to a more diverse one will accept the changes without the biases inherent in ethnocentricity. Therefore, diversity training and informal socialization are important to help overcome barriers to communication (Clayton et al., 2016; Hofhuis et al., 2016; Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012; Xie & Adamson, 2015).

An increased awareness of the difficulties that are faced by most and ignored by many makes it possible to gain increased insight and understanding of cultural communication experienced by immigrant employees. It is not possible to completely negate the effects of culture and communication, or to separate the two within the workplace setting. However, awareness of the problem is the first step in mitigating the issues that are currently found regarding obstacles caused by cultural and communication issues in the workplace. Chapter 3 provides detailed information into the way the study was conducted, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the study itself.

Following the presentation of such information, the results of the study are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to explore and describe the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers and ESL workers. I examined the participants' narratives on overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace, which allowed for a description and understanding of how communications and culture in the workplace form the perspectives of each participant's worldview and understanding. The aim of this study was to accomplish the task of understanding how non-English speaking immigrants experience language and cultural challenges by exploring various written and oral communication barriers that occur among employees and immigrant workers.

In this study, the participants were asked to recount details of the various communication issues they had faced within the context of their work environment. I explored such issues by recording the experiences of the participants through the lens of culturally diverse non-English speaking and ESL employees of American companies (Akomolafe, 2013; Neeley, 2013). Chapter 3 details the steps through which the research study itself was completed. The presentation of this information can increase the validity and reliability of the study. To ensure the presence of the same, Chapter 3 presents the research design, role of the researcher, methodology, and various issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question set forth for resolution during the study completion is identified as "How do non-English speakers or English as a Second Language speakers

(ESL speakers) describe their communication experiences in the workplace?" The central concepts that were explored within the context of the study are the application of communication within the workplace setting and an exploration of the myriad of ways in which culture and communication influence one another within the context of the work environment (Wang et al., 2011). The complex and interconnected nature of the relationship between culture and communication can create areas of concern not only when looking at the communication practices among individuals, but also in identifying current issues, allowing for the creation of recommendations that may be tested in future studies.

To accomplish such a task, I selected a qualitative narrative inquiry as the ideal means by which to collect, analyze, report, and present the data. The qualitative research tradition enables exploring of the sum of the area of interest, allowing the researcher to collect pertinent information that is not available in numerical format (Creswell, 2013). Given that the information that was collected from participants concerned their thoughts and perceptions regarding workplace communication, a qualitative study was the most appropriate choice, for such information cannot be presented in a quantitative format (Creswell, 2013).

Five primary research designs can be employed in the completion of qualitative studies: the case study, a phenomenological study, an ethnography study, a grounded theory study, or a narrative research study (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Lewis, 2015; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The narrative inquiry, or narrative study, was determined to be the most effective after reviewing each of the five different selections. Narrative inquiry was first known in the management science field and later in

the knowledge management field, which can also be related to information management (Cleveland, 1989). This form of qualitative research is centered on the life experiences narrated by people who had an experience with an emphasis on learning in any field (Chase, 2013). Even if related to one individual, the narratives are considered valuable (OMICS International, 2014), which makes narrative inquiry an appropriate method for exploring the experiences of non-English speakers in the workplace.

Lenfesty et al. (2016) claimed that narrative thinking gives the researcher a storytelling vocabulary from which arise global meaning and sense making. The researcher can get data from field notes, interviews, journals, and other sources (Lenfesty et al., 2016). Further, a theoretical lens offers a structure toward advocating for particular groups, and the findings can give a voice to those who are not always acknowledged (Lenfesty et al., 2016). The participants in the study had extensive experience as employees who are culturally diverse and for whom English is not their primary language.

Looking first to the case study research design, I knew this particular method is most appropriate when researchers seek to explain a set of circumstances surrounding a given phenomenon. Case study can assist in making contributions to the extant body of literature, regarding both the knowledge of a given group and its associated phenomena (Yin, 2012; 2014). The extant body of literature indicates that there is a need to explore areas of communication barriers pertaining to cultural and linguistic differences outside of the realm of education or healthcare. Indications are present for the need to explore the construct within the context of other business environments as well as dictating the necessity for more than simply generalized information regarding the way to address such

concerns (Akhavan, 2012; Carr & Dekemel-Ichikawa, 2012; Chitakornkijssil, 2010; Dawood & O'Sullivan, 2012; Free et al., 2014; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013; Sun, 2011; Tian & Borges, 2011).

In the case of the present study, the participant sample was less rigid than the type of group definition that is best suited to the case study, and case study would narrow the scope of the study to a certain organization, environment, or individual (Denzin, 2012). Under those circumstances, the effectiveness of the study would decrease and contribute to further gaps (Denzin, 2012). Therefore, case study was dismissed. Ethnography is most commonly employed in cultural anthropological studies or when the researcher is to act as an observer participant (Denzin, 2012). However, because neither of these criteria would be present within the current study, this design was deemed unsuitable as well (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Lewis, 2015; Maxwell, 2012). Likewise, ethnography was considered unsuitable for the study because it would only offer scientific descriptions of customs of individual people or cultures, but not provide an effective exploration among multiple non-English speaking cultures (Denzin, 2012).

I considered phenomenology because this design could have enabled me to explore a given phenomenon. Still, considering the nature of the target population and the number of hours necessary to obtain the data for use in a phenomenological study, I deemed this design inappropriate due to time constraints (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Lewis, 2015; Maxwell, 2012). Thus, I discarded phenomenology because it addresses lived experiences, generally through face-to-face interviews, interviews relative to narrative inquiry regarding communication challenges in the natural work environment of the participant (Frost, 2011). It would provide rich data in fields where communication is

essential to the participants' stories of human interaction in the workplace (Reissman & Speedy, 2006). Finally, grounded theory design was considered unsuitable for this study because the communication theory was used as a conceptual framework and no new theories needed to be developed (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). This elimination process left the narrative approach, which allowed for multiple participants from different target groups to make up the participant pool. This situation made narrative inquiry ideally suited to the completion of this study and the collection of varied perspectives through semistructured interviews until data are saturated and no new information is obtained (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Lewis, 2015; Maxwell, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has several different roles, responsibilities, and actions that must be adopted to finish the study. These roles included the following: (a) the role of the researcher, which includes researching the data necessary to complete the literature review, collecting the data from participants, and analyzing the collected data; (b) the role of the analyst, in which I reviewed all of the data collected, ensuring that all necessary information was present and completing a full analysis of available data, ensuring that the research question being asked was answerable with the collected information and that the material would be evaluated in full; (c) the role of the writer: After reviewing the information uncovered during the research and analysis processes, I wrote up the information ensuring that all data were taken into consideration, all pertinent information was included, and all collected information was appropriately considered; (d) the role of proofreader and editor, in which I reviewed the completed document, ensuring that the appropriate levels of continuity were maintained throughout the document, that spelling

and grammar were correct, and that the paper not only flowed logically but that it also addressed all aspects relevant to and required by the study; and (e) the role of the submitter, in which I would submit the completed write up of the study, ensuring that the research and submission process were concluded.

In addition to the adoption of each of these roles, I took on the role of the observer, obtaining data from the participants, and observing their body language and facial expressions during the interviews. No prior personal or professional relationships were present between the participants and me. As in the completion of all studies, there was the potential for researcher bias, wherein the researcher views the data through the lens of the expected outcome, inadvertently skewing collected data (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010).

To negate the possibility of bias, I maintained awareness of the potential for bias but also worked to ensure that, in the review of the data, there were no preconceived notions as to what to expect the results of the study to be. There were no other ethical issues to be considered outside of those that were discussed in detail in a subsequent section. There were no interviews conducted at my office and there was no relationship between the participants and me.

Methodology

The purpose of presenting the methodology employed in the completion of a study is to ensure that other researchers have all of the information necessary to replicate the study, should they so desire (Ladwig, 2016; Pickard, 2012; Wiberg, 2014). The presence and inclusion of this information ensure test-retest reliability, which serves to increase the overall validity of the results collected (Ladwig, 2016; Pickard, 2012; Resch

et al., 2013; Wiberg, 2014). To ensure that all information necessary was present and included, I presented the participant selection logic, the instrumentation, pilot study, procedures for recruitment and participation, and the data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

To ensure that the participants were able to provide the data necessary to answer the identified research question, 20 participants who were over the age of 18 and who were not native English speakers were asked to share their experiences about workplace communications. Such criteria ensured that all aspects of communication relating to those of different backgrounds for whom English was not a primary language were taken into consideration. All individuals were required to have full time jobs. The participants I recruited were individuals in their mid-30s and above, with mid-career level jobs in fields such as accounting, banking, management and administration, finance, IT, and marketing, with at least 5 years' experience.

The sampling strategy was purposive sampling to ensure that all participants were of various cultural backgrounds so that no one cultural background was overly representative within the sample population. This strategy ensured that more than one individual perspective from a given culture was included to ensure a greater level of generalizability. The sample size was selected to make sure that there was representation from different non-English speaking cultures.

Participant recruitment occurred through the use of physically posted signage in the form of fliers and in the form of online posts requesting individuals who fit the criteria listed in the previous paragraph to respond to a given phone number or email address if interested in participating. Once the potential participants contacted me, I asked

them to state their age, to provide information on their cultural backgrounds, and to confirm that English was not their primary language. When the potential participants confirmed these facts, I explained the purpose of the study and provided information on the semistructured interviews regarding how and where English becomes a language problem at their work. If potential participants agreed to participate in the study, they were requested to provide an email address in which an informed consent form was sent to them. The individuals were then asked to sign the informed consent form electronically and forward the document back to me. Once I received the informed consent forms, I counted the individuals as active participants in the study.

Instrumentation

Following the recruitment of participants, I scheduled semistructured face-to-face interviews with the 20 participants in which I asked them a list of open ended questions (see Appendix A). The interviews took place in a conference room at the participant's workplace or another place of their choosing at the participant's convenience. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and lasted appropriately half an hour to 45 minutes. Furthermore, I was taking handwritten notes on the narratives and including my observations on body language and facial expressions to capture the personal and emotional impact of the involvement in coping with communication barriers on the participants. For a sample interview transcript, see Appendix B.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once the participants were recruited, the interviews were concluded, and the digitally recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, I contacted all the participants by either phone or email. I explained that the study was concluded and

that I could answer any questions that the participants had. I reminded them that participation in the study was voluntary and confirmed the responses provided to me. If the participants thought of anything else to expand or elaborate on in the described situations, I noted that, including the date and time of the event, if the event was described in the interviews, what was missing, and what additional information the participant had. This process served as a form of member check to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data (Harper & Cole, 2012; Reilly, 2013; Torrance, 2012).

Data Analysis Plan

Given the presence of a single research question, all the data collected via the instrument were directly connected to the identified research question. Since all the recorded information was in direct relationship to barriers and culture in the workplace, all the data collected were pertinent to the resolution of the research question. I was looking for common threads throughout the participants' stories about communication barriers in the workplace to help me in my data analysis, at the time that I conducted the semistructured interviews. When the interviews went through the transcription process via a professional transcriptionist (who signed a confidentiality agreement), I compared the transcripts and my handwritten notes to aid in developing categories and themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Stake, 2013). Coding the data assisted in the understanding of the participants' narratives of communication barriers they experienced in the workplace as immigrant employees whose first language was not English.

When conducting qualitative research, the coding system typically consists of reviewing the collected data for a word, phrase, or construct that the researcher assigns to a given piece of data or data set (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2008). The identification of

this word or phrase serves as a means of assisting the researcher in summarizing the type of content present within the collected raw data. It guarantees that the researcher is not only able to retrieve the information easily, promptly, and precisely but that all themes are identified to ensure the successful exploration of the collected data (Saldana, 2008). Without the use of such a system, the researcher would be less efficient in the analysis of data; the coding process ensures efficiency while at the same time ensuring that others are able to understand the system being employed should the experiment need to be replicated (Saldana, 2008). Any discrepancies in theme or information presented were noted carefully, allowing for accuracy in the reporting and presentation of the collected results.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I established credibility through the collected data, member checks, and saturation reached through the consistent identification of themes, as documented through the codification process (Harper & Cole, 2012; Reilly, 2013; Saldana, 2008; Torrance, 2012). The self-reported data did have the potential for decreased credibility. However, member checks were used to confirm what the participants said and my knowledge and awareness of the same words to boost overall credibility (Harper & Cole, 2012; Reilly, 2013; Torrance, 2012). I achieved saturation through the continued presence and representation of common themes.

Transferability

The transferability of the study refers to the external validity of the study (Koos, Mouret, & Doncieux, 2013; Wenger & Olden, 2012). Such transferability was present

because data saturation was achieved even if the participants worked in different industries and had different cultural backgrounds. In fact, those self-same variations in participant selection assisted to ensure the transferability of the study, for it served to indicate that the collected data were similar regardless of workplace environment or cultural background. Such factors for consideration were present due to the absence of English as the primary language of the individual.

Dependability

Dependability assumes that the study is replicable and repeatable and that the results obtained when the study is or was repeated would be similar to those obtained by the initial researcher. The findings would be in keeping with the documentation presented by the original researcher in the write up of the study (Funder et al., 2014; Saldana, Scherer, Rodriguez-Barraquer, Jampel, & Dickersin, 2016). The presence of the content contained within the chapter and within the study should offer the necessary information to assist future researchers in recreating the study. This situation would depend on whether my recommendations are implemented and whether additional efforts are made in the future to address this growing concern within the business world (Wang et al., 2011). It would depend on the likelihood of the answers matching up. I would expect that the answers would not match up in the future, for I believe that efforts would have been made to decrease communication barriers within the workplace setting regardless of primary language through future endeavors.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to "the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others" (Trochim, 2006, p. 1). Member checks assist in confirming the

study data, serving as both a means of providing credibility by confirming the recorded data (Harper & Cole, 2012; Reilly, 2013; Torrance, 2012). By the same token, additional audits of the data may be conducted, and, if necessary, additional data can be collected from participants to confirm their additional experiences, verifying the presence of the communication barriers and the manner in which they present themselves within the construct of the participant's workplace. Still, another method that could be used, if necessary, would be to contact various nonaffiliated employers. Researchers could request they discuss their interaction with non-English as a primary language staff to confirm the types of events that participants detailed using the "Devil's advocate" approach (Trochim, 2006, p. 1).

Ethical Procedures

When a researcher undertakes the task of conducting primary research, certain matters must be considered, particularly when the primary study being conducted requires human participants (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012). Since the research was conducted while I was affiliated with an institute of higher learning, the most important consideration was the acquisition of approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval #04-18-17-0311755), an entity tasked with ensuring that there are no human rights violations or ethical violations in the completion of the research. When researchers conduct studies using human participants, they are responsible for ensuring that all ethical standards for research are followed before, during, and after the data collection process (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012).

If materials collected from humans are being utilized in the completion of the research project, obtaining written consent is not necessary, particularly if the written

content is part of public domain already (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012). An example of material in the public domain is published content written by a third party in which the third party is not a part of the information being gathered. This practice does not mean, however, that such use can go without acknowledgment. Citing this information to ensure that the author receives credit is sufficient (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012).

Returning to the human participants, however, said participants must agree to participate in the study. It is not enough, however, to simply obtain verbal consent from the individuals who have agreed to participate in the study. When human participants are providing data directly to the researcher to be used in the completion of the study, the researcher is responsible for obtaining written consent from the participant to use the information collected (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012). The consent form may be made by the researcher or a generic consent form may be used, with the researcher tasked with inputting study specific information to ensure that all ethical considerations are addressed (Driscoll & Brizee, 2012).

Ensuring that the research being conducted is ethical is a vital part of the research process, for studies that extend beyond the boundaries of acceptable norms, behaviors, or content, such as instances in which participants are manipulated, serve to invalidate the data being collected (Resnik, 2016). Thus, the inclusion of ethical considerations is vital to not only providing credibility to the research but assisting others in replicating the process while at the same time ensuring that all participants are treated appropriately, a vital practice since World War II (Resnik, 2016). In the case of this study, I first obtained IRB approval (IRB Approval #04-18-17-0311755; see Appendix C). Following this, I obtained informed consent forms from each of the participants. Once the informed

consent forms were obtained from the participants, they were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could stop participation at any time. They were provided with information to contact Walden University and me if they had any questions or concerns (Punch, 2013).

Rowley (2012) suggested that letter coding can be used to protect each participant's confidentiality. The participants received an assigned code identifier specific to them even if the participant withdraws. The consent of participants is consistent during the interview process. Participant consent is primary to the research process (Punch, 2013). If at any time the participant did not want to continue the interview process, the interview would conclude immediately. If a participant withdrew from the study, the participant would receive the audio, transcripts, and any notes of his interview during and after the interview process.

In addition to ensuring that informed consent was obtained, the participant data was kept confidential. I used number coding so that each participant's identity was confidential (Rowley, 2012). Each participant was assigned an identification code and it was kept even if the participant withdrew from the study. Furthermore, all the participants' data are to be kept confidential, and any identifying information is to be scrubbed from the collected data.

I am the only party to have access to the collected data, and all the data collected are to be stored in a locked location (i.e., in a password locked file on my computer if emailed back to the researcher, or in a locked drawer in my office if mailed back to me). I shared the interview transcripts with the participants to conduct member checking to ensure the collected narratives as told in the interview are valid and depict the reality of

their experiences (Denzin, 2012; Harper & Cole, 2012). All the data collected are to be stored for a period of no more than 5 years following the completion of the study and then they would be destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 detailed the reasons that a qualitative narrative inquiry was chosen as the research design and method justifying the use and indicating why the other potential design options for a qualitative study would not be effective or would not be as effective as the design chosen. The role of the researcher was discussed to define the actions that I took in the completion of the study. Next are the findings that were used to complete the study. Chapter 3 allowed for identifying the participant selection logic and discussing the instrumentation to be used in the completion of the study; the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the plan for data analysis. Next, I addressed the issues of trustworthiness, including those of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and all ethical procedures and practices as well as the reason for their inclusion. With the provision of this information, it is possible to increase the overall validity of the study by ensuring that it could be recreated if another researcher so desired. It would also be possible to make sure that there would be no confusion on the part of any reader regarding how I acted to complete the study. The presentation of such information ensures that the data presented in the following chapter, the results of the study, are appropriately framed within the context of the study as a whole.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to explore and describe the experiences of non-English speaking immigrant workers and ESL workers. To accomplish this task, I completed 20 interviews with participants who matched the inclusion and exclusion criteria previously discussed in Chapter 3. I completed them over a 1-month period. The participants in the study were provided with informed consent forms. Once they signed and returned the forms, I coordinated with them to set up the best date and time that did not conflict with their schedules.

At the interview, I provided the interviewee with a copy of the signed informed consent form with a number written at the top right-hand corner. I wrote the corresponding number on my copy of the transcript to ensure that if the participant desired to remove him or herself from the study, I could find the interview coded with the same numerical value and pull the information without breaching his or her confidentiality. It also provided a means for me to identify participants to complete the member check process following the interview transcriptions without including any identifying information in the collected data used in the completion of this study.

The participants agreed, as indicated on the informed consent form, to the audio recording of the interviews. Each interview was transcribed less than 48 hours following its completion. After the transcription process, I completed a quality check by listening to the interviews again and compared the transcribed interview to the audio recording to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Once I was satisfied that the text of the transcribed interviews matched the spoken words on the recording then I contacted the participants. I

sent the transcribed interviews for them to review for accuracy and to confirm that the spoken words were in alignment with what they wanted to express on the study topic (Harper & Cole, 2012; Reilly, 2013; Torrance, 2012). None of the participants indicated that I needed to make any changes to the transcribed interviews.

After I completed the member check process, I used Manual Level 2 coding (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2008). Within the proposal stage of this project, I thought that I could use Atlas.ti in the completion of this project. However, the trial version of the software would not allow me to analyze the 20 documents. The fees associated with the purchase of the program were cost prohibitive which led me to use manual coding. The process took longer to complete than using a computer program, but it allowed for a more thorough analysis of results since different verbiage was used by individual participants to discuss the same subject. Chapter 4 presents these results followed by an evaluation of the findings within the context of the literature previously identified and synthesized in Chapter 2. The demographic data are presented first, followed by the analyzed results as they pertained to each of the identified research questions.

Demographics

The demographic data I collected from the participants are within this section. There are four different demographic data sets that I compiled from the interviews: they are gender, age, job position, and location.

Gender

There were 11 males and nine females who were interviewed.

Age

Some of the interviewees only provided their ages range for the data collection process. All the participants were over the age of 18 per the inclusion criteria of the study and their ages were in the mid-30s.

Job Position

The interviewees were given the opportunity to provide information about their jobs or the setting in which they worked. The collection of this information has the potential to allow for greater exploration and analysis concerning the types of situations faced within specific types of jobs, industries, or positions. Table 1 provides information on the job positions of participants.

There were four managers, nine assistant managers, and seven supervisors who participated in the interview. They worked in finance, accounting, banking, IT, and marketing.

Location

The participants were from New York City (Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island) and Long Island.

Results

The information collected during this study was designed to answer the primary research question: “How do immigrant workers who are non-English speakers or English as Second Language speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace?” Participants were asked to think of specific incidents that would provide a storied narrative about their experiences as employees where English was a second language.

Table 1
Job Positions

Participant	Job Position	Type of Industry
Participant 1	Assistant Manager	Banking
Participant 2	Assistant Manager	Finance
Participant 3	Supervisor	Finance
Participant 4	Manager	Finance
Participant 5	Assistant Manager	Accounting
Participant 6	Supervisor	Marketing
Participant 7	Manager	Accounting
Participant 8	Supervisor	Information Technology
Participant 9	Assistant Manager	Marketing
Participant 10	Manager	Finance
Participant 11	Supervisor	Information Technology
Participant 12	Assistant Manager	Banking
Participant 13	Supervisor	Accounting
Participant 14	Manager	Information Technology
Participant 15	Supervisor	Accounting
Participant 16	Assistant Manager	Marketing
Participant 17	Supervisor	Banking
Participant 18	Assistant Manager	Accounting
Participant 19	Assistant Manager	Finance
Participant 20	Assistant Manager	Information Technology

The first question in the interview process asked participants to describe their most memorable story, either negative or positive, about communication barriers in the workplace. Table 2 documents the different types of communication barriers they identified. Through a review of the primary communication barriers faced by participants in the workplace setting, it showed that the main communication issue that occurred was miscommunication. Some participants indicated that their coworkers used this lack of understanding that resulted in miscommunication between the parties to blame those (participants) for the adverse job situations. The second most common communication barrier faced by participants in the workplace environment was not being aware of the appropriate terms to use which resulted in one of two types of situations.

One situation resulted when the participants were unsure of how to communicate effectively with a coworker or a customer and they did not know the appropriate terms to use to describe succinctly what needed to be done. The other situation was when they found themselves in circumstances in which they were unsure of what they were being asked since they did not know the meaning of the words that was being used to describe an object or to explain a task that needed completing. The individuals involved in these situations occasionally created adverse conditions for the participants.

Table 2

Communication Barriers

Participant	Communication barrier
Participant 1	Unable to clearly express self/ Need to use alternative means of communication
Participant 2	Miscommunication/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 3	Miscommunication/ Need to use alternative means of communication
Participant 4	Loss of respect/ Need to use alternative means of communication
Participant 5	Delays in work completion/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 6	Miscommunication
Participant 7	Miscommunication/ Delays in work completion
Participant 8	Lack of appropriate terms / Need to use alternative means of communication
Participant 9	Miscommunication/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 10	Miscommunication/ Loss of respect
Participant 11	Miscommunication/ Delays in work completion
Participant 12	Miscommunication/Lack of understanding
Participant 13	Miscommunication/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 14	Miscommunication/ Loss of respect
Participant 15	Lack of appropriate terms/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 16	Lack of appropriate terms/ Unable to clearly express self
Participant 17	Miscommunication/ Delays in work completion
Participant 18	Unable to clearly express oneself/ Need to use alternative means of communication
Participant 19	Miscommunication/ Lack of appropriate terms
Participant 20	Miscommunication/ Lack of appropriate terms

Sometimes the interviewees would find themselves facing disciplinary action with their supervisors. Other times, they had the potential to lose the respect of the employees who they were managing. The verbatim description by Participant 3 of one such situation: “The persons who I work with were more fluent in English and they were able to address the problem much better.” Participant 3 continued, “And that put me into a position where as a supervisor I was seen as ‘okay, you cannot address the situation.’ So, you do clash sometimes with your coworkers.” So that was one barrier like you know I had at the workplace and there are many more miscommunications like that.”

The participants were next asked to explain the extent to which their English language fluency affected their performance in the workplace. All the participants who provided a direct answer to this question indicated that their level of English language fluency highly impacted their performance within the workplace setting. Participant 19 provided a somewhat succinct explanation of how the lack of fluency could affect a business: “I did have a problem when...when they speak with me tell me to pick up this I don’t understand. I pick something else. And when I go after two, three months, then I pick up their accent, you know?” Participant 19 continued: “Then at first, I feel some more problems than I used to. Then, after they tell me to bring something, then I understand after like five, six months.”

Participant 19 was not the only one who explained this phenomenon during the interview. As the others increased their grasp of the English language, they were able to improve the overall ease with which they were able to accomplish their job. Only one participant had a job where it was felt that the use of English, however poor or well spoken, was not necessary. Participant 8 explained that they worked in a highly

multicultural setting, stating, “English is very easy and is very strong and helpful, but if there is no English language I cannot work here. I work with many types of client accents. So, if I don’t know English, I cannot communicate with them.” This story was the only example from a participant who believed that the communication barriers of English are so high that it is a hindrance in using English as an international language. All the other participants expressed that if a person’s English was poor; it was detrimental to workplace performance.

The next question asked was an exploration of the extent to which they felt English language fluency was vital when it came to getting a promotion. I should note that the initial question on the semistructured interview guide was the following: “To what extent is English language fluency important when it comes to getting promotions?” I asked many of the participants the question as presented in the interview guide, however, I asked some a variation on this question such as Participant 7 and the question asked was, “How important is English language (fluency) when considering promotions to your staff?”

While changes in the question, such as this, may seem initially different, these variations ultimately served to decrease the overall ability to analyze the responses because they finally change the question and change the type of answer being given. As such, in analyzing the answers given to questions asked of participants that included the combination of the idea of a promotion within the workplace and the relationship of that to fluency in English, I had to complete a more generalized analysis. The responses provided by participants varied in relation to the question I asked of them. Each participant did answer the specific question asked of him or her, but the variations

provided served to focus on the creation of a more overall picture of perceived influence in the scope, as opposed to allowing for the collection of answers to a specific question that could be analyzed. Participants expressed, on the whole, that their level of English fluency did affect their likelihood of attaining a promotion.

Participant 16 used an example of a coworker's predicament as a means of explaining the crux of the problem:

One of our coworkers, he is very good. He has almost 10 years of experience. He is very good in business. Everything he knows about the store, the staff, but the reason he cannot be promoted is his language barrier. When it comes to handling people or the vendors, his verbal skills are not that good. So, he simply, you know the managers, they don't want him to get a new position because they know he cannot handle money matters and management level matters.

Many other participants had similar stories either about themselves and their abilities or about the abilities of others with whom they worked.

The participants who were asked if they took English language fluency into account when considering promotions to employees indicated that the matter was less of a concern and it depended on the type of work done. Participant 7 explained that the tax laws remained the same, regardless of the language spoken and since the company worked with many international clients, language barriers did not influence promotion as a result. Participant 7 was the only one to indicate, however, that English fluency was a factor in the acquisition of a promotion.

Participant 4 looked at the matter on a much broader scale, stating, "I...think English is important not only in America, but I think it (is important) everywhere. But

here especially because it is a main language everyone understands and works with.” By looking at the answers provided by all the participants, it became possible to see that the effects of English language frequency were all encompassing, influencing their ability to move forward in their careers and affecting their ability to advance within the companies for which they worked.

These matters led to an exploration of the participants’ ideas regarding the level of effort that they felt was required to be able to communicate effectively within a workplace setting. Due to the variations of the participants’ responses, no clear picture could be made to indicate the level of effort that participants believed is required. Some stated that employees must be fluent in English, others indicated that one should be able to communicate in English at the high school or college level, while the rest of the participants mentioned that individuals should only need to be able to communicate to the point of making themselves understood. As Participant 4 stated, “Communication must be so much, so fluent, that it should not be an embarrassment for a speaker and the listener.” Although the levels of communication difficulty varied, all participants described personal challenges.

I asked the sixth question, “To what extent would you consider (a) lack of English language fluency a barrier towards work productivity?” There were no two similar answers. Participant 7 stated that a lack of English language fluency was a barrier “about maybe 5-10%,” but did not elaborate as to the reason for providing that response. Participant 6 stated, “Obviously I lack a vocabulary, so that is a barrier. I usually have to struggle to find the words to explain the situation and the scenario.” This answer explained how the barrier was present, but not the degree to which the work productivity

was affected as a result. There was no indication as to whether this barrier caused performance issues, decreased efficacy, or only created frustrations. Participant 1, on the other hand, just stated, “It’s a...it’s a barrier, yes. If you could not speak good English, it’s a barrier.” It seemed that participants had difficulty expressing the communication barriers they faced.

The seventh question was to discuss the extent to which language barriers could have the potential to cause emotional issues. All the participants indicated that language barriers could result in the presence of such challenges however briefly those emotional issues might be present. Participant 1 explained that it was emotional there were certain problems and the participant had to determine whether to go to a supervisor, and how to be able to present the setback in a manner so that it might be understood and taken seriously.

Participant 17 stated that the emotional issues came from another area “because sometimes people make fun of you due to not knowing English and it really affects you...it really affects all your emotions.” Others, like Participant 19, stated that their lack of English fluency used to cause emotional issues but that they have moved beyond such concerns. At the same time, Participant 7 indicated that it did not cause any emotional issues for her nor had she ever seen a language barrier create any emotional issues for anyone else. The situational context in which the participants associated the question, in terms of their own experiences, played a significant role in how they answered the question. Most indicated that language barriers could, had, or did create emotional issues or emotional setbacks for them, for others, or both.

The participants were asked to identify whether they preferred written or oral communication. Almost all the participants provided variations of the same response. The type of communication preferred by participants varied depending on the task. While there were some, like Participant 10, who preferred one type of communication over another, this choice primarily was focused on the kind of work being completed by the individual. Participant 10 worked with computers, so he stated that he preferred written communication because the computer was able to assist him in ensuring that the appropriate message was conveyed through the use of grammatical checks. Some of those who noted that the method of communication preferred was dependent on the situation also indicated that in written communication, computers proved beneficial in this regard. However, the preference for method of communication was dependent on the task.

Question 9 requested that participants explore the extent to which English language fluency had influenced their career choices. Some participants did not answer the question directly and they indicated that it influenced not the career choices but how they would be able to advance within the organization. The majority of participants answered the question directly stating that they had been turned down for jobs that they had applied for because they were unable to communicate effectively or speak clearly and comprehensively. Many, like Participant 2, stated that they preferred working for larger companies as it is the larger “companies who give you more benefits.” Still, their lack of mastery of the English language prevented them from being hired or being qualified for such positions, resulting in a need to look elsewhere for employment.

Participants were next asked to describe their relationship with native English language speaking coworkers. The responses were varied. Some participants stated that they had strong relationships with their coworkers because their coworkers were supportive of them learning English and assisted with the process. Still, of those who indicated their response in such a manner, some, like Participant 1, stated that even though their relationships were good, they felt as though their coworkers were better than they were. In other words, due to their lack of proficiency in the English language, they felt inferior to those who were already well versed in the language. Others indicated that they had fractious relationships with coworkers, due to the way that their coworkers treated them, mocking their attempt to grasp the English language. The type of relationship that participants had with their coworkers seemed wholly dependent upon the type of work environment that was present within their organizations.

Question 11 asked participants to explore the extent to which they felt left out during team meetings due to a lack of English proficiency. Some, like Participant 1, stated that when they do not understand something in a team meeting, they feel left out, but they were also too shy to say anything, or did not know the words to ask for an explanation. Others, like Participant 3, stated that although he was a supervisor, his lack of English proficiency made it seem as though those who were working for him were not taking what was being said seriously as a result of those language barriers or communication difficulties. Participant 6 was one of the few participants who indicated that she did not feel left out during team meetings due to this lack of proficiency, stating, “I know that even with the lack of English I have skill also. That is balanced out in both

ways.” In other words, she was confident, regardless of her lack of English proficiency, her skills and work ethics ensured that she was not left out of the meetings.

The second to last question asked the participants to explain whether they would prefer to work with someone who understood their native language, or if they would prefer to work with someone who did not know their (participant’s) native language who had a higher skill level. Responses were equally divided between the two areas; however, the reasons for the division between the two were different. For those who indicated that they would prefer to work with someone who understood their native language, the reasons given included an ability to reduce confusion, to increase ease of understanding, and to perform better in a team.

Participant 10 stated, “I definitely prefer to work with co-workers who speak my language and it’s really easy for me to communicate, so we can, I think, perform better instead of working with the workers like they don’t speak my language.” Participant 17 explained, “My native language would be really more useful for me because I can explain things.” He continued, “I could explain each and every point to my native language coworker and that is very skillful. In my language, I cannot miss any point, so if we have any confusion, we can discuss with each other.”

The other half of the participants stated they would prefer to work with someone who did not know their language but who had a higher skill level. A reason given in this regard included the ability to improve the participant’s own English skills through interactions with more skilled coworkers who do not know their (participants) own language. Another reason was a desire for someone who knows what he or she is doing to

be the one in that position; they want the best qualified person for the job, regardless of primary language spoken.

Participant 3 provided a response representative of the answers given by those who would prefer to work with someone who understood their native language, stating, “I would say to someone who does understand, ‘We’re working at the same level,’ which I would say is preferable. Presumably, you would say that you’re at the same level, so you feel like you can communicate better.” Participant 13, on the other hand, provided a response representative of those who indicated that they would prefer someone who had a higher skill level but who did not know the native language, stating,

I believe I’ll go with the person who is more skillful because the language you must learn it; it’s not something you know by birth. So, everybody can learn so many languages, but if somebody is not good at work then yes you cannot work with that person because that’s simply going to waste the resources, the time, the money, everything, So, I’m going to prefer somebody who even does not know the language, but they are good at work because it saves you the time and energy to explain it to them. If somebody knows my language, but is bad at work, what am I going to do with that person? I can’t teach them because skills are not to be taught; they are to be polished; they are to be self-learned. So, I can’t tell them do this do that or make them do something. I have to be very careful in choosing the person, and I’ll definitely choose the person who’s good at work.

The final question asked was if they were willing to share any stories regarding their day-to-day interactions with coworkers and communication barriers that arose between them in their place of employment. Some participants provided stories to explain

the different communication barriers faced within the workplace. Others indicated that they did not wish to provide any additional information, and still others simply provided the communication barriers that they identified within the workplace.

There were those who were willing to tell stories from which the communication barriers identified within the workplace setting was experienced. There were those who were willing to list the communication barriers that they faced in the workplace setting. In telling the stories, several primary communication barriers emerged, in addition to the previously identified areas of a lack of vocabulary and presence of miscommunication. These narratives included an “anti-immigrant” climate, as described by Participant 20. When additional personnel were needed to work overtime, it was challenging due to the need of an interpreter, according to Participant 1. There were difficulties with accents, whereby the individual was made to “feel uncomfortable” when it involved communicating with coworkers or customers, according to Participant 14. Many of the participants reported a lack of confidence. The primary communication barriers described by the participants were a lack of knowledge of appropriate terms or vocabulary; and in miscommunication among coworkers, superiors, or clients, these other communication barriers were manifest as well.

A total of six themes emerged from the manual coding and analysis of the data available in the transcripts (Table 3). These themes were (a) miscommunication, (b) lack of ability to express oneself clearly, (c) need to use alternative means of communication, (d) lack of appropriate terms, (e) delays in work completion, and (f) loss of respect. Each of these themes was associated with the different communication theories explored within the context of this study (Geertz and Pacanowsky’s). Awareness of these themes,

acknowledgment of their presence within the workplace setting, and identification of the steps that can be taken to reduce their presence within the workplace are critical for the success of companies in a global environment that increasingly uses English as the *lingua franca*.

Interpretation of Findings

Following the analysis of collected data, it is imperative that the study findings be interpreted within the context of the current body of literature. Such interpretation would allow for identification of areas of similarity to previous findings and areas of difference. This identification process could indicate a potential discrepancy in the study data, or it could indicate a shift in the current state of the topic itself. When looking to identified communication barriers, participants suggested that a lack of vocabulary or specific terminology and miscommunication were the two primary issues within the workplace setting.

Other secondary communication barriers identified included the following: (a) a need for an interpreter, thus hampering the working environment; (b) difficulty with accents and comprehension associated therewith; (c) lack of support from coworkers and; (d) feelings of discomfort, preventing the individual from speaking up or obtaining further clarification on an unknown issue. The communication barriers identified by participants during the study were not dissimilar to those present within the extant body of literature on the subject.

Table 3

Emerging Themes

Six emerging themes	Specific theme
1	Miscommunication
2	Inability to express oneself clearly
3	Need to use alternative means of communication
4	Lack of appropriate terms
5	Delays in work completion
6	Loss of respect

Flores and Matkin (2014) identified similar barriers to communication in their research. Also, multiple researchers have confirmed that there is a distinct need for workers to maintain an appropriate knowledge of vocabulary for the industry in which the individuals work and for the specific businesses where they hold positions (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Lowey, 2012; Vasile, 2014). Certain words, phrases, and gestures are universal. The need to communicate effectively within the workplace is crucial within the business world, including knowing the appropriate slangs, idioms, metaphors, similes, and other nonliteral forms of communication, although they should be avoided to prevent miscommunication (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Lowey, 2012; Vasile, 2014).

Regarding communication in the workplace, the results showed that the increased ease brought about by globalization has translated to a host of difficulties, the majority stemming from the communication barriers identified. There is an issue of being concise

in the interoffice communications which in turn translates to challenges to the ESL employees. These communication barriers serve to create situations in which employees are unable to be as effective as they could if they were speaking and communicating in their native language, which further stresses the need for concise communication within the workplace (Akhavan, 2012; Asante et al., 2014).

Most of the participants expressed the idea that communication was difficult due to the need to communicate primarily in English, the *lingua franca* of the United States (Jenkins & Leung, 2013; Merriam Webster, 2016). It should be noted, however, that current literature indicates the majority of the communication done in the workplace is in English. Still, there are organizations, as evidenced by participants' responses, where this standard is not the case (Briguglio, 2015). It is of note, however, that the participants who indicated that difficulty in English communication was less of a concern due to the multiple languages used within the workplace setting still revealed that they had difficulties because their English was not proficient.

Another concern present within the workplace setting was that participants indicated that there were times when they did not understand the topic of discussion or what someone asked them to do, or how to respond when asked for answers regarding a specific issue. In many of those cases, the participants indicated that they would either not ask for clarification, would pretend to understand what was being asked of them, or would simply disengage from the conversation without resolution. Researchers have previously identified that such situations are common (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; James, 2013; Richards, 1971). Although most participants indicated that they were actively taking steps to improve their grasp of the English language, researchers have

shown that although secondary language use does improve over time, discrepancies between the native English speaker and the second language English speaker will continue (James, 2013; Richards, 1971).

Summary

This chapter has presented the analyzed and synthesized results obtained from the completed participant interviews. The collected data indicated that there were high levels of communication barriers present for individuals who spoke English as a second language. Many found these barriers to affect adversely their ability to advance in their careers or expand their businesses. Many had difficulty with the English language in a primarily English language workplace which caused issues associated with respect, self-perspective, or embarrassment.

An interpretation of these findings concerning the synthesized literature presented in Chapter 2 revealed that the data collected during the study bore a marked similarity to data previously collected in this area of research. When written in a flowing manner through the interview process from start to finish, the results create a comprehensive narrative of experiences. The results take the experiences of the participants and transform them into a coherent exploration of the problem of communication barriers in the workplace. Certain issues were present with the interview process itself, ultimately creating new study limitations due to variations in the presentation of the questions asked of participants. However, once the information was collected and analyzed, ample data were provided for the resolution of the identified research questions, which are presented in more succinct detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to explore and describe the stories of non-English speaking immigrant workers and ESL workers. I examined the participants' narratives on overcoming language and cultural communication challenges in the workplace. These narratives allowed for a description and understanding of how communications and culture in the workplace form the perspectives of each participant's worldview and understanding. The aim of this study was to accomplish the task of understanding how non-English speaking immigrants experience language and cultural challenges by exploring various written and oral communication barriers. Chapter 4 allowed for the presentation of that narrative. Chapter 5 is devoted to identifying the answers to the research question, determining some of the implications of the answers to that research question, and presenting recommendations for future research and practice based on the results and their subsequent implications. The presentation of this information should lend further significance to the study. Nonetheless, based on the limitations identified in the previous chapter during the data collection and analysis, there is a need for additional research with the removal of some of the limitations.

Conclusions

The research question asked at the start of this study was the following: How do immigrant workers who are non-English speakers or English as Second Language speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace? I interviewed a total of 20 participants to obtain data that could be used to explore this question further. While participants' answers varied, the analyzed results indicated that participants found

a host of difficulties within the workplace setting because of their status as ESL speaker. I could identify the difficulties described by participants because of several communication barriers present, either large or small, within their own experience or within their workplace setting.

These same communications barriers were present, regardless of whether the individuals were employees of an organization or whether they held management positions. The uniformity of communications barriers served as the best and perhaps most accurate description of the workplace experiences of these individuals. The experiences of participants documented throughout the completion of this study showed a marked alignment with literature conducted in this area, literature spanning from the 1970s to the present (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; James, 2013; Richards, 1971).

Interpretation of Findings

The interview responses obtained from these 20 participants encompassed a discussion of their insights, practices, and experiences, as much as could be collected through the 14 interview questions. The questions were designed to represent the communication experiences of non-English speakers and ESL speakers within the workplace setting. During the interview sessions, participants reflected on their beliefs, behaviors, and the various methods that they used to identify not only communication barriers found within their various workplace environments, but also to discuss the way those problems affected their ability to work efficiently.

The participants also discussed some of the steps that they took to mitigate those issues. The documentation of the different communication barriers the participants identified allowed for six themes to emerge. A review of those themes and their

relationship to the primary research question explored within the context of this study allows for the presentation of those findings. A discussion of the implications of those findings follows, which in turn can offer practical applicability recommendations.

Research Question and Themes

Research Question 1

The primary research question explored within the context of this study was: “How do immigrant workers who are non-English speakers or ESL speakers describe their communication experiences in the workplace?” The 14 interview questions were designed to provide me with the information necessary to resolve the research question. The data collected from these interview questions, after analysis, resulted in six primary themes.

Theme 1: Miscommunication. The first theme to emerge from the interview data in support of the research question representative of the participants’ communication experiences within the workplace was miscommunication. I identified miscommunication as one of the primary barriers to communication found within the workplace (Flores & Matkin, 2014). Although the identification of this particular communication barrier is unsurprising, the presence of this barrier across a wide range of industries and within those different industries suggests that this particular theme may be more pervasive within the typical workplace environment than previously thought.

Theme 2: Inability to express oneself clearly. The second theme that emerged as a result of the analysis of the interview data was that the participants found it difficult to express themselves clearly. The inability to express oneself clearly refers to the difficulties present in conversing in an unfamiliar language. This inability can cause loss

of words, difficulty expressing ideas, or not understanding what one is being asked to do or complete. Not expressing oneself clearly is another common barrier to communication that researchers have identified within the current body of literature (Flores & Matkin, 2014).

Theme 3: Need to use alternative means of communication. As previously discussed, some methods can be used to communicate that allow individuals to be able to convey what it is they desire. Additionally, as the participants noted, a person may experience difficulties in verbal communication that are either decreased or negated entirely. They may also have difficulties when using written communication, either physically or digitally, or with diagrams (Goman, 2011; Guffey & Lowey, 2012; Vasile, 2014).

Theme 4: Lack of appropriate terms. According to the participants, the lack of appropriate terms refers to knowledge of how a term might be stated in one language but not in another. The lack of appropriate terms may also involve not knowing the word or phrase that is meant to describe a particular object, subject, or task. Within the extant body of literature, researchers like Goman (2011), Guffey and Lowey (2012), and Vasile (2014) found this deficiency of vocabulary to be a common theme. Also noted was the inability on the part of the participants to retrieve and use efficiently and consistently the industry specific terms necessary for the effective completion of job duties. While many terms are universal, as are many gestures or actions, when working in a professional setting, employees need to communicate clearly and efficiently using the appropriate terminology for that industry. A word used in a general sense can have multiple

meanings. Thus, if a worker does not understand the terminology particularly when the consumer of the good or service does then that could pose a problem.

Theme 5: Delays in work completion. Delays in work completion, in this case, refer to the inability on the part of participants to be able to complete their job duties or any additional tasks that they are assigned within the workplace. Such delays can be the result of a lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness of the tasks that they are being asked to complete. This particular theme ultimately stems from previous issues within the workplace setting, such as being unwilling to speak up to ask for further clarification or being unwilling to make oneself heard. Decreasing the speed at which they get that explanation then slows the speed in which the task will be accomplished (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; James, 2013; Richards, 1971). Other potential outcomes include lack of completion for that job period, trouble at work stemming from failure to get tasks completed, and not getting the task completed within a certain period, thereby decreasing employee effectiveness and the workplace as a whole (Akhavan, 2012; Asante et al., 2014).

Theme 6: Loss of respect. The final theme to emerge from the analysis of the interview data was a loss of respect. Participants indicated that their lack of understanding and awareness of the English language resulted in situations in which coworkers, supervisors, and sometimes those who reported to them, displayed a marked lack of or loss of respect when those coworkers became aware of the linguistic challenges. This loss of respect has been shown to decrease the effectiveness of the employee and the efficacy of the company because such communication is necessary to

complete the job duties. An inability to complete those tasks can create further barriers (Burgoon et al., 2016).

Implications

The results of the study indicate that the current state of affairs for ESL speakers within the workforce in the United States has not changed since the 1970s. The same cultural and communications barriers have been present in the workplace environment for almost 50 years. Such circumstances might indicate that efforts made within the workplace environment are either insufficient to meet the needs of the ESL population or are not effective within the context of the past and current culture of the country (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; Flores & Matkin, 2014; Goman, 2011; Guffey & Lowey, 2012; James, 2013; Richards, 1971; Vasile, 2014). Indeed, these six emergent themes have been present in the workplace since the 1970s (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; Flores & Matkin, 2014; Goman, 2011; Guffey & Lowey, 2012; James, 2013; Richards, 1971; Vasile, 2014).

The implication is that despite an increased amount of attention on this particular subject matter, either effort to decrease these communication barriers in the workplace have been unsuccessful, or steps have not been taken to target these communication barriers individually or reduce the likelihood of their occurrence. This implication suggests a need for modifications to workplace policy, and perhaps even a need for changes or modifications to current policies. It is imperative that the researcher avoid overstating the implications of the study when discussing the potential implications of a study. Still, the continued and ongoing presence of the same communication barriers

within the workplace implies that either little is being done to address the matter or the steps that have been taken have been insufficient to address the matter at hand.

Study results were in alignment with the current body of literature, discussing the need for more concise communication within the workplace setting (Akhavan, 2012; Asante et al., 2014). Specifically, the results of the study indicated that there were many issues for ESL speakers within the workplace setting, stressing the need for precision in communication. This finding is in alignment with the current body of literature, yet it is not a newly identified area of concern. The matter, as with the issue of communication barriers discussed previously, is one that still exists within the workplace, with little to no forward progress being made to address this situation (Akhavan, 2012; Asante et al., 2014). This information implies that, as before, policy changes in general are needed regarding communication practices within the workplace.

Researchers can take these implications a step further. One can argue that, if such policies exist within the workplaces of the participants, the current policies regarding communication practices within those workplace environments are ineffective. They are ineffective in actively identifying communication problems within the workplace and taking the steps necessary to resolve identified concerns. All the participants discussed the need for more concise communication practices within the workplace setting. However, none knew how to accomplish this or adequately debate the matter with their coworkers to bring about change. All viewed the lack of effective communication as one in which the burden of resolution should be placed solely on the participant's shoulders. This situation is one that was manifest across the responses of most participants who held positions of varying levels across all different industries, including front line employees

and management. In light of this identified pattern, additional communication training is needed across the workforce in general and that could be completed internally or externally or some combination of the two.

From the results of the study, a further indication was manifest within the context of the current body of literature regarding the participants' lack of knowledge of the English language. They admitted to feelings of inferiority, embarrassment, and in some cases, shame (Akhavan, 2012; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013; Asante et al., 2014; James, 2013). As a result of these negative feelings, the participants indicated that they did not wish to speak up because they did not want to call attention to their linguistic difficulties. They did not want to face ridicule because of a lack of knowledge on a given subject. This fear of speaking up implies that the culture within the workplace settings they experienced did not foster a sense of understanding with the participants. They did not feel as though their questions would be well received regardless of whether it would enable them to perform their job duties more expediently, or whether that information was needed to understand what those functions were.

A further implication of the results of this study stems from the awareness of the participants of their shortcomings regarding comprehension of the English language. Most of the participants indicated that they were actively taking steps to improve their grasp of the English language and expand their vocabularies and communication skills. Researchers have suggested that although secondary language use will improve over time, discrepancies may continue to be present between native English speakers and second language speakers (James, 2013; Richards, 1971). The researchers who have conducted studies on this matter have seen gradual improvements with similar actions

currently being taken by participants. Such an improvement implies that if steps are taken to improve English within a more targeted setting (e.g., in a classroom), it is likely that both rapid learning and expedient acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities would take place.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change to which the present study could contribute include business leaders' increased understanding of effective management and communication strategies to be employed with non-English speaking and ESL workers (Asante et al., 2014; Kincaid, 2013; Ling et al., 2013; Stacks & Salwen, 2014). My hope is that such management and communication strategies can assist these employees to gain confidence and become more comfortable in the workplace. When they feel self-assured and respected, their productivity would naturally increase, which would ultimately add to the profitability of their company (Papa & Whelan, 2015; Root-Bernstein & Ladle, 2014). Employing good communication strategies would also help to bridge the cultural and language divide that exists in many U.S. companies (Akomolafe, 2013; Dawood & O'Sullivan, 2012; Parthab Taylor et al., 2013).

The present study could contribute to company leaders encouraging positive behavior of coworkers. Better understanding of communication barriers of ESL and non-English speaking workers can eliminate low self-esteem issues for these immigrants who have entered the U.S. workforce. This research will help minimize barriers related to issues of diversity through inspiring employers to develop training and development manuals and workshops for their entire workforce. Such materials could help to increase sensitivity of people who consider themselves part of mainstream American culture to

those who have unfamiliar customs and ways of communicating (Dworak-Peck, 2016). Staffing and recruitment companies can use these results to better match company positions with the candidates to avoid stress and pressures on potential employees to be less genuine to avoid being met with cultural bias in job interviews (Fell, König, & Kammerhoff, 2016). Educational institutions can use the research to better equip the emerging professional work force, both immigrant and nonimmigrant, for their fields to prevent discrimination and emotional setbacks their students may perpetuate or experience when they start working (Bentley-Williams & Morgan, 2013).

Recommendations

Two types of recommendations can be explored based on the results of this study: recommendations for future practice and recommendations for future study. Such areas can include means to improve the current study, recreating the study to gain information that was lacking throughout the study process. Also, researchers can identify new gaps that need further exploration. Recommendations for future practice include exploring the practical applications of the results of this study and determining what potential changes can be made, based on the newly identified information, to improve the general state of the workplace for English as a Second Language speakers.

Recommendations for Future Study

Several recommendations can be made regarding the areas of future research and the first is the potential ways in which this study could be improved to allow greater understanding of this research area. These recommendations stem from the analyzed data obtained from the interview responses given by participants and the interpretation of the findings, which are present as a result of the study implications. I have documented these

recommendations within this section as viable suggestions for areas of future study, instances where gaps are still present in the literature, or cases in which one needs further information to understand the topic better.

The first recommendation would be the collection of data of the socioeconomic status of the individual, which would allow a more targeted breakdown of the specific communication industries present based on the different demographic segments or work industries. This protocol would facilitate identification of the area's most likely to be affected by this phenomenon. Based on the results obtained through the completion of this study, it is clear that such instances do appear to occur at all levels of management. Still, there is no clear indication on the widespread nature of this phenomenon. In completing a study, during the interview process, it is possible that the participant did not get the crux of the question, or we can do snowballing. Notably, during the completion of the analysis stage of the study, several interview questions had their verbiage changed to make it easier for the participants to understand and respond.

Other recommendations for future study come from areas identified throughout the study's completion. I suggest further research regarding the types of activities in which participants are engaging to improve their English language skills. While the majority of participants indicated that they were actively working to improve their knowledge and grasp of the English language, additional information on the steps and their effectiveness, including perceived improvement levels, were not collected. Identifying this information would serve as an additional step regarding what is currently being done to address the identified problem of communication difficulties for ESL speakers.

I would recommend that further studies be conducted on organizational culture to find out the perceptions of the treatment of ESL speakers both from personal narratives and their primary language English speaker coworkers. Furthermore, data collection from the human resources department is needed to determine the nature of the phenomenon. Such information would reveal whether any changes have occurred, or if changes have not occurred because reports of difficulties have not been generated, leaving companies unaware of potential issues within the workplace setting. I recommend further studies be conducted on organizational productivity to find out with the lack of concise communication, miscommunication and work delays how it impact the company financially.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Despite the difficulties identified during the completion of the study, and needed future research, there are still individual recommendations for future practice that can be made based on the collected data. These recommendations stem primarily from the implications of the study itself. I recommend that organizations, regardless of its size or the industry in which it operates, should reiterate its policies to assist in improving communication within the workplace setting. I also recommend that these policies detail exactly what effective communication is and how employees can achieve effective communication practices.

I would recommend specific policies designed to assist second language English speakers in the communication arena. Such policies, through human resources, could provide a recourse through which these individuals could get additional clarification for tasks completion. I further recommend, for larger organizations, that steps be taken to

provide employees who have the technical knowledge and skills necessary to advance but lack the English skills necessary to do so, with training programs to ensure that they receive the assistance needed for advancement.

Finally, I recommend a review of terminology within the standard training policies of the organization that all employees are required to complete. Even if some employees do know the terms, the inclusion of terminology within basic training for all staff would go a long way toward ensuring that all working within the organization are familiar with the application of terms within the context of that specific organization. This strategy would decrease confusion and ensure that all employees are clear on what is under discussion within the context of their job duties, their positions, and the organization as a whole.

Although it is unknown at this time whether anyone would take these recommendations seriously or take steps to implement these recommendations within the general workplace setting, I hope that employers would give increase care and attention to this ever-growing segment of the population, which would ensure a smooth transition for employees for whom English is a second language. A caring environment would increase the overall positivity of the workplace culture and improve the efficacy of workers within the organization. By creating a workplace culture that is designed to benefit all instead of some, each organization would be taking steps to improve societal interactions as a whole.

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Appendix A: Semistructured Narrative Inquiry Interview Questions

1. In answering the questions that follow, please think of specific incidents that will tell a story about your experience as an employee for whom English is a second language.
2. What is the most memorable story you can tell (negative or positive) related to communication barriers at the workplace?
3. To what extent does your English language fluency affect your performance at the workplace?
4. To what extent is English language fluency important when it comes to getting promotions?
5. What level of effort do you think is required to communicate effectively at the workplace?
6. To what extent would you consider lack of English language fluency a barrier towards work productivity?
7. To what extent might language barriers cause emotional issues?
8. Which method of communication in English language is preferred? Written or oral?
9. To what extent has English language fluency influenced your career choices?
10. Describe your relationship with coworkers who are native English speakers.
11. To what extent have you felt left out during team meetings due to lack of English proficiency?

12. Which would you prefer, a coworker who understands your native language or a coworker who does not know your native language yet is more skillful?
13. What further stories can you share regarding your day-to-day interactions regarding communication barriers at your place of employment?
14. Do you have further questions or concerns you might me to address?

Appendix B: Sample Interview Transcript

[I=interviewer, P=participant]

I: Okay I have participant 3 here with me and she is a thirty-two-year-old woman working as a supervisor for a financial firm. The questions I have for her is I want her to think of a specific incident that tells us a story about her experience as an employee for whom English is a second language?

P: As a nonnative English speaker there are certain incidents that you encounter that will put you in a position where you feel like you have to try extra hard to get to a certain position. It's like a boat or a bridge. You can either row your way there which is a little harder or you just walk across the bridge and that's for native English speakers. So there have been many incidents that are related to my work experience that are both positive and negative.

I: Okay what is the most memorable story that you can tell it can either be negative or positive that's related to the communication barriers at the workplace? If you want I can explain you what communication barriers are but if you understand can you please tell me anything negative or positive related to your workplace?

P: Well see in a very diverse community we have a lot of clients that come in that are of different descent our co-workers are of different descent.

I: You are talking about diversity at work or diversity outside of the workplace?

P: Well I think in this workplace definitely yes because clients walk in. Obviously, they're not just going to walk in one race. Our co-workers are different descent they're very diverse so within your work environment you have to be able to communicate at one level. There are certain people who are above you and there are certain people who are below you.

I: So, we're talking about supervisors and co-workers and people who are working under you as you being their supervisor right? Okay.

P: So, when you are speaking with your boss or your co-worker or people who are working under you who you are managing. We have to make sure that they understand. Sometimes we don't understand them because of the language difference because of an accent. So over there, there are lot of problem and because of miscommunication a lot of work becomes like put into pending and we are unable to get to that at a sooner time. Only because of miscommunication.

I: Okay participant three do you think of any negative or positive specific memorable story related to the positive and the negative environment and workplace?

P: So, well it's definitely a negative thing that happened because of lack of English fluency you can say.

I: From your side or the person you're addressing?

P: From my side we had to deal with a certain case that I would not like to disclose. But there was a certain case we had to handle and both me and one of my co-workers who I work with we went head to head with a situation because we were addressing the

situation very differently from different perspectives. The person who I work with they have more fluent in English and they were able to address the problem much better and that put me into a position where as a supervisor. I was seen as okay you cannot address the situation. So, you do clash sometimes with your co-workers. So that was one barrier like you know I had at the workplace and there are many more miscommunications like that.

I: That question, my next question is specifically for you. What extent does your English language fluency affect your performance at the workplace?

P: I would say to a very high extent because every person who walks through the door as a client comes with a problem and the way to address the problem because we're obviously in a nation where we're speaking English as a first language. The problem must be addressed; the solution must come in English. So, your performance that you give off that's basically how you solve these problems. There are certain letters do we have to speak to certain people? But when your English comes in the middle you are hesitant to do something to your full capacity. You're not able to do it because you feel like maybe my English is not good enough to do something. So, at that point you're held back.

I: Okay what is the parameter of your performance? By that what I mean you judge yourself based on the fluency of the English you speak or based on the skills that you perform at work? Those skills can have English as a major participant to them or they might not have English. For example, I'll give you a situation. You're working at a computer where you have to deal everything in English. Do you think your fluency of

English at that level affects your performance? Or your direct communication with a person who walks into the office, that makes your performance matter?

P: I think they go hand in hand, it's fifty, fifty. What I do on the computer obviously I have to understand it same way with a client I must understand them as well. We have to be on the same level. Yeah it affects your performance complete like I wouldn't say 100%, but I would say at least 60 or 70% because you must understand the material. If your language is weak you cannot understand something you cannot act upon it either because you're not understanding something.

I: Okay participant three my next question to you is; to what extent is English language fluency important when it comes to getting promotions?

P: It is important. It is highly important.

I: It is important at your workplace right now? Or generally it's important?

P: I would say both because the boss looks at what you are able to do. What you're able to do has a lot to do with communication. How you treat customers. How you react with them. How you treat your clients. How you are able to solve problems. The more you can do the more qualified you are seen as.

I: Sorry but I want to ask you this question. Does your fluency in English matters to your boss?

P: I would say it does.

I: Is he a Native American?

P: Yes, he is.

I: Okay.

P: So that's the thing because obviously we're working for a financial corporation everything has to be, you can say it has to be professional.

I: Okay. So, you think it matters a lot in getting promotions, right?

P: Yes, because it depends on how much you are able to do.

I: Okay is it a self-satisfaction? Or is it related to self-esteem? Or is it related to making your boss happy because you are fluent with English? Where do you put the level of fluency in English? Is it a matter of satisfaction for you a self-esteem or making your boss happy?

P: See language is a form of confidence. If I'm confident in how I'm speaking I'm able to complete my task quicker. For an example when we have clients who come in that need urgent work done right away for an example of letter. We need to solve a case for them that has to do with letter typing. Some financial explanation that needs to go out, so I must be able to fluently explain myself in that letter and if I'm not fluent in English because obviously the letter will be drafted in English. I cannot type the letter I cannot do it and if someone else can do that better than me they have a better chance at a higher position than me because they're seen as more qualified.

I: Okay participant three my other question to you is; what level of effort do you think is required to communicate effectively at the workplace? By level of effort I mean individual effort put in by you.

P: I feel like as long as you get your point across its okay. It's not that intense as when you know you're directly dealing with higher authorities. But when you are just communicating within the workplace just have a little bit of effort to make sure that your communication level is clear. You're getting your point across.

I: To what extent would you consider lack of English language fluency a barrier to towards work productivity? And that's your productivity.

P: Well this goes kind of back to the promotions question where if you're not able to do something you're held back, same thing with letter typing. Same thing with communicating as a third party for someone else if you're not able to speak fluent English you will not be able to get your point across. So, it prevents you from doing certain things that you're able to do. I've seen this first hand in the environment where I'm working because there are certain people who because of their English. They're not able to understand the material. They're not able to grasp it as well as someone else and that holds them back. That puts them in a back position.

I: Okay this question specifically I want to ask you now is; your level of English fluency. How does it affect your productivity at work? For example, if you're dealing with something. A case or a scenario that is put forward to you and you do not understand the language in it. You think your productivity gets affected? Of course, it does. It's a

general phenomenon it does get affected. But how do you take it as language lack of fluency affecting your productivity related to a specific task that you ever faced? Did it ever happen to you?

P: It often happens with notices that we receive. We receive a lot of financial notices you know we're working for a financial corporation a lot of companies have notices that come in and we must address them. These notices are coming from higher company, so they have professional English written in them. A good vocabulary and I'm unable to understand that and that's where I take it to my higher authority.

I: Did you ever feel an emotional issue related to a language barrier?

P: Yes.

I: Is it positive or negative?

P: It's definitely negative. It puts your self-esteem down like I said again language is a form of confidence. It's not success but it is a form of confidence. When you are speaking to someone who is better than you. You feel like alright I'm not as good as them and that puts you down. It puts your self-esteem down. It puts your self-confidence down.

I: Okay so do you remember anytime when you had an emotional set back?

P: Well there have been many incidences, yes. My biggest one would be when a client came in for a personal issue and we had to address the client as a third party. If a client felt like I wasn't able to do it as well because my English wasn't so good. He felt that I

wasn't handling the problem in a proper way because I didn't have the right vocabulary terms. That's mainly what it was he felt like I wasn't professional.

I: Okay participant three my other question to you is; what method of communication in English do you prefer, written or oral?

P: I would say it depends. The thing with written English language is that you are able to take your time. You can Google things here and there. You have the thesaurus available to you. With oral you can't pause people and say let me Google this, let me first define this. You can't go through a thesaurus, so I think it's both. But for people such as I, English as a second language. Written would be preferred because a lot of people notice your accent as well. So, when you're writing something, your accent is not available there. Your accent is not present, so you have a better chance at being seen as okay you're a little fluent in English.

I: Okay my other question to you is; to what extent has English language fluency influenced your career choices?

P: I'd always have to reconsider whether I'm suitable for this position or not based on my vocabulary, based on my English. When I do step in for that interview, the questions that I will be asked, will I be able to completely answer them. Or will I have to pause and think about how do I say this or how do I put this into better words. Because even when you step outside the workforce when you are there, and you have to place an order or when you have to communicate with other people who are better than you. It's like how do I answer you. I've often seen when people come into this office and we have an issue

in the office with them directly they come in here and they speak one, two, three. Good communication, good English and they get away with it.

I: Do they communicate in English or any other language?

P: English just English. They're so good at the way they communicate like one, two, three and they know how to answer the question only because their English is so good. So, English does have a lot to do with how well you're able to play off some things. The same thing with career choices if your English is great when you step into that interview, you will ace it.

I: Do you think your current level of English fluency is better off putting you at a higher position somewhere else or you still need to improve on your English?

P: I still need to improve, I definitely need to improve.

I: You're not going to make any career choices right now because your English not good?

P: No not right now. I would definitely have to improve my English.

I: Okay participant three my other question to you is; describe your relationship with co-workers that are native English speakers? At your workplace.

P: So, with native English speakers, I don't know if it's just me or but from my personal experience I have always took a step back when I've dealt with native English speakers because I felt like they put you in a position where you feel like you're not capable of doing something. Often, I've heard that people or our customers or clients prefer

speaking with people who are of native or English American descent because they can speak to them fluently. They speak to them better and they wouldn't want to speak to us because we might have a little accent, or we might not address the issue, better. So, they prefer other people over us.

I: To what extent have you felt left out during team meetings due to lack of English proficiency?

P: As a supervisor you would assume that I'm supposed to be there in most of the team meeting because I have many people under me, I'm managing them. But during team meetings I felt like my word isn't taken seriously often times also because maybe I'm not able to understand what's going on. That also again has to do with English fluency. So, these people, well by people I mean wherever you go you will be put in a position where it's clear and crystal to you that you are not suitable right now for this because you don't understand. You're not at our level. So, at that point you feel left out and that has happened. We were sitting in a team meeting and everybody's opinion was taken but when it came to me I wasn't taken seriously maybe because they felt like I wasn't putting words together the right way.

I: Did it ever make you embarrassed, shy or did you ever feel a low self-esteem during the team meeting because of your language?

P: Yes, when people deliberate they're great at the way they describe what to do. How the financial environment is. What's going on and then I am there just sitting, what do I say. How do I put these words together? You're just kind of put to the side. So, people

who speak English fluently, they're always put first because they're seen as more intelligent and we're seen as people who are still learning. Only because of our accent or our choice of vocabulary words we're always put second.

I: Participant three I have specific question for you. As you're talking about your work environment where you mention that most of the people are not native Americans. Do you think that the fluency in English language determines the level of intelligence of that employee?

P: I wouldn't say so, no because I'll just give an outside example a lot of professors in institutions who are of Asian descent. A lot of times we don't understand their accent but they're teaching math. So, if you take that for an example, one of our co-workers is great with Excel. He's amazing. He does some things I probably wouldn't even imagine I could do but when it comes to the language itself there are a lot of problems.

I: Okay so they are not proportional?

P: Right.

I: Which would you prefer a co-worker that understands your native language or the co-worker that does not understand your native language but is more skillful?

P: The think about that if I were to say someone who does understand. We're working at the same level which I would say is more preferable. Presumably you would say that you're at the same level, so you feel like you can communicate better. But the opposite side of that is someone who is more skillful you have a better chance at learning from them.

I: So, you prefer somebody who doesn't know your language but is good at work?

P: I would assume that but just to be on the safe side I would say someone who does speak my language only for my level of self-esteem.

I: What further stories can you share regarding your day to day interactions regarding communication barriers at your place of employment?

P: Well a lot of times there is miscommunication. We have clients who come in and they turn to their more favorable employee who is working here only because they feel like they can communicate better with them. If it's someone who is fluent in English, then they'll turn to someone who is more fluent in English as well. If it's someone who at the same level as you, they speak the same language as you then they'll come to you. A lot of these things happen in the workforce. A lot of times tasks are given to someone who speaks fluent English even if you're capable of it but again it's handed over to someone who is more fluent in English only because they're seen as a better candidate.

I: Okay participant three my second to last question to you is; as per my understanding you work at a supervisory level that means you have people who are working underneath you. You're saying that your English is not that fluent how are you are going to deal with people who are working underneath you and they're not fluent in English as well, how are you going to raise their self-esteem?

P: People who I would say are at the same level as I for whom English is a second language. I am able to communicate with them great but for people who I believe speak fluent English. To bring out the supervisor authority form to them I just kind of handle

that with the way that I work. When I address an issue and I know what I'm doing. My work is great, and I know what I'm doing that's where they feel like okay this is my supervisor. My supervisor knows what she's doing even if her English isn't great, but she addresses the problem the right way. Even for people who are not at that level I try to pair up those two people who are not and who are at the same level. This way they can overlook each other's work and it helps them.

I: Okay participant three my last question to you is; it's not a scenario but it's a situation. You are working with three people underneath you who are reporting to you. They're fluent in English. They are native American English speakers. What method of communication would you prefer working with them in? Oral communication or a written communication and why?

P: Well if they're working for me I would say oral definitely. Even if my English is not as good as theirs I would prefer oral. That way when they speak I can learn from them I know where I'm wrong. At the end of day, I know that I am still at a higher authority figure than they are. So not matter what it is my work experience is much greater than theirs. So, with them I would definitely say oral, definitely oral.

I: Okay your preference would be oral?

P: Yes.

I: Do you have further questions or answers you might want me to address?

P: No.

I: Thank you so much participant three. I had a lovely time interviewing you. If I'll be of any help to you just let me know. Once again, I really appreciate that you took the time to give me the interview. Thank you so much.

P: Okay.

[End of Recording]

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Abeer Anwar, Researcher
Walden University, School
Cultural Perspectives on Communication in Community Leadership, Title of Study

Introduction

I am a student in Walden University working on my PhD. I am doing interviews on communication issues in the workplace for immigrant employees who speak English as a second language (ESL). This study will explore the challenges ESL employees experience in communicating with others in their companies. Sharing your stories, if you are willing to do so, might help you become more productive. They would also help others like you, which could lead to a positive impact on you and your company.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the stories, experiences, and challenges of ESL workers, in how they overcame language and cultural communication issues in the English-speaking workplace. The aim of this study is to understand and describe how communications and culture in the workplace affect the way people view and understand the world.

Participant Selection

Each participant is valuable to the modern workplace in which people from all over the world work together. That helps the economy yet presents challenges. The rules I am using to select you, as one of 20 participants, is that you are over the age of 30 and are not a native English speaker. You will be asked to tell your stories about workplace communications. Participants need to have full time, steady jobs in jobs like accounting, banking, bookkeeping, finance, insurance, management and administration, and marketing with 5 years experience or more. You must have working experience both in your native country and in New York City. You must also have a legal immigration work permit for the United States or have permanent U.S. residency to be included in the study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in my study is completely voluntary. I will be offering no money or rewards to you if you decide to participate, which is entirely your choice to do so or not with no penalty at all.

Procedures

During the interview I will sit down with you in a place that you choose. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to the next question. No one else will be there unless you would like another person to be present. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will see it. I, Abeer Anwar, the interviewer, will be able to access the information you provide during the interviews. All interviews will be recorded on a digital device, yet no names will be used

to identify you on the recordings. Instead, your identity will be coded with numbers or alphabet letters to keep them private and anonymous.

I will use Company A, Company B, and so on for your company so no one can tell where you work. Each one of you can be sure that that only I will can access the codes, in order to keep all your information and anything you have said private. I will be the only one to be able to get to the data I collect, and all data I get from you will locked up and stored in my home. I will share the interview transcripts (typed copies of what you said on the recordings) with you to make sure your stories in the interviews really tell the truth about your experiences.

Duration

The study will be done in just one session. The interviews should take no longer that 45 minutes. After the interviews are transcribed, I will contact you and make an appointment with you to go over your stories to make sure they are accurate. I will correct any errors until you are satisfied. If any corrections must be done, we can meet one more time where you can approve the changes in the transcription. I will ask you to sign only with the code I assigned you to confirm that the data are accurate and true.

Risks

Because I am asking you to share with me some very personal and confidential information, you may feel uncomfortable when you discuss it. If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, you do not have to answer them if you do not wish. Besides being willing to share personal information, there is no risk because your names will not at any point be connected to your stories.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefits to you, but your company and coworkers may benefit from the results of the study to explore and understand the challenges you face, as an immigrant, in dealing with communication in the workplace.

Confidentiality

All interview answers will be and remain anonymous. They will not be shared with anyone in the company. Your supervisor especially will not her about the research results so none of them would be used inappropriately, like for employee evaluations. The study will not have any names to identify who you are, for I will be using codes made up of letters and numbers rather than names. I will name the companies as Company A, Company B, and so on. The only person who will know the coding procedure is I, the researcher herself.

You will be protected during and after the interviews because of the participant code I will give you to make your information private. All data will be stored on my private computer system with a password protected file. Only I will know the password on the protected file. The location for data storage will be at my private home. All data connected with this study will be destroyed at the end of 5 years.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this study. Choosing not to do so will have no effect on you in any way. If you start to take part in the study but do not wish to continue, you may do so at any time with no problems at all. Even after you have finished the interviews, you can still get out of the study. However, when the information gets published you will not be able to leave the study.

Who to Contact

Contact me for any questions you have now or later. You can reach me for questions that come up at the following number and email:

It is 612-312-1210.

Abeer Anwar
(718) 650-3088 (Cell)
(718) 777-3129 (Work)
Email: abeer.anwar@waldenu.edu

I will decline answering any questions about job performance or immigration rules and will not provide advice regarding communication strategies. I will answer questions about the study only.

If you have additional questions or wish to speak to a Walden representative about your rights as a participant, you can call 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-18-17-0311755 and it expires April 17, 2018.

Part II: Certificate of Consent for Participant

I have read all of the above information. I have also had a chance to ask questions and get answers that satisfy me. I give my voluntary consent to take part in the study.

You should print and keep a copy of this consent form for your record or future reference.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Email _____

Date _____ Telephone _____ (optional)

Day/month/year