Non-Native English Speaking Employees: Do You Speak Their Language?
Micah Bellieu
CEO and Founder of Fluency Corp
micah@fluencycorp.com
Language pervades every aspect of organizational life. It touches everything. Yet remarkably, leaders of global organizations, whose employees speak a multitude of languages, often pay too little attention to it in their approach to talent management.

As we have observed in countless organizations, unrestricted multilingualism creates inefficiency in even the most dedicated and talented workforces.
Quote: Harvard Business Review

It can lead to friction in cross-border interactions, lost sales, and a host of other serious problems that may jeopardize competitiveness.

Developing a comprehensive strategy for managing language can help transform that vulnerability into a source of competitive advantage.
Mi abuela me regaló la casa cuando se falleció.
How many here have worked exclusively in their second language?
How many people here work with someone who is working in their 2nd language each day?
What's Your Problem?
How do your employees feel about working in their 2nd language?
How do employees feel about working in their 2nd language?

“I’m afraid to speak at meetings because they’ll think I’m dumb when they hear me speak.” - Intel, Engineer, California, from Taiwan

“Sometimes I feel like I don’t have proper words for explaining a complex matter, so I describe the word I don’t know, and I am not fluent enough. Sometime it makes me resign (stop) from explaining.” - Doctor, Texas, from Poland
How do employees feel about working in their 2nd language?

“My first meeting in Dallas, Texas was a 2-hours presentation in front of 200 people. Everybody listened, which was a good success, but to this day we are still laughing about it. Indeed, they [only] understood half of it and it was the first time they were hearing someone with a French accent.” - Amadeus/Southwest Airlines, Senior Project Manager, from France

“I often second guess myself when speaking to native speakers.” - American working in Ecuador
How do employees feel about working in their 2nd language?

“The first few weeks were hard. I love to talk, but during those first weeks I barely uttered a word. I was just trying to find close captions on people's chest, but they never appeared. I remember I was alone with a co-worker and had to ask her a work related question. When I opened my mouth, nothing came out. I literally choked. I got so nervous, I started crying in front of her. She asked me if I was ok, and all I was able to do was nod and walked away. I will never forget that day.”

-Mary Kay and Loreal, Scientist, from Puerto Rico
“At the beginning, it was difficult to communicate in my 2nd language because I was worry about pronunciation and syntax. At my job, I wouldn’t share ideas unless is was in my 1st language. I tried to hide so I wouldn’t have to speak. I felt anxious, nervous, and stressful. The only thing that was on my mind was “what if I do not say it correctly”, “what if they laugh about my accent”, “what if I cannot make my point across”.

One of my biggest challenge was to speak in front of a large group. To succeed in this, I practice many times with my relatives, friends, and even I took a speech class to get comfortable and overcome my fears. The class helped me a lot, it did what it was supposed to do “help me to speak in front of a group”.

-Educator, Texas, from Mexico
Key Feelings when Using 2nd Language:

- Embarrassed
- Frustrated
- Confused
- Stupid
- Nervous
How can we engage and include these employees?
Does your company have SASS?
Slower
In short, slow it down about 10-20%.

Don’t speak too fast. Because English is not their first language, they need more time to process what they hear in English in order to make sense of it. The faster you talk, the harder it is for them to process and make sense of what you say.
...and then they told me I had to filter all the old user data.

That's nothing. I have to debug those filters.

Complain all you want, but at the end of the day, you're still going to have to do your work.

Tick-Tock... Get it?

Did you hear that? Janet said we can complain all we want!

That's nothing. I heard her say we don't have to work until the end of the day!

©2017 Jeff Lofvers

Don't Hit Save - don'thitssave.com
Would you please be so kind as to point me in the direction of the premises where I will find relief?

Toilets, please.
Idioms - Everyone Has To Learn Them
“Since John is arguing the toss, we need to be on our back foot in this matter. When we went to the meeting, he was really a banana skin. During the next conference call, let’s make sure Jennifer is there. She wears belt and braces but is really box clever too. What do you think?”
Since John is arguing the toss, we need to be on our back foot in this matter.

Arguing the toss
A. Being Dumb
B. Wasting Time
C. Be Disapproving

Be On Our Back Foot
A. Be Conniving
B. Be On the Defensive
C. Sell the Company
“...he was really a banana skin.”
A. Be Clumsy
B. Someone who Eats A Lot of Potassium
C. Be Difficult

“...is really box clever too.”
A. Is Good at Carpentry
B. Cunning
C. Skillful at Geometry

“She wears belt and braces,...”
A. To Be Awkward Socially
B. To Be Very Cautious
C. To Have Bad Taste
“Since John doesn’t really approve, we need to be ready to defend this project. When we went to the meeting, he was being difficult. During the next conference call, let’s make sure Jennifer is there. She’s cautious but really smart too. What do you think?”
When I got to work my boss told me off in front of everyone. I told her I’d make up for being late, but really she was blowing up over a deal that had fallen through yesterday, I learned later. She then told me that I’d let everybody down, and just went on and on....
When I got to work my boss yelled at me/screamed at me/got upset with me in front of everyone. I told her I’d work longer hours today/stay longer today for being late, but really she was mad/angry/upset over a deal that had been lost/cancelled yesterday, I learned later. She then told me that I’d disappointed everybody, and just continued yelling/screaming/complaining....
### Benefits from a Work Buddy Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Free</strong></th>
<th><strong>Better communication</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brings teams closer</td>
<td>Understand each other’s cultures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I made friends with 1 person in my office, and it changed my entire experience here in the US. We ate lunch together a lot and we became friends. I could ask her questions about culture and language, and she would explain slang and idioms to me. If it weren’t for her, my English would be very different right now. I know this allowed me to give more to my employer because I felt more confident speaking up in English.”

- Educator, Dallas, from Mexico
Benefits from a Language Coach

What are the benefits of a language coach?
- Focused training, goal oriented
- Progress-tracking
- Customized lessons and schedule
- Presentation and public speaking skills
- Writing and vocabulary

“I love so much the class because I had the opportunity to speak a lot with my teacher. If I said something wrong she correct me in the moment. Now, I don't feel scared to speak English. I feel more secure and fluency in my language.”
- Engineer, Ferrovial Agroman, from Spain
Share this valuable knowledge with your managers
To Review

- **S**low it Down
- **A**sk for a Response/Input at Meetings
- **S**imple Language
- **S**upport

S-A-S-S!
Once Again...

Language pervades every aspect of organizational life. It touches everything.

As we have observed in countless organizations, unrestricted multilingualism creates inefficiency in even the most dedicated and talented workforces.
The WIN!!

Developing a comprehensive strategy for managing language can help transform that vulnerability into a source of competitive advantage.
From Vulnerable to Competitive Advantage!

From sour to sweet.
FREE PRESENTATIONS (pass up business card):

- How To Speak To Your Global Workforce

OR

- Why We Need to Support Employees With Language Training
“Train people well enough so they can leave. Treat them well enough so they don't want to.”

Sir Richard Branson