Language Socialization in the Workplace: Immigrant Workers’ Language Practice within a Multilingual Workplace

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the development of trajectories of communicative ability of immigrant workers in the multilingual workplace over time as a part of language socialization process focused on the education practices they give each other at the workplace. The objectives of this study are: First, informed by the concept of workplace as a Community of Practice (CoP), the study aims at exploring the workers’ communication experience at the workplace. Second, assuming that the participants develop some communicative ability over time, this study seeks to answer questions on how they construct their communicative repertoire in the workplace. Third, based on the workers’ experience in developing their communicative ability and the workplace nature, this study also seeks to understand how immigrants educate each other about the communication strategies necessary for accomplishing work together. In the multilingual workplace like Brighton housekeeping department, workers from different language backgrounds and ethnicities engage in cooperative sense-making in workplace CoPs where they participate in joint activities, learn the dominant languages in the workplace and create new ways of using language together. Observations, interviews, and document studies reveal how immigrant workers engage in sense-making together and learn about the rules, norms, and expectations of their workplace. This study also shows how immigrant workers that were regarded as ‘uneducated’ and ‘illiterate’ perform their roles as teachers, translators, and guides for immigrant newcomers, their coworkers, and the other CoP members in the workplace, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries in the process.
Dedication
For Columbus, a mini-melting pot, a place to call home
Acknowledgement

Writing a doctoral dissertation is an incredible journey full of pebbles and stones. At times, it seems just a job to be done, while at other times it seems one big mess that makes no sense. Although the process of reaching this milestone has occasionally been a painful and very lonely one and I have almost lost faith in being able to bring it to a conclusion, believe me when I say that I have enjoyed it! This is because I have had the most wonderful people supporting, guiding, and working with me: you all deserve a huge appreciation for keeping me on track, in and outside academic works.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores communicative experiences of immigrant workers with a focus on professional repertoires and trajectories of socialization into a multilingual workplace life. Migrating to the U.S., the immigrant workers in this study discover and fill a demand for low-wage labor, entry level position that contributes to the growth and profit of hospitality industries. Armored with one goal in their mind: to collect funds to support their families, most of these immigrant workers who work as housekeepers often entered the workplaces in the U.S. with no relevant work experiences, previous education or trainings, and most importantly, knowledge on sociocultural differences including languages.

Every day, from down the bowels of the hotels to the presidential suites on the top floors, the immigrant workers carry out cleaning tasks and listen to the sounds of different languages spoken in the workplace. One of the workers said, “Housekeeping is the easiest job that immigrants can get since they don’t require particular skills. If you’re strong, you can do this job.” I believe that immigrant workers are both skillful and strong; not only do they perform physically demanding jobs but they also develop a range of strategies to survive in a foreign environment full of new sights, sounds, materials, rules, languages, signs, technologies and much more.

During the early stages of their transition process into work environments in the U.S., immigrant workers encounter many established immigrants from diverse ethno-
linguistic backgrounds. They engage in joint activities together in the workplace to get the tasks done. By working together, they learn to accommodate each other to function in different groups or Communities of Practice (CoP) in the workplace. In groups the immigrant workers from different backgrounds learn how to handle responsibilities and challenges in their workplace by navigating their languages and communication strategies. Researchers have documented immigrant workers’ language practice in the last few decades, however there has been a scarcity of research on how immigrants from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds actively partake in daily communication, display their expertise while at the same time elevate others’ development to achieve common goals. Therefore, this dissertation focusses specifically on the education immigrants give each other, about each other, when they work together. I analyze this education because it is fundamental to the process by which foreign people and their practices become intelligible when there is work to be done.

In this dissertation, I explore the educational aspects of my participants' collectively constructed mutual intelligibility (Garfinkel, 1967), more so than individual subjectivity and shared beliefs. That is, how the workers figure out what to do, given the existing circumstances, such as no shared language background or work experience. How immigrants instruct each other when they engage in activities together, and how they come to understand the order of things in their new environments. Thus, this dissertation focuses on the education immigrants provide each other, and the educative moments they
experience interacting and working in the U.S. multilingual workplace. While it can be argued that education is an on-going phenomenon present everywhere social interaction takes place, I have narrowed my field of observation to the “work-based education” of immigrants in the workplace based on several reasons.

First, work is the primary reason for the immigrant workers to migrate to the U.S. It needs to be understood that the larger context of their presence in the U.S. is rooted in the pursuit of labor and labor participation. Therefore, much of the time and energy spent by the immigrants in this study is focused on work-based activities and their efforts to enter the social field of employment in the urban labor market. Second, “work” implies a collective effort shared by a group of people working toward similar goals. An analysis of work offers naturally occurring opportunities to observe how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds solve problems. It also involves studying the ways immigrants create new problems together, which they must solve for the sake of their continued participation in the workplace activities.

An analysis of work based education also means understanding that workers have different trajectories in their professional lives. Some immigrant workers need to alternate jobs frequently while others master only one job over several years. Participating in a workplace as a CoP means different things for each worker as they confront constantly changing dynamics and social conditions within the workplace. This also calls for an exploration of how each workplace is distinctive in terms of the local
orders and languages immigrants produce together. Lastly, focusing on work-based education allows the researcher to explore of how workplace such as spaces, events, and work-related objects and materials play meaningful parts in the everyday educational experiences of immigrant workers. This dissertation highlights how immigrants play their roles as workers, communicators, and problem solvers in a multilingual environment that challenge assumptions about what counts as competent language, education, and professional skills.

There are numerous ways of carrying out a study of work-based education. In the multilingual environment of a hotel in Columbus-Ohio where my study is located, I place central importance on the role of communicative experiences in work-related activities. This involves paying attention to communicative practices – the putting into action of semiotic resources in a socially situated context to create meaningful interaction. Studying communicative practices enables the researcher to identify how “natural teams” (Kleifgen, 2013, 2001) are formed through workplace participation. It also allows the researcher to examine how workers solve problems together and adapt to new “modalities,” such as languages, material objects, and technologies. This topic of inquiry illuminates what “sites of engagement” matter to workers, and how workers position themselves in relation to each other and various overlapping “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Studying work-based education through the primary lens of communicative
practices involves more than a simple description of the languages spoken in the workplace. Communication is a collective activity that arises from, and transforms in, various unique social contexts where speakers use distinct language resources to engage in cooperative sense-making together and decide on their next moves.

A. Backgrounds and Contexts of the Study

During the eight months of fieldwork from 2015-2016, as a participant observer who work and learn languages and professional knowledge with my study participants, I have sought to understand how immigrant workers educate themselves and each other about how to survive the U.S. labor market. As they make their transition from their home countries to the U.S. workplaces, they build new “Communities of Practice (CoP)” (Lave and Wenger, 1991) through which they collectively and informally solve a variety of problems and learn from more experienced immigrants. For example, in Columbus, Ohio, Hispanic workers and some other immigrants from different countries teach each other how to go about everyday work-based activities like getting a job through a staffing agency, using cleaning tools and chemicals, reading instructions and signs written in English, building networks, using smartphone translation applications, or engaging in social activities to expand their networks. I view this process of developing and passing on meaningful and valuable knowledge as education at work- “the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort” (Cremin 1976, in Wang & Boyd,
This dissertation explores primarily on the experiences of immigrant workers who work as housekeepers in Brighton Hotel in Downtown Columbus area. My study participants include approximately 65 immigrant workers from Latin America and some other countries of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Middle East, who all chose to migrate to the United States within the past 20 years for the opportunity to earn money and support their families. Their work allows them to pay for their own living costs and send money home to buy pieces of property or land, build new houses, fund their siblings’ education, pay for ceremonies and other social events, and much more. Some of my study participants leave their spouses and children in their native country, some brought their whole families with them, and some others have U.S. born children.

In the U.S., labor migration has brought people together from distinct parts of the world. The local details and dynamics of their labor experiences illustrate the increasingly heterogeneous nature of the American workforce. Their workplaces are educative spaces of social interaction where cultural and linguistic boundaries among various immigrant groups in the U.S. evolve and transform through collective efforts. In analyzing how immigrants make sense of each other when they come into contact, it is important to see how they work together to meet everyday challenges in various, autonomous, and new ways. Immigrants do not simply reproduce their cultural practices in isolated ethnic “enclaves,” apart from the rest of society. They frequently interact in
and outside the workplace at the floors, hallways, lobbies, public areas, storage rooms, dumpsters, cafeteria, lockers, on the street, in bars, at the town festivities, through social medias, electronic devices, and in various other spaces and mediums of social interaction where they do the work required to get along and make a living.

I follow various configurations of educational processes as they unfold in the workplace as a community of practice by observing the moments in which the immigrant workers face numerous of hardships and make use of the available resources around them. This is the “when” of education, which involves both the “transformation in the life time of a person and the history of a polity” (Varenne, 2007). This means focusing on the present “difficult deliberations” (Varenne, 2007) and choices made by immigrants given the resources and options available to them, as they move through “powerfully differentiated” social fields, or spheres of participation in society. Workers come to learn how to use language and to engage in communication at work. During this process, the immigrant workers often have experience adaptation and change, which, quoting Varenne, often situate them in difficult deliberations (2007). Difficult deliberations create possibilities for learning, which is facilitated and made apparent through peoples’ language practices (Garret & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). Through an analysis of language practices in the workplace (and the language immigrants use to describe their own language practices at work), it is possible to understand how people teach other the rules and norms of interaction necessary for dealing with moments of uncertainty presented by
new situations and contexts.

One of the many prominent characteristics of immigrant workers migrating to the U.S. is that they did not have any agenda to pursue schooling, language instruction, or paths to citizenship in the country of destination. Yet they are active participants in American society. Instead of looking at “formal” institutional settings (non-profit organizations, schools, support groups, government agencies, etc.) where immigrants seek guidance about migration, work, and language education, I follow the less-researched path of immigrant life and informal education outside these institutions.

During my fieldwork at Brighton, as a participant observer, I worked with and observed the immigrant workers at the public spaces and rooms, cafeteria, and locker rooms, attended meetings and parties at the hotel, and spent time with them at the local coffee shops and restaurants during the interview sessions, to understand how my participants produce social order in their daily lives. Inspired by Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodological approach, I navigate my research towards *mutual intelligibility* and *orders of indexicality* (1967) built by immigrants in the multilingual workplace. That is, I explore what participants do, in the moment, to build socially meaningful and recognizable actions. Importantly, this approach primarily focuses on the instructional and educational aspects of this collectively constructed mutual intelligibility, more so than individual subjectivity or shared beliefs. I explore how immigrant workers figure out what to do in various events, given the existing circumstances of the workplace, such as
no shared background language or work experience; how they instruct each other about participating in activities together, and how they learn the established order of things in their workplace environments.

Even though the above statements may seem obvious, even to my own study participants who have often stated “we just learned how to do it because we had to”, I argue that the process of transitioning into a new community and surviving in an American workplace is anything but obvious. The struggles involved in immigrant labor participation are worth recording and recounting, not only because I am a participant observer in my study, but most importantly because they illustrate the informal means by which people develop knowledge together and decide on what directions to take next, despite undocumented status, limited networking and financial resources, exhausting work activities, tight schedules, and so on. I have intentionally refrained from situating their experiences in terms of race/ethnic discriminations, a critical analysis of unequal power relations at the workplace, identity formation or assimilation theories, and other dominant discourse on immigrants in the United States. Instead, I outline the problems presented to immigrant workers in entry level positions, and how they explain and handle these problems using language resources and communication strategies.

The immigrant workers (regardless of their immigration statuses) are important to study because their presence is pervasive throughout the United States. In 2012, it was estimated that “1 in 7 U.S. workers are immigrants, with one third of immigrant workers
coming from Mexico alone” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 4). The U.S. migrant workforce is “primarily comprised of Hispanic workers, and thus the basis of U.S. primary industry falls in the hand of immigrant populations” (2012, p. 4). Their numbers are often under-counted in census reports, and few ethnographic studies reveal the current nuances of their circumstances-how they live, where they work and with whom, what they do on a daily-basis, and what social problems they identify as important in their lives.

Immigrants in the service-sector economy often work extremely long hours for low wages in physically demanding jobs. Yet most remain optimistic and invent a variety of creative means to deal with difficult circumstances. These solutions are designed by the people themselves and are forms of education that do not rely on government, private organizations, policy arrangements, or funding sources to function. Immigrants are autonomous in ways that “skilled/educated” workers are not, as they actively design alternative solutions to everyday problems in unexpected ways. Since arriving to Columbus, Ohio, for example, one of my participants has been hired by multiple staffing agencies, obtained a fake social security number, opened a bank account, acquired a credit card and a cell phone plans, bought a car, sent money home and help her parents’ business in his native country, found a house to share with other immigrants in town, and successfully sent her two U.S. born children to schools in Columbus, Ohio. She accomplished all of this by relying solely on the knowledge of immigrant workers. While politicians, educators, and academics continue to deliberate and worry about the social
consequences of the ‘uneducated’ masses, immigrants are busy coming up with their own solutions for surviving in the U.S.

Despite increasingly complex and expensive efforts to halt immigrants, especially the undocumented ones from entering the United States, there is little chance that they will stop migrating. It is also unlikely that the hospitality industries in the U.S. will cease hiring immigrant workers to handle the entry level positions such as housekeepers. And once immigrants become established in the U.S., they often help many other immigrant newcomers navigate to the United States. This expanding population, whose participation in the workforce is substantial, widespread, and present for the long-term, should be considered an integral part of the U.S. workplaces. However, discussions on the “skill levels” and educational attainment of immigrants in the United States often fixate on low educational achievement, school failure, and lack of competitive or valuable professional skills. In the U.S., immigrants who do not participate in U.S. schools have been constructed as social threats and problems.

Adult newcomers with few years of formal classroom education or English language instruction are considered “outsiders” or “aliens” who lack the adequate tools to become competent participants in American society. My study participants are all “working class adult immigrants past the age of compulsory schooling,” (Young-Scholten, 2007, p. 5) a population that has been singled out as the most “disadvantaged” of all second language learners. Some words used to describe this population include
“uninstructed,” “uneducated,” “low-educated,” “unskilled,” “low-skilled,” “pre-literate,”
“illiterate,” and “low-performing” among other disparaging categories (2007, p. 5). Their
language abilities are considered incomplete or deficient because they have not been
“properly” or formally taught “correct” English in school. This perceived language
incompetence is viewed as an impediment to achieving upward mobility and integration
into U.S. society.

Historically, English language skills have been tied to expectations about the
fulfillment of specific rights and obligations that support the advancement of the state,
often through positive contributions to the state economy. “Skilled” and “educated”
speakers of Standard English have been considered the most capable and powerful
members of American society. This perspective has manifested in the U.S. in many ways
over time. The English literacy test was first adopted by Connecticut and Massachusetts
to determine who could be allowed to vote, a right reserved “for those who spoke a
common language for the American common good” (Oh, 2012, p. 116). Literacy tests
were instituted as a component of the “Americanization campaign,” to ensure voters
could read the Constitution. So-called “illiterates in English” were considered unfit to
vote, and were deplored by politicians, educators, and many others (2012).

The “adult immigrant literacy problem” has manifested in many areas of language
and education policy research, particularly when the allocation of funding for literacy
programs depends on the construction of immigrants as problems. The widespread
concern about the immigrant literacy problem is increasingly discussed by researchers using statistics and sociological categories that try to predict immigrants’ social class mobility. Bean and Stevens (2003) note how “recent research of contemporary immigrants shows that their skills in English and levels of literacy in English are consistently strong predictors of occupational status and earning” (2003, pp. 147-148). In 2007, a U.S.A Today article entitled Programs focus on Illiterate Immigrants, reported that “an estimated 400,000 legal and 350,000 illegal immigrants are unable to read or write even in their native language,” a number that needs to be taken into account as it implies “decide how to distribute federal dollars to programs that provide English classes for adult immigrants” (Hollingsworth, 2007, ibid). In the article, Barbara Van Horn, co-director of a Family Literacy Research Institute, is quoted as saying, “it’s easy to understand why immigrants struggle if they aren’t literate in their native languages;” these “preliterate people” just don’t have “that basic understanding of what literacy is about” (ibid).

According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are approximately 2 million foreign-born adults with less than a fifth-grade education in the United States (Batalova and Lee, 2013). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL, 2013) defines literacy as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential” (ibid). According to NAAL, 22 percent of adults have “below basic” literacy levels, “indicating they possess no more
than the most simple and concrete literacy skills” (ibid). However, these concerns and assertions run contrary to the actual accomplishments and experiences of the immigrant adults in my research. This does not imply that all immigrants are assured success whether or not they go to school or become legal workers. But for a particular group of immigrants working as housekeepers, education in schooling institutions is not considered a necessary component of social participation. Opting out of schooling is not a proof of their absence in social participation, on the contrary, it involves a complex amount of social work “strongly framed and powerfully constrained, and yet open to alternate and possibly unauthorized activities” (Varenne 2007, p. 1561).

Consequently, this dissertation explores language as a principal means by which immigrants “share information, solve problems together, control and direct people, negotiate their positions with powerful supervisors, and reshape workplace practices in their own interests” (Barton & Tusting 2005, p. 41) as language becomes a media where cultural values are produced, transferred, and instantiated (Garret & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). In a multilingual workplace, learning how to communicate in different languages with coworkers, employers, and customers has important implications for how workers are positioned in their work environments. Those who can communicate with ease achieve greater status and respect at the workplace, giving them a sense of belonging and job stability. Effective communication also allows more complex relationships to develop beyond the immediate demands of the workplace. In addition to teaching each other how
to perform various job tasks and responsibilities, immigrants also rely on each other to learn what they need to know about living in the U.S. Immigrants educate each other about the local, context-specific rules, norms, and expectations of workplaces.

In the process of making sense of each other, workers learn to mediate tensions, form alliances, use honorifics, mix languages, and improvise new languages together. Research on immigrant languages at work celebrates the education immigrants give each other in spaces outside of school, where language education is not regulated by teachers or standardized curricula. It demonstrates how languages are taken up, modified, and manipulated by immigrants for their own purposes, in ways that cannot all be predicted or assimilated by schools. Language is a powerful tool; the more we understand how immigrants use languages, the more we can see how they subvert and transform the conditions of their lives. It can also provide us with an understanding of alternative models of education capable of incorporating the vastly different life backgrounds and experiences of learners from different schooling, socioeconomic, racial or ethnic backgrounds.

B. Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

First, informed by the concept of workplace as a community of practice, the study aims at exploring the participants’ communication experience at the workplace. I focus primarily on the educational/instructional aspects of my participants' in collectively
constructing mutual intelligibility (Garfinkel, 1967), more so than individual subjectivity and shared beliefs. This dissertation focuses on the education immigrants provide each other, and the educative moments they experience interacting, working, and living in the U.S. multilingual workplace.

Second, based on the assumption that the participants develop some language proficiency over time, this study seeks to answer questions on how they construct their communicative repertoire in the workplace. Given that workers have different trajectories in mastering both professional and communicative knowledge, this study seeks to follow their trajectories of the development of their communicative ability in English over time across different time and context.

Third, referring to the concept of workplace as a community of practice, this study discusses to what extent are workplace orders, such as work routines and language use, relevant to participants’ communicative experience in the workplace reflected in their strategies and challenges they encounter as novices learning in a new discourse system overtime, while working in a new environment. Thus, this study is particularly aimed at exploring language as a principal means by which immigrants “share information, solve problems together, control and direct people, negotiate their positions with powerful supervisors, and reshape workplace practices in their own interests” (Barton & Tusting 2005, p. 41) in a multilingual workplace that consists of overlapped community of practices.
C. Research Questions

This study is aimed at answering the following proposed questions:

1. What are the immigrant workers’ communication experiences within the workplace?

2. How are communicative repertoires constructed in the workplace?

3. To what extent are workplace order, such as work routines and language use, relevant to participants’ communicative experience in the workplace?

D. Theoretical Frameworks

I will apply two overarching frameworks to guide my study: Shieffelin and Ochs’ language socialization perspective and Lave and Wenger’s concept of CoP. Situating my understanding of immigrants language socialization in theories of language socialization, I am interested to see how novices become a professionally, linguistically, and culturally competent members through language use in social activities (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986) in the workplace. In this case, language learning is seen as a part of a process in which novices acquire particular values and relationships from experts in the social contexts where learning takes place. Since the process of acquiring a language (and cultural values) is deeply affected by the process of becoming a competent member of a community, language learning is then closely linked to the construction of social roles, cultural affiliations, beliefs, values, and behavioral practices (Schieffelin and Ochs,
Thus, immigrant workers as second language (L2) speakers acquire a worldview as they acquire a language.

Furthermore, for second language speakers and learners, who walk in two cultural worlds, the process of acquiring a language may involve the intersection of multiple and different cultural values and beliefs and multiple social contexts of socialization. For such communities, language practices do not exist in isolation from each other (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Duff and Talmy, 2011), just as cultures and communities do not exist as discrete entities (Katz, 2001), but rather interact with each other in various degrees of complementarity or conflict (Duff, 2008). The power struggles between social languages designated by the workplace and the immigrant language practice may also affect the speakers’ choices of appropriating or creating a particular social language in the effort of becoming a member of that community.

Studies of language socialization among immigrants in the workplace have documented how novices or newcomers, like immigrant workers, socialize themselves, being socialized (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986) by more competent members, given opportunities to negotiate their identities and investments (Peirce, 1995) in the efforts of obtaining access, resource, and legitimation from the target CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In addition to the language socialization framework, the concept of CoP will also guide this study in identifying how opportunities, power, and legitimation are delegated and rewarded by the old-timers to the new-comers in order to enter the community as
legitimate participants. A central concept in Lave and Wenger’s situated learning model is that of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) that provides a way to define the relations between newcomers and old-timers and the sources available in that particular community. Within an LPP framework, learners must be seen as legitimate participants in order to access a particular community’s resources. Peripherality is a term that describes the engagement of newcomers in varying degrees of participation gained through negotiation of opportunity, power, identity, and investment (Peirce, 1995) to obtain legitimation. Both peripherality and legitimation are necessary in order for an individual to become a full participant in a particular community.

E. Study Benefits and Future Research Directions

Going through the lifelong process of language socialization can be gratifying yet frustrating for some speakers (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Schieffelin & Ochs also pointed out that this process would also be ultimately empowering. In support of this view, Watson-Gegeo and Bronson recommended that the best language socialization research should always involve a commitment to benefit the communities studied (2013). Immigrant workers, as Li (2000) informed us, experience the complexity of double socializations: as novices acquiring the new professional-related language and as novices operating within a new language and culture. Therefore, documenting their process of language socialization can help them accelerate their linguistic as well as professional performances as they have the opportunity to reflect on what they have gone through with
regards to the development of their communicative ability when they are involved in a research.

The participants of this study have interacted with me in and outside the workplace for over a year. During the eight months of data collection process, I also attempted to collect public documents from the hotel and hotel’s website, and the participants’ personal written language use from their text messages, status updates on Facebook site, and notes written to co-workers, managements, and guests in English and Spanish. I also assigned the participants to make glossary list of words they use, learn, and encounter during in the workplace. I interviewed the participants individually in English. For all the participants, this is their first time to be involved in a research. By reflecting on and learning from their own journey it is assumed that the workers will be able to recognize their own achievement and strength and to be able to choose different skills and strategies that work best for them to increase their communicative ability that will help them advance their professional development in the future. Duff, Wong, and Early (2002) specifically highlighted the importance of enabling immigrants to develop their English proficiency and marketable skills, as they need to increase their self-esteem, social identity, independence, and overall integration to the workplace environment.

The result of this study will be able to inform the workplace with regards to how the communicative ability of the workers are supported or constrained, and how the workplace’s policy facilitates or hinders the development. With this in mind, the
workplace will be able to create a more accommodative working environment for the workers and to boost their overall language development to increase their professional performance. Academically for language educators, the result of this study will be able to inform the curriculum developer of the workplace English and a Second Language (ESL) programs to create lessons that will be able to accommodate workers (and employers) not based on the ‘all purpose flour’ view (Katz, 2001) but the ones that will be flexible, adaptable, and enriching to the nature and the contexts in which the learners will work.

The increase of immigrations that allows the rapid growth of multilingual workplaces, especially in service industries has triggered the development in literacies, sociolinguistic control, and how languages are learned and used (Duff, 2008). Scholars in different areas have continued documenting how workplaces have provided opportunities for immigrant workers to learn new discourse system (Li, 2000; Duff, Wong, and Early, 2002) and how their policies have sometimes marginalized the non-mainstream workers (Katz, 2000, 2001). Since most of studies on immigrant language socialization have mainly been conducted among the homogeneous communities and small scopes this study shows that future research should include wider range of communities and contexts. Little studies have been conducted by researchers who have themselves been apprenticed or have gained membership within the communities being studies and therefore, these studies will gain salience in the future as they can shed some
lights on the complexities of language use across different contexts through the lens of participant observers (Duff, 2008). It is hoped that the results of this study will be able to illuminate future research on TESOL workplace-oriented research, ethnography of socialization, and extended language socialization.

F. Gaps in Research

Schegloff (in Wong and Olsher, 2000, p. 122) pointed out that: “the talk that learners are going to have to do when they are not in the hothouse of the classroom is situated in the real world where they have real things to do, and that’s the talk that people ideally should be recording and studying if they want to understand what the real world problems are for those who are speaking a language who is not their native language”. Thus, learning from Schegloff, there has been scarcity of research focusing on the language use outside the classroom settings, regardless of the massive development of research in second language (L2) learning outside the classroom settings. Working in concert with Schegloff’s view, Firth showed us that, despite of the current development of studies of L2 outside the classroom, little are known about what happens in the complex interplay between L2 use, L2 learning, and L2 competence in naturally-occurring interactions outside the classroom (2007). In another study, Firth (2009) also argued that, given the nature of L2 use in innumerable social settings in the age of globalization, the internet, mass tourism, mass migration and employment mobility and considering that one of the main goals of L2 classroom activities is to prepare learners to
use their L2 outside the classroom environment, it is striking how few studies have been undertaken on L2 use and/or learning outside the classroom. Given the scarcity of research in this area, more studies are needed in exploring the language learning and use in the myriad naturally-occurring locales where people go about their everyday lives, deploying in many cases a plurality of languages as they do so when interacting with diverse social groups without recourse to teachers, textbooks, exams, and pedagogical tasks and, indeed without orienting directly to L2 learning per se during the language socialization process.

Language socialization research seeks to understand the process of becoming a competent member of society through language-mediated activities. It emphasizes independence of the acquisition of language and sociocultural knowledge through interaction with other members of a social group through a situated, integrated, socio-cognitive process (Atkinson, 2002). Adult L2 learners like immigrant workers learn L2 in natural settings in the workplaces. Workplaces and institutional settings provide contexts for adults to socialize themselves and be socialized, linguistically, culturally, and professionally in communities that consist of different social groups. However, scholars have identified that language socialization in the workplace remains understudied (Saville-Troike, 2003; Duff and Talmy, 2011; Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). Despite the expansion of studies on language socialization later in life, Duff identifies that there is still scarcity of research discussing the workplace and professional
socialization (2008). Precisely as explored by Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, looking back in 2002 over the previous 16 years, only 5 of the 48 studies they referenced related to workplace and professional socialization, mainly because the methodology used in such studies is hard to carry out in the workplaces (2002). The core methodological features are, according to Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, that the research is ethnographic, holistic, longitudinal, and based on naturally occurring data. Thus, such studies also require evidence of learning, both in terms of cognition and social interaction. Even in longitudinal studies, research on the shop floor or the office cannot readily capture the changes in how activities are accomplished over time. Furthermore, these two scholars identified that another crucial factor contributing to the scarcity of studies in the workplace is that access to workplace to carry out ethnographic studies is not easy to obtain, often because researchers are assumed to be either spies or troublemakers. Thus, so far most of studies of language use in the workplace are connected to language and cultural training (e.g., Katz, 2001, Stube, 2003), since this maybe the only way in which employers are willing to offer their organization as a field site for research. While functioning as instructors in that program, teachers can act as ethnographers, collecting data from the workplace to produce research-based teaching materials.

Studies in the workplace conducted in the last few decades, as reported by Holmes (2009) tended to be mainly institutional data that often involved one-to-one interactions between professionals and clients. Workplace sites have then expanded to
include a much wider range of professional white-collar contexts, including government organizations and private companies, with large group meetings as the common focus. Very few researchers, according to Holmes, have ventured into blue-collar work sites that are often depicted as noisy, dirty, and hostile, and thus, academics might find the places rather uncomfortable to undertake research. More specifically, little studies have been conducted by researchers who have themselves been apprenticed or have gained membership within the communities being studied, the workplace, except for Mullany’s study that is based on the researcher’s observation in two major companies in the U.K. (2007). Studies of language socialization in the workplace that involve participant observer are projected to gain salience in the future as they can shed some lights on the complexities of language use across different contexts through the lens of participant observers (Duff, 2008). Furthermore, the studies on language socialization of immigrant workers have mostly been conducted among homogenous communities. There has been a scarcity of research conducted among diverse foreign language speakers that experience language socialization in the later stage of life such as in a multilingual workplace (Duff & Talmy, 2011) that, instead of focusing on exploring the interaction between NES-NNES, also touches the communication involving NNES and the other NNESs (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013).

Researchers have explored that most of the changes to the nature and context of international communication are demographic. Crystal (1997) reported that more than 80
percent of communication in English is now taking place, in the absence of native speakers, among the non-native speakers of the language, and that most of English speakers in the world are not native speakers, or in another word, outnumbering native speakers 3-1 (Crystal, 2003). Graddol (2006) further highlighted that the increasing numbers of international travelers have propelled the growing role of global English in international communication. As a result, linguists have also suggested that the native speakers are the one who now risk being misunderstood unless they accommodate to the norms of other, international Englishes around them (Graddol, 1997). Bringing forward the notion of intercultural communication, Sharifian and Jamarani (2013) specifically pointed out that international communication in the new era involves speakers who do not speak English as a native language. In light of this view, Sharifian and Jamarani argued that traditional studies of communication across cultures that mainly focused on native-non-native communication become less relevant. This study explores communications immigrant workers from different language backgrounds. Such studies that explore communication between non-native speakers are needed to further explore how values and beliefs are negotiated during the communication activities.

Considering that the over-arching context of the workplace determines the conditions for language socialization and the form it takes, Roberts explained that corporate and institutional priorities, ideologies and structures, the values and practices of different professions, and the particular social climate of the local work group construct
these conditions and their dynamics. Thus, language socialization, together with the individual agency of workers and apprentice professionals, is the consequence of these conditions. Roberts, however, notified us that what it will consist of in terms of language mix, switch, and shift within multimodal practices remains relatively uncharted research territory. Therefore, future research will need to map this territory, with micro-analysis of the local contexts of production, as well as more long-term studies of what constitutes language socialization in the complex communicative environments and requirements of the future workplace (2010).

G. Methodology

The Housekeeping Department at Brighton hotel in Columbus Downtown was chosen as a site for this study based on my professional affiliation with this site for over two years. With me as a participant observer, this study is conducted qualitatively by adopting an ethnographic orientation through participant observations, field-notes, interviews, and consultation of personal and public documents. Specifically, interactional sociolinguistic that has its roots in the ethnography of communication (Holmes, 2009) will be applied in this study to explore the participatory practices within a particular community (Castanheira et al., 2001) and how these practices are contextually and locally defined and accomplished among members through discourse processes (Kelly & Crawford, 1997). According to Kelly & Crawford, this is also related to the idea that ethnographic analysis relies heavily, and is reinforced by, discourse
analysis, as interactional sociolinguistic focuses on the ways cultural practices are interactionally constructed. Interactional sociolinguistic method allows the researchers to explore the linguistic and cultural diversity in communication, and how this impact on the relationships between different groups in society (Holmes, 2009).

Related to the status of researcher as a participant observer, this study tries to fill a research gap identified by Firth (2009) regarding the scarcity of studies of L2 learning conducted in naturalistic encounters outside the classrooms that provide naturally-occurring encounters. This argument is also supported by Wagner (2004) who holds that the real potential for a social approach to language learning lies outside the classrooms where the real problems faced by speakers of other languages are most visible (Schegloff, in Wong & Olsher, 2000). Specifically in the workplace, Duff (1988) notified us regarding the scarcity of research on immigrant language socialization conducted by researchers who are also immersed and apprenticed within the CoP, except for example, Mullany (2007) who conducted participant observations in two U.K.-based companies for six months, and Alvarez (2011) who explored the relationship between racial status and communicative activities of Latino custodial workers within a university setting.

Informed by the above scarcity in studies, in this study I strive for an emic perspective with me as a participant observer. I have spent over a year working with most of the participants and this has granted me membership in the housekeeping department as the
major CoP and some other groups within the workplace where I am also affiliated with in some degrees of membership and participation.

An ethnographic method is chosen because, as Mullany critically argued, it is crucial to conduct a research with and for rather than on participants, to ensure that participants’ concerns and agendas are considered in the research design, and that the findings are of relevance for those who take part in the study, are declared as the key principles of the research (2007). Another insight is borrowed from Heller (2008) who said that ethnographic work can allow the researcher to “see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people’s lives,” over time (p. 250). The ethnographic process of fieldwork allows one to engage with the complexity of social interaction not by examining the preconceived notions and selected phenomena, but by reflexively and comprehensively recounting and analyzing natural interaction in a given context (Blommaert, 2007). With this view in mind, I have an understanding that the ethnographer may begin the data collection with particular interests in mind but it is the research context that guides inquiry and therefore through fieldwork a recursive cycle of data collection and analysis is initiated. This study regards that the workplace as a CoP is the ultimate arena that allows the members to experience various paths to language socialization.
H. Assumptions of the Study

The idea of writing this research on language socialization in the workplace has been propelled by my academic disciplinary orientation and background as an international student and student worker in a U.S. educational institution, an organizational member at various higher education institutions, and a scholar interested in second language acquisition, with a specific focus on language socialization in adult and foreign language learned later in life. This has also been dictated by my own experience as a participant observer in this study, particularly in socializing myself as a non-native English speaker in the multilingual workplace. As seen from the nature of language socialization that is dynamic and multilayered, it is possible to consider the data gathered from the site from vastly different disciplinary orientations or different lenses. My data analysis, however, will focus on how the multilingual site as a CoP organizes communication, how workers perceive their communicative ability, and how the site provides both affordances and constraints for the development of communicative ability to take place. In order to thoroughly explore the nature of the study site, this study analyzes how the participants use diverse communicative repertoires with different group of speakers in different situations. The data analysis also touches the role of cultural values and investment in shaping the trajectories of development of communicative competence. The followings are several assumptions with regards to the study site and participants:
Assumption 1. Immigrant workers in the U.S. multilingual workplace have significant challenge in displaying their communicative ability in the workplace. This assumption is partially based on my experience as a non-English-speaking worker in a U.S. workplace, thus, someone who is well aware of some of the language-related struggles immigrant workers who have limited English communicative ability experience in the U.S. workplace. For instance, I have regularly witnessed my co-workers struggle to verbally display their thoughts and advance their career due to their limited English communicative ability. Mirroring from my coworkers experience as English language learners, there have been numerous occasions when they could not clearly communicate their thoughts and ideas in English to others in the workplaces, which led to exceptionally uncomfortable situations. Moreover, even though it is assumed that the workers have acquired a considerable amount of cultural capital in the past few years, they seem still struggle linguistically and culturally in various social contexts. Thus I also assume that immigrant workers with limited English communicative ability have heavier struggle related to those matters.

Assumption 2. The workplace is a community of practice that enable the immigrant workers to socialize themselves linguistically, culturally, and professionally, however, the workplace often sets English proficiency as one of the primary gatekeeping encounters in the hiring and upward mobility processes, including for the non-language workers. Regardless of the fact that the immigrant workers who are working as
housekeepers are regarded as non-language workers (McAll, 2003), mainstream language spoken in the workplace (in this case, English) has become one of the vital requirements for them to secure the job and obtain career advancements. They are learning new language, new culture, and new professional codes in the workplace. Their statuses as bilingual and multilingual speakers, however, are often underrepresented. Furthermore, their quality as expert speakers of English, for example Indian and Nigerian immigrants is ignored (Blommaert, 2007) due to the accented English they display in workplace interaction.

Assumption 3. Target language learning is often outside the immigrant workers’ urgent priorities. There are a number of reasons why immigrant workers who work for low-paid jobs such as housekeepers and custodial workers do not include learning the target language in their top priorities. The workers spend most of their adult life in the workplaces (McAll, 2003) and at home taking care of their families. Some of them have two to three jobs, thus leaving very little to no time to learn the language and to socialize with others inside or outside the workplaces. The housekeepers often work in conditions that render sustained and frequent verbal interaction at work impossible. The workloads that they have as housekeepers usually leave no space for them to actively use English to communicate in the workplace and thus language is not central to work as they are considered as the non-language workers (McAll, 2003) where the transformation of materials are paramount. Furthermore, some immigrants live in the U.S. transnationally
where they use their native languages to communicate with their families back home and in the U.S., and they decide to return to their home country upon satisfying their professional needs in the U.S. and therefore, some of them do not see the urgency of learning English.

Assumption 4. Immigrant housekeepers have limited opportunities to develop their communicative ability in the workplace. Related to the third assumption, based on my experience in working with the housekeepers, it is quite common for immigrant workers to communicatively rely on same-culture and same-language persons for comfort, affirmation, and coping when faced with communicative constraints in the workplace. This is understandable considering the commonality of experiences that pushed them to support and affirm each other during stressful circumstances and various struggles with cross-cultural others as ‘out-group’ members in the U.S. workplaces. The constant communicative reliance with people from same-culture and same-language and limited opportunities to communicate with the English speakers can contribute to their lack of communicative ability in English.

Assumption 5. Workplaces can be unwelcoming and difficult spaces to navigate communicatively, especially for foreign language speakers. Immigrant housekeepers often become targets of rejection and marginalization from other organizational members. The romanticized notion of their sophisticated contribution in ‘achieving the company’s success’ distorts many people’s perceptions of a workplace, such as a hotel,
leading them not to view the workplace as a site that can be hostile and unwelcoming as any other types of companies. Throughout their journey as housekeepers in multilingual workplace, they have encountered as much rejection and marginalization as in any other social contexts in which they have participated.

I. Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms and concepts will be used throughout the study to provide guidance and to better understand the discussions presented in each chapters and the purpose and goals of this study:

**Community of Practice (CoP)**

The concept of communities of practice, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991, 1998) is the main idea in situated approaches to learning. This concept that has been taken up across social, educational, and management sciences holds that people typically come together in groupings to carry out activities in everyday life, in the workplace and in education. There are three aspects characterized the groups, which are mutual engagement, join enterprise, and shared repertoire to enable the members of the groups to interact in many ways (Barton & Tusting, 2005).

**Language Socialization**

Language socialization is generally conceived as the socialization through language to use language in socially appropriate ways (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). Comparing language socialization and language acquisition, Ochs pointed out that the
former research examines how language practices organize the life span process of becoming an active, competent participant in one or more communities (2000). Communities according to Ochs can comprise households, neighborhoods, peer groups, schools, workplaces, professions, religious organizations, recreational gatherings, and other institutions. Thus, unlike language acquisition research, the analytic focus nests neither on less experienced persons as acquirers nor on more experienced persons as input but rather on socially and culturally organized interactions that conjoin less and more experienced persons in the structuring knowledge, emotion, and social action.

**Communicative Repertoire**

The sociolinguistic term repertoire early encountered in the works of Gumperz and Hymes (see Hymes, 1985; Gumperz, 1972) is the set of language varieties used in the speaking and writing practices of a speech community (Finegan, 2004) that is regularly used to explore the resources people deploy and have access to in terms of stylization (Rampton, 2003), use of linguistic codes (Blommaert, 2005, 2010, 2011), and literacy practices (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000). The language repertoire of a speech community includes all the linguistic varieties (registers, dialects, styles, accents, etc.) that exist in this community. In monolingual speech communities this repertoire is made up of varieties of one single language. In multilingual speech communities (e.g. in India) it may be comprised of several languages and may include linguistic varieties of all these languages. Communicative repertoires build on the notion that repertoires are hybrid,
translingual, and plural (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000) and that language and literacy resources are deployed by individuals across languages and strategically diverse ways within individual and group norms of communication (Rymes, 2010). Thus, the language repertoire of one individual speaker is determined by the language varieties that he or she knows and uses within his or her speech community. A speaker’s verbal repertoire defines his or her individual communicative competence.

*Communicative Competence*

The communicative competence concept has been defined in different ways by scholars in different fields. As a response to Chomsky’s definition of language competence as illustrated in the ideal speaker-hearer in a homogenous speech community, several scholars introduced the concept of communicative competence based on diverse points of departure. From sociolinguistic point of view, Hymes (1974) points out that communicative competence is the appropriateness of the sociocultural significance of utterance. Meaning in communicative competence, according to Hymes, is determined by its speech community and actual communication events. As such, communicative competence, as Hymes (1974) pointed out, is a fundamentally ongoing, unformed, transitional, situational, and dynamic process. From the ethnographical point of view, Saville-Troike (1989, 1996) places the concept of communicative competence within the area of second and foreign language contexts. Saville-Troike introduces the central construct of communicative competence into three types of knowledge: linguistic,
interactional, and sociocultural knowledge. Inclined to the anthropological view in defining the concept of communicative competence, Gumperz points out that talk is something by which speakers attempt to attain communication goals in real life communication exchanges (1996). Finally form the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field, Canale and Swain (1980) argued that the ability to communicate required four different sub-competencies: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Also in the field of SLA, the discussion on communicative competence also owe the insight from Firth and Wagner who regard language users as the ones who will always be ‘learners’ or ‘acquirers’, regardless of the social settings, because “new or partly known registers, styles, language-related tasks, lexical items, terminologies, and structures routinely confront language users, calling for contingent adaptation and transformation of existing knowledge and competence, and the acquisition of new knowledge” (1998, p. 91). Thus, communicative competence should show speakers’ ability to not only construct grammatically correct sentences but also to apply language correctly and appropriately, i.e. with respect to different social speech situations. A competent speaker is able to vary his or her language by applying different registers and styles in their speech repertoire.

Communication Experiences

Any verbal or nonverbal meaningful symbolic exchanges between two or more persons; specifically, communicative exchanges with organizational members, such as
supervisors, coworkers, and strangers/guests (i.e., guests, hotel patrons/visitors, conference/meeting attendees). These exchanges could occur in any situation or context, such as walking through a hallway or in a supervisor’s office.

J. Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study that have hindered the research process:

1. The participants’ attitudes toward the researcher and the research.

My status as a participant and an observer has for some degrees affected the nature of data collection process in many ways. Regardless of the seemingly boundless relationship that I have with the participants in this study, I received mixed reactions about conducting a study at the housekeeping department and recruited them as participants. Some workers showed their positive attitude toward this research and told me that they were excited to participate in this study, as they hoped to learn new knowledge through their involvement in an academic project. The other workers, on the other hand, were worried and some of them even suspected me as a spy from the department of labor, a police officer, and a trouble maker (see Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002) that would risk their status as (undocumented) immigrants and workers and impede them from carrying out their duties because of being involved in the data collection activities. It has therefore been challenging for me to ensure that my study participants were in their comfort zones and that their concerns and agendas were
properly considered (Mullany, 2007) so that they were willing to fully participate in this study.

2. Time allotment for data collection process related to my status as a participant and an observer.

My double statuses as a participant and researcher has given me challenges during the data collection process. Being a participant means that I had very much the same complexity of tasks as my coworkers did, while at the same time, I had to remain embedded in the data collection process without causing distraction to the flow of work. It had the same amount of duties and responsibilities to maintain my job performance at the housekeeping department or I would have to accept the consequences of, for instance, being reprimanded. Considering the nature and complexity of the tasks at the housekeeping department, it has been problematic for me as a researcher to capture events where I could thoroughly observe and made notes or audio recording while handling the tasks at the same time.

3. The high turnover of the participants.

Housekeeping is considered a low-paid and physically demanding job and therefore it is very common for some housekeepers to be affiliated with several workplaces where they can collect more working hours to be able to earn more money. Therefore, they often move from one job to another very easily depending on how
satisfied they are with the conditions and outcomes of the job. In addition to that, the fact that they work for the staffing agency guarantee less job stability. Different workplace has different expectation regarding workers’ work and language performance. It is therefore equally common for workers who work for staffing agency to alternate jobs depending on the employers’ demand and expectation. This phenomenon also happens in the site where the data collection takes place. The high turnover has especially affected the data collection process because of the constant changes on the status and condition of my participants.

4. Participants’ limited communicative ability in English.

Even though all participants of this study are assumed to have some degrees of communicative ability in English, some participants have very limited ability to communicate in English that it is nearly impossible to communicate with them. Since I do not speak any of the participants’ native languages, it has been challenging for me to interpret their conversations when they code-switch to their native languages.

5. Participants’ experience in a research.

The participants in this study do not have any experiences in being involved in a research before and therefore I need to familiarize them with the nature of research, what my position was in it, their contribution in the study, and some research activities such as
the data collection processes which includes: observations, interviews, and document studies.

6. The managements’ attitude toward research activity

Researchers have documented constraints that can occur in a workplace study. Garret & Baquedano-Lopez, for example, identified that the method used to study the language socialization is hard to carry out in the workplace (2002), and that it can sometimes uneasy to obtain access to workplace to conduct ethnographic studies due to assumption of the management toward the researchers of being troublemakers who can truncate the dynamic of work of the workers involved in the study. To add more complication to this, the workplace may have specific ‘hidden’ expectations with regards to studies carried out in the workplace related to the workers’ overall development. This answers the questions why previous studies in the workplace are mostly related to language and cultural training, since this maybe the only way in which employers are willing to offer their organization as a field site for research (Katz, 2001). Thus, when I discussed my plan to conduct a research on the site, the management cautioned two matters. First, whether I will be able to navigate my status as an employee and a researcher, and second, whether I can assure my participants’ convenience and privacy during the research process.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

To highlight what I have learned from the sources incorporated in this study, I presented the literature review based on three focal points. First, I learn that ethnographic accounts of immigrant workers in the U.S. institutions have focused heavily on their disadvantaged positions. Their experiences in the U.S. are often seen through the lens of antagonistic class and race relations, and deterministic paradigms of legality and illegality, and their social status as the uneducated or illiterate group. This produces a representation of immigrants as isolated, alienated, and powerless. As a result, their experiences are reduced to a constant struggle against more powerful individuals and social institutions. This overshadows immigrants’ accomplishments and contributions in the U.S. and the various ways the immigrant workers frequently negotiate relations with other immigrants and the domestic (American) workers in their new home and work environments. Additionally, it is believed that immigrants overcome their essential position of powerlessness through different assimilation and integration experiences (Suarez-Orozco and Páez, 2009; Smith 2005; Portes and Guarnizo 2003). This includes paths of incorporation through schooling, legalization, or participation in community organizations serving immigrants (Oliver, 2010).

Challenges to assimilation are often discussed using individual, cultural, and structural/societal explanations, such as oppositional identity (Ogbu, 1992), culture of poverty (Lewis, 1966), and/or racial/ethnic, geographic, class, and linguistic segregation
(Lareau, 2003). Yet for many immigrants, such as those in my study, participating in these paths of incorporation like going to school in the U.S. or getting work visas has not been in the top list of their agendas. They have come up with all kinds of ways of getting around the pressures and powers of social institutions in order to obtain what they came to the U.S. to find—namely, jobs and money. Integration and incorporation assumes the legitimacy of a “core” center or ideal of participation in U.S. society, which is unattainable since peoples' positions are constantly shifting in relation to each other. There is no single center of participation, nor is there just one way of becoming a skilled, “masterful” worker. Individuals are always engaged in countless ongoing activities, obtaining varying degrees and kinds of competencies, given the resources, opportunities, and constraints they encounter daily. Research on newcomers in the U.S. can benefit from a focus on their abilities to make choices and decisions that sometimes include rejection of incorporation in favor of other forms of participation. I believe that more studies should emphasize how newcomers such as immigrant workers educate each other and figure out alternate pathways to meet the problems they identify as important in their lives. This can be done without necessarily explaining their experiences within dominant ideological discussions about literacy skills, citizenship, or overarching structures of racism or classism.

Second, I also learn that immigrant newcomers in the contemporary workforce are often described as lacking “basic” language and work skills. These assumptions are
rooted in school-based notions of achievement and performance. Employees without a socially valued diploma or degree, especially “low achieving” and “limited English proficient” minorities, are considered inadequate and unfit members of the workforce. Contemporary research of workers and work sites has focused on worker productivity and workers’ potential contribution to the U.S. economy. I believe that these competency measures reduce immigrant newcomers in the workforce to a position of powerlessness. There has been scarcity of workplace studies that focus on the diversity of the U.S. labor market, in terms of types of workplaces, and kinds of workers, skills, and languages found in different work contexts. English is not the sole language of the workforce, and not all workers are American citizens and speak English in the workplace.

The participants of this study are all accustomed to workplaces where the majority of workers is foreign-born and “standard” English is hardly spoken. The American workplaces employ thousands of immigrant newcomers each year, operating and often making profits without needing workers to be fluent English speakers or legal residents. The hospitality industries, such as a hotel, is a part of the American prominent business landscapes. In Columbus, Ohio alone, there are around 250 hotels that employ immigrant workers especially for the entry position levels. Studies on the NNES (Non Native English-Speaking) workers have usually been conducted around the formal and semi-formal education focus such as ESL (English as a Second Language) or professional training purposes. Formal work and language training programs have become
increasingly popular interventions for solving the “crisis” or threat of a deficient, “illiterate” workforce. However, a growing body of ethnographic research on workplaces has shown that workers traditionally labeled as unskilled and incompetent are always capable of devising their own creative methods of adjusting to workplace challenges. I believe it is necessary to continue focusing on the methods devised by workers themselves, to show how they are capable of arriving at new knowledge and negotiating their positions with the resources already available to them.

Third, I have been convinced that focusing on the language practices of immigrant newcomers can help us understand the education they give each other. Many anthropologists, literacy researchers, and “community of practice” scholars have provided valuable insights on the communicative and educative practices of immigrants and language minorities. I present research that has opened rich ways to explore language, work, and education among the immigrant workers from different native countries that work in a multilingual workplace. This research shows how language practices are socially situated, and notions of “competency” vary, according to the local rules that emerge in different social contexts. Being a newcomer is only a temporary position, and difficulties that arise from “ignorance” are not deficiencies, but potential avenues for learning and collaboration.
A. Studies of Immigrant Workers in the U.S.

In the last few decades, there has been a significant trend in the U.S. workplaces to hire employees from different culture and language backgrounds. Scholars have explored how immigrant workers have increasingly become an integral part of the U.S. workplaces and how multilingual workplaces are continuously created. From the mirror side, Suarez-Orozco (1996) identified three major causes of recent increases in immigration: policies aimed at hiring inexpensive workers from foreign countries to fulfill the U.S. job markets, market’s dependency on foreign workers for low-paid jobs, and the fascinating economic development in the U.S. that attracts foreign workers to pursue their professional lives. Those factors have fueled the desire of some U.S. companies to hire workers with limited English, even though most of the time they require workers to speak English on the job (Haviland, 2000) in the multilingual workplaces. Given this fact, some of the non-native English-speaking workers face challenges resulting from the complex policies and ideologies coopted in the workplace. Katz (2001) pointed out that workplaces often designate language-related ideology as an attempt to dictate the identity of workers in order to exercise hegemony, and to remake the workers in the image of the English-speaking employer. This fact seems to complicate the existence of multilingual workplaces. These ideologies also represent the company’s specific mission directed by the dominant status of language and culture of the mainstream. As part of the language challenge, Katz mentioned that another
significant problem faced by the workers is maintaining their development of communicative ability in English, one of the paramount elements of their professional performance and advancement in the U.S. workforce (2001).

Multilingual workplaces mirror the sociocultural contexts where novices, like immigrant workers, become socialized into new discourse systems and cultures. The workplace provides settings for language socialization process where workers from different nationalities work together and create a multilingual environment. Peers and more competent members at the workplace facilitate language socialization of immigrant workers. Immigrant workers experience complex language socialization process in multilingual workplace due to constant exposure to the target language and professional discourses. For the workers, the workplace is a community that enables them to interact in both formal and informal communication with other members of the community in performing both professional and social activities. During this activity, members experience multilayered socialization as this process is realized through language, the primary symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). The workers do not only develop their target language competency in the workplace, they also learn the other forms of knowledge that are learned in and through language, such as cultural values, social knowledge, and identities (Duff & Talmy, 2011).
For immigrant workers, the workplace represents a complex, dynamic setting where they experience a double socialization (Li, 2000): into the hybrid discourses of the workplace, which all newcomers experience, and into the specific language and cultural practices that realize these discourses. In other words, immigrant workers encounter multilayered language socialization as they learn the language in order to perform different tasks which are often acquired in multi stages of socialization. During the initial stages, the new language requirements of the workplace produce for immigrant workers and professionals a ‘linguistic penalty’ (Roberts and Campbell, 2006), since the communicative demands of the selection process maybe greater than those of the job itself. In the practice, for immigrant workers who are categorized as the non-language workers (McAll, 2003), English communicative ability is among the most important requirements for immigrant workers to be able to secure jobs, even when the job itself has a minimum demand for using the language in the workplace. Furthermore, language and literacy demand of the new work order and its associated ideologies can serve to exclude bilingual and multilingual workers even when they are considered as expert speakers in their country of origins or in the community where they grew up or reside (Blommaert, 2007). Their status as multilingual speakers are often underrepresented in the multilingual workplace. Speakers of English perceived as experts or proficient speakers in, for example, India, Nigeria or Philippine can be downgraded to limited or inappropriate in the specific context and genres of the workplace in the U.S. workplaces.
At the later stages of their professional journey, immigrant workers experience the changing demand of the workplace entrenched in the ‘new work order’ (Heller, 2010). Heller specifically outlined that the ‘new work order’ has created a ‘new word order’ in the workplaces, and that the ‘word-force’ has replaced the ‘workforce’ depicted in the new genres of language and communication applied in multilingual workplaces. At these stages, the nature of tasks and the communicative environment at the workplace change continually. In some cases, in particular workplaces there has been change with regards to the nature of education and work. Roberts (2010) highlights the messy boundary between the educational and professional experiences by showing us that people move back from work to education, do on- and off-site training and continuous professional development are common in some workplaces (Duff, 2008; Vickers, 2007). As Roberts puts it language socialization in the workplace is, therefore, a combination of both formal and informal learning (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) and cannot be separated from the professional socialization and training that takes place outside of the formal, physical workplace. The notion of the workplace as a site where language socialization takes place is becoming increasingly contested along with the growing numbers of immigrant workers. The presence of immigrant workers in the U.S. workplaces provides research landscapes to study how foreign language-speaking workers learn and interact within the specific context of a gate-keeping professional and social institution.
This study is conducted at the housekeeping department at Brighton Hotel, an upscale hotel located in the heart of downtown Columbus, Ohio and is aimed at exploring how the immigrant workers engage in multilayered language use and learning that shows their ongoing development of communicative ability over time in multilingual sites. The approach adopted in this study is in line with the socio-constructivist perspectives on the trajectories of development of multilingual and multicultural competences (Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000). Following Mondada and Pekarek (2004) and Zuengler and Miller (2006) this study is an attempt to integrate different theories of language learning and socialization (Ochs, 1988; Duff, 1995) and learning as a situated practice in a CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Specifically, this study subscribes to the four main assumptions that, subscribing to Pavlenko (2002), characterize second language learning and use:

1. language learning is not merely a cognitive process but mainly a socialization process, with the result of gradually becoming a competent member of a ‘community of practice’ like a workplace;
2. in language use speakers can construct and reconstruct various competencies related to language, socio-cultural values, and identities;
3. language is regarded as a symbolic capital with different degrees of social values;
4. language learners are considered as active agents whose action is not limited to cognitive processing of input and output but also to manage their own...
learning, searching for opportunities to participate in the everyday life of social institutions and, ultimately ‘investing’ (Norton, 2000) in a new language and culture.

B. Language-Related Competency of Immigrant Workers

Research on the skills, or perceived lack of skills, of immigrant workers in the U.S. workforce has centered on school-based notions of literacy and literacy attainment. In a recent article by the U.S. Department of Labor, entitled “Building Career Ladders for the Working Poor through Literacy Training,” (Bruno et al., 2010) the “working poor” in the U.S. are described as having low levels of “quantitative literacy.” According to the authors, this leads to significant “literacy gaps [that] are sufficient to prevent the average working poor from functioning adequately in most (76 percent) occupations that could raise their incomes...” (2010, p. 6). The article further suggests the implementation of workplace literacy training programs to help the working poor become functional and climb the ladder out of poverty. This articulates a misleading correlation between language skills and intelligence or ability to function as a competent member of a particular workplace or even society. This view also marginalizes workplaces where English is neither the principal or commonly used language, ignoring the tremendous linguistic diversity found in U.S. labor market.

Goldberg and Corson (2001) explore the “social construction of language skills” (2001, p. 1) in Ontario workplaces where immigrants, refugees, and aboriginal Canadians
are employed. The authors argue that the concept of skill is a social construction, and they draw on Dunk’s (1996) notion that “the assessment of the worth of an individual’s or group’s labor power is tied to the overall valuation of that individual or group” (Goldberg and Carson 2001, p. 5). Additionally, the authors argue that minority languages learned informally are “not valued as a skill that yields returns in the market in the same way the official languages or formally learned languages do” (2001, p. 1). They found that minority languages learned “informally” are viewed inferior because “‘standard’ grammar structures are less likely to be mastered” (2001, p. 8). Ontario workers who learned languages informally through their workplaces were considered “talented” as opposed to “skilled” (2001, p. 9). By conceiving of “minority language skills in this way, the skill need not be valued or rewarded in the labor market the same way as minority language skills that are learned formally, requiring ‘effort’ and ‘challenge’ to learn”. This study highlights how informal workplace language education among immigrants and minorities tends to be devalued by employers as an improper way of learning language. The actual work involved in this “informal” process is usually ignored or taken for granted because it is not considered “real” learning, and the languages involved in the process are not considered “good” languages.

Katz (2000) writes about workplace language education and the “intercultural construction of ideologies of competence” (2000, p. 1) among immigrants in a California manufacturing plant. She argues that employers in the U.S. are too quick to blame their
immigrant workers for workplace mishaps, because they are seen as lacking “workforce preparedness” due to “skills deficits” (2000, p. 145). She argues that behind these “deficit-oriented views of workers” are “overly simplistic, skills-based definitions of language and literacy, and conjectures about workers who are portrayed as under-educated, and as lacking appropriate linguistic tools and the other basic workplace knowledge” (p. 146). Katz warns against the dangers of viewing language as a skill isolated from social activity. Workers languages are not separate from their workplace participation. Gee et al. (1996) argue that workplace language training programs in the United States have become increasingly concerned with ‘retooling workers’ (Katz, 2000, p. 146) and “transforming employees whose skills and knowledge, including language and demeanor, are perceived as being in need of repair” (ibid).

Language training programs attempt to shape how employees communicate to encourage collaboration and teamwork, while ignoring the ways employees are already communicating and teaching each other new languages. According to Hull (1997) reading and writing skills are often considered “generic skills” that once mastered, “can and will be used in any context for any purpose” (1997, p. 17). The language demands of workplace environments are tied to the local context, including participants involved and responsibilities required of workers. In line with Dunk (1996), Hull argues that this simplistic view of skills demonstrates that “skills are always defined with reference to some socially defined version of what constitutes competence” (1997, p. 18). Treating
language as an autonomous and discrete skill “fails to account for the complexity of language” (Katz 2000, p. 149). Katz believes workers’ competence is increasingly measured according to their sociolinguistic behavior. In her ethnography of a cable manufacturing company Katz found that simplistic notions of language resulted in dismissal or penalization of workers’ language practices. In line with these broad assumptions about language skills and worker competence, the methods workers devise for learning new languages with each other are not considered relevant, valuable, systematic, or transferable across contexts (Katz 2005, p. 149).

Li (2000) argues that “the workplace is an important but little studied context where novices to a culture become socialized into new discourse systems and environments” (2000, p. 62). In new working environments, novices may experience “double socialization,” meaning they are “novices in the new working environment-which may be in a different field from their prior training and experience” and they may also be “novices in the new language and culture” (2000, p. 62) of the workplace. Li draws on Ochs & Schieffelin’s (1986) notion of language socialization to describe the activities of Chinese immigrant women in an “inner-city immigrant job-training program operated by the Chinese American Association” (Li 2000, p. 62). She documents how these women develop communicative competence in English using strategies outside the classroom. The immigrants in Li’s study developed “communication style by learning...the 'American Way' of conducting discourse in the workplace” and in doing so,
workers learned to express their “pragmatic intentions more directly and effectively” (2000, p. 65). Immigrant workers accomplished this through “sociocultural exposure and participation in social interactions and with the assistance of experts or more competent peers” (2000, p. 63). Li demonstrates how Chinese women observed the English language practices of other women from America, Poland, and other countries, to discover effective techniques for communicating with English-speaking employers. They exchanged stories about English in and out of classrooms and shared techniques for communicating that were effective for interacting with superiors. What was equally as important as learning English words and phrases, was that they taught each other English in new and diverse social contexts. Her work demonstrates that immigrants are capable of identifying their language needs as well as important and necessary linguistic knowledge, according to identifiable local language conventions. It also shows how immigrants educate each other to meet those needs using a variety of resources and strategies already at their disposal.

Interestingly, workers can also resist language instruction by choosing to speak their native languages when communicating with each other. Goldstein's (1997) study of female Portuguese factory workers in Toronto demonstrates how Portuguese assembly-line workers spoke in Portuguese with each other to resist the rigid demands of formal English instruction required by the company. Her work also shows the relationship between communication practices and the actual workplace space. The organization of
work space influences language interaction. Being on an assembly line or in a small kitchen space with other workers increases chances of language exchange and discussions about the language environment itself. Engaging in tasks that require collaboration in shared spaces opens opportunities for new language practices to emerge.

Job training programs for newcomers tend to adopt teaching strategies commonly found in schools that try to produce outcomes in terms of increased work skills, employee advancement, and business profit. These strategies include formal instructors and structured learning goals, curricula, and learning assessments. This school-based approach is used for immigrant newcomers, despite the fact many do not have extensive experience in schools. My study participants all learned the knowledge and skills needed to make a living by working with friends and family outside of classrooms (at the factory, at the hotel, on the farm, in the mechanic shop, in the restaurant). Still, workplace training programs tend to be modeled after modes of instruction offered by schools.

Additionally, evaluations of workers are not restricted to text-based reading and writing skills or speaking competency. Workers are also evaluated on their “numeracy and technologized literacies” at the workplace. In their case study of boat-building apprentices in Australia, Zevenbergen and Zevenbergen (2009) argue that “there is a growing concern with regard to the literacy and numeracy levels of young people entering the workplace” (2009, p. 183). Employers lobbying governments argue that young people are “ill-prepared” for the “literacy and numeracy demands of contemporary
work” (ibid). Zevenbergen and Zevenbergen (2009) argue that math is often considered a skill learned in school that is isolated from practice, process, and environment. Thus, a common approach to evaluating workers’ numeracy competence is to uncover and locate how “school mathematics” is put into practice. As a result, this search for school-based forms of “knowing and doing” mathematics “fails to recognize and validate the processes employed by workers as they undertake their tasks and how they go about solving problems” (2009, p. 184). In other words, searching for school mathematics in workers’ activities overshadows how workers actually make calculations and solve numerical challenges. Boat builder apprentices differed in their uses of “formal” units of measure, in their estimation techniques, and in the choice of tools used to make necessary calculations. To successfully build a boat and be recognized as effective boat builders, apprentices used versions of school math, but “not those found in text book examples” (2007, p. 204). They demonstrated the ability to communicate about numbers and “engage in effective problem solving,” using “little of the mathematics encountered in school other than arithmetic” (2007, p. 202). Researchers found that within the workplace, “there are very different ways of working from that of schools” that the “complexity of workplace practice has not been recognized” (2007, p. 204). The authors emphasize the need to look at work activities as complex processes where new forms of practice and participation emerge out of the specific conditions of the work environment. So-called “informal” tactics and skills should be taken more seriously as researchers
continue to learn about the “education people give each other” (2007, p. 204).

The dichotomy between “informal” and “formal” learning is still maintained in much education research, lending more authority and validity to specific kinds of educational practices and institutions over others. Cremin (1977) discussed this problematic distinction in Dewey’s work (1916), arguing that scholars of education who base their ideas of learning on this dichotomy are more likely to interpret education as synonymous with schooling. Cremin noted that although there are multiple individuals and institutions that educate, they are not usually considered educational or capable of educating. Yet Cremin returns to one of Dewey’s central concepts—that experience itself is pedagogical. He argues that education is “ordinary in the best sense of the term” (McDermott and Raley, 2007). Various researchers who study educational spaces and practices outside of schools have stated and re-stated this idea, arguing that “everyday activities can at any moment present an opportunity for learning” (Hamilton 2006, p. 125). Hamilton points out the difficulties with locating and defining the parameters of what constitutes informal learning, which has traditionally been defined “by what it is not—that is, an absence of formal learning” (2006, p. 126). The quest to locate informal learning is entangled with the problems of studying learning that is “embedded” in the “everyday flow” of activities (2006, p. 127).

Lee and Roth (2003) explain that the everyday “work involved in getting the job done” is often hidden and “rendered invisible” (2003, p. 154) in the eyes of the
uninformed observer, and requiring “special efforts to bring it to the surface” (2003, p. 154). Many researchers have neglected everyday work as merely routine or just representations of labor exploitation. Other anthropologists concerned with work have developed a distinct vocabulary to talk about informal learning. For example, Kusterer (1978) focuses on the work performed by truck drivers, welders, meat cutters and warehouse workers, among others. He argues that in order to do their jobs successfully, all workers must acquire a stock of what he calls *basic working knowledge* as well as *supplementary working knowledge*. These are the informal practices all workers develop through their creative participation with people and tools to problem solve, deal with unpredictable variables, and avoid disruptions at the workplace.

Kleifgen (2013) explores the communicative practices of a circuit manufacturing plant and the “informal opportunities employees have for learning 'on the job' and moving along a career path in the company” (2013, p. 12). Kleifgen argues that there is little known about the details of everyday work in small businesses, even though over “80 percent of all jobs in the U.S. are in companies that employ fewer than 150 people” (2013, p. 17). Additionally, Kleifgen asserts that workplace researchers often assume that “working immigrants and language minorities lack strong communication and literacy skills” and therefore “studies focus almost exclusively on learning English as the path to improved work performance” (2013, p. 97). Her analysis of workplace learning in “Genesis” (a circuit board manufacturing plant) draws on the theory of Russian linguist
and Bakhtin Circle member, Valentin Voloshinov, who argued that “language is
organized dialogically, at the level of the utterance where participants' contributions
shape others' responses” (2013, p. 7). For Voloshinov, ideology and power relations exist
at the level of the utterance, which is never monologic, but comprised of multiple,
constantly evolving voices. Kleifgen's unique study illuminates how team members at the
manufacturing plant drew “on multiple linguistic and interactional resources,” including
workplace technology, to “display their social relationships within the constraints of
problem solving activities at work” (2013, p. 97). Specifically, the linguistic resources
used by Vietnamese-speaking workers included “person-reference systems, honorific
alternants, and politeness terms” (ibid) and the “efficient use of their home language
during much of the interaction” which incorporated English and “assembly terminology”
(2013, p. 59).

Much like the immigrant housekeepers who work in a multilingual workplace,
multilingual employees at Genesis experienced a need to “create social alignments” with
each other as they made decisions in the course of their talk. Additionally, Kleifgen's
research demonstrates the important ties between communicative practices and the
distribution of knowledge that arises as teams engage in “learning-in-interaction” (2013,
p. 134) at work. Although conflict necessarily arises whenever individuals from different
backgrounds come together for solving problems and accomplishing tasks together,
“creative shifts in power-relations and social identification” (2013, p. 151) occur as they
attain “new knowledge and skills” (2013, p. 150) despite differences in status and challenging work situations. She recommends that future researchers of workplace settings should focus on the global convergence of individuals who bring diverse ways of acting, speaking and knowing into workplaces, particularly through “more on-the ground ethnographic observations of workers” (2013, p. 167) as they learn at work. This kind of research has the potential to reveal the rich semiotic resources and “mediating tools” put into practice by workers in contemporary workplace “sites of engagement” (2013, p. 151).

Blommaert (2013) explores “superdiversity” and “colorful blends of locality and globality that emblematically characterize contemporary cosmopolitan societies (2013, p. 111). For example, he analyzes multilingual and multimodal menus in a tavern called “Bellefleur” in the Statiestraat of Antwerp in Belgium. In this tavern, Indian immigrants, elderly Belgians, and younger, recently migrated middle class people converge in a “polycentric space and cooperate there in different kinds of joint activities” (2013, p. 110). The “newcomers”-Indian restaurant owners-have learned to attract a steady clientele base at the tavern by adding an “‘Indian accent’” to the “curious combinations” on the menu, which includes classic Antwerp dishes alongside Indian cuisine offerings “beef stew in trappist beer next to mutton kottu rotty” (2013, p. 111). Blommaert explains that coherence can be found in patterned interaction and interdependence between different parts of a complex semiotic or “sociolinguistic system” (2013, pp. 9-10). These
systems are not unified wholes; they are characterized by mobility and polycentricity, which involves different scale levels or fragments. The observable elements of complex sociolinguistic systems have taken form over time and continue to change—they “are the outcome of historical processes of becoming” (2013, p. 11). In Belgium, for example, immigrant workers and local business owners constantly interact and transform their neighborhoods while engaging in commerce activities together.

As diverse populations figure out ways to “effectively communicate” (2013, p. 81), they contribute to the formation of new “specialized professions,” “class stratum” and repertoires of “economic activity” that offer diverse populations opportunities to acquire new knowledge, qualifications, access to prestige, and new layers of “‘ethnic enterprise [in] service industries” (2013, p. 73). He states the importance of taking into account “mundane objects” like menus, store signs, and “plastic shopping bags” which are “not usually considered to be reading material” but which can point to “ways in which communities are organized and, indirectly, in the history of presence they have in the neighborhood; and they inform us about processes of emergence and the development of such communities” (2013, p. 66). Blommaert argues that ethnographic research should continue to highlights the “complex and multifilial features and their various different origins that are contained in synchronized moments of understanding,” (2013, p. 13) or acts of “ordered and localized communication” in superdiverse spaces of interaction.
C. Language Socialization Perspective

The perspective of language socialization believes in the interconnectedness among language, culture, and cognition (Saville-Troike, 2003). Socialization in a broader view refers to the process of becoming a competent member of a community through internalizing the norms and values of the community (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Ochs (1993) defined socialization as a “dynamic interactional process between participants in experts and novices role who develop cognitively through their activity, thereby changing over interactional time” (p.1). According to Vygotsky (1978), children become internalized and gain performance competence in a specific context through participating in social interactions. Socialization does not imply a mindless, passive conditioning that leads novices to have desired homogenous responses, competences, behaviors, or stances (Duff, 2007a); rather, a socialization is a bi-or multidirectional process (Duff, 1995).

Language socialization means both socialization through language and socialization to use language, and in this perspective, novices in society become acquire knowledge of social order and system through engagement in language mediated interactions (Ochs, 1986). Language socialization represents an orientation to language and literacy improvement in a particular community and setting, and the perspective of language socialization considers development as culturally situated, mediated, and replete with social, cultural, and political meanings (Duff, 2010). Duff also argued that the core
Theoretical premise of language socialization is that language is acquired through interactions with more proficient people not only in language and cultural practice but also in worldviews, ideologies, values, and the identities of the community members.

The term language socialization refers to the process which newcomers become socialized into the group’s culture through exposure to and participation in language mediated social activities (Morita, 2000). With the definition of language socialization, Morita (2000) pointed out two important elements of language socialization: one is that activity or human action plays a major role in socio-cultural approaches to cognitive development, which is related to the idea of Vygotskian school of psychology that participations in socioculturally organized activities as well as to the idea that language skills are formed partly through culturally specific activity. The other element is the participation of more competent members of the social group with less proficient participants; however, the interactions between them mean a bi-directional process, not a directional process.

Language socialization represents an orientation to language and literacy improvement in a particular community and setting, and the perspective of language socialization considers development as culturally situated, as mediated, and as replete with social, cultural, and political meanings (Duff, 2010). She also argues that the core theoretical premise of language socialization is that language is acquired through interactions with more proficient people not only in language and cultural practice but
also in the worldviews, ideologies, values, and identities of the community members. Therefore, studies of language socialization link the acquisition of linguistic competence to the social and cultural frameworks, practices, ideologies that define a particular group (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

As a prominent research paradigm, language socialization vigorously emerges out of concerns due to the narrowness of child language acquisition theories. It is originated with the work of Ochs and Schieffelin and is built upon notions of communicative competence (Hymes, 1974) that also becomes one of the focuses of this present study. According to the theoretical paradigm of language socialization, individuals are socialized through language, but are also socialized to certain ways of using the language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). In view of this, Ochs contends that novices in society become acquire knowledge of principles of social order and system through engagement in language-mediated interactions (1986). Socialization in a broader view, as Schieffelin and Ochs highlight, refers to a process of becoming a competent member of a community through internalizing the norms and values of the community (1986). This view implies that the perspective of language socialization takes a stance that language, culture, and cognition always work in concert. Accordingly, Ochs defined socialization as “a dynamic interactional process between participants in experts and novices role who develop cognitively through their activities, thereby changing over interactional time” (1993, p. 1).
Studies of language socialization often examine processes rather than outcomes by focusing on how values are transmitted through language and what challenges learners contend with rather than looking for the successful uptake of new practices (Duff & Talmy, 2011; Atkinson, 2002). It has been suggested that this focus maybe attributed to the fact that research in this paradigm was first conducted in monolingual settings, for instance among caregivers and children whereby the eventual acquisition of practices was assumed inevitable.

With a focus on ‘how’ or rather processes, language socialization research aims to document the process of learning how to both act as a member and to be seen by others as a member of a community (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). It is rooted in the notion that novices across the life span are socialized into using language and socialized through language not only in the immediate or local discourse context but also in the context of historically and culturally grounded social beliefs, values, and expectations, that is, in socio-culturally recognized and organized practices associated with membership in a social group (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986; Ochs, 2002). Language socialization entails much more than language, participating effectively in everyday activities requires a great deal of interactional, cultural, and ideological knowledge. Processes of socialization necessarily entail accommodating “members’ ideologies about communicative resources”, along with an understanding how they are used in identity work and social organization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012, p. 7). Thus rather than viewing language as
something that can be decontextualized and broken down into component parts, from the perspectives of language socialization, language is defined as a constantly changing social practices (Duff & Talmy, 2011).

Research in language socialization has gained prominence through the works of some scholars who explored L1 socialization (e.g., Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Heath, 1983), and L2 socialization in various learning contexts (e.g., Duff, 1995; Li, 2000; Duff, Wong, and Early, 2002; Schecter and Bayley, 1997). In line with Heath (1983) who once argued that “all language learning is culture learning” (p.5), Schieffelin and Ochs also said that language socialization theory considers language learning as the simultaneous acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, therefore, language acquisition also reflect a process of language socialization where novices do not learn linguistic codes in isolation but learn about the world as they learn a language. Indeed, in language socialization, language and culture co-constitute and co-contextualize each other. In language and sociocultural acquisition process, language is “the primary symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed” (Garret and Baquedano-Lopez, 2002, p. 339); while culturally based practices, settings and interactions are the salient vehicles which powerfully and necessarily affect both language teaching and learning processes (Poole, 1992).
Because language socialization is a “life-long process and a collaborative one” (Moore, 2008, p. 175), it should be understood that novices experienced language socialization across their entire life span and speakers do not only experience primary language socialization during childhood but some of them continue to experience the secondary language socialization process as adults entering new sociocultural contexts or joining new communities of practice (such as a workplace or an educational program) (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In line with the neo-Vygotskyan sociocultural theory (in Li, 2000), there are components that work recursively within the language socialization process, i.e., more proficient interlocutors, peers, caregivers, or teachers help novices/newcomers develop their potential by means of scaffolding or guided assistance.

Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez (2002) identified that longitudinal studies and ethnographic orientation characterize language socialization research that seeks a holistic and integrative perspective to understanding learners’ development (Duff and Talmy, 2011). Under this holistic theoretical umbrella, language socialization contends that sociocultural ecology of home, community, school or workplace impacts strongly on the L2 learners’ communicative practices, which shape and reshape, construct and reconstruct the learners’ interactive routines and strategies. Language socialization emphasizes the role of interactive routines since they can provide structured opportunities for novices to engage with experts and other community members (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). Schieffelin and Ochs and some theorists contend that as repetitive routines
become increasingly proceduralized in learners’ interactional ability, the structural and predictable properties of the interactive practices facilitate novices’ increasing participation in them, which forms a vehicle for learners to the target language proficiency and sociocultural norms (Poole, 1992, Moore, 2011).

Since participation is salient in the process of socialization, some scholars also use a situated learning orientation to bridge the concepts of language socialization and the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) framework. According to this framework, novices initially have to join a particular community as a newcomer. As they become more competent they move more to the center of that community. Technically, according to Lave and Wenger, newcomers must undergo the legitimate and peripheral participation (LPP) before being accepted by others in a CoP in order to gain access to resources and opportunities for socialization. Thus, in addition to participation, access to the CoP resources is also salient in the process of language socialization (Duff and Talmy, 2011). This idea supports Norton’s (1997) argument that people who have access to wider range of resources in a community will have access to power and privilege to operate within that community, which will help them understand the new world and future possibilities.

In addition to access to the learning contexts and participation frameworks, Duff and Talmy also discovered that the language socialization process involves more complex components such as the social, cultural, pragmatic, and other meanings that
come bundled with language and various interactional routines and activities. Related to Duff and Talmy’s argument is the fact that during the socialization process, newcomers need to negotiate their identity and investment (Peirce, 1995) to the target language and culture in Peirce’s construct of investment seems to complement the constructs of motivation in second language acquisition (SLA). Peirce showed us that a novice who is highly motivated to socialize him/herself in the target CoP does not automatically guarantee that his/her investment is also equally high.

1. Adult Language Socialization

In language socialization study, it is increasingly acknowledged that people not only experience their primary language socialization during childhood but continue to experience secondary language socialization throughout their lives as they enter new sociocultural contexts, join new communities of practice (e.g. a workplace, an educational program, a religious group) (Lave & Wenger, 1991), assume new roles in society, and/or acquire a new language. As Ochs (1996) noted, any expert-novice interaction involves language socialization. This expansion in the realm of language socialization allows it to stretch beyond its initial research interests in first language acquisition into the fields of bilingualism, multilingualism and second language acquisition. While most of the pioneering studies of language socialization were conducted in small-scale societies or on relatively homogeneous monolingual
communities (e.g. Heath, 1983; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986), more and more recent and currently ongoing studies have begun to pay attention to the particularities of secondary language socialization processes within linguistically and socioculturally heterogeneous settings associated with contact between two or more languages and cultures (e.g. Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Duff et. al., 2000; Katz, 2000; Li, 2000; Lotherington, 2003; Poole, 1992). In fact, young as language socialization is in the field of SLA, which gained its voice in the field only during the last decade, it has quickly become one of the most informative, sophisticated, and promising domains of second language acquisition inquiry (Watson-Gegeo & Nielson, 2003; Watson-Gegeo, 2004).

Unlike child language socialization which normally takes place in a supportive environment, the process of language socialization later in life frequently occurs within a much less favorable ecology (Watson-Gegeo, 2004) and it is sometimes hostile, like the workplace. Being socialized to draw on their home and community linguistic and sociocultural repertoires, second language learners will inevitably experience cross-cultural communication difficulties, to different degrees, when they plunge into the host cultural environments where communicative interactions are governed by the target cultural behavioral standards and cultural values. Generally speaking, intercultural misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, ridicule, and discrimination together with strong feelings of inadequacy and impostor will become the unavoidable ‘tuition and
fees’ second language learners have to ‘pay’ on their way to becoming bilingual/bicultural individuals. For second language learners, the intercultural language learning/using contexts constitute extremely powerful and influential settings for secondary socialization.

While robust studies on children’s language socialization have dominated research in language socialization, Saville-Troike identified the scarcity of research documenting adult language socialization (2003), particularly in the workplace (Duff and Talmy, 2011) where novices to a culture become socialized into new discourse systems and environments (Li, 2000). Language socialization of adults is facilitated by peers (Saville-Troike, 2003) and thus the workplace can provide a context where novices like immigrant workers are socialized in three elements: corporate, professional, and social or personal aspects by peers or other more proficient members in that community. The interactional regimes (Blommaert et al., 2005) of the workplace make it a site where everyone at the same stage is new to the environment and has to be socialized into its particular linguistic and cultural environment. This socialization can be seen as consisting three parts: corporate or institutional discourses, professional discourses, and the social or personal discourse (2005).

While most of pioneering studies of language socialization were conducted in small-scale societies or on relatively homogenous monolingual communities (e.g. Heath, 1983; Watson-Gegeo, 2004), current trends in language socialization also document
researchers’ interest to the particularities of secondary language socialization processes within linguistically and socio-culturally heterogeneous settings associated with contact between two or more language and cultures (e.g., Duff, Wong, and Early, 2000; Katz, 2001). The nature of workplace language and communication and how the workplaces facilitate workers language socialization has received increasing attention in recent years concerning the adult learners’ language development over time in workplace-related language training (Peirce, Harper, and Burnaby, 1993; Goldstein, 1994; Duff, Wong, and Early, 2000; Li, 2000; Katz, 2000; Burns and Roberts, 2010), language use inside and outside the workplace (Derwing and Munro, 2009), gender-related language practice in the workplace (Katz, 2001; Collier, 2011), and some other types of discursive practices in the workplace such as Holmes’ (2002) study on the contribution of humor in the workplace.

Scholars have identified that the nature of workplaces can provide contexts for immigrants to learn particular discourse systems that are new for them. In the workplace, therefore, immigrants are viewed as novices who experience double socialization (Li, 2000): i.e., they are novices in the new working environment—which may be in a different field from their prior training and experience—and they are novices in the new language and culture. In line with Li’s idea, Duff (2008) also mentioned that immigrant workers often face more complicated socialization into new fields, especially when their prior socialization experiences were based on very different languages and discourse
conventions. By referring to immigrants as novices, Li (2000) invited us to critically see them as individuals who have expertise in other areas of their lives and that language socialization at work is not the only experience they have as language socialization occur across life span.

Related to the English for the Workplace (EWP) and English as a Second Language (ESL) context, Peirce, Harper, and Burnaby (1993) identified that workers’ relationship to larger social and economic structures in the workplace and wider community may influence their ESL activities. Li (2000) observed how the requesting behaviors of the ESL immigrant learners participating in her study became increasingly target-like on the basis of their growing confidence and exposure to appropriate requesting strategy. Working in tandem with Li’s study, Katz (2000) describes workplace literacy classes in a cable manufacturing plant in California based on an ethnographic study of workplace literacy programs serving immigrants in California. As a theoretical background, Katz presented some discussions related to how language trainings in the workplaces have been conducted based on the ‘all-purpose flour’ view by equating the workers’ language use with incompetence, the situatedness and context-bound literacy, gender-related intercultural communication, and the notion of power in the workplace.

Informed by her previous study in workplace literacy program in California, Katz (2001) also conducted a study that explored the curriculum of one workplace initiative
serving immigrant women employees in a hotel housekeeping department. She discussed
the compensation discourses and ideologies in the workplace-family, skills, and, more
recently, being part of the team. Inevitably, problems arise when employers assume they
can teach workers how to behave, talk and interact-and it can become increasingly
challenging for workers to maintain their own identity. Her study showed us the conflicts
some immigrant workers experience between their own cultures’ ways of understanding
workplace discourse and those presupposed by American employers, and it highlights the
importance of linguistics and cultural versatility in the United States workplace.

From the mirror side, Derwing and Munro (2006) analyzed the perceptions of two
groups of native speakers of English on immigrant workers’ speech to identify whether
their preferences are influenced by the notion of comprehensibility or accentedness.
Even though it appears that the participants prefer less accented over more accented
speakers, and that comprehensibility was found to gain more importance offer the diverse
accents, the latter factor seems to be less important when the two groups’ preferences
were compared. The result of this study complemented previous finding that native
speakers of English were not necessarily found to be easily understood nor were they
found to be the best able to understand different varieties of English (Munro et.al., 2006).

Scollon and Scollon (1995) discussed two kinds of socialization into a new
company: formal and informal. Formal socialization refers to organized orientation
classes or handouts provided by the company to inform novices about company or office
forms and procedures. Informal socialization refers to the process whereby a person learns from other members, through observation or informal guidance, about what exactly is needed in particular circumstances. Participating in these forms of socialization over a period of time allows people to feel more at ease and more confident that they are fitting into the new position—and, in their own manner, they too have an impact on the culture of the workplace by the way they in turn socialize their colleagues.

From another setting such as a workplace, Katz’s (2000) research in a California electronic cable manufacturing plant revealed that the different politeness systems between employees and managers and the insistence of the employees to keep their own cultural values and social identities lead to misunderstanding between the two parties, at the cost of the employees’ being negatively and unfairly assessed as resistant, uncooperative, and even incompetent. As discussed in Katz’s (2000) study, the ‘survival of the fittest’ principle permeates various settings on one’s way to second language socialization. While acculturation can facilitate learners’ second language socialization, resistance to adaptation and significant sociocultural discontinuities not only impede L2 learners’ language practices but also mediate their learning opportunities, cultural obligations, and social identity establishment.

2. Language Socialization in the Workplace

The notion of the workplace as a site where language socialization takes place is
becoming increasingly complex. There has been a constant change with regards to which boundaries between work and other aspects of social life, the nature of work, and the continuing change of the communicative environment at work. Regarding the boundaries of work, there is no clear boundaries between education and work. Workers, as Roberts identified, move back from work to education, do internships as part of formal education, and on- and off-site training and continuous professional development are routine (Duff, 2008; Vickers, 2007). The nature of work, as researchers have identified, has also radically changed (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Hull, 1997) into what they call as the ‘new work order’. The new technologies have had a paradoxical effect on how people view the workplace as a key site for language socialization. According to Farrel (2001) the ‘new work order’, on the one hand, has led to a ‘new word order’ (p. 57). Then, the work force has become the ‘wordforce’ (Heller, 2010) which is characterized very much by talk and texts. Being able to communicate well has become the most demanded competence in an increasingly competence-driven world (Matthewman, 1996). On the other hand, the new technologies such as the internet has helped to create the new work order have refocused linguists on the multimodality of everyday activities. Language interact with the texts and materialities of these new technologies which themselves facilitate new forms of language (Heath & Lehn, 2008; Kleifgen, 2001).

Changes in the nature of work itself have occurred at much the same time as global flows of people have transformed employment. While the physical location of
some workplaces has led to a particular ethnolinguistic group tending to be employed over others, in large urban centers, many organizations are characterized by “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024) where no single ethnic group stands out but where employees are from many different backgrounds. Along with new technologies, globalization challenges traditional notions of community as homogenous or geographically placed. A more dynamic view of community as heterogenous and plural better represents living and working in the cities. Similarly, recent theorizing about space, language, and culture has raised questions about language choice and mix (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005). Rather than language practices being determined unproblematically by specific domains, with, for example, a particular language used in one domain rather than another, they are highly situated and dependent upon the context of the particular interaction and the mutual resources of the speakers (Blommaert, 2007; Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005; Duff, 2005). So within a workplace, there may be a constant tension between “interactional regimes” (Blommaert, et al., 2005, p. 208) and the more creative and hybrid language practice of individuals in particular contexts.

Furthermore, current theories on language and globalization (Blommaert et al., 2005) also raise questions about the notion of language socialization in the workplace. The foundational studies on language socialization took place in a small-scale societies where the notion of a community was relatively stable. Novices gradually learned how to
use language and learned through language how to conduct themselves within this relatively homogenous community. More recent research has extended these studies to include the life span and complex, heterogenous societies where the idea of single, fixed communities and a set of established linguistic standards and practices no longer obtain (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). The originators of language socialization theory, Ochs and Schieffelin (1983; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) have themselves played a leading role in criticizing any static notion of socialization into a community, the stereotypes such research can produce, and the possible underplaying of more general or universal practices. Ochs also stressed that socialization is a two-way street with more or less experienced members learning from each other. This more dynamic and transformative notion of language socialization, along with responses to Och’s critique, are illustrated in several studies discussing the language socialization in the workplace.

Despite the expansion of studies on lifelong and “life-wide language socialization” (Duff, 2008, p. 258), there is still scarcity of research discussing the workplace and professional socialization. Specifically as explored by Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez (2002), looking back in 2002 over the previous 16 years, only 5 of the 48 studies they referenced related to workplace and professional socialization. One reason for this is that the methodology used in such studies is hard to carry out in the workplaces. The core methodological features are that the research is ethnographic, holistic, longitudinal, and based on naturally occurring data. Such studies also require
evidence of learning, both in terms of cognition and social interaction. Even in longitudinal studies, research on the shop floor or the office cannot readily capture the changes in how activities are accomplished over time. Another factor, according to Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez is that access to workplace to carry out ethnographic studies is not easy to obtain, often because researchers are assumed to be either spies or troublemakers. Thus, many studies of language use in the workplace are connected to language and cultural training, since this maybe the only way in which employers are willing to offer their organization as a field site for research. In that program, teachers can act as ethnographers, collecting data from the workplace to produce research-based teaching materials.

3. The Workplace as a Community of Practice and a Site of Socialization

The “interactional regimes” (Blommaert et al., 2005) of the workplace make it a site where everyone at some stage is new to the environment and has to be socialized into its particular sociolinguistic and cultural environment. This socialization can be seen as consisting of three parts: corporate or institutional discourses, professional discourses, and the social or personal aspects of the workplace (Roberts & Sarangi, 1999). The communities of practice model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) have traced the gradual process of becoming a full participant in the workplace where there is not only one overarching community of practice but also multiple local communities depending
on the particular sites of engagement that employees are subject to or contribute to creating.

Corporate discourses differ (and are dynamic) in different parts of the world but since virtually all management training resources are produced in the West (Jack, 2009; Poncini, 2003), this hegemonic discourse is what Scollon and Scollon (1995) have called “the Utilitarian Discourse system” (p. 107). It is empirical, deductive, individualistic, egalitarian, and institutionally sanctioned. New employees are inducted either formally or informally into the unique forms of text and talk, and the particular way things are done and categorized in any one institution (Iedema, 2003; Mawer, 1999).

Socialization into professional discourse occurs in formal training contexts both outside the workplace and within it (Roberts & Sarangi, 1999). Several studies have charted the processes of shaping a professional identity through acquiring new discourses and values in healthcare, scientific, legal, and vocational settings. Erricson (1999), in medicine, and Arakelian (2009) in nursing, documented how relative novices learn to be professional learners in the workplace. Hobbs (2004) analyzed how progress (treatment) notes are used in medical socialization. Mertz (2007) studied the novice law student socialization through Socratic dialogue and the reworking of legal texts in different contexts. Similarly, Jacoby (1998) looked at how adults master new registers and genres in the process of becoming physicists, and Vickers (2007) documented the processes of becoming a core member of an engineering team through observation, scaffolding,
ridicule, and opportunities to talk through design processes.

The third aspect of workplace socialization relates to the personal and social discourses at work. As language work (talk and text as institutionalized tasks in the workplace) takes on an increasingly central role, the interrelationship of professional and personal or social discourses becomes ever more salient. This has always been the case with the caring professions, but now that talk is work in call centers, shop floor team meetings, and workplace training sessions, the presentation of self is part of most people’s working skills and requires an assertive persona that is by no means a cultural universal (Katz, 2000). The Wellington Language in the Workplace Project in New Zealand has made a particular study of politeness and humor in the relational work done within the contexts of power in organizational life (Holmes, 2005; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Workplace studies in Sweden (Gunnarsson, 2009) have shown how immigrants and professionals have learned to use humor and developed high levels of pragmatic competence in this area. This has involved not only a linguistic view of appropriateness but also adaption to the flattened hierarchies of the Swedish workplace (Andersson, 2009 as cited in Gunnarsson, 2009).

The informal socialization of office workers (Li, 2000) and care workers (Duff, Wong, & Early, 2000) illustrate the significance of pragmatic and social skills in the necessary face work of daily interactions in the workplace. Li’s case study traced the experience of a Chinese woman, Ming, from the employment preparation course into the
workplace as a filling clerk in a U.S. medical equipment company. It was only in the workplace that her “indirect communicative style” (p. 67), particularly realized in how she made requests, brought along from her early socialization and work experience in China, changed to a more assertive styles as she faced up to the unacceptable behavior on local American office workers. This longitudinal study goes beyond the pragmatics of making requests to wider issues of self-presentation and identity. It also explored the mix of the “new American way” of requesting: “directly, truthful and things a little bit sweeter,” as Ming noted on her diary (p. 75) with the inductive way of making requests from her early habitus. Her new assertiveness, in which she requested coworkers to be more polite, exemplifies the transformative nature of language socialization in which the so-called novices become experts in managing the local politics of the office and contribute to changing the communicative environment.

In their study of migrant workers training to become long-term resident care aides, Duff et al. (2000) described a similar gap between formal training and informal socialization in the workplace. The more formal and technically specific focus in the English language training program did not prepare the trainees for the emotional labor of communicating with the residents with a wide range of English language competence (including English at all) and often with mental and linguistic abilities impaired by the aging process. Affective, personal, and social modes of talk and bodily language were more important in the healthcare aide than accurate English grammar or medical terms.
These three aspects of workplace language socialization—corporate, professional, and social or personal—interact to produce new identities with new ways of being, feeling, and articulating the self in the new moral worlds. These changes have always been central to the study of language socialization. In the workplace these identities are collaborative achievements (Ochs, 1993) within the organizations, in professional socialization, and in the context of gendered migration (Katz, 2000; Gunnarsson, 2009).

4. Immigrant Workers in Multilingual Workplaces and Their Language-Related Challenges

The U.S. is becoming more multilingual with the constant increase of immigrants whose native languages are not English. The census bureau of 2000 results show that 18 percent of the total population aged 5 and over, or 47.0 million people, reported they spoke a language other than English at home, and increase of 47 percent since the 1990’s (Shin and Bruno, 2003). It is therefore a painful irony to characterize the U.S. as an English speaking country because as Johnson (2000) wryly stated, it presumes the privilege of not mentioning that millions of its residents speak languages other than English, or in another word, English is positively valued in this society, and speakers of devalued languages may be shamed into abandoning their native language and their achievement as multilingual speakers. It also denies the fact that people naturally mix
and play with languages to display their positions in everyday life (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2011).

Scholars have studied that immigrant workers have become an integral part of the American business activities as more people from other countries come to this country for various reasons ranging from economic, political, and academic fulfillments. Related to the economic reason, Suarez-Orozco (1996) discussed three primary causes of recent increases in immigration, and in particular in undocumented immigration: (a) policies that aim at recruiting foreign workers to feed a voracious appetite for inexpensive labor; (b) a reliance by some sectors of the market on foreign workers to do the jobs nobody else wants to do, even with high unemployment among native workers; and (c) stunning global economic and political transformations (e.g. NAFTA in the US; political upheaval and the spread of ethno-nationalistic conflicts in Europe). Those immigrants, as Canagarajah (2005) informed us, often have desires and dreams, linguistic and cultural resources, and functional goals that may all differ from that of other groups.

Haviland (2000) explores that some companies in the U.S. often hire workers with limited English, then require them to speak English on the job. As a result, some of these non-native English speakers have to face challenges related to different language-related ideology in the workplace. The language ideology of the workplace is often designated as an attempt to dictate the identity of workers in order to exercise hegemony, and to remake the workers in the image of the English-speaking employer. Within this lies the
unspoken assumption that it is both natural and preferable to be monolingual in the U.S. workplace. Furthermore, there is often an unfair case when the immigrant workers whose expertise and knowledge do not match with the occupations on offer suffer from linguistic and cultural capital loss, which is in contrast with the transformation of others (the employers) gaining new cultural capital from them (Burns and Roberts, 2010). In support of this argument, Katz (2012) discovered that in many cases, some immigrant workers who hold particular degrees with distinctive knowledge, expertise, and work experiences in previous trainings and occupations are not honored in the U.S. This particular case exists because those workers are not proficient in English. Even though, ironically, English proficiency offers no guarantee of upward mobility (Miller, 2009).

Language proficiency and choice often create dilemma in the workplace setting and it can be problematic for immigrant workers to maintain their native language. In order to be a good worker, and a good American, one must repudiate one’s native language and assimilate completely. There is often a belief that a single language will be more preferable (Moore, 2008) because it can lead to more effective communication and will create racial harmony. Those who speak a language other than English in the workplace (Haviland, 2003) can be characterized variously as insubordinate, disruptive and distracting, rude and vulgar, selfish and discourteous, lazy and untrustworthy, violent, willingly engaging in dangerous and unhealthy habits, and in need of authority to determine what is best for them. He also posited that uniformity of language is equated
with a positive, harmonious, and safe working environment. In each instance, monolingual speakers, usually coworkers, complained about not being able to understand what was being said. Haviland termed this view as ‘linguistic paranoia,’ which is defined as the assumption that when those around you speak another language it can only be because they don’t want you to understand the bad things they are saying about you. In each instance, the responsibility a participant takes on in order to successfully complete the communicative process is placed on the non-native English speaker; the native English speaker needs only say ‘I don’t understand you,’ and then the non-native English speaking partner must do something to accommodate the conversation (Lippi-Green, 1997).

As Haviland alerted us, the belief that English speakers have the right to understand everything being said leads to a curiosity that employees use a language other than English in order to hide what they are talking about. These speakers appear to embody a wide array of deviant behaviors, but once English is mandated, these behaviors apparently disappear. English represents appropriate behavior while undesirable traits seem to be embedded in other languages directly. This process is called iconization by Irvine and Gal (2000), which is the belief that the qualities of a society are mirrored in the qualities of their language. Based on this belief, non-native speakers of English such as immigrant workers often suffer from language-related marginalization. Employers often equate their lack of language ability with deficiencies (Katz, 2001). Katz’ study on the
ESL for the workplace program in California also documented how immigrant workers are linguistically and culturally undervalued in a multilingual workplace. Fitch and Hopper (1983) discovered how employers often stereotyped immigrant workers nationalities and native language based on their language proficiency. In the same vein, Huntington (2004) reported that unless Mexican immigrants start using English, America is going to face the erosion of its core values, i.e. the rights of individuals, the rule of law, a work ethic, and the ability and duty to create a better world, which will be replaced by Hispanic traits such as a lack of ambition or self-reliance, a lack of a work ethic or desire to be educated, a distrust of those outside of the family, and acceptance of poverty.

Previous studies on the language practice of immigrant workers have also discussed how immigrant workers communicate with others both in and out of the workplace. These studies invited scholars to critically see how immigrant workers use their language in the workplace, how the decisions regarding language choice is made, and most importantly, how the decision in choosing languages help workers socialize themselves in different and new discourse systems in the workplace (Li, 2000). Applying in depth interviews, a current study by Alvarez (2011) illustrated how Latina and Latino immigrant custodial workers in a university setting communicate with their co-workers, supervisors, and customers. Findings showed that abilities in navigating language choice played important roles in their communication activities in and outside the workplace. Involving participants from the same nationalities, Bergman et.al (2008)
discussed the contribution and consequences of speaking Spanish in the workplace. They argued that language use in the workplace is influenced by both external (norms, professional needs) and internal (group identity, language comfort) processes. Collier’s (2011) study on immigrant women’s language strategies in entrepreneur contexts clearly showed us that immigrant workers have been empowered by their multilingual ability that allow them to navigate their powerful position as powerbroker and competent communicators with in-group workers and out-group customers.

Much work has been done describing the immigrant workers linguistic challenges in the socialization process, internally resulting from their language proficiency and choices, and externally fueled by the different language ideologies coopted in the workplace. It is therefore urgent to study how they construct their identity and ownership across different languages and cultural values, and possible factors accelerating or, the other way around, impeding it. A pioneering study in this topic is a study on extended language learning, social identity, and investment in the workplace conducted by Peirce (1995). Albeit generating tough critics her work on how investment play salient role in immigrant’s language socialization process has been groundbreaking. She convinced us that language learning results from participation in communicative events; therefore it is important to investigate how power relations (including the novice’s investment in L2 and L2 culture) are implicated in the nature of this learning. Furthermore, her research has exceptionally enriched studies in socialization considering that most studies on
immigrant language practice conducted previously have mostly involved participants from the same language backgrounds and homogenous backgrounds. In her study Norton analyzed the language socialization of participants from heterogeneous groups and different native languages. In this current study, therefore, diverse participants will be involved to allow the researcher to capture much wider insights on how the participants experience language socialization in their groups and across different groups in more heterogeneous sites.

The ultimate challenges faced by the immigrant workers have also been fueled by the change in the nature or work. While some aspects of working life remain stable, the globalized economy and working practices produced by the rapid expansion of new technologies has led to a ‘new work order’ (Gee et al., 1996). This order is supported by the discourses of what have become known as ‘new capitalism or fast capitalism’. The need to constantly change products and customize them to survive in the globalized marketplace has led to a restructuring of the workplace, which, in turn, has created new language and literacy demands that affect even the low paid workers. These demands arise from an increased use of technologies, more multitasking at all levels, more flexibility required of workers as hierarchical structures are flattened, and generally, a more “textualised workplace” (Iedema & Scheeres, 2003, p. 336) in which there is increasing reliance on written instructions and web-based materials, so both new and well-established employees have had to be socialized into these new practices (Hull,
Many studies of workplaces have shown how routine activities are mediated by digital technologies (Lemke, 2002; Goodwin, 1995).

The new work order has created a “new word order” (Farrel, 2001) or “word-force” (Heller, 2010). There are new work genres, and new work and professional identities are constructed and negotiated through talk on the shop floor (Iedema & Scheeres, 2003; Kleifgen, 2001); in health settings (Cook, Gumperz, & Messerman, 1999); and in call centers (Budach, Roy, & Heller, 2003; Cameron, 2000; Friginal, 2009a, 2009b; Heller, 2002; Roy, 2003) where there is a constant tension between the highly routinized scripts of interaction and the emotional labor of dealing on a daily basis with often angered or frustrated customers and being expected to adapt to their style of communicating.

The globalized economy is paralleled by the global movements of people. Superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) is the norm in most large cities, and few places in the world remain untouched by migration or the effects of diaspora, as the studies by Li (2000) and Duff et al. (2000) described earlier show. Global flows of people to more wealthy and secure societies have created workplaces where staffs are bilingual or often multilingual. However, the dominant language of the nation state produces and enforces a linguistic capital that serves to maintain and reproduce linguistic and ethnic inequalities. Migration and mobility create the need for “double socialization” (Li, 2000, p. 61) into the workplace. So, in addition to the socialization processes that all new
employees face, relative newcomers are expected to learn to participate in the linguistic and cultural practices of work in a new country.

The extensive literature on workplace language and cultural awareness training demonstrates the amount of retraining and more formal socialization expected of the migrant and international worker and professional (Bell, 2003; Goldstein, 1993; Holmes, 2000). Some of these trainings have been questioned as being too narrow (Goldstein, 1997) or not sufficiently critical of the positioning of migrant workers within the new work order (Farrel, 2000). Some of these evaluation studies of language training take a wider and more ethnographic perspective, seeing the workplace as the curriculum (Mawer, 1999). However, few of them are framed by theories of second language socialization or examine the “exposure to similar communicative experiences in institutionalized networks of relationships” that contribute to the production of “shared culture and shared inferential practices” (Gumperz, 1997, p. 15).

The double socialization and the shift to language work in the new work order produce new regimes of inequality that, despite the relative stability of some work practices, as noted earlier, make language socialization in the workplace problematic. As McAll (2003) discussed, there is a linguistically divided labor market, similar in many ways to the traditional two-tier labor market. Many low paid, so-called entry level jobs are insecure, isolated, in poor and noisy condition, and organized into ethnic work units (Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Goldstein, 1997; Gunnarsson, 2009). These are often the
only jobs that minority ethnic workers, particularly relatively new arrivals, whatever their educational background, can obtain. Under these conditions, there is little opportunity to be socialized into the dominant language. Indeed, as McAll argued, those areas where there is relatively little talk in the majority language of the organization, are the areas where there is little power: “in the workplace power is exercised precisely in those areas where language is most intense” (2003, p. 249). Goldstein’s study of female Portuguese factory workers in Toronto illustrated how the assembly line workers chose to speak Portuguese on the line to assert their ethnic solidarity and so both in terms of place and language were isolated from the intense areas of English language work. Even non-Portuguese-speaking migrant workers were socialized into speaking Portuguese on the assembly lines (Goldstein, 1997).

Furthermore, as depicted in the previous discussion, unlike the usually supportive conditions for early language socialization, second language socialization in the workplace often occurs in a relatively hostile environment, (Katz, 2000; Li, 2000; Mawer, 1999; Roberts, 1992). Misunderstandings, racist comments, and the deliberate noncontact of some groups in relation to others both limit opportunities for socialization and actively construct resistances to it. However, some studies present an alternative view (Andersson, 2009; Duff et al. 2000) described earlier. Andersson’s study in a Swedish hospital setting documented the use of communication strategies and humor and found that the local Swedish staffs were patient listeners. Even when second language
speakers had to use several communication strategies as they struggled to convey their intent, the local staff allowed them to finish their turn at talk.

Finally, the language and literacy demand of the new work order, and its associated ideologies, can serve to exclude bilingual and multilingual workers even when they are considered expert speakers of the dominant language in their country of origin or in the multilingual community in which they grew up or now reside (Blommaert, 2007). Expertise, Blommaert argued, is relative. A speaker’s use of English perceived as expert in, for example, Nigeria or the Philippines is downgraded to limited or inappropriate in the specific contexts and genres of the workplace in the new country. Hull (1997) and Katz (2000) described the linguistics and performance demands of multilingual workers in high tech Silicon Valley companies in California. A similar assertive stance was required of linguistic minority nurses retraining in the U.K. whose English was expert in their own country but rated as inappropriate in British hospitals (Arakelian, 2009).

Several studies in Canada have shown how speakers of English or French who were considered experts, linguistically, within their own communities can be disadvantaged by dominant norms and workplace ideologies. In their studies of francophone novice nurses in Quebec, Parks and Maguire (1999) found that the nursing reports and care plans they had been taught to produce were different from the conventional practices in both French-and English-speaking hospitals. In another study on bilingual call workers in French Ontario, the researcher found that they were excluded
from the better-paid bilingual jobs because of the commodification, standardization, and codification of the dominant language, French. The ideology of a pure standard French, which was the stated call centers’ requirement, excluded local vernacular French speakers from the better-paid bilingual worker jobs. Their French was considered not meeting the new standard of bilingualism, and so, despite being bilingual, they were hired as English monolingual speakers (Roy, 2003; Budach et al., 2003). The effect of globalization in the new international call centers has local, exclusionary repercussions, even for bilingual and multilingual speakers and shows that there is a linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1991; McAll, 2003) that determines what counts as linguistics capital and sets the standards for language socialization.

D. Mainstream Language as a Gatekeeping Element in Multilingual Workplaces

We have learned from the nurse training in the U.K. and call center studies in Canada described earlier that corporate discourses of the new work order impose a “linguistic penalty” (Roberts & Campbell, 2006, p. 1) on those who do not meet the standards of language and communicative competence. Early work on gatekeeping encounters in linguistically diverse societies established the gap between the sociolinguistic demands of the selection and assessment processes and those of the workplaces (Mawer & Field, 1995; McNamara, 1997). More recently, equal opportunity commitments and the widespread use of competency-based criteria in recruitment and training have done little to narrow the gap. The socialization required to be successful in
the selection interview or assessment outstrips the language and interactional demands of
the job or assess language and communication skills that are not relevant to the job
(Roberts & Campbell, 2006). On the analogy of the ethnic penalty, which describes the
discrimination experienced by black and minority ethnic groups (Heath & Cheung,
2007), there is a linguistic penalty that excludes on the basis of language. A recent study
has shown that job interviews for low-paid, entry level jobs in the U.K. require an astute
performance by candidates that combines blending institutional, professional, and
personal modes of discourse with a standard narrative structure (Campbell & Roberts,
2007; Roberts & Campbell, 2006). Candidates’ responses also have to be what Iedema
(2003) termed bureaucratically processable. In other words, they have to “fit their stories
into boxes” (Roberts & Campbell, 2006, p. 45). The formal language socialization
through language training and work preparation courses is far removed from the
competency-based interview, which itself is distant from those areas of work, away from
the language-intense areas, where linguistic minorities and relatively new arrivals are
routinely positioned. Language socialization for entry into reasonably secure, if low-
paid, work is a bigger hurdle than language socialization within the workplace itself.

A follow-up study (Roberts, Campbell, & Robinson, 2008) looked at the role of
promotion interviews in contributing to what Phillips (2003) has called the ‘snowy peaks’
of senior management: the fact that most companies had only white majority group
members at the top. This study showed that the gradual process of socialization into
management discourses was essential to success at the promotion interview. Access to informal interactional networks helped those from minorities to be socialized into what Roberts et al. (2008) called talking like a manager. However, there were tensions and struggles for those considering promotion since they were expected to be ‘authentic’ members of the shop floor community. Going for promotion was seen as a double betrayal of this community and of their own ethnic group. So language socialization for promotion to management in this mosaic of affiliations and tensions is not a straightforward matter of gradual participation in the workplace as a new community of practice.

The workplace, as McAll (2003) observed, is a site where immigrant workers spend most of their lives as adults. McAll distinguishes between language workers (for example engineers, managers, sales people) for whom language is central to work, and others (such as woodworkers, custodial workers, janitors) for whom the transformation of material is central and whom often work in conditions that render sustained and frequent verbal interaction impossible. Drawing examples from his research on language use in aerospace industry in Montreal, McAll shows how language difference remains a key instrument in maintaining inequality between speakers of a dominant language and language speakers of subordinate language over whom they exercise power. McAll study further shows that, even in Montreal where legislation has greatly expanded work
opportunity for Francophones, it is found out that English remains the dominant language of the engineering sector of the aerospace industry that employ ‘language-workers’.

Socialization into the competences of the promotion interview depended upon learning its communicative and rhetoric styles. The overriding orientation was to the self as a project, always self-aware and self-reflecting for the benefit of the organization the candidate aspired to be a manager in. Candidates born and educated abroad were less likely to produce this self, a synthesis of the utilitarian discourse of claims and evidence with euphemized feelings and informality. This group of candidates tended to be judged as either too emotional or too impersonal, relying on a generalized assertive style that did not blend the hybrid discourses of the selection interview. These studies of the linguistic penalty in access to training, employment, and promotion show that language socialization into and in the workplace is problematic. There are clearly different versions of the self-required at different stages of the employment process as well as resistances and tensions within the apprenticeship period.

The double socialization into a workplace officially dominated by the state or majority language implies that learning the practices of the workplace would go hand in hand with majority language socialization. However, studies have shown that for many workers, contact was most frequent either with those who shared a first language other than that of the majority or with speakers with very different styles and varieties of this majority language (Duff et al., 2003, Clyne, 2003). Since workplace language policies,
work teams, and the linguistic backgrounds of those employed are all dependent on economic and structural factors, the communicative environment rarely remains stable. This raises the questions of what linguistic communities of practice newcomers are socialized into, the extent to which such communities change over time, and the sociopolitical realities on the ground that cause these changes. For example, in a food factory in a small town in the U.K., successive groups of workers, first from Pakistan, then Kurdish workers from Iraq and Turkey, and more recently from Eastern Europe, as well as the company’s restructuring meant that changes in the linguistic makeup of the food-processing lines outstripped the opportunities for socialization into English, the official language and the language of opportunity, or indeed into any one language of the processing line (Roberts et al., 2008).

Although the globalized economy and the rhetoric of multilingualism used in corporate discourse would appear to imply that those who are multilingual are assets to the organization, the evidence is rather mixed. The literature suggests that there is a persistent gap between the official rhetoric of institutions and the policies on the ground and the linguistic ideology that underpins both of them, either explicitly or implicitly. Heller and Roy have shown that the so-called purity of the standard French required in call centers was at odds with the celebratory rhetoric around local vernacular French (Heller, 2002; Roy, 2003). In the same vein, Duchene (2009) described the commodification of multilingualism in a call center. His ongoing work in a Swiss
international airport has shown the structuring work that linguistic ideologies do in positioning workers with the wrong kind of multilingualism. The neoliberal discourse that promotes the hiring of those with multilingual resources does not work through into status and pay. Even baggage handlers are doing language work. They are listed as interpreters and translators and expected to do language work as part of their duties. However, there is no recognition of this in terms of salary or official status (Duchene, 2009). In such contexts, unofficial language policy and language socialization tend to reinforce unequal boundaries between different types of language workers and the languages they speak. The use of language other than the state or the majority languages, while functional and indeed of direct benefit to the organization, does not grant its user any more power than if they were monolinguals.

Other studies of socialization into the multilingual workplace are in contexts where bilingualism, multilingualism, and lingua franca usage (Firth, 1996, 2009) are ratified as functional and prestigious practices; for example, international business negotiations and the interaction between what are termed bilingual professionals (Day & Wagner, 2007). These contexts contrast in several ways with workplaces discussed earlier. Firstly, they are not ethnically and linguistically stratified but relate to activities where participants have more or less equal status or valued skills, such as the international professional sportswoman or man in the Netherlands (Kellerman et al., 2005). Second, they are not tied to a particular geographic area. Third, and arising from
the first two, language socialization in these contexts is a matter of choice dependent on
the particular activity (Day & Wagner, 2007). Choices relate to choice of linguistic code
both for the whole activity and in code-switching within it (Mondada, 2004; Poncini,
2003; Rasmussen & Wagner, 2002) to create a “new bilingual interactional order” (Day
& Wagner, 2007; Mondada, 2004, p. 19). This order is not created in terms of difficulties
or deficiencies in communication but as a pragmatic response to the functional
requirements of the workplace event.

Studies of the use of English as a lingua franca in international domains
demonstrate a similar defocusing of the problematics of language differences. Firth
(1995, 1996, 2009) showed that interactants, in Ochs’ (2000) terms, rely on “over-
arching, possible universal, communicative and social practices” (p. 232), which
underplay cultural differences, play up orderliness across these differences and so
“facilitate socialization into multiple communities and transnational life worlds” (Ochs,
2002, p. 232). Similarly, other lingua franca studies have shown how the pragmatic
norms of the speakers’ first language give way to new more informal norms (Rasmussen,
1998; Wagner, 1995; Li, 2000), suggestive of a new “lingua franca interaction” (Day &
Wagner, 2007, p. 398). A multilingual workplace as a community of practice can
provide a media for the immigrant workers to create a particular form to facilitate the
interactions across different languages in order to accomplish the tasks assigned to them.
E. Communities of Practice, New Literacy Studies, and Anthropological Accounts of Language Education Outside Schools

Barton and Tusting (2005) use a critical social linguistics approach to argue that language plays a central role in the articulation of community of practice activities. In the context of the workplace, language is a principal means by which people “share information, solve problems together, control and direct people, negotiate their positions with powerful supervisors, and reshape workplace practices in their own interests within communities of practice” (Barton and Tusting 2005, p. 41). A community of practice is defined as “a set of relations among “persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 98). This perspective on human interactions values the locally-specific and “relational character of knowledge, and learning, the negotiated character of meaning, and the concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of learning activity for the people involved...there is no activity that is not situated” (1991, p. 33). Lave sees learning as a process built and generated collectively through participation in communities of practice. Influenced by a Marxist historical approach, Lave explores the complex, shifting, and diverse relationships created within the concrete, material world while also attending to issues of access to resources, and unequal power relations. Lave describes these differences in community membership as “legitimate peripheral participation,” a descriptor of “engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral
constituent” (1991, p. 35).

Learning from Lave, not all workers participate in the same ways or from the same “peripheral positions” – nor is there one single “core” of mastery or participation. For example, newcomers to Brighton housekeeping communities of practice may be more peripheral participants than experienced staff as they figure out how to carry out various work responsibilities and the rules of the workplace. Underlying conflicts are likely to emerge as participants work out these differences in position, through the “renewed construction of resolutions” (1991, p. 35). Yet conflicts that arise from peripheral participation are also opportunities for arriving at new knowledge and forms of engagement. Lave and Wenger argue:

the partial participation of newcomers is by no means ‘disconnected’ from the practice of interest. Furthermore, it is also a dynamic concept. In this sense, peripherality, when it is enabled, suggests an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement (1991, p. 37).

Thus, legitimate peripheral participation helps us see how individuals gain access to sources of understanding, and the ways social order is constructed and negotiated in locally observable actions. In Brighton housekeeping department, for example, immigrants arrive at new kinds of knowledge while developing changing forms membership in communities of practice. As workers master housekeeping tasks or being able to communicate in English or another language spoken at the workplace, they
become more involved in overlapping communities of practice (superiors, veteran housekeepers, guests, hoteliers, etc.) that center and rely on their successful labor participation.

Lave’s (2011, 1991) study of apprenticeship in Liberia demonstrates how legitimate peripheral participation occurs among Vai and Gola tailors. Lave showed how apprentices became masterful tailors as they engaged in common, structured pattern of learning experiences without being taught, examined, or reduced to mechanical copiers of every day tailoring tasks. Her analysis of learning through apprenticeship highlights the situated nature of learning and the complex, interrelated, and differentiated ways individuals becoming full cultural-historical participant in the world. Individuals experience growing involvement in communities of practice particularly through increased communication with other community of practice participants. However, accounts of how participants actually communicate are often absent from community of practice studies.

Analysis of language in a CoP can enable a deeper understanding of how different forms of language use emerge in socially situated contexts where novices and experts learn how to act and adapt in culturally appropriate ways in the workplace. Language analysis can also provide insight on how workers manage the “structural constraints” and “limitations imposed on them by social structures” (Bucholtz 1999, p. 209) to make purposeful choices and improve their work conditions and overall standards of living.
Several scholars have argued for a more situated approach to the study of language interaction, literacy, and language education. The ways individuals are exposed to different language practices that vary across social contexts has been referred to as language socialization. Language socialization is meant as the process by which novices acquire the “knowledge, orientations, and practices that enable him or her to participate effectively in the social life of a particular community” (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002, p. 339). Language is the primary medium through which cultural knowledge is “communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed.” Language does not happen separately from real-life social interaction; it is a form of social practice. The field of New Literacy Studies (Baynham et. al 2008) encompasses a group of scholars who research literacy from the perspective that literacy is not only embedded in the flow of everyday activities, but is “configured by the institutional life of organizations that shape such activities, the ideologies and social relations that frame them” (Hamilton 2006, p. 6).

New Literacy Scholars have developed a range of approaches to the study of literacy over the past thirty years. According to Baynham (2004), their theories have been informed by “situated and informal learning,” and posit a “variety of relationships between the everyday and ‘schooled’ learning” (Hamilton 2006, p. 4). The main problem New Literacy Scholars have set out to address is how informal learning is embedded in everyday practices that incorporate different language and communicative resources.
Several studies have demonstrated how workers make use of language resources to solve problems together and negotiate their social positions at work. Orr’s (1996) ethnography of field service technicians describes how workers use language to accomplish tasks such as repairing photocopiers. He argues that talk at the workplace is instrumental in the success of workers. Kleifgen (2013, 2001) uses conversation analysis to examine social positioning between Vietnamese workers in a circuit board manufacturing plant. Her analysis of talk illustrates how interlocutors attempt to achieve “symmetrical positioning in high pressure moments of problem solving” through the use or omission of Vietnamese directives and vocatives. Herrick (2005) explores a Chicago plastics manufacturing company, where English, Spanish and Romanian is spoken. Herrick contends that workers use a variety of strategies to achieve mutual understanding across linguistic barriers. To communicate with workers who may not understand their language, the production planning team practices words together through repetition, hand and facial expressions, and available props. When a communicative rupture is perceived, Herrick demonstrates how team members intervene to enable communicative goals to be reached (2005, p. 370).

Blommaert (2010) discusses the multilingual repertoires that have emerged in “globalized neighborhoods” where diverse immigrants interact in diverse urban establishments. He argues that some of these repertoires may appear “fragmented” or “truncated” (2010, p. 12) because they combine “highly specific ‘bits’” (ibid) of language
and literacy varieties that may not be easily transferred to contexts beyond the workplace. These repertoires are often considered inferior, invalid codes because they deviate from idealized standards of language use. However, Blommaert suggests that these multilingual repertoires or language resources do achieve local validity, and researchers should focus on how speakers acquire these language competencies. Incorporating Hymes (1974, 1996) “ethnography of speaking” approach into a “sociolinguistics of globalization,” Blommaert connects global migration patterns to local situations in which migrants are confronted with communicative requirements that “stretch their repertoires and complex patterns of shifting and mixing occur” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 12). Language competencies are “co-occurring” (ibid) and develop through collaboration. In Brighton, immigrant housekeepers from different language backgrounds cooperate in the linguistic work required to feel understood and respected.

Exploring adult literacy journey, Tomas Kalmar’s *Illegal Alphabets and Adult Biliteracy: Latino Migrants Crossing the Linguistic Border* (2001) presents an important and innovative contribution to the field of New Literacy Studies. Kalmar demonstrates how adult Mexican immigrant farm workers in Cobden, Illinois teach each other how to speak English, using their knowledge of Spanish. His work focuses on how these Latinos created their own ways of developing linguistic competence using the resources at their disposal. Kalmar’s analysis of this language education involves three components, the game, discourse, and scene of writing. Immigrants play a “game” in which they match
Spanish sounds to English words. They play with the Roman alphabet to establish consistent relationships between sound and letters, which allows them to pronounce English words more easily.

Discourse is a way of talking about the game, and what counts as a valid move or the best possible move. Mexican immigrants collaborate to decide on what game strategies are the most effective for making sense of English. Kalmar discusses the “scene of writing” (2001, p. 61) developed by workers as they engage in the language game and discourse. This scene includes the production and dissemination of Cobden glossaries, lists of English words that are written using Spanish sounds. These glossaries represent an ‘institutional no man’s land between two legal systems, two economies, two sovereign states, two languages, and between two institutionalized forms of alphabetic literacy’ (2001, p. 2). He gives examples like “dolodasnt protect as” (the law doesn’t protect us) or “juellulib” (where do you live) to show the ways workers put together sounds and played with alphabet to communicate and participate in activities with local “Anglos” (2001, p. 20). This act of organizing to create a new alphabet and way of communicating is integrally connected to their participation as immigrant laborers in a foreign language environment of Cobden, Illinois. Kalmar illustrates that literacy is not just a mental possession of individuals; it is a social relationship among people. Gee (2001) argues that literacy is “primarily and fundamentally out in the social, historical, and political world” (Kalmar 2001, p. iv).
Kalmar shows field workers “doing linguistics as part and parcel of their very survival, their politics, and their transformation of society, and the historical workings of the field of professional linguistics constructing and construing languages and cultures, language variation and language universals on the other hand” (2001, p. v). Language and culture are not “stable” “objective” phenomena, but always temporal, emergent, and disputed. Kalmar’s farm workers can be seen as a CoP in Illinois, who used education to adapt to challenging environments and transform their social positions. Such is also the case in Grey Gundaker’s essay “Hidden Education among African Americans during Slavery” (2007) which discusses how slaves in the United States were able to learn English, despite being denied the right to read, write, and engage in other forms of expression. Gundaker explains that while plantation slavery was a total institution with “massive hegemonic structures operating at all levels,” (2007, p. 1592) enslavers took an “out of sight out of mind” (2007, p. 1593) approach toward activities of the enslaved. In some places where absentee plantation ownership was practiced, a certain degree of literacy was regarded as advantageous for key enslaved personnel to keep accounts, order supplies, and communicate by letter with the property owner.

Planters also ‘educated’ the enslaved with an edited selection of bible passages garnered to support capture and involuntary servitude. Yet these ideas were often rejected by those who had knowledge of the scripture. The “hiddenness” of African American education from whites was not absolute. Gundaker describes how much of the care of
white children was left to black caretakers who would carefully gather snippets of schooled knowledge. Gundaker shows how “education proliferated underneath and with the stuff of everyday life;” (2007, p. 1594) the enslaved and the “free blacks in the north and south constituted a CoP dedicated not merely to exploiting loopholes, but more importantly to furthering transformation personally, locally, and on a massive social scale” (ibid). According to Gundaker, “educational activities during slavery were thus more diverse, flexible, and contingent than what the rubric ‘schooling’ could ever encompass, even more so because regimes of slavery varied across the diaspora and within north America” (2007, p. 1594).

Gundaker explores invisible or seemingly extraneous aspects of schooling and efforts to orchestrate school-like activities, hidden and not so hidden literacy acquisition, and expressive practices with educational dimensions for participants that remained largely invisible to outsiders. African Americans made education fit their circumstances. School children would sometimes barter bits of schooled education for apples, oranges, or marbles. When playing at school, white children usually assumed the role of the teacher, passing along basic skills. From that point on African American learners proceeded rapidly on their own. The enslaved have contributed a complex theory of education and left a legacy of valuable educative skills that schools today often undervalue; such as knowing how to say more than one thing at a time; scanning for opportunity, grasping material and participatory complexity, recruiting networks and
distributing information, and sorting truth from lies. (Gundaker 2007, p. 1609). Humans in difficult positions often establish alternative avenues for educating themselves and each other about the knowledge they need to survive and succeed.

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) Jacques Rancière describes how Jacotot, a French teacher, assigned his students the task of learning the French text contained in *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1765), a French novel by Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, with the help of a Flemish translation of the same book. Even though Jacotot had not explained anything about French spelling or grammar, his students were still able to read the text and produce French “sentences whose spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book” (Rancière 1991, pp. 3-4). His students figured out how to read, write, and speak French without the “aid of explication” (1991, p. 9) from a master explicator. Similarly, in Brighton housekeeping, some immigrant workers learn languages together without formally appointed language teachers to provide lessons in grammar or spelling. For example, a housekeeper learned to read English and Spanish by “observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done” (1991, p. 10). In chapter 6 and 7, I describe an example of how this process takes place in the housekeeping department at Brighton. Suresh, an immigrant worker who barely finished second grade of elementary school in his native country, Nepal, develops his own “color coding strategy” to deal with
difficulties involved in organizing laundry items and communicating with a Spanish coworker and an American worker at his workplace. Although an immigrant worker like Suresh who came to the U.S. without an ability to write in Roman alphabet might be described as an unskilled worker who lacks basic language competencies, the vignette presented in chapter 7 illustrates how individuals develop alternative solutions to accomplish their goals and gain respect, status, and new forms of knowledge along the way.

Summary

In this chapter I present an overview and critique of scholarly literature related to the main issues addressed in this study. That review of the literature addresses topics such as some ethnographic perspectives in studies of immigrant workers in the U.S. workplace, language socialization perspectives, the workplace as a CoP, and the language-related challenges of immigrant workers in a multilingual workplace.

The next chapter (chapter 3) explains the design of study. In this chapter I explain what methods are applied, why the selected research site was useful for this study, how the data collection and analysis are administered, how I situate myself within the research site, what relationships I have with the research site, how I see my role as a researcher and participant, and how who I am and my assumptions shape my research in this site.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter explains the design of the research study. In this chapter I discuss the rationale for using an interpretive conceptual framework, why the selected research site was useful for this study, and how the data collection and analysis are administered. More importantly, I explain how I situate myself within the research site, how my relationship with the research site looks like, how I see my role as a researcher and participant, and how ‘who I am’ and my assumptions shape my research in this site. Finally, I also offer some ethical considerations and the study’s limitations.

A. Situating Immigrant Workers’ Language Use and Learning within an Interpretive Framework

An interpretive framework was useful for conducting this research study because “for interpretivists, it is axiomatic that we need to see social action from the actors’ point of view to understand what is happening” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 31). The philosophical principle that undergirds this research study is what Wilhelm Dilthey called Verstehen or the effort of understanding an action from the actor’s point of view. I centralized the notion of “seeking to understand” as I attempted to broaden and deepen my understanding of the language use and learning of the immigrant workers within a workplace setting.

Social scientists have advocated the need to conduct qualitative research studies, in general, due to their emphasis on localized, situated meaning making among social
actors and between social actors and researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993). As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained, qualitative research “locates the observer in the world . . . It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world and involves researchers making sense of phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them” (p. 3).

This research project aimed to make sense of the meanings that workers co-constructed with others through their everyday interactions. This study embraced an interpretive framework because, according to Hecht, Ribeau, and Sedano (1990), interpretive research methods have “a unique ability to capture the actor’s point of view and allow the cultural perspective to emerge from the participant’s own words” (p. 35). Hence, this research paradigm was useful for examining the workplace lived experiences of immigrant workers.

Concerning relationships between interpretive research and studies of immigrant workers from diverse race and ethnicity, Orbe (2000) explained that there is “a clear need to extend beyond social scientific research methodologies. In order to advance current conceptualizations of racial–ethnic minority groups in intercultural scholarship, research must begin to focus on the ‘experiential’ as much as the ‘experimental’” (p. 604). The present study represents an effort to answer such calls to action for more experiential research about language use and learning, by investigating the nature of communication experience in the workplace, the relationship between workplace order and
communication experience, and the workers’ development of communicative ability.

1. Qualitative Research for Studying Language Use and Learning in a Multilingual Site

This study employed qualitative methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer the research questions posed. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), qualitative researchers’ primary goal is to “seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (p. 18). Qualitative research has no specific defining method but, instead, uses a variety of methods. For instance, whereas naturalistic inquiry almost always relies on researchers’ immersion in the world of the social actors’ being studied, and ethnographers almost always use participant observation as a methodological strategy, qualitative research is a broad umbrella term that can employ various strategies, such as participant observation, interviewing, and document and artifact analysis.

This study employed participant observation as a primary methodological strategy to examine the workers’ workplace communication. An interpretive framework was suitable for this project because this framework’s philosophical tenets advanced that social actors’ realities are constantly created, sustained, and modified through their interactions as they create and exchange, and make sense of, localized meanings and communicative performances (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The strength of this paradigm is that it functions inductively to produce knowledge; as Lindlof
and Taylor (2002) explained, in this paradigm, “theory should be developed inductively through the iterative testing of tentative explanations against the experience of ongoing interaction with group members” (p. 11). The implications of such a conceptual stance are that the knower can seek to understand social actors’ communicative practices and meanings through a deep textual reading of their symbolic performances, as they simultaneously participate in meaning co-construction throughout the research process. Such a research approach implies that the researcher does not have to be a passive observer, as required in some positivistic paradigms, but an active participant in social actors’ situated, localized, and emergent realities.

As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explained, “True knowledge is gained through prolonged immersion and extensive dialogue practiced (by researchers) in actual social settings,” and “intimate familiarity with the performance and significance of social practices . . . is a requirement for [their] adequate explanation” (p. 11). Therefore, within an interpretive paradigm, “the researcher is the instrument” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 11). Because I wanted to be an active participant in the participants’ lived experiences, using qualitative methods provided the opportunity to proactively and symbolically engage the people studied in their world. In other words, I actively sought to understand workers’ perspective. This research goal robustly aligned with Dilthey’s notion of Verstehen.

Several additional characteristics of the interpretive paradigm further highlight its
usefulness for the present study. First, the position, background, and researchers’ choices tend to inform interpretations, such that researchers’ values are unavoidably instilled in the research. Second, researchers’ knowledge of their position and values allows for an understanding of issues that lead to certain choices being made and to achieve intersubjective understanding with those they study. This strategy allows for reliable findings and constructive interpretations of research claims (Goodall, 2000; Van Maanen, 1988). Third, researchers’ reflexivity is important during the research process and when reporting findings. By reflecting on the choices, positions, and values that are at play during data collection and analysis, researchers can offer specific and useful accounts of actual relationships between them and the persons they study (B. C. Taylor & Trujillo, 2001).

B. Methods for this Study

Specifically, this study adopts the interactional sociolinguistic methodological orientation to explore the participatory practices within a particular community (Castanheira et al., 2001) and how these practices were contextually defined and accomplished among members through discourse processes (Kelly & Crawford, 1997). According to Kelly & Crawford, historically, interactional sociolinguistic has its roots in ethnography of communication, and analysts using this approach typically focus on linguistic and cultural diversity in communication, and how this impacts on the relationships between different groups in society. Interactional sociolinguistic also
represent an approach to discourse analysis which attempts to bridge the gap between
top-down theoretical approaches which privilege macro societal conditions in accounting
for communicative practices, and those, such as conversational analysis which provide a
bottom-up social constructivist account (Gumperz, 1999). In another word, interactional
sociolinguistic draws heavily on conversational analysis techniques in its micro-analytic
approach, but unlike conversational analysis, an interactional sociolinguistic analysis
explicitly recognizes the wider sociocultural context impacting on interactions (Holmes,
2009). Interactional sociolinguistic taps into those ‘goal-oriented interpretive processes’
through what Gumperz calls ‘contextualization cues’. These are “constellations of surface
features of message form by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the
activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to
what precedes or follows” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 131).

Schiffrin (1996) suggests that non-verbal behaviors also provide very important
contextualization cues, even though she underlined that obviously these are not available
for analysis in the case of audiotaped data used in this study. Roberts et al. (1992)
argued that interactional sociolinguistic provides a useful tool for the critical analysis of
discourse in certain typical ‘strategic’ research sites. These are situations of ‘public
negotiation’ such as interviews, meetings, and encounters at work, which are
characterized by status and power differentials between the participants. There is often
tension between different (and sometimes conflicting) goals, which is played out through
the discourse processes we can observe. Information about the sociocultural context can throw further light on why certain linguistic features are chosen and how these are interpreted by participants in such contexts.

Duff (1988) notified us regarding the scarcity of research on immigrant language socialization conducted by researchers who are also immersed and apprenticed within the CoP, except for Mullany (2007) who conducted participant observations in two U.K.-based companies for six months. In this study, I have striven for an emic perspective with me as a participant observer. I have spent more than a year working with the participants and this has granted me membership in the housekeeping department as the major CoP and some other groups within the workplace where I am also affiliated with in some degrees of participation.

An interactional ethnographic method is chosen because, as Mullany critically argued, it is crucial to conduct a research with and for rather than on participants, to ensure that participants’ concerns and agendas are considered in the research design, and that the findings are of relevance for those who take part in the study, are declared as the key principles of the research (2007). Heller (2008) also suggested that ethnographic work can allow the researcher to “see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people’s lives,” over time (p. 250). The ethnographic process of fieldwork allows one to engage with the complexity of social interaction not by examining the preconceived notions and selected phenomena, but by reflexively and
comprehensively recounting and analyzing natural interaction in a given context (Blommaert, 2007). With these views in mind, the ethnographer may begin the data collection with particular interests, but it is the research context that guides inquiry and therefore through fieldwork a recursive cycle of data collection and analysis is initiated.

1. Methods: My Experience as a Worker and a Researcher in the Field

This study is conducted qualitatively by adopting an ethnographic orientation through participant observations, interviews, and consultation of personal and public documents. Before starting the data collection process for this study, I have immersed in the site and affiliated with most of the housekeepers for over a year. Even though my affiliation with most of the housekeepers have granted me memberships in various groups within the housekeeping departments, it was not easy to gain trust from some of the workers. During the participants’ recruitment, I had constant questions on whether it would be ‘safe’ to be involved in my study. A couple of workers also suspected that I was an undercover police officer, an investigator from the department of labor, or an immigration officer. Since some of the Spanish-speaking workers were not able to read nor write, I had to read to them regarding the details of my study, how to participate in it, and how the consent document worked, with the help of Spanish bilingual workers. Jack and Angelica, the first two participants that I recruited volunteered to help me translate for their coworkers. To recruit the participants, I simply talked to them individually during break time. I was able to gather more than 65 participants that consisted of
housekeepers and executive housekeepers for the observation process.

My initial plan to observe them during their daily working activities was hard to carry out. Observing housekeepers involves a tactful and careful approach to avoid interfering with work flow or putting workers at risk of being reprimanded or losing their jobs. I knew immigrant workers had experienced many difficulties and risks to find work anywhere in the U.S., and I did not want to jeopardize anyone’s position or right to work. Although these establishments may seem chaotic from the outside, there is a systematic order of activities in each housekeeping positions that is necessary for it to function successfully. If my presence created too many disruptions, I knew workers would be much less willing to talk to me. While doing fieldwork with undocumented workers, I learned it was important to avoid several key things. I avoided asking about personal information on the first encounter, and made sure not to draw workers (or mine) away from the work responsibilities for more than a few minutes at a time. I could follow them around but not separate them from their tasks. I had to be extremely flexible with workers’ schedules and the immediate demands of their employment. I allowed workers to define suitable times for extended interaction, usually during work breaks, lunch breaks, after work, on the way home, or on their day off during the week.

During fieldwork I noted that the majority of the housekeepers were women, showing the female domination in the U.S. entry level labor markets (Katz, 2000). I learned that some of the housekeepers were related as families. Jack, one of the
housemen, for example had worked with his sister for more than five years as housekeepers. Some other workers had cousins and even a parent who worked with them in the same workplace. I learned that the workplace was often time hostile due to the physically demanding tasks that the housekeepers have to handle. The place also taught me that some of the workers were not always willing to help each other out or be sympathetic of other’s problems. Sometimes workers could be very anxious about sharing their concerns and experiences with others, particularly about personal matters. Even though I have previously shared the details of the research with the management, some housekeepers admitted that they were often interrogated by supervisors about whether or not I disrupted their works, and whether I asked sensitive questions about the company and the other staff members. Some workers were restless during the fieldwork and they were afraid that the manager might potentially fire them for being ‘snitches’. For these reasons, I learned that it was much easier to have extended questions and interviews outside of the workplace, without the looming possibility of being discovered by hostile supervisors. The fear of being ‘caught’ accompanied me throughout my fieldwork. In this way, I gained insight into what life as an undocumented immigrant worker must feel like, constantly dealing with the threat of being fired or even deported for talking about personal information or exploitative work conditions.

From the participants I learned that it was their first experience of being involved in a research, and therefore they were completely unfamiliar with being questioned about
their personal and professional experiences at the workplace. This prepared me to be more alert about my position and the way I presented myself to the workers. I established rapport with Hispanic workers first, considering that as the majority at the housekeeping department, they have a significant existence and a strong reliance with one another within their group. For example, when I approached, an El Salvadorian worker, Angelica, to participate in my study, her Hispanic friends deliberately came to me to ask for clarification and to find out if I would also recruit them, which I did. This method of accessing Hispanic workers first was useful, because from them I learned about the other workers and the superiors (i.e., employers and managers) from their point of view, much like newcomers (e.g., new housekeepers) would get advice about the workplace from more experienced Latino and Latina workers.

As a participant observer, I worked with the housekeepers as a lobby attendant with specifically limited work area, usually at some public areas at the hotel. The first week I began exploring the workplace to recruit more participants, I went to the floors where the room cleaners and the housemen were located. Since I needed to consent the entire housekeepers for the observation, I approached a group of housemen where I met with Jack, a friendly and talkative Peruvian who helped me earn the trust of his coworkers. Jack was very responsive of my needs and offered to meet with me outside the workplace, introduced me to his sister and his Latino coworkers who agreed to participate in my study. Jack also assisted me by translating my academic jargon into
Spanish, which made it easier for workers to understand me and my questions. He also translated their terms for me, whenever I had trouble understanding their “work language” or “insider” code for people, objects, and activities at work. Sometimes as a group we had informal group conversations and talked extensively about being immigrant workers, life in the U.S., and much more. I eagerly learned about Jack’s work and personal life, and listened to his numerous insights about the social problems that were important to him and the other workers.

Jack gave me many tours of the hotel and the overlapped groups in the workplace and its members from his point of view. He helped me develop and fine-tune the interview questions I posed to workers, and suggested topics and methods for investigating different problems we encountered in the field. Jack helped me analyze my field notes and audio recordings of interviews and conversations. I shared my notes with him and he provided extensive feedback based on his own perspectives and observations. I also asked Jack to analyze and write about his own workplace environment, and the hotel in general based on his view as an employee. He shared these candid observations with me throughout the course of my fieldwork, and my knowledge about the hotel and immigrant workers was enriched and expanded through every conversation we shared. He also introduced me to the non-Spanish speaking coworkers, which made fascinated on how he gained multiple group memberships in the workplace.

Through Jack, I learned about the various activities that the workers do together. For
example, he explained how the housekeepers from different language backgrounds coordinate and communicate to accomplish everyday tasks. He identified workers who were exceptional in certain tasks, like his coworker Suresh who invented an idea to organize laundry from the entire hotel by using color coded strategy, or Esperanza and Angelica who created Spanish translations for most of the labels for the housekeeping items. Most importantly, Jack and some other housekeepers helped me translate some simple Spanish expressions I had during the interview with the Spanish speaking housekeepers. In return, I helped them practice their English by being their conversation partner, which we did it for ten to thirty minutes during the lunch break and end of the shift.

Before conducting data collection activities, I have already been exposed to learning Spanish by memorizing some words and expressions and trying to greet Spanish-speaking housekeepers in Spanish. Particularly during the field-notes activities, I had chances to use more simple Spanish as I observed and interacted with the workers. I used mostly my smart-phone to make entries through the Notes application. Sometimes I also took pictures to help me visualize the dialogues that we had during the observation. As soon as I got home, I transferred the notes to spreadsheet. During the observation I asked questions whenever possible, and made note of their responses. I paid careful attention to how workers reacted to my presence as a coworker and a researcher. I became increasingly attuned to how workers talked to each other and how workers in
different roles worked together to accomplish responsibilities. I made small talk with workers in the hallways and made sure they feel comfortable with me following and observing them when they were working. I started to learn a lot of more words and expressions, including slang words in Spanish. Every time I met Spanish-speaking housekeepers, I tried to greet them in Spanish and imitated Spanish pronunciation as closely as possible.

I began to see the workplace as a location of many different activities going on simultaneously, not unrelated from each other, but each requiring its own grouping of workers and the interaction of their communication abilities and skills. For instance, during my observation on the top floor, four housekeepers worked together to refresh the executive lounge. The American pushed the cart to collect the trash, the El Salvadorian helped changing the trash bags and swept the floor and had a Haitian mopped the floor right behind her. The Mexican wiped and cleaned the food and beverage counter and furniture, collected the trash, put it in bags, and gave it to the Haitian houseman who would dump it in the dumpsters in the basement. The El Salvadorian cleaned and tidied up the restroom and replenished bathroom necessities. When the hotel is fully occupied, several housekeepers worked together, waiting for the guests to leave the lounge, cleaning and replenishing bathroom and pantry, and dividing tips. While huddled around at the elevator landing, they (in Spanish and English) remarked on the quantity of tips or made jokes and gossips about the guests quietly.
I focused on how workers such as these coordinated around particular tasks that were connected to other tasks and groups of workers. Over time, sequences of events and coordinated activities became more and more apparent to me. Sometimes the coordinated activities would last just a few minutes or seconds, as in the case of a houseman helping a room cleaner collecting trash from a room. Other times, coordinated activities seemed to last for hours on end. For example, during the turndown task, on the floors, a runner, a turndown attendant, and a houseman, coordinated the tasks, depending on the hotel occupancy.

During the peak season when the hotel is fully occupied, a turndown service task might last for four or five hours. First, the three housekeepers organized ‘baskets’ containing towels, toiletries, and bathroom items into carts. The turndown attendant and the houseman, both prepared the turndown task by loading room necessities and cleaning equipment into the trolley, while the runner pushed the cart full of baskets to the floors and placed the basket one by one in front of rooms marked with the DND (Do Not Disturb) signs. Both turndown attendant and the houseman went to the floors, pushing the trolley and refreshed the rooms based on the list assigned by the supervisor. Refreshing the rooms usually included preparing the clean rooms for the guests to sleep in the night and checking for room necessities. They skipped all rooms with DND signs for rooms that did not need service. Through the radio, the runner notified which guests had taken the DND signs, which means that those rooms required service. The service
usually consisted of room cleaning and restocking. During the room cleaning service activities, the turndown attendant and the houseman worked together. Sometimes the three housekeepers met with each other and they walked together to finish the remaining tasks. They also sometimes took small breaks in the hallways or elevator landings where they joked around or watched videos from their smartphones. This method of following coordinated activities allowed me to understand how workers go about getting work done together. I observed gestures and non-verbal communication exchanged during these coordinated activities, such as Latinos and Haitian play-fighting, poking, chasing each other, pointing and gesticulating, or maintaining distance while occupied with separate tasks, for example.

Workplace activities and language interactions are linked in many important ways. The demands of the workplace require teamwork and cooperation, delegation and a degree of orderliness. Workers from different language backgrounds develop different relationships with each other, the materials in their surroundings, and the activities undertaken in their environments, depending on the work context. Language is critical for getting work done, and all kinds of work create different problems, including working with foreign languages in the immediate environment. Communication arises from the peculiarities of the activities routinely undertaken in these types of businesses. For example, housekeepers who clean rooms all day have an extensive vocabulary related to room services which they can use when communicating with guests, while runners
usually memorized room necessities as they need to bring those items to the guests based on the requests, while chute attendants, even though seems to always work in silence, they have to identify laundry items from the entire hotel and make sure each item goes to the right places in a timely manner.

To understand how housekeepers work together to tackle everyday demands, I focused on the communication involved in these coordinated activities. This approach to the study of social interaction is rooted in the ethnomethodological tradition, which analyzes:

the methods people use for producing recognizable social orders. Ethno refers to members of a social situation or cultural group and ‘method’ refers to the things members continually do using those methods to create and recreate various recognizable social actions and social practices. (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2011, pp. 90-91).

From this perspective, there are particular rules and orders of communication that may not be immediately apparent to outsiders or linguistic newcomers, but which must be learned in order to partake in meaningful interaction with others. At Brighton, the housekeepers engage in cooperative sense-making with more experienced coworkers to successfully participate in the production of local social orders of interaction. I focused on “the things (words, turns, gestures) people use to make meaning” which can have “many possible meanings and take on a particular meaning only as participants build an
order of practice together using them” (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2011, p. 91). I noted things workers used in Brighton to make meaning and create order, including words, cleaning objects, gestures, smartphone applications or translation devices, a coworker’s expertise, and many others.

Ethnomethodology focuses on the production of social order “that does not depend on shared beliefs” (2011, p. 91, ibid). This approach to communication at work primarily focuses on the instructional and educational aspects of collectively constructed mutual intelligibility, more so than individual subjectivity or shared beliefs. Therefore, since it is impossible to “get inside the heads” of interlocutors during conversation and interaction, I did not analyze the motivations behind speakers’ actions. I did pay attention to my own intentions, feelings, and challenges as a participant in unfamiliar language environments. This permitted me to better understand some of the challenges other speakers unfamiliar with any languages used or housekeeping terms have encountered. Ethnomethodology involves:

a multifaceted focus on the local social orders that are enacted in various situations. The individual persons who inhabit these situations are, as individuals, uninteresting, except in so far as personal characteristics, such as blindness, reveal something about the competencies required to achieve the “recognizable production of the local order that is the object of study (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2011, p. 91)
Over time, immigrant workers in Brighton develop increasing awareness of the “recognizable boundaries of the game” (2011, p. 91) - the methods necessary to communicate and work together according to local, context-specific expectations. Workers who partake in this linguistic “game” contribute their own unique linguistic resources as they co-produce these social orders with other participants. Sometimes, communication breaks down between different language speakers as they try to negotiate “conflicting rules for making sense and conflicting contexts of accountability” (2011, p. 91). Communicating competently requires more than knowledge of grammar and vocabulary- it also demands sensitivity to the broader linguistic norms that are enacted by speakers (honorifics and status markers, rules about when speech is appropriate or when silence is preferred, the correct order for properly arranging items in the guest’s room, etc.).

While interacting with workers, I studied how they managed the ambiguity that results from managing multiple language codes, linguistic norms, and expectations. Managing ambiguity in coordinated ways creates “endogenously produced intelligibility” (2011, p. 93) or locally valid sense-making and communicative competencies. The conditions for constructing intelligibility are located in the concrete, everyday details of peoples’ immediate social environments. Ordinary social events are produced from patterned details that are recognizable to a particular group. Garfinkel’s ethnomethodological approach (Rawls, 2008; Garfinkel, 1968) is particularly helpful in
understanding the nuanced details of multilingual, multimodal conversations among
speakers of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds. The communicative problems and
opportunities that arise when populations of speakers with no shared native language
come into sustained contact deserve close inspection because they can inform us on the
ways everyday people—particularly immigrant workers who are frequently stigmatized as
linguistically deficient—solve problems on their own terms, using their own methods.
Mutual intelligibility does not mean that workers actually understand each other’s'
intended meanings. There is often a great deal of “productive ignorance” that arises when
those workers figure out how to work together efficiently, even if they don’t “really
understand” each other. According to Varenne and McDermott:

such externalizations of apparently inappropriate performances are a problem for
any analyst convinced that the units of analysis of human interaction must be
derived from an observation of the behavior and not through a deductive process

Varenne quotes McDermott and Dore’s (1982) approach to the observation of these
performances and interactions:

the analyst must first discover (a) the units of behavior to which the participants
are oriented; (b) the particular contexts, frames, or constraints which are most
immediately in effect; and (c) the ways in which the most immediate contexts are
embedded in more inclusive social and institutional contexts (also available in the
behavior of the participants) (1998, p. 6)

The outcome may not indicate “learning” according to externally defined standards about what counts as learning (i.e. proficient language and literacy skills). Regardless if the student falls short of these previously established expectations about ideal learning trajectories, he has arrived at a new place and position in a dynamic field of relations, having used his own methods along with the knowledge, resources, and skills of fellow participants and the local environment. The education of the student often depends on how he attempts to learn and how others acknowledge his attempts to learn—the methods for figuring out what to do next.

As Varela and McDermott note, “each step is a complex setting where human beings work together and, eventually achieve something, a ‘thing’ that is recognized as having happened and stands as the fact on which further history can be made” (1998, p. 6). These perceived “attempts”, moves, and shifts in the production of local orders simultaneously establish the “trust” necessary to sustain these orders. According to Garfinkel, “all mutually intelligible ordinary actions have an observable structure” (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2011, p. 93). I chose to study the patterned orderliness that emerged from workplace interactions, rather than looking to participants’ individual learning trajectories. These basic principles are elaborated by Hymes (1962) in his “ethnography of speaking” approach, which provides a useful analytical framework for understanding multilingual, multimodal interactions in the workplace:
The speech of a group constitutes a system, speech and language vary cross-culturally in function, the speech activity of a community is the primary object of attention (Hymes, 1962, p. 42).

Like Garfinkel, Hymes argues that even ordinary conversation contains different kinds of orderliness, which is a vast portion of verbal behavior in fact consists of recurrent patterns, of linguistic routines (1962). Description has tended to be limited to those with a manifest structure, and has not often probed for those with an implicit pattern. Analysis of routines includes “identification of idiomatic units, not only greeting formulas and the like, but the full range of utterances which acquire conventional significance, for an individual, group, or whole culture” (Blount 1974, p. 213). Hymes’s concept of utterances acquiring conventional significance can be linked to Garfinkel’s notion of mutual intelligibility, in that local interactions are achieved through multifaceted, continuous routines. Hymes recommends a focus on “linguistic routines” in particular, which are a “recurrent sequence of verbal behavior, whether conventional or idiosyncratic” (Hymes 1962, p. 43). Since “any stretch of speech is an imperfect indication of the knowledge that underlies it” (1962, p. 43) the job of the anthropologist is to account for the details of communication involved in the “artful accomplishment of a social act, which represents the patterned, spontaneous evidence of problem solving and conceptual thought” (Hymes 1986, p. 55).

Therefore, studying multilingual contact languages from an ethnomethodological
standpoint involves focusing on the local nuances and specific details of interaction. This can be particularly complicated, for a few reasons. First, according to Gumperz (1971) conventions may exist within the local, multilingual speech group which are not necessarily shared (or are only partially shared) with other speech groups, or “speech communities” even those of similar populations (Duranti, 2009). Another problem is that each speaker in the multilingual work-speech community may have their own variety of “jargon” which is continuously changing in response to circumstances within and beyond the localized workplace environment. For example, a worker may decide to take an English class and practice his new English language skills with coworkers, or the managers/employers may decide to make announcements and signs bilingual or multilingual to accommodate the different languages spoken at work, encouraging the use of multiple sets of language resources.

I asked all the participants in my study to describe how they communicated with others at work and listened to them talk about each other and their own languages. I listened to workers as they provided me with metalinguistic analyses of their own language practices. Documenting workers’ metalinguistic analysis allowed me to understand the ways they interpreted their language environments, and the necessary rules for communicating with individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Metalinguistic analysis also revealed the ways workers felt accountable for speaking and behaving in certain ways—the boundaries of the game. I learned a great deal by listening to
workers talk to each other about a myriad of topics, including work, family and friends, food, party, technology, phones and other gadgets, among others. Listening was a very important method for understanding communication at the workplace. I listened to the patterns and rhythms of talk, the silence of workers, the intonation or tone of workers’ voices, the actual sounds and words they used together, the coordinated movements of bodies around the workplace. I sometimes sketched how they moved around while they interacted with others. I learned by listening to silence that silence itself does not indicate lack of understanding or communication among workers. Silence revealed workers’ coordination and efficiency, in being able to accomplish tasks without verbal explication or direction, even in the busiest of work hours.

One interesting aspect of doing fieldwork in a multilingual workplace like Brighton is that workers consistently claim not to know or “dominate” the local languages of their workplace, yet I see them all using language in many different ways. This is a basic problem in anthropological field work: what people say they do is not always what they actually do. To manage this problem, I took random samples of audio in each establishment (some are recorded by the participants), took observational notes of interactions, and asked some of the participants to analyze my descriptions of their language environments. I presented them with different “findings” and solicited their input as I tried to piece together the local rules of interaction which varied across work contexts.
A Nepali worker has said to me “the Mexicans only speak in their language,” a statement which is confusing for a couple of reasons. First, Hispanic people don’t always only speak in Spanish. Even a Mexican newcomer, for instance, know some English words (from movies, school, songs, interacting with others, etc.) which they may sporadically incorporate into their ‘repertoires’. Young Hispanic generations are also known for their frequent use of English loan words in Spanish, or a blend of Spanish and English: Spanglish. Many Latinos also have experience with English speakers, either through their work in the U.S. or time spent in America. That they choose to speak in Spanish is a different issue than not being able to speak different language varieties. Also, this raises the question of whose language is whose, given the frequent mixing of languages that is constantly occurring? Franz Boas (1920) pointed out long ago that one language cannot be tied to a single people/ethnicity/race/nationality. Populations have been migrating, mixing, and moving around throughout history. One Hispanic’s way of speaking cannot be said to be the way all Hispanic people speak, and same goes for immigrants from Africa, who bring their own ways of speaking (English) from their native countries.

Another challenge of studying the mix of different languages in a multilingual workplace context is that even in one small workplace setting, such as the housekeeping department, there can be multiple communities of practice oriented around different activities (cleaning rooms, preparing chemicals and cleaning tools, sorting and organizing
laundry, restocking room necessities, collecting garbage, cleaning restrooms, etc.). Each of these activities requires a different set of language tools, so the room cleaners who spend the whole day up on the floors may not understand the language used by the lobby attendants when they organize the gym and swimming pool. The Somalian housemen who stripped rooms cannot expect the Nepali chute attendant who worked in the basement to know the names of items used to refresh rooms, or how many bags of coffee and which coffee bags are needed for the presidential suites, and where to place them.

Another difficulty is that sometimes it may seem like no language exchange is happening among different language speakers because the Nepali, for example, can be silent for hours while Latinos are busy chatting, singing, yelling, and so on. Then, out of nowhere, a Latino will ask the Nepali to do something in Spanish, and the worker will oblige without skipping a beat. I also sometimes noticed that during the break, a Latina suddenly burst into laughter over jokes made by native English speakers at the break room. Thus, it is possible for workers who don’t speak much Spanish to actually understand enough Spanish to know what’s going on. Thus, it was very difficult to gauge just how much a worker knows in Spanish, or how much a Spanish knows in some other languages, when they don’t necessarily want or need to speak those languages to get along. Then, of course, my own language learning process felt slow and disjointed at times; other times, it felt like I could understand what was being said around me even though I couldn’t make out individual words.
I occasionally detected the presence of languages besides Spanish and English (and their various mixed arrangements), such as French, Arabic, and Pidgin English. Some housekeepers who do not have enough speaking partners from the same language, such as the Nepali, Cameroonian, Somalian, Uzbekistani, Hungarian, Polish, and Haitian also speak those languages in the workplace, especially on private phone talks with their families and friends. The fact that these languages are not frequently heard or seen in most of my field sites does not mean that they are unimportant to speakers. I chose to focus on the languages used “most” at the workplace, the particular language varieties that are more commonly expressed than others. These varieties do not comprise a “whole” or “complete” picture of all language resources available to workers.

It was difficult to navigate moments where Latinos and other language speakers were carrying on in spontaneous, rapid conversation in 3 or more language varieties. Sometimes it seemed I couldn’t even document what I had just heard because workers had already moved onto the next thing and were occupied with something else halfway to the floors by the time I had even had a chance to digest what had just happened. The fast paced and busy environment of many of these workplaces disguises a lot of the nuances of how language operates. As a worker and researcher, I was granted access into most of spaces where the housekeepers operate, mainly the public areas, floors, hallways, storage areas, restrooms, locker rooms, break rooms, dumpsters, loading dock areas, restaurant areas and administrative offices. Thus, I could almost do my fieldwork in spaces where I
also work with them. I complete my tasks as a worker, observe the workers, and participate with workers and their workplace materials and activities.

Some of the workers, for instance, Jose, has a habit of recording conversations with coworkers using his smartphone during break and work. He gave me some of the audio files as part of his personal documents and we analyzed them together, which helped me understand the content and context of the conversations. On some occasions, workers knew he was recording conversation, at other times he hid the phone in his pocket. The conversations were each just a few minutes long, but they gave me insight into (semi) naturally-occurring worker interactions. Jose’s method of recording audio was very useful because he identified the conversations and interactions that he thought would “showcase” interesting dimensions of communication at work, and assigning the research participant to be involved in collecting data for a research is empowering (Alim, 2009). The data that some participants voluntarily collected included mixtures of English, Spanish, and improvised words developed at work with fellow Latino and other language speakers. Although they are not representative of how communication takes place in all housekeeping areas, or in hospitality industries in general, the audio provided me with a better understanding of how workers at a multilingual workplace, such as Brighton, address each other, plan activities together, tease each other, and frequently engage in language mixing.

While doing fieldwork, I focused more on workers’ interactions than workers’-
guests’ interactions. Every day of fieldwork in the workplace introduced dozens if not hundreds of guests that I could not easily observe or follow around. During work, usually on the floors or public spaces was the only time to observe workers’-guests’ interactions. The interactions were almost always in English and workers commonly did not engage in extended conversations with the guests. I also focused on the workers’ language strategies for learning English, more so than non-Spanish speaking workers for learning Spanish. Even though I developed close relationships with all housekeepers from different native language backgrounds during my fieldwork, I had more access to Spanish-speaking workers’ perspectives, simply because I understand some Spanish even if those workers have limited ability to speak English and they had to explain things to me in Spanish. I also observed workers’ interactions with superiors as some workers such as runners interact more with supervisors at work. Interactions with the superiors could be described as mostly formal and task-oriented. However, both workers and superiors’ communication could also be casual where they joke around in both work and non-work times.

a. Using My Ignorance as a Paramount Method to Explore the Site

For the immigrant workers, making sense of the language and communicative styles of their coworkers, superiors, and guests, is a central part of working in American workplace. Jack, one of my interview participants, described this challenge as la *necesidad de entender* (necessity to understand). While doing fieldwork I also felt this
necessity to understand languages spoken in the workplace, especially Spanish as the language of the majority at the housekeeping department. The more observant and serious I was of learning Spanish, the more attention I received from the Spanish speakers. The more I practiced the language, the greater access I had to their world. I was often praised by Latinos who identified me as “a student of Spanish”. This opened many opportunities to engage in conversations with most of the workers. I displayed my desire to learn by eating their food, watching telenovelas on break with them, and using Spanish phrases to greet and talk to them. I was greatly awarded with the attention and curiosity from both Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking workers, who wanted to teach me more and demonstrate their expertise, both in languages and work skills. For a ‘newcomer’ like me, learning the languages of local speech communities was key method for developing and deepening relationships in the workplace. My efforts to understand Spanish also brought me closer to non-Latinos in the workplace, because we shared similar struggles and I also depended on their knowledge to guide me. Their knowledge also gave me insight into the various problems they identify as important to know in the workplace, and their ways of going about devising problem-solving strategies through language. Thus, one of the best ways to understand how immigrants educate each other is to allow oneself to be taught by immigrants about the things that matter to them in their local environments. While consistently being taught by the immigrant workers about things I didn’t know, I discovered their rules, strategies, and methods for teaching and
Allowing my ignorance to guide my research became one of my most important tools in the field. In a way, my own ignorance was a context for action. Making full use of my ignorance as a peripheral participant entailed reflecting on the “moves” or strategies put to work by workers. For example, I could find Spanish-speaking workers talked with each other in English, or African immigrants watching telenovelas, reading Spanish announcements, or speaking Spanish comfortably with coworkers. I wondered how workers had managed to accomplish learning a new language or understanding documents written in another language, without being formally taught how to do so in an overtly systematic way. Their accomplishments were apparent, but I was ignorant about the steps workers had taken together to arrive at these accomplishments. I had no choice but to take some steps myself, using workers’ guidance, instruction, and suggestions.

My discovery of local procedures was a learning process that my participants experienced in their own ways, and continue to experience every day. This method revealed the extensive knowledge immigrants have and how they creatively develop solutions to local problems and puzzles. Also, the “moves” required to transition from one position to another are different in each housekeeping positions, so my ignorance seemed to multiply as I continued the fieldwork. Observing the room cleaners, for example, I learned that there are many “right” ways to make the rollaway bed, or refreshing the guest room. When observing them making beds, I wasn’t interested in how
well each of them could create the design and tidiness of the bed (the “quality” of the work according to my outsider standards). Instead, I was interested in the various steps the housekeepers took based on their prior knowledge and training to create their version of the bed-making that would pass the room inspectors’ expectations and guests’ satisfaction. A correct procedure in one place would appear completely wrong in another and I learned there are many ways to learn to arrive at acceptable outcomes, even when the end result appears the same. There is no guide book about how to make the bed that I have to read, I had to determine how the housekeepers themselves became viewed as competent workers in their daily responsibilities. This of course, meant appreciating misunderstandings and mistakes as cues that existing knowledge, strategies, and moves, were not going to work. There had to be another path, another step in the dance to learn. The housekeepers with work experience in multiple hotels seemed familiar with the general “tune” of the song (same steps, same tools, same items), but the dance steps (in what order to manage the tools and items, how and when to apply which tools and steps) had to be re-learned and re-taught, time and time again.

When I began my fieldwork, I knew close to nothing about Spanish language. I made the conscious decision to avoid taking Spanish lessons before entering the field so I could learn Spanish in the ways my participants had been learning in the field. Much like some of my study participants, I was ignorant about many things in the workplace. There were many instances where I put my ignorance to use. As puzzles emerged in the field, I
often thought about the problem for many days, or talked about it out loud with other workers. Sometimes, when I felt ignorant about something, I continued to watch my surroundings until a suitable or potential answer emerged. I followed clues and cues in my environment to help me solve these puzzles. Sometimes conversations in the break room with one set of housekeepers would give me the answer or explanation for something I was puzzling over on the floors. I acquired pieces of knowledge from one source, and pieces from another, to make my way through the obscurities of my peripheral position.

In a similar fashion, recent immigrants piece together information on a very broad range of topics from numerous sources. Many immigrants are avid seekers and collectors of important survival knowledge (such as practical information necessary to make a living in America), and they possess information that is valuable to others. The challenges of adapting to a completely foreign environment are real and immediate, and most immigrants can’t afford to remain ignorant about most things that concern their livelihood, or the well-being of their families and friends. Thus, in this context, being an ignorant person in a critical moment is both a condition of being a new comer but also an impetus for action. My own “work” to be carried out in the workplace didn’t involve the same kinds of responsibilities as my participants, but it had its own very real pressures and challenges. I was not completely ignorant as a fieldworker (due to my preliminary research) but some aspects of the setting was completely foreign, and the quality of my
work depended on the relationships I could build through communication with people in the field. Building relationships with some workers was difficult because I didn’t have the language to express myself freely in all situations, or comprehend all that was being said. I was ignorant not only to languages spoken in the field but also the diverse styles of communication present in the workplace. I realized that I often had trouble understanding other workers communicate. Sometimes they were silent, other times they mixed Spanish, English, French, Arabic, and some other Spanish dialects, and other times they used hand signals or slang terms I had never heard before.

Even though I thought by knowing English and a little Spanish I would be the most knowledgeable worker, I was completely wrong. With every new thing I learned, I realized there was much more to figure out. In this way, my ignorance was productive because it created new questions and pointed me in new directions. Learning a new vocabulary word often indicated a larger semiotic system at work, a (to-be-discovered) context in which that word could be valuable and useful for communication.

Before travelling to America, some of my study participants have had some knowledge of English language, especially the grammar element. When they started working in American workplaces, they imagined that their English was not in the same quality as the ‘English of the native English speakers’. However they also admitted that their knowledge of English grammar did not help them much in communicating with others and handling the tasks. They eventually learned that little by little, not by attending
English classes, but by engaging in task-completion and problem solving activities with their coworkers, superiors, and guests. They learned that some other aspects of communication strategies such as using honorifics, turn-taking, word choices, etc. are important to understand when communicating with particular people in particular situations, as much as it is also equally important to understand jokes and curse words. Being able to recognize and pronounce profanities in different languages (for example Spanish and English) was a way to tease and play with coworkers, participate in jokes and stories, elicit laughter, and appear approachable and trustworthy.

The hotel and the housekeeping department in particular was always busy and full of physical activities. This indicated a degree of orderliness necessary for working efficiently to serve large volumes of guests. This orderliness is constructed over time, moment by moment, over the course of an endless series of encounters and events. I was often baffled by the orderliness. Using my ignorance as a method enabled me to arrive at an understanding of local rules and knowledge exchange. Interestingly, my ignorance about language and communication also served me in other ways. Being obviously clueless was an occasion for people in my environment to come to my assistance on their own volition, in their own ways. For example, when I first entered the Spanish-speaking dominant workplace, I had a zero knowledge of Spanish language. My ignorance about how to ask for others for help forced me to handle the tasks by myself. I spent the first couple of weeks figuring what to do until I decided to start learning Spanish by engaging...
in teamwork with Spanish-speaking workers. Over time, I learned some Spanish expressions and more Spanish vocabularies by communicating with Spanish speakers in Spanish, and found myself teaching them to others months later (whenever I worked in another department and needed to teach my coworker some simple Spanish). Eventually, as I became a more legitimate field worker, I gained enough competency to educate others about my knowledge of the workplace.

After finishing my fieldwork, I found it useful to categorize and analyze communication in the workplace according to different workers’ views and knowledge, and my own methods of cooperative sense-making. I organized commonalities found among various communicative strategies I detected and learned while doing fieldwork. Therefore, this method of framing interactions arose from my own sense-making process, and the ways I observed others making sense of me and each other. As I encountered ambiguity in the field, I found these strategies helpful for understanding my surroundings. I noticed similar communication strategies used by workers across various workplaces while analyzing my field notes, audio recordings of interviews, and multilingual conversations.

C. Data Collection

This study drew on multiple methods of analysis as well as different kinds of data. When applying an ethnographic method, Duff (2007) argued that ethnography involves a combination of “ethnographic description, micro-analysis of events, and discourse
analysis” (p. 292). Data were collected using the qualitative technique through participant observations, interviews, and collections of documents to contextualize participants’ experiences. Interviews were conducted to gather the participants’ perspectives and lived experiences. Much of the information in chapter 4, and throughout the manuscript, was obtained from my participant observational notes and from the hotel’s documents. The data collected came from these various sources because qualitative “research should privilege deep understanding of human actions, motives, and feelings. It should illuminate how cultural symbol systems are used to attribute meaning to existence and activity” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 11).

a. Participant observation

According to Forsey (2012), “…, while participant observation provides us with a convenient shorthand phrase, there is some useful conceptual ground to be made from listening attentively to the field and allowing the ear a fairer hearing than it appears to get” (p. 562). Observations (with the investigator as a participant observer) is aimed at capturing meanings and questions available in different communication settings in the workplace. Participant observations allowed me to witness social actors’ communicative performances in their environment as they happened. Participant observation, as a mode of data collection, was a useful tool in identifying and describing performances and happenings within the organization. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), “The validity of participant observation derives from researchers’ having been there” (p. 135).
I used participant observation to immerse myself in housekeepers’ work lives. I also wanted to intimately get to know what it is like interacting with others from a housekeeper’s perspective. My primary goal was to develop a deep understanding of the immigrant workers as they communicatively enacted their organizational roles with culturally similar and dissimilar others. When employing participant-observational methods, researchers can accomplish their goals by embodying one of four roles: complete participant, participant-observer, observer-participant, and complete observer (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

In the first role, participant as observer, I entered the field with the clear expectation that I was in an investigator role. I studied the scene from my vantage point of working as a part-time housekeeper who was in the building learning about housekeeping culture and individual and group symbolic performances. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), in this role “participation is part of a ‘deal’ negotiated with gatekeepers (or sponsors) and usually involves a special status-usually a part-time, temporary, voluntary, and/or ‘play’ role” (p. 147). In this role, I worked as a part-time housekeeper at Brighton and was not expected to master all the housekeeping duties that veteran housekeepers mastered. I was in this role for several months in summer of 2015 where I typically worked 4-hour shifts three to five days a week for a total of approximately 10 to 12 hours a week. I was initially assigned to work as a runner but also sometimes handled the lobby attendant’s tasks and helped the turndown service duties.
My work duties consisted primarily of delivering room necessities for the guests. As a lobby attendant I usually cleaned and refreshed the gym and swimming pool, and cleaned the hotel’s public areas such as the business center, lobby area, and meeting rooms. I also swept and mopped floors several times. During that time, I was fully engaged in performing the duties of a housekeeper, but without having all the expectations and responsibilities that affect full-time housekeepers. For instance, I did not have to finish cleaning by a certain time. During this time, I did not collect any data from the participants, instead, I used this opportunity to fully introduce and familiarize myself with the field and built networks with the potential participants of the study. I was also able to talk to most of the housekeepers in two pre-shift meetings and individually about the research details and to informally invite the housekeepers to participate in my study.

When my study was finally approved by the Ohio State University Institutional Review Board, I went back into the field in October 2015 to April 2016 and spent more hours working with the housekeepers as a full time worker. On May 2016, Brighton decided to end its affiliation with La Trabajas and all the workers working for this staffing agency had to leave the hotel. Fortunately, I was still able to maintain my connection with all of my interview participants to finish the interview process.

During my full time term of working at the hotel, my role was an observer-participant. I spent two days preparing and distributing the consent documents to the participants. During this time, despite of the amounts of tasks I had to handle, I took
some time off to write field notes and to ask the supervisor and coworkers questions about their work activities and specific happenings in the scene. In total, I spent approximately 156 hours in the field gathering information to support my research claims. The observation activities yielded roughly 136 pages of handwritten field notes. In the observer-participant role, “participation derives from a central position of observation. In other words, the agenda of observation is primary, but this does not rule out the possibility that researchers will casually and non-directively interact with participants” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 149). I came back to revisit the field to re-engage the housekeeping work life after spending months re-conceptualizing the study. As the project unfolded, and as I continued to engage research topic-related texts and data, I decided to go back into the field and observe firsthand how scholarly literatures and data texts related to the housekeepers’ lived experiences. Another important reason for returning to the field was that as an iterative process, qualitative research allows researchers to leave and come back to the field to better capture and understand the social actors’ lebenwelt (lifeworld) and symbolic performances (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Participant-observation data were collected from three scenes in the research site: (a) staff meetings, (b) breaks, and (c) during work hours. These three scenes displayed the housekeepers’ routine interactions with coworkers, superiors, and guests. The staff meetings gave me an opportunity to observe housekeepers’ conversations with their supervisors and coworkers in a decision-making and collaboration context. During
breaks, housekeepers displayed their communication in a more relaxed atmosphere with their peers. During work time, I observed the housekeepers’ interactions with coworkers, superiors, and guests as they encountered these individuals during a regular work shift. Spending time in and studying these three scenes was a useful experience that amplified my understanding of housekeeper’s work life.

First, I observed staff meetings lead by the executive housekeepers. I participated in five meetings, in which, typically, the meeting leader discussed the hotel’s status, particular events conducted in the hotel area, and any guests that need special attention, such as VIP guests. These staff meetings usually took place before the beginning of housekeepers’ work shift. The meetings typically lasted no more than half an hour and took place in the housekeeping office. As a scene in the research site, these staff meetings provided a discursive space where I could observe superior–subordinate interaction and decision-making and collaboration processes. I saw how the supervisor verbally addressed the workers and how workers responded to the supervisor and to their coworkers. Staff meetings also allowed me to glance into the department’s culture, as I could observe behaviors related to leadership style, as well as organizational discourse. In sum, staff meetings offered a discursive space where I could examine department-specific attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors within the work group being observed.

In the second scene, I observed the housekeepers interacting with others during
their break hours. I had various opportunities to sit down and “break bread” with the workers. I observed housekeepers when their “veils” were down, with the housekeepers typically relaxed, joking around, and sharing food with each other. In that scene, I, thus, saw a “laid-back” side of the workers. We also talked about their dreams, fears, personal lives, and their feelings about their work. It was during breaks that I conducted some informant interviews (meant to inform researchers about key features of scenes) and ethnographic interviews (casual conversations that happen spontaneously; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). It also was during break hours that I learned about housekeeping work, in general, as well as the department’s culture and housekeepers’ perspectives about the workplace. These casual moments led to many conversations that deeply enriched my knowledge about menial/housekeeping work.

The third scene that I observed was work areas where the housekeepers worked on their tasks. I was able to explore and observe the housekeepers with different positions, task distributions, and work locations. I spent most of my time in the field doing housekeeping work, but also observing housekeepers doing their jobs and interacting with other people. Housekeepers, including myself, spent most of the time in the isolated areas, with some rare, brief, and casual encounters with coworkers, hoteliers, and guests. In the time I spent working as a housekeeper, I experienced constant boredom and felt the monotony of housekeeping work. I recall thinking to myself, “I could not do this for very long, or I’m going to die.” I constantly thought about the communication
isolation in which I was immersed for those hours that I spent cleaning facilities. However, I gained valuable insights into the housekeepers’ day-to-day communication during those hours, as I experienced firsthand with whom they talked and what they talked about, as well as the frequency, breadth, and depth of their conversations.

b. Interviews

Interviewing is critical to understanding the subjective knowledge and meanings of those whose experiences scholars seek to understand. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explained, “Interviews are particularly well suited to understand the social actor’s experience and perspective” (p. 173). Interviewing was employed in this study because it allowed me to co-construct meaning with participants about their lived workplace experiences. Paget (1983) eloquently described the value of the interview process for interpretive research:

> What distinguishes in-depth interviewing is that the answers given continually inform the evolving conversation. Knowledge thus accumulates with many turns at talk. It collects in stories, asides, hesitations, expressions of feeling, and spontaneous associations . . . The specific person interviewing, the “I” that I am, personally contributes to the creation of the interview’s content because I follow my own perplexities as they arise in our discourse. (p. 78)

This observation suggests that the interview process is an interactive and dynamic discursive process of co-construction of meaning between knower and known. Before
conducting any interviews, the workers needed to meet two criteria: (a) be a self-identified non-native English speaking immigrant, and (b) have some experience working in the organization by being employed there for at least 6 months as a housekeeper. This timeframe was chosen because, as a study about everyday communication, time was necessary for the person to have some interactions in the workplace. After identifying those individuals who met these criteria, I constantly sought out their knowledge through various types of interviews, including informant, respondent, and ethnographic interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The first interview type, the informant interview “inform[s] the research about key features and processes of the scene—what the significant customs and rituals are and how they are done” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 176). This type of interview provided an opportunity for me to gain knowledge about happenings and situations in the scenes. During respondent interviews, I encouraged interviewees to “express themselves on an issue or situation, or to explain what they think or how they feel about their social world” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 105 178). The last type of interview conducted, in addition to formal in-depth interviews, was ethnographic interviews, which were informal and impromptu interviews conducted during my time on the “frontlines.” In concert, interviews helped to gain a deep understanding of the social actors’ lived experiences, as well as the departments’ cultures and everyday activities.

Interviewing was employed as a method of data collection for the study because,
when done well, it creates a discursive space where participants narrate their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. Interviews allowed participants to verbally recreate their lived experiences in ways that other forms of data collection such as surveys or experiments may not have achieved. Such situated narratives are rich in description and, thus, ideal for an interpretive study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Fontana and Frey (2000), “Interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 646). One key feature of contemporary forms of interviewing is that they have become a more interactive process than traditional positivistic ways of interviewing. Because of these new approaches to interviewing, interviews offered a valuable tool to collect the data for this study.

For the interview process, I employed a conversational approach with the workers, and therefore most parts of the interviews were conducted in series of friendly conversations. Contemporary interpretive researchers are moving away from traditional forms of interviewing where linearity of communication and rigid structure was the norm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Contemporary perspectives on interviewing strongly advise researchers to create comfortable climates where interviewees are seen as the holders of knowledge and addressed as equals (Clair, 2003). Orbe’s (2000) observation illustrated some of the alternative ways of engaging the housekeepers: “Unlike traditional research interviewing, ‘subjects’ are able to ask questions of those conducting the research. In this
regard, all individuals are committed to investigating their perceptions of intercultural relations resulting in a shared responsibility for the discovery of knowledge” (p. 612). Approaching interviewing as an interactive process where knowledge is co-constructed with participants, thus, can yield powerful narrative texts about their lived experiences.

The housekeepers with whom I conducted formal, sit-down, in-depth interviews were recruited through a snowball sampling strategy ($N = 13$). The snowball sampling strategy allowed various experiences to be collected from individuals who worked in different positions and with whom I did not have the opportunity to interact. To reach various participants across positions, I asked housekeepers with whom I had built relationships to connect me with their coworkers. I then contacted those referrals via telephone to set up dates and times to meet for a sit-down interview. The interviews were initially scheduled between January 2016 and March 2016 and I was formerly conducted the interview to 10 participants. However, seven participants decided to withdraw from participating in this study due to personal reasons. Consequently, I extended the interview period to May 2016, and was able to gather 13 participants for the study. The initial group of interviewees was acquaintances with whom I had formed relationships during my time as an employee at Brighton. I interviewed eight Mexicans, an El Salvadoran, a Peruvian, an Uzbek, a Nepali, and a Cameroonian. All of them were hired by a staffing agency, *La Trabajas* as housekeepers with different positions at Brighton Hotel.
I asked semi-structured, open-ended questions that gave interviewees opportunities to share their narratives about their lived experiences in an unrestricted way. I created the interview guide to align with general criteria recommended by interpretive scholars (e.g., Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Some of these criteria were: (a) keeping the topics and questions broad such that the interviewer can ask the questions differently to participants, (b) that the interview guide should not rigidly dictate the order of how questions are asked, (c) that the guide should provide the interviewer the freedom to ask optional questions, and (d) that the interview guide should allow the researcher to reframe questions and adapt to interviewees’ verbal style as the interview unfolds (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Regarding sample size, the guideline that I followed was to conduct interviews until no new information was gained in relation to answering the research questions; that is, until the point of “theoretical saturation” was apparent (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This point was reached at 13 in-depth interviews. I conducted the interviews outside the workplace such as hotel’s café, coffee shops in campus area, and at the participants’ residence. The interviews lasted 45 to 75 minutes on average. All interviews (including informant, respondent and ethnographic) were conducted in English. With interviewees’ permission, in-depth interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. In transcribing the interview audios, I was assisted by one of the interviewees as there were some Spanish sentences in them. For her transcribing assistance, I helped her practice
English by being a conversation partner for 30 minutes every day after work. I used pseudonyms chosen by the interviewees for all participants in all data texts. In total, the interviews yielded 114 pages of transcribed text.

c. Documents

Organizational documents were acquired to contextualize housekeepers’ workplace communication experiences. I collected organizational documents before, during, and after my time as a participant observer. I also collected documents from the housekeepers and staffing agency. I collected documents to strategically supplement the information obtained from participant observations and interviews. Additionally, documents strengthened my ability to make research claims because they helped me gain a deeper understanding of how it (the organization) categorizes events of people (e.g., membership lists); how it codifies procedures or policies (e.g., manuals, announcements, flyers, guidebook); and what ways it informs or instructs the membership (e.g., newsletters, hotel’s website, guests’ reviews/notes/comments), explains past or future actions (e.g., notes/memos), memorializes its own history or achievements (e.g., Facebook site/websites/newsletters), and tracks its own activities (e.g., minutes of meetings). (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 117). In collecting documents, I adhered to general criteria about suitable document selection for interpretive research: (1) documents should be “linked to the talk and social action contexts that the researcher is studying;” (2) documents should help the researcher “reconstruct past events or ongoing processes
that are not available for direct observation;” and (3) documents should embody the organization’s social rules “that govern how members of a social collective should behave” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 117).

Documents collected for this study included text-based, visual materials, and audio materials: emails, flyers, posters, employee handbooks, announcements, guest comments, website information, and some personal documents such as: time request off forms, online notes from social medias, housekeepers’ notes/memos, and audio files recorded by some participants. These documents provided a snapshot of the organization’s relationship with the housekeepers and the organization’s culture. In total, I collected 155 documents in Spanish and English from the hotel and housekeepers that were part of the research study.

D. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study will strive to reveal the nature and development of communicative ability over time. Schwandt (1997) noted that the analysis of documents “refers broadly to various procedures involved in analyzing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to particular study” (p. 32). In line with this view, the data analysis would be processed systematically and inductively as I look into and arrange the data from the different sources, and then the data would be broken into, synthesized, and discovered categories as mapped as patterns or themes.
In this study, I conducted the data analysis process to build a thematic analysis of my site, observations, documents, and interview data (Watson-Gegeo, 1988) to present the findings of this study. As with my previous study, I will record and organize the data manually in MS-word and spreadsheets. With respect to grain size, this study moves from a big picture analysis examining the site as a whole, then narrows to an individual worker within particular groups. This choice is grounded in the theory guiding this work, understanding that language, including language ability of the participants cannot be abstracted from the contexts within which they are embedded (Roth & Bowen, 1995). The data will be analyzed at different levels of specificity using an analytic process called Ethnographic Research Cycle suggested by Spradley (1980). Considering the iterative nature of this process, each set of analyses will lead to and influence the following steps in overall analysis. Therefore, consistent with the ethnographic approaches for the study of cultural practices, and language use in particular (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), the method used is not presented separately from what will be obtained as a result. As such, a description of general methods describing the “logic inquiry” (Gee & Green, 1998) used to guide the analysis will be explained in this section.

Detailed analytic procedure informed by theory was also presented along with the results. While this study explored the nature of language use in a workplace, ways of participating as housekeepers cannot be completely isolated and analyzed as separate from the participatory norms of the workplace as a whole. Particular to this study, this
will mean looking first across “everyday life” within the workplace to identify the patterns related to language use across different groups and occasions and then moving to the ways these patterns can support or constrain the participants’ development of communicative ability.

The data compiled throughout the data collection period was presented to investigate how particular discourse are available in the workplace with regards to how communication is organized within the context of the workplace under study. The investigation also included how the participants’ sociocultural backgrounds is situationally established as a valid means of displaying communicative ability. The first stage of this analysis was based on the observation and document study (see chapter 4) to vividly present the site as a starting point where the communication practices, language use and learning were displayed. The second stage of the data analysis relied mostly from the interview (see chapter 5) to display the life experience of the immigrant workers in relation with different actors available in the workplace (Green & Meyer, 1991) within which workers share their knowledge and understanding of concepts emerge across different groups and occasions. A detailed semantic analysis based on the integrated data from the observation, document studies, and interview (see chapters 6 and 7) then was conducted to identify the types of discourses being used across these diverse stages of activities (Spradley, 1980). Ethnographic data was drawn on to provide evidence that
these established practices becomes patterns and practice consistently used across a particular period.

To investigate the ways these identified patterns of practice contribute to the display of language use, data gathered from the field-notes and observations were sampled as key events. These key events are specifically chosen from data collected because they include opportunities for the participants to display their communicative ability through two modes of discourse—an oral language display and written reports. Applying systematic coding methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), these activities were categorized and labeled to produce the thematic categorizations. The categories serve to identify the participants’ engagements in workplace communication, how they perceived their communicative ability, and how they developed some communicative repertoires.

To analyze the data texts, I employed an inductive conceptual framework to let the data inform the research claims and theory development. This analytical framework is based on a process that examines and produces concepts and themes that emerge from the data. This is a simultaneous inductive and deductive process where themes and categories emerge through researchers’ immersion in the raw data. The data analysis and collection occurred almost simultaneously “by identifying some important issues that guide the collection of data” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 12). Preexisting theories, concepts, and issues sensitize researchers to specific questions and orientations in an iterative process of observation and analysis during the research project; therefore, “theory is built up from observation . . .
Theory is ‘grounded’ in data” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 12). Two central characteristics guided the process of data analysis: Theory is grounded in the relationship between data and the categories into which they are coded; and (2) Codes and categories are mutable until late in the project, because the researcher is still in the field and data from new experiences continue to alter the scope and terms of his or her analytic framework. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 218). This second characteristic might suggest that the coding process could last for an indefinite period of time, but according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), research endeavors, in general, reach a point of “theoretical saturation.”

Furthermore, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002):

What keeps the process under some control is the fact that the analyst is comparing each incident to other incidents in order to decide in which categories they belong. Thus, when considering any new incident, the analyst compares it with incidents that have already been coded into categories. (p. 219)

It was within this iterative analytical process that data in the form of observation notes, interview texts, and documents were analyzed for this study. Data sources provided a well of information that was coded. Themes and concepts from the literature reviewed and research questions also guided the process of coding the raw data. I took this approach to ensure that the coding process was accurately oriented toward these theoretical themes and concepts. Throughout this process, I discussed initial and subsequent findings with my advisors and some of my colleagues, and I reflected on
scenes and interviews, as well as on my positioning as a researcher. The data-analytic process was a constant part of my sense-making process throughout the study. This process also allowed me to hone in on salient coding categories that shed light on the issues under investigation. Throughout the coding process, I paid attention to data that informed the everyday communication experiences of the housekeepers and how they perceived themselves, others, and their interactions. Keeping these sensitizing concepts in mind helped to identify the concepts when they emerged from the data. Such a process also was useful in helping to understand my position as a researcher studying the research site and the people in this study.

E. My Multiple Positions at the Site

Even though I formally spent 8 months in the research site working as a housekeeper while collecting the data for my study, in actuality, I have been immersed in the workplace for more than a year as an active participant within the workplace in different capacity: as a worker. This circumstance gave me additional knowledge about the organization and its history, culture, and people. Hence, I had a developed relationship with this organization and most of the people that I studied that is much longer than the time that I spent officially “studying” it. This relationship gives me a vantage point that was useful in researching the phenomenon under investigation. For instance, my role as a researcher and as a participant is not that of the traditional researcher who comes into an organization because she or he is interested in studying
symbolic processes in that organization. I already had been immersed in the organization and, therefore, was more sensitized to the day-to-day happenings of the organization. This circumstance, of course, presented me with both advantages and disadvantages.

My background as a graduate student may also have shaped how the immigrant workers perceived me in that context. Although I am not an immigrant, the workers viewed me as a non-American NNES that have acquired much cultural capital (i.e., learning the dominant language and about U.S. culture) during my time in the United States, and this capital has allowed me to climb various “social ladders” (e.g., educational and socioeconomic). Thus, in the workplace as a CoP, the workers might see me as a part of an elite group of people—the educated elite. This reality might have shaped whether the workers viewed me as an in-group or out-group member. During the data collection process, I benefitted from how the workers viewed me based on our age circumstances. Most of the participants in my study were middle-aged (30 years old or older) women. I also shared some commonalities with some of the housekeepers such as being a working mother. These circumstances might have shaped how the workers oriented toward me and the information that they chose to disclose. Likewise, participants also could have seen me as a positive role model or as someone who is motivational for other NNES immigrants, regardless of age and occupation. In fact, several participants explicitly communicated to me that they were proud of me and “all my accomplishments.” Many workers even encouraged me to “continue representing immigrant well.” Such
perceptions might have motivated them to be more open to me, to help me meet the study’s goals. In sum, who I am within this research site may have had both positive and negative consequences due to my relationship with the organization and its members. Hence, my role as researcher and participant may have been affected by my other role as a student.

Lastly, my relationship with the academia at the university where I was affiliated with and my graduate student role partially shaped my assumptions and what I saw as I prepared to engage the housekeepers. From my colleagues’ perspective, I had the idea that the housekeepers were unhappy, and that they were likely suffering and living a despondent life because of the jobs that they held, and due to how the community in general viewed them based on the ‘dirty job’ that they were entitled to. I came into the site ridden with assumptions about who the housekeepers were and what their feelings were about work and life, ready to discover all the wrongs that were being committed against them. Those views, however, partially were shaped by me “doing their jobs” and “watching” them from my privileged role as a participant observer within the site. Throughout the research process, I had to reposition myself and my views about who the housekeepers were and their work experiences, by also viewing myself as one of them. Additionally, I learned that it is critical to enter a research site and approach people with an awareness of the assumptions and standpoints that cloud our perceptions, working hard as a researcher to “suspend” preconceived assumptions. Through building
relationships with the housekeepers before and during the data-collection process, I heightened my awareness and better understood my role as a researcher.

F. The Research Site

Heller pointed out that ethnography will ask the researchers to identify the phenomena they are interested in, and then go about discovering where those phenomena occur and how they are linked (2008). Following Heller, the first stage of a research is to find a research setting and that this can sometimes mean finding out that no one has ever “got it quite right, and adjusting one’s plans” (p. 254). From the outset of this study, my interests in conducting a research on language socialization in the workplace sparks from my own experience as a NNES worker who socialized myself in the workplace. Regardless of my ability in communicating in English, I still find it challenging to gain memberships in the workplace as a CoP. Based on my personal experience, I learn that being able to communicate in English is not an automatic leeway to display the professional knowledge shared in the workplace and therefore memberships in the professional CoP is not automatically granted, instead, it is earned. Based on my experience, too, I assume that workers with limited ability to communicate in English will have different challenges in their journeys of entering the, oftentimes, overlapping CoPs in the workplace.

Before deciding to conduct a research study about immigrant workers’ language use and learning in a workplace, I had already been in a research site for more than a
year. I decided to explore how the workers at the entry level use and learn language in the workplace regardless of their statuses as ‘non-language workers’ (McAll, 2003). As I have been immersed in housekeepers’ work life, I thought that a hotel located in Columbus Ohio where I was located was a practical location for such an endeavor. In this section I briefly discuss how I gained entry to the research site and then provide three specific reasons why Brighton was a useful research site in which to study the immigrant workers’ language use and learning in the workplace. Just like most of the participants in my study I worked for a staffing agency as my direct professional affiliation or employer. A hotel is normally affiliated with many different agencies and it relies on these agencies in hiring workers. This agency organizes and assigns jobs to workers who are mostly immigrants to different workplaces based on companies’ demands. Workers who were employed by staffing agencies oftentimes had to be ready for relocations, which was why collecting data for this study was not easy due to the workers’ high turnover.

1. Entering the Site

I became interested in how NNES use and learn language and develop their communicative ability in the workplace as I learned from my own experience in working in a multilingual workplace at a hotel in Columbus, Ohio. After immersing myself in scholarly literature related to how NNES socialize themselves to language and through the use the language in the workplace I became interested in understanding the language use and learning of entry level workers, such as housekeepers. Subsequently, I
conceptualized those persons as working on the lower levels of U.S. organizational hierarchies. I met with the Human and Resources (HR) manager and housekeeping manager to explain about my plan to collect data from the housekeepers at Brighton hotel. Upon knowing that both opened the door for me I started the IRB process which took seven months until it got an approval. My academic advisor was involved in negotiating with the HR manager regarding the scopes, limitations, and goals of my proposed study, particularly with regards to participants’ recruitment and data collection. The hotel management granted me permission to collect data from workers who are employed by staffing agency, which was a perfect fit for my research considering that most of those who worked for the staffing agency were immigrant workers. Two other important aspects included in the agreement was that I was only allowed to collect audio data during non-work time as the hotel management had a concern on disrupting the workers during work time. The hotel management allowed me to observe the workplace, write notes during work time, and collected public and personal documents from the hotel and the workers on site. Despite the limited data I collected, I had ample opportunities to take notes, pictures, and sketch interactions during work time. I did all the note taking, sketching, and taking pictures using the “Evernote” program I downloaded on my phone. This program allowed me to integrate notes, audio and video, and pictures which I manually organized in spreadsheets everyday after work.

My initial plan was to collect data from the housekeepers for six months,
however, the process was extended due to participants’ withdrawal from the study. After finishing the interview process from 10 participants, 7 workers decided to withdraw from participating in my study after they heard about an unpleasant immigration experience of one of the undocumented immigrants who work for the staffing agency. This undocumented immigrant worker had to return to his native country and to obtain a proper immigration documents. Some of the workers, however, suspected that this participant’s involvement in my study had been the culprit of his immigration hardship. Thus, as a group, some workers decided to cancel their involvement in my study. As a consequence, I spent a couple of months recruiting and interviewing new participants for the interview process.

2. The Participants

For this research, I observed approximately 65 participants that consisted of 4 executive housekeepers, 2 housekeeping supervisors, 2 room inspectors, and 53 housekeepers. The number of the participants was approximated due to the high turnover of the workers who came in and left the workplace. The people who were studied for this research project also represented a diverse group of workers. For instance, participants exhibited differences in terms of nationalities, age, socioeconomic, educational, and occupational backgrounds. The majority of the participants are Spanish speakers, dominated by Mexicans. The non-Mexican, Spanish-speaking workers came from Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Peru, El Salvador, and Honduras. Around 25% of the
workers are non-Spanish speaking workers from Haiti, Somalia, Nepal, Poland, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Cameroon, Hungary, and Uzbekistan. Participants’ ages ranged from 25 to 65 years old, with the mean age being 46 years old. Most participants migrated to the United States as young adults (in their mid to late teens) or when slightly older. The majority of participants was married and had children. The large majority of participants had lived in the United States for at least 5 years. These differences made for diverse and rich perspectives and lived experiences.

In addition to regional origin and age difference, the people studied came from varied socioeconomic, educational, and occupational backgrounds. Participants came to their current job as housekeepers from occupations as diverse as hotel housekeeper, factory worker, kitchen helper, landscaper, store clerk, car mechanics, plantation workers, farmer, and government officer. This job diversity also reflected participants’ educational diversity. Whereas some participants had achieved some college and high school levels, others never went past the second grade of elementary school, and some could not read nor write. The large majority of participants’ formal education was in their native countries. Two participants had opportunities to attend language-related training and courses in the U.S. Several participants were highly articulated and used sophisticated words to communicate with me, whereas others consistently relied on code-switching and used restricted codes. The following figure depicts all participants involved in this study based on their positions in the workplace and their involvement during the data collection.
period: observation and interview.

Of the 65 participants, I interviewed 13 housekeepers outside the workplace during non-work time. The following table contains the list of the interview participants with their detailed demographic information (all names are in pseudonyms):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Native Languages</th>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>#years staying in the U.S.</th>
<th>Prior Education</th>
<th>Prior Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>car mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelica</td>
<td>El-Salvador</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>turndown attendant</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Saleswoman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suresh</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>chute attendant</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>elementary school</td>
<td>factory worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>houseman</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>government officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>houseman</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>elementary school</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>restaurant owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raquel</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>36 years</td>
<td>elementary school</td>
<td>Waiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>houseman</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>store clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>elementary school</td>
<td>plantation worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taron</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>English, French</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>car mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violeta</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>room cleaner</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>waiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruslan</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Uzbek, Russian</td>
<td>lobby attendant</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>business owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaura</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>lobby attendant</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>store clerk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Interview Participants' Demographic Information
Of 13 workers I interviewed for this study, 8 were Spanish-speaking workers from Mexico, Honduras, El-Salvador, and Peru. The other 3 participants were from Cameroon, Nepal, and Uzbekistan. While all of the participants are obviously bilingual speakers with various degrees of communicative ability in English, two of them are multilingual speakers. All of the participants have resided in the U.S. for over 5 years with various immigration statuses. Five participants have attended college level education and held jobs such as government officers, private business owner, sales person, restaurant owner, and clerks in their home countries. Some of the participants have finished high schools and had various occupations ranging from car mechanic, plantation worker, clerk, and waiter, while the rest of the participants had elementary school degree with limited ability to read and write. For all of the participants, working at Brighton as housekeepers were not their first job as prior to working in this hotel they have been hired by several staffing agencies for various jobs in the U.S.

G. Overview of Data Sets

In the following section I include some portion of a data set collected during the fieldwork that contains the list of observation documents consisted of audios and notes collected from the eight months of fieldwork. In total, there are 155 completed observations which are transferred into transcribed audios and notes. This data set actually includes the details of the housekeepers I observed and brief notes that I wrote to remind myself on who, what, where, when, and how the interactions naturally occurred.
I intentionally removed the columns containing non-pseudonymed housekeepers due to the ethicality and security reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest naked in room</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:08:04</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest left coat in room</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:22:56</td>
<td>5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing turndown service</td>
<td>hallways</td>
<td>0:20:42</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a &quot;hillbilly&quot; man?</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:14:17</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mucho trabajo poquito dinero</em></td>
<td>hallways</td>
<td>0:03:47</td>
<td>10 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suresh on housekeeping jobs</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>0:04:56</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to refill in tampon machine</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:06:29</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your next paycheck will be in Card!</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:11:52</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re the last housekeeping in the floor!</td>
<td>hallways</td>
<td>0:02:05</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No shave November</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>0:01:52</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Taron from Africa or from the US?</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>0:15:23</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La China learned Spanish in the rooms</td>
<td>hallways</td>
<td>0:13:19</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Me manana sick!</em></td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>0:26:14</td>
<td>45 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevator smelled like weed?</td>
<td>elevator</td>
<td>0:08:47</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi Copia what?</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:02:41</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meskyn people and trip plan</td>
<td>elevator</td>
<td>0:20:11</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need my paycheck, so poor</td>
<td>Hallways</td>
<td>0:21:07</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s a tornado?</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>0:16:16</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is “damn it”?</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>0:17:24</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother used to beat my ass</td>
<td>break room</td>
<td>0:04:39</td>
<td>0 second</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Observation Data Set
The above data set example (the complete data set is available in the appendices) is one of my major source of data analysis as it provides vibrant picture of the findings that generate most of the answers to the questions proposed in this study. Most of audio data are captured in English, while there are obviously some Spanish portions in the audios, they do not significantly inhibit me from comprehending the interactions. Most of the observation data generated during worktime are based on written notes, except a few of personal audios recorded by some participants who voluntarily captured some interactions at the workplace on their smartphones. Due to the ethical consideration, I consulted every single Spanish terms occurred in the audios used in the data analysis to several bilingual Spanish-English speakers at the hotel.

H. Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues related to the workers’ protection should be highlighted, as these were persons who some may consider to be vulnerable “subjects.” Therefore, as a researcher, part of my responsibility was to inform and to protect participants. I carried out my responsibilities by explicitly expressing to participants that their cooperation was strictly voluntary. Additionally, I thoroughly debriefed participants about the study’s purpose and their role in it. Another aspect important to consider when working with human beings is what researchers do with the information obtained. For example, as a study that required translation, I needed to be careful in how I represented participants’ statements in a different language. Although this study had minimal risk for the
participants and their well-being, I used several precautions to protect the participants. 

First, I used informed consent throughout the study. Participants were informed well in advance of the study’s purpose and of their participation. Each participant had the opportunity to read and sign informed consent forms. For those participants who had problems in understanding the document, I read the form to them. Second, all pertinent documents (e.g., interview protocols) were read to the participants with examples to provide them with access to any information pertaining to their participation in the study. Third, all information regarding participants was kept confidential throughout the final manuscript, with, as explained previously, all names being pseudonyms. Lastly, all information related to the research study is in the research or is in the possession of my advisor and dissertation committee members. Nobody, other than these individuals, has access to this information.

Summary

This chapter explained the epistemological foundations and methodological approaches that guided data collection, analysis, and interpretation. After discussing the significance of the interpretive paradigm that framed this study, the research site and its practicality to support the research project’s goals was explained. The types of data and the data-collection and analysis procedures then were explicated. I also positioned myself as a researcher within the research site. I talked about my relationship with the research site and how I viewed my role as a researcher and as a participant, as well as how the
person that I am and my assumptions shaped the research in this organization. Finally, I mentioned some ethical considerations relevant to working with human beings.

In chapter 4, I describe the research site in more detail, to help the readers familiarize themselves with the nature of the workplace. In addition to that, presenting a thorough discussion on the study site provides overview on how the workplace relate to the workers and to make sense interactions occurred on the site.
Chapter 4: The Hotel, the Hoteliers, and the Housekeeping Issues

This chapter sketches a detailed portrait of the research site. In addition to describing the site, I also present some stages of immigrant workers’ personal and professional trajectories in working in the U.S. The workers’ professional life is inseparable from their language development as language becomes one of the essential media that helps them accelerate their career advancement. The discussions on the complexity of the site and the study participants also reflect their language use and learning incorporated in their day to day activities in the workplace. Drawn from my experience as a participant observer and generated from the observations, interviews, and document study, the aim of the site description is to gain familiarity with and to understand the workplace’s relationship with the participants, and how the activities in the workplace were organized and distributed, which helps in exploring their language use and learning over time.

In this chapter I describe the research site in detail, providing a vibrant picture of the organization and how interactions among the members in the site as a community of practice are portrayed. I also present some immigrant workers’ activities on the site in narratives, illustrating their relationships with the managerial staffs and other workers through the complexity of tasks they perform and their professional and personal journey of working in a U.S. institution. The workers’ professional journey in the U.S. cannot be separated from the contribution of the staffing agency as it facilitates the development of
the workers especially with regards to their job management and professional networking. In this chapter I also present one of the two staffing agencies that has sent most of the housekeepers in the last five years. The description on staffing agency covered the workers’ affiliation with it and the agency’s contribution to their professional life.

A. The Hotel and the Hoteliers

The study was conducted at Brighton Hotel located in downtown Columbus, Ohio. This particular hotel was chosen based on my more than a year of professional affiliation with most of the immigrant workers who then become the participants in this study. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to interview Christopher (pseudonym), the hotel’s General Manager. Brighton operated 532 guest rooms and 32,000 sq. ft. of premier event space. As a newly built hotel, Brighton seems to attract a wide range of clientele.

Viewing the hotel as a movie industry, some of the employees are positioned the limelight acting in front of the camera, while some others are toiled away behind the scenes; as it is left to the people behind the screen to make the production appear effortless and natural. Some employees have constant face to face interaction with the customers and others have limited opportunity to expose themselves to hotel visitors. For the later group, language related skill might not be a primary requirement to handle the tasks at the workplace. Hotels’ employees in general can be categorized based on their
McAll (2003) asserts that for language workers in a hotel, language becomes the primary tool in handling the job. The workers that fall on this category are the front desk staff, guest service associate, bartender and waiter, and bellman. These group will always depend on language-related interaction to get the task done. The non-language workers, on the other hands, task accomplishment is paramount and language is less needed in accomplishing the tasks. As a company that focuses on hospitality in providing service to the customers, human resource becomes the backbone for a hotel. Understanding how the employees are organized and how the tasks are distributed in each department in the hotel can also mean revealing of internal company structure and values.

At Brighton, the hotel employees or hoteliers are called the ‘team members’. Christopher revealed that the hotel employed around 250 workers. He also added that when it was first opened, this upscale-four diamond, full-service hotel has hired immigrant workers, most of whom worked for staffing agencies. Revealing the diversity in its human resources, the general manager believed that approximately 45 to 50 percent of the team members are immigrant workers. He approximated the numbers of the workers considering that normally there is always a high employee turnover in the hotel, especially at the housekeeping department where employees were less steady compared to those working in the other departments in the hotel. Having immigrant workers in the hotel means that communication is facilitated in multiple languages. Angie, the
housekeeping manager informed me that there are at least four languages spoken in the hotel by the team members: English, Spanish, Arabic, and French. Both Christopher and Angie highlighted that Brighton allows the team members to speak whatever language they are most comfortable with in the workplace.

As seen from the language backgrounds, Brighton’s upper management and front desk staffs were comprised largely by native speakers of English, resembling the ‘snowy peak’ (Phillips, 2003) management style, where the majority of upper management positions are dominated by the Caucasian or “white” native English speakers. Down to the midlevel managerial groups there were team members who were either Spanish-English or bilingual speakers. While the majority of these bilingual staffs were managing the housekeeping department, they were also found in the other departments such as the food and beverage and front office departments. The NNES who were categorized as the entry level employees were spread in almost the entire departments, ranging from the housekeeping, food and beverage, engineering, security, and front office departments. The human resource department was so far the only department that did not host immigrant workers. Christopher believed that the diversity among the team members has obviously become one of the hotel’s strength.

The diversity of the team members can be found in most of the departments in the hotel, I learned however that the housekeeping and the food and beverage departments obviously have the majority of the immigrant workers. Most of the immigrant workers in
hospitality industries normally occupy entry level positions, such as the housekeepers at the housekeeping department and room servers, stewards, and waiters at the food and beverage department. In Brighton, however, some of the immigrant workers who are obviously bilingual speakers also hold the midlevel managerial positions such as supervisors and managers. The benefits of having bilingual speakers at the midlevel managerial positions, as Christopher said, have enabled the entry level workers to communicate better with the top management employees. These bilingual team members are able to minimize problems caused by miscommunication.

B. The Housekeepers

As a participant observer at Brighton, I worked as a housekeeper and collected the data particularly from the housekeepers. Despite of the high mobility of the workers with respects to their job placements, Brighton has been a site where those workers were relatively settled. During these eight months of fieldwork, I conducted intensive data collection activities where I documented interactions in the workplace through observations, interviews, and documents study on site. This data collection process involved most of the housekeepers and managerial staffs at the hotel. Most of my study participants who worked for Brighton were employed by two staffing agencies as temporary workers. For most of these workers, housekeeper has been their primary job in the U.S. Even though Brighton has become their main workplace, as temporary workers, the agencies also occasionally sent them to different hotels based on employee
demands and their time availability. It is therefore quite common for a worker to have multiple professional affiliations. Ruben, one of the housekeepers, for example, works as a part time houseman at Brighton in the second shift, and a lobby attendant in the morning in another hotel. When I asked why his second job is also a housekeeper, Ruben told me that being a housekeeper is the only position available offered by the agency.

The housekeeping department at Brighton, as has also been the case in most of the nearby hotels in downtown Columbus, has the biggest numbers of immigrant workers who are also Non Native English Speakers (NNES). Based on my observations and interviews, I noted that only 8 out of 65 housekeepers at Brighton were Native English Speakers (NES). The majority of the NNES housekeepers were Spanish speaking immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El-Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Columbia. The other groups were comprised of Eastern European, Haitian, Polish, Cameroonian, African Americans, and Caucasiands. In addition to that, over 75 percent of the immigrant housekeepers are women. According to Katz (2001) this fact shows the gender-stratified labor market in the U.S. in which “housekeeping” jobs in hotels belong almost exclusively to immigrant women.

Based on the length of staying in the U.S., most of the immigrant housekeepers who participate in my study have resided in the U.S. for over five years. Raquel, one of the senior housekeepers, for instance, migrated to the U.S. in the 1980’s. Esperanza, another housekeeper who has resided in the U.S. for over two decades had career
advancement at the housekeeping department, from a room cleaner to a room inspector. One of the supervisors, Alberto, told me that because of her advanced ability to communicate in English, Esperanza sometimes helped the management translate for her co-workers. Raquel, however, have worked in the same position as a room cleaner for over 30 years. Some of the housekeepers left their family members behind in their home countries and some of them would like to return home upon satisfying their professional needs in the U.S. Raul, one of the housemen left his wife and children in Mexico. He sent money to his family once a month and communicate with them through phone and Facebook site. Most of the Spanish-speaking housekeepers regard that Spanish is the primary language of communication both at home and at work. It is very much understandable for them to speak only Spanish at homes as their family members speak Spanish. When I asked why they preferred Spanish over another language at work they choired the same answer: because they work with mostly Spanish speakers and everyone speak Spanish. They also said that they have always worked with Spanish-speaking workers at some companies prior to working at Brighton. Jack and Enrique, for instance, mentioned at least four companies: an apparel factory, a landscape company, a restaurant, and a painting/construction company, where he worked with Spanish-speaking co-workers. In addition to that, communicating with the staffing agency staffs where they were affiliated with were always in Spanish. These housekeepers were glad that Brighton is very accommodative in terms of language use and the hotel never sets any rules
regarding what language they had to use and the workers were therefore able to use the language they were most comfortable with.

Due to the constant hotel high occupancy, Brighton is affiliated with staffing agencies to provide workers to carry out the housekeeping tasks. During my first 6 months of data collection, among the 65 total housekeepers, 41 were employed by two staffing agencies. This fact is not surprising considering that most of the housekeepers are immigrant workers. This also showed the dependency of U.S. hospitality industries on immigrant workers to undertake the entry level job markets, the type of jobs that are less preferable for domestic workers (Haviland, 2000). Joseph, the former housekeeping manager indicated that the housekeepers from the staffing agencies are among the best workers he has ever worked with. During his leadership period, Brighton has won three consecutive awards for excellent cleanliness and service for a hotel industry.

The executive housekeepers at Brighton housekeeping department comprised of Mexicans, Americans, and Dominicans, many of whom were inspector housekeepers whose job is to inspect the rooms after they had been cleaned to make sure that the room cleaners have done their works properly. Right above the inspectors are the coordinators, supervisors, and executive housekeepers, some of whom were Spanish-English bilinguals. One skill that many (although not all) of these employees shared is the ability to communicate in at least two languages. The bilingual executive housekeepers, some of whom had migrated a decade prior had been in the U.S. long enough to develop
fluency in English. Being a bilingual speaker, as Angie, the newly appointed housekeeping manager emphasized, seemed to be a definite advantage for the hotel since these women (all but one of the executive housekeepers were women) communicated constantly with the upper management (in English only) and with the other managers and room cleaners (in Spanish and English).

The housekeeping department is led by the board of managers or the housekeeping executives. The housekeeping executives normally consists of manager, assistant managers, and supervisors. In Brighton, however, in addition to supervisors, there were also coordinators whose duties were supporting the supervisors in handling the daily housekeeping activities and who are coordinating the task of the day in each working shifts. The housekeeping manager or is also commonly called the executive housekeeper is the head of the department. There are two assistant housekeeping managers whose duties are assisting the manager especially in handling administrative matters such as managing the schedules, daily activities, supply orders, and both upward and downward communication at the hotel. One of the two assistant managers is a Spanish-English bilingual speaker from Mexico. Below the managers are the supervisors, coordinators, and room inspectors. Both coordinator and room inspector main duty is to assist the supervisor in carrying out the daily tasks and they normally interact directly with the housekeepers on duties as they are on the floors most of the
time. The chart for the structural organization of the housekeeping department is depicted below:

![Structural Organization Diagram](image)

Figure 2. Structural Organization at Brighton Housekeeping Department

During my data collection period, there are three supervisors, two coordinators, and three room inspectors at the housekeeping department. Each of the supervisors worked for three shifts: morning shift, night shift, and overnight shift, while the coordinators worked only in the morning shift. One of the supervisors and a room inspector worked for the staffing agency.
C. Shifts and Task Coverage

Workers in each shift have different task coverage and focus. Morning shifts start approximately at 7 a.m. and ends whenever the housekeepers accomplished their tasks. Given that most hotel activities were carried out during the daytime, morning shift is obviously the one packed with wider task varieties compared to the other two shifts. It is also the only shift where the executive housekeepers, i.e., the managers, were available at the office. Room cleaning-related activities became the major task in the morning shift and therefore most of housekeepers, particularly the room cleaners and housemen work in this shift. There are fewer housekeepers working in both night and overnight shifts. The other tasks covered during the morning shift are laundry sorting, public area cleaning, and guest request services.

Room cleaning activities are carried out mostly in the morning. Room cleaners normally clean the rooms when the guests check out. For the occupied rooms, room cleaners usually need to wait until the guests requested room service. In the end of the pre-work staff meeting, the room cleaners get their list of tasks (task board), containing the number of ‘check-out rooms’ and occupied rooms. It also contains information on any particular rooms that need special attention such as whether the guest staying in the room is a VIP (Very Important Person), staying with pets, honeymooners, staying with children, guests with special needs, etc. In order to maintain privacy, task board does not contain any guest’s details. Room cleaners have their own assigned carts where they load
all cleaning and room amenities with the help of the housemen. When on duties, they push the carts from one room to another, and park it in the hallways. Each room cleaner has his or her own floor assignment. Violeta, a senior housekeeper, for instance, always works at the upper floors where presidential suites are located. Even though not set in stone, seniority seems to play a significant role in determining the room cleaners floor assignments, as I see that most of senior housekeepers are assigned the upper floors, where the VIP guests are located.

Some housekeepers such as room cleaners and housemen are required to work in teams, where each team member has different responsibilities, complemented one another. The team normally works at the same floors, and unless there were emergency issues, such as workers calling off, a room cleaner will always be teamed up with the same houseman. The room cleaners major task is cleaning and refreshing rooms, while housemen’s tasks facilitate their team mates’ tasks by restocking room amenities in housekeeping closets in every floor, stripping the rooms, taking out dirty linens and trash from the rooms. They also deliver room necessities needed by the room cleaners. Since such tasks require housemen to be relatively mobile, they are equipped with radio device to make sure the tasks are accomplished properly and on a timely manner.

Other than the housemen, housekeepers who are relatively mobile are the guest request attendants or runners as their tasks require them to ‘run’ from the housekeeping storage to the guest rooms. The runners who work only in the morning and night shifts
deliver items needed by the guests. These items are normally miscellaneous room
necessities that are not handled by the room cleaners. Runners use radio device to
communicate with their coworkers and supervisors. Finally, based on their mobility,
lobby attendants or lobby porters are housekeepers with most mobility as their tasks
require them to explore the entire public areas in the hotel. Their main tasks are cleaning
the public restrooms and other hotel facilities such as lobby, hallways, gym, and the
swimming pool and restocking amenities for those areas. Lobby attendants only work in
the morning and night shifts and there are two of them in each shift. Night shift lobby
attendants also assist another housekeeper such as the turn down attendant during the
hotel high occupancy.

Turn down service is a particular task where the housekeepers refresh the rooms
before the guests take a rest in the night. In other words, this task is Brighton’s way to say
‘good night’ to the guests. Given that the guests are in rooms during the task
accomplishment, turndown attendant has more opportunities to communicate with the
guests compared to the room cleaners. The main task of this housekeeper is replenishing
the rooms in the end of the day. This housekeeper also cleans and refreshes the rooms
based on the guests’ demands. Being able to communicate in English obviously becomes
paramount for the turn-down service attendants, considering that sometimes the
housekeeper needs to solve problems faced by the guests or to communicate the problems
with the housekeeping supervisor on site for assistance.
Unlike the executive housekeepers, housekeeping supervisors are available in all shifts. Because of the large task coverage, more supervisors work in the morning shift, while night and overnight shifts have one supervisor respectively. Coordinators only work in morning shifts. All supervisors working in the morning and overnight shifts are non-native English speakers, while the one working in the night shift is an American.

Night shift starts from 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The housekeeping tasks carried out in this shift are public area cleaning and refreshing, turndown service, guest request service. In addition to those routine tasks, there are also sometimes specific seasonal tasks that need housekeepers’ assistance such as conferences, meetings, and weddings. The last shift for the housekeepers run by Brighton is the overnight shift where workers handle deep-cleaning tasks in several main areas in the hotels such as floors, kitchen, and elevator areas. Based on the task coverages, this particular shift that starts at 11 p.m. and ends at 7 a.m. assigns housekeepers with specific cleaning skill.

Based on the frequency in interacting with guests, turndown attendants, lobby attendants, and runners have more opportunity to be exposed to guests or the other hotel visitors compared to the other group: room cleaners, housemen, and chute attendants. The staff working in the former group are normally those who can communicate in English as they are normally required to communicate more with guests and the other team members from different departments. Runners, for instance, are constantly required to communicate to the guest service attendants that work for the front office departments,
even though they normally do not communicate one way, as depicted in the following figure:

Figure 3. Guest Request Task Accomplishment Process

When guests need amenities for their rooms, they will call the guest service agent that works under the front office department. Upon receiving the call, the guest service agent will transfer the details of the message to the housekeeping supervisor through a radio communication. Since housekeeping and the front office departments are in the same channel, all staffs handling radios can hear the conversation or messages. The housekeeping supervisor then direct the messages to the runners so they can deliver the
amenities to the guests. Finally, the runner will report to the supervisor that the task is accomplished. During the hotel’s high occupancy, lobby attendants also perform runners’ duties. All lobby attendants and runners are NNES. Misunderstandings absolutely occurred during task accomplishment. Eduardo, one of the runners shared with me his experience in delivering wrong item to the guest:

*The supervisor I thought said ‘yoghurt’, man! So when I give yoghurt to the guest, the guest said, not yoghurt, I need the mat for the yoga. It is yoga mat not yoghurt. Sometimes supervisor and the front desk speak fast...*

No matter what language the housekeepers speak, being able to communicate with others is fully encouraged, even if they communicate in their native languages. There are at least four different native languages spoken by the housekeepers: English, Spanish, French, and Arabic. Even though Brighton does not particularly require team members at the housekeeping department to be able to speak English, Christopher the general manager believed that being able to speak English will be a benefit, considering that most of the time they have to work in teams within and across departments. English is the most possible medium of communication across departments. Therefore, even though diversities in languages are treasured, having some degree of communicative ability in English is suggested. With regard to working in team, Angelica, a turndown attendant revealed that she would rather choose her working partner, someone who speak
the same native language. She is fluent in English, but she said that dividing and
delегating tasks with coworkers who have the same native language is more convenient.

While some housekeepers work in teams, some others work individually with a

While some housekeepers work in teams, some others work individually with a
clear cut division of tasks. Lobby attendants, for instance, even though working together,
they are always found in different parts of the hotel with different task distributions.
They are responsible of cleaning three floors: the LL (Lower Lobby), the L (lobby), and
the second floor. Tasks are organized based on area coverages. Since there are two
lobby attendants in each shift, one of them work on the first area, the LL where
conference venues and public restrooms are located, and L, which includes lobby, coffee
shop, public restrooms, and entrance areas. Another lobby attendant is responsible for
the second area, the second floor with abundant guest function facilities such as
restaurant and bar, public and team member’s restrooms, business center, lounge,
swimming pool, and gym. As seen from the nature of tasks, lobby attendants are
frequently exposed to the guests especially at the events conducted at the hotel, during
which they may assist the guests with directions and simple assistance. Ruslan, a one of
the morning lobby attendant, for instance, proudly said that a guest complimented him for
assisting with the printing. This guest notified his helpfulness to the management and the
housekeeper was acknowledged at the hotel staff meeting.

Unlike the other housekeepers who usually work in teams, there are two
housekeepers who always work solo: the runner and the chute attendant. Runners deliver
the amenities to the occupied rooms based on guest’s request. For the chute attendants, since Brighton relies on outsource laundry service to handle the laundry, the tasks of the laundry attendant are sorting and organizing the laundry items in containers and trucks before and after washing process by the laundry service. After the washing process, the chute attendants reorganize the laundry items so that they go to the right places for the housekeeping department and the entire departments utilizing the laundry service.

Brighton assigns a chute attendant that work only in the morning shift. Their work station is located at the basement, right in front of the elevator landing. This location enables the housekeeper to at least meet and greet staffs who use the elevator as the chute room door is always open. Music is always played from the chute room and without going inside the chute room, people will find out who works on that day based the music they play: the Latino or the Nepali housekeepers.

D. The Meetings

In the housekeeping department, staff meetings are paramount and they mark the beginning of each shift. Morning shift has the longest meeting as normally it addresses the entire hotel status of the day and it has the most attendees. Morning meeting is led by the executive housekeepers or any assigned supervisor on duty. During this meeting, the housekeepers get their task boards containing the works they need to accomplish on that day. The night and overnight meetings cover some specific agenda in the hotel, which
typically includes events such as weddings, conferences, or meetings taking place in the hotel where housekeepers need to focus on.

Meetings are usually delivered in English, however, to accommodate the non-native English speakers, the executive housekeepers speak in both English and Spanish in the meetings. Angie the bilingual executive housekeeper said that her morning meetings with the housekeepers were always delivered in both English and Spanish. In the absence of bilingual managers, the meeting leader will appoint a bilingual housekeeper to help translate the messages. There were usually one or two housekeepers acting as translators during the meeting. Alberto, the Spanish speaking supervisor admitted that in addition to translating the messages in meetings, his translating task skill was also needed by the human and resource department in developing hotels advertisement in hotel’s website, newspapers, newsletters, and some other printed documents such as fliers, announcements, and booklets.

The management encourages the housekeepers to actively participate in the meetings as they want to hear their concerns on the tasks they carry out and their well-being in general. Based on the meetings she led, Angie the executive housekeeper told me that so far the housekeepers were actively engaged in the meetings. Most of the housekeepers asked questions and shared their opinions in Spanish which she then translate for the rest of the team. The problems on the floors were mostly solved during the meetings when housekeepers had the chance to interact with others.
Even though there is no restriction in using native language in the workplace, one of the supervisors said that being able to communicate in English equally crucial. This thought was particularly based on one of the guest’s reviews regarding problems they face in communicating with the housekeepers:

*Everything was amazing! The only thing I could say that was a slight issue was trying to speak with housekeeping staff and them not understanding English very well. Other than that it was exceptional [Guest’s review.]*

*We asked if she could come back in 30 minutes. She said “no English” … … “tresenta minutos despues por pavor” … “si” … [Guest’s review].*

For Brighton, it was rare to read guests’ review related to language problem. In fact, that was the only two comments I found from the entire year about guest commenting about the housekeeper’s communicative ability in English. The common review on housekeepers were usually directed to the quality of room cleaning activities and some other general comments such as addressing the housekeeper’s friendliness and punctuality. Christopher underlined that guests’ comments on housekeepers were rarely related to the language-related problems. If the language-related problems existed, he assured that the guests commonly understood the fact that housekeepers have language barrier:

*For those who have high language barriers, that’s not uncommon. And, I think guests for the most parts can understand, maybe they had problems in*
communicating with the housekeepers, but most of them can understand immediately when there is a language barrier.

To minimize problems related to language barrier, the management made effort to involve non-native English speaking (NNES) team members to get involved in activities where they could practice communicating in the dominant language used in the company: English. So far, as Christopher and the executive housekeepers explained, Brighton has not accommodated the NNES team members with workplace English classes. The company provides facilities that enable the NNES team members to communicate with others. The primary facility for them has been the Spanish-English translation available in most of hotel’s announcements and documents. There are also meetings and celebrations at hotel’s level where translation is also provided. One of the meetings, as Christopher said, is when the general manager addressed the hotel’s review from the customers:

_I know we have done in, I don’t know if you have attended any of our meetings, I try in the bigger presentation in the hotel I tried to have a bigger screen in Spanish so that they can follow along. I write it up my version and I will give it to Leonardo, Joseph, or somebody, you know somebody like Angie, somebody who can translate it and I am sure it’s not perfect but you know as long as they get the idea, especially when I’ll try to take my notes, because they can actually follow numbers, you know the charts and numbers, but not the comments_
Christopher conducted a weekly meeting attended by representatives from each
department, including the housekeepers. This meeting addresses the hotel’s most current
states and updates, based on reviews received from the guests. He always relied on
bilingual team members to assist him during his presentation. In his presentation slides
where he included commentary sections of the reviews, he also made duplicate slides in
Spanish version. He is confident that they can understand numbers and charts, but not
sentences. He always wanted to make sure that all team members can get the idea what
he said and follow along, that way they feel comfortable and included. Other than
assistance from the bilingual team members, he also said that he used external translation
service company in the past, and even online translation facilities such as the Google
translate site. His primary emphasis was not on accurateness but on how the message is
transferred. When mentioning about the printed documents, he told me that while it has
not been done in Brighton, in the corporate level saw documents translated in 27
languages.

E. The Break

All team members at Brighton are allowed to take one break during the working
shift that lasts for an hour in total. This break consists of long break or lunch break and
two additional 15-minutes break that becomes a welcomed perk for Brighton team
members. During the break, team members will normally have meals and socialize with
the others in the break room located at the basement. The break room at Brighton is
designed in such a way that would allow all team members from different departments to mingle and enjoy their meals together. The meals are always offered in buffet style with multiple choices from salad, main course, to desserts.

For some housekeepers, including those who have migrated in the U.S. for over two decades, this type of meal composition is strange. Suresh, a housekeeper from Nepal sometimes bring his own food because he said he does not find American food satisfying. I also sometimes noticed some Latino team members sharing their tamales, tostadas, and carnitas with their co-workers. Food, as they said, is something that they grew up with and therefore it was hard to switch to something unfamiliar. There are also vending machines in the break room for extra beverages and snacks. The menu choices of the day are displayed in front of the break room door, written in chalk, in English and Spanish. There are two television screens projected on the back wall. One of the screens is used to display hotel’s announcements and “wise-words of the day” which are always displayed in English. The other television is provided entertainment for the team members during their break.

The seating in the break room is designed to resemble restaurant style seating, allowing the team members to sit in groups. Christopher, the general manager would show up in the break room for lunch and dinner, greeting the team members in at least three languages, English, Spanish, and Arabic. Even though Christopher hoped that the team members would mingle more, the common view during the break time was almost
always that team members sit according to their departments, and what language they speak. Immigrant workers sit in the same group almost all the time. Even the housekeeping group, there were smaller groups within this group; the Latinos, the African Americans and white Americans, the other non-native English speaking housekeepers. The Spanish-speaking housekeepers always invite me to sit with them. I have some degree of membership in their groups as I speak a little Spanish and because of this the consider me as a Spanish learner. Sitting in an exclusively big group, they talked in Spanish most of the time with their co-workers. During the overnight shift, the TV would be airing Spanish-language channels as the break room would be occupied by the majority Spanish-speaking team members who are mostly housekeepers. They usually spend the break time watching telenovelas or Spanish soap operas on TV.

F. The Scheduling

Normally, full time housekeepers are required to work eight hours a day. During hotel’s high occupancy, some team members work for five to six days in a week. During this occasion, some housekeepers had to work over-time with no days off in a week. Some housekeepers said that they like peak season when they will get extra income. In addition to that, some housekeepers also admitted that in busy days they have more opportunity to communicate with more guests, as Jose, one of the room cleaner admitted:

*I like to work on busy days, like when Arnold festival is in here. I like to meet with very popular people when I work. When I clean the room I met a person who*
sing in the Rolling Stones when he is in room. He said I clean good. I tell my friend and he say oh my God you meet with the big people [Jose].

It appeared that most housekeepers were exposed to interacting in a multilingual environment for approximately 40 to 60 hours a week. Ruslan, the morning shift lobby attendant said that his task and responsibility as a lobby attendant has given him even more opportunities to interact with the guests. Ruslan who studies in a local community college admitted that he loves interacting with others to expand his network for his future career. He plans to open a small business with his friends upon finishing his study. His biggest problem so far was that it was challenging to juggle between his school, family, and his work schedules at the hotel.

Schedules are created based on housekeepers’ time availability they submitted when they were first hired. When they have changes in their time availability they will be required to fill in a form. They can also request a day off by filling in a day off request form. All forms are available in English and Spanish. Schedule is published every Thursday and it is displayed on the announcement board in front of the housekeeping office. Just like the housekeeping department forms, everything displayed on this announcement board is written in English and Spanish. Housekeepers are allowed to request day off due to family-related emergencies and other urgent circumstances. In order to request day off, housekeepers have to fill in request off form which is available in English and Spanish.
Based on tasks and responsibilities they are entitled to, Brighton used several terms to identify the housekeepers such as: room cleaner/room attendant, lobby porter/attendant, houseperson/houseman, laundry/chute attendant, turndown attendant, and runner, even though in general, all of them are called “housekeepers”. The titles defined task and responsibilities of each housekeeper. Regardless of the many different titles assigned to the housekeepers, the executive housekeepers expected that all housekeepers are flexible and have some degree of knowledge in basic housekeeping task: cleaning. Housekeepers’ experience in carrying out cleaning task is one of the most important aspect asked during the hiring interview. After being hired, a housekeeper will commonly get a week of training lead by a senior housekeeper. One of the most important aspect in training is getting to know several housekeeping terms such as: occupied room, vacant dirty, vacant clean, and vacant ready rooms, check out and check in, DND (Do Not Disturb), VIP (Very Important Person), turndown service, and stay over, to name a few. The training also included details on communicating with guests such as greetings, knocking on doors, and self introduction. There is a piece of paper in every housekeeping carts that include English-Spanish translation for list of items needed in room cleaning activities, ranging from beddings, coffee set, bathroom set, and cleaning equipment.

During the training session, there are several important aspects that housekeepers have to learn. One of them is knocking on guest’s doors. Sounding as simple as
knocking on the door, in the hotel, this should be done in such a way that it will not disturb the guests. Housekeepers have to knock on the doors for at least three times before deciding what to do. This ‘what to do’ details include notifying the supervisor or entering the room under supervisor’s permission. The housekeeper should identify him/herself in clear voice by mentioning ‘room attendant’, ‘housekeeping’, or ‘guest request’ depending on the reason of room visit. In addition to that, there is also several ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ on floors areas. Sometimes a guest may ask housekeepers to give directions or to let them enter their rooms. Housekeepers are not allowed to simply letting strangers in any rooms. During the training, they are asked to make sure that the housekeepers have ask the person’s identity. In the past, there has been incident happened when a housekeeper letting someone enter the room. It turned out that this person was a thief that stole a guest’s belongings.

Another important aspect in training is how to handle cleaning equipment, the chemicals for cleaning purposes. In Brighton, chemicals are bottled with different colors and labels, containing the names and usages. Labels contain explanation in English and Spanish on how each chemical is used and how each should be handled. Realizing the danger of misusing the chemical products, there is a particular housekeeper assigned in bottling the chemical and organized them in caddies. Chemical caddies in a rack in the storage room. Raquel one of the room cleaners revealed that she benefited from the English-Spanish labelling as she has witnessed her co-worker in another hotel got fired
after mistakenly misplacing the chemical bottles and poured it in a plastic cup. Her co-worker has not only lost his job but also got charged because someone else at the hotel accidentally drank the chemical and got hospitalized. The availability of Spanish translation in some tools and amenities has always been a major concern at the housekeeping department considering the harmful consequences of misusing them. The housekeeping manager explained that she also made effort to translate some verbal daily communication including the ones transferred through radio communicative device. She purposively modified the way she pronounced her name in order that the Spanish speaking housekeepers recognize her easily. She emphasized that accommodating the Spanish speaking housekeepers has significantly accelerated the task accomplishment.

G. The Radio

Approximately 75 percent of communications during task accomplishment at the housekeeping department, including the ones across department occurred through radio assisted media. During my data collection process, Joseph, the former housekeeping manager introduced the new version of radio to replace the old ones that only enabled the users to communicate one way. Through the new radio, the user is able to hear the other speakers from the same channel. Before launching the use of new radio, Joseph invited all executive housekeepers and some representative housekeepers from each shift for a quick training. This training was followed by snowball trainings by the supervisors and the housekeepers previously trained. Since he is a bilingual speaker, the training was
delivered in English and Spanish. When I asked Angelica, a turndown attendant, regarding what two important points in the training she mentioned:

_The first is I can hear everything everybody said even the security and the front desk. I am happy because I can people can work fast because everyone hear when supervisor give a task. But, I am scary (scared) that if I answer people don’t understand if my English is not good. And, also the second one we cannot say bad words. Joseph say we cannot do that because all people can hear._

After attending the training, Angelica was assigned a radio and she started using the device on the job. Angelica noticed the benefit of using the radio during work by mentioning that housekeepers can complete the task quickly because everyone was aware what is going on through the radio. She admitted that she learned a lot on how to communicate in English as radio communication is used across department. Through my observation I noted that Angelica learned to use different expression to respond to a radio talk such as: ‘copy that’ instead of ‘got it’, to say that she comprehends a message; ‘no problem’ instead of ‘you’re welcome’ to respond to thank you. She said that it was not complicated to understand tasks assigned through radio as the supervisor or whoever giving tasks will always speak slowly and articulated. She also said that she spoke in Spanish with her co-worker most of the time. She only used English with non-Spanish speaking housekeepers. Some of the managers, including the American ones
accommodated the radio communication when speaking with Spanish-speaking housekeepers:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kara & : \text{Raul, room 1134 service } \text{necesito. (Kara mentioned the room number in Spanish)} \\
Raul & : \text{Please repeat the room number.} \\
Esperanza & : \text{Kara, the room is completed. Do you want me to punch out clean?} \\
Kara & : \text{Ok, Raul, could you please punch the room?} \\
Raul & : \text{Ok.} \\
Kara & : \text{Gracias, Raul.}
\end{align*}
\]

Kara is one of the supervisor who does not speak Spanish. She, however, always tried to accommodate the Spanish-speaking housekeepers, such as Raul, by inserting Spanish words in her instructions, especially when she mentioned room number. However, Raul admitted that Kara’s Spanish sentence was most of the time not understandable. As a result, Raul made effort to speak English to her. Most of the time whenever problems occurred because of language, the bilingual managers and supervisors would jump in the conversation to solve the problems:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kara & : \text{Ruben, por favor go to room 1239 (Kara mentioned the room number in Spanish) Violeta needs you to pick up dirty linens.} \\
Ruben & : \text{Repeat for me.}
\end{align*}
\]
Kara : Violeta in room 1239 needs you there

Ruben : OK (then Ruben called Esperanza in Spanish to make sure he got the message right).

Eduarda : ...Kara, can you repeat, please?

Ruben, even though he thought he copied the message from the supervisor, he was still not sure that he got the message correctly, so he called a room inspector, Esperanza. Since Esperanza was not responding, Eduarda jumped on the conversation and asked Kara to clarify the message before finally spoke back to Ruben to solve the problem. Esperanza and Eduarda are Spanish speakers so Ruben spoke with them in Spanish. Ruben always tried to speak with Kara in English because he thought that the supervisor will understand him better. Likewise, Kara also thought that accommodating Spanish-speaking housekeepers by speaking in Spanish would help in transferring the message faster. Ruben admitted that talking in English through a radio, or phone in this matter, is harder than talking with the person face to face.

Since it is not easy for some non-English speaking housekeepers to communicate through radios, the bilingual executive housekeepers always stand by whenever needed. Angie admitted that for the housekeepers who speak exclusively Spanish, she pronounced names (including her name) in such a way Spanish speakers do. Raul, one of the housemen said that he has an experience being called 5 times through a radio by a supervisor, and he did not realize that the supervisor mentioned his name. When Angie
jumped in the conversation, mentioning her name and his, he finally comprehended. According to Raul, Spanish names should be pronounced in Spanish way. After that incident, Angie said, there was a short training for the housekeepers and executive housekeepers during her morning meeting on how to pronounce names ‘in different languages’.

All executive housekeepers and housekeepers are equipped with radio device at work, except for room cleaners. Radios must be carried at all time and they must be projected to the correct channels. The reason why room cleaners do not carry radio is that they are working in relatively the same locations everyday. Thus, tracking them is not as complicated as tracking mobile housekeepers such as the lobby attendants and housemen. Since room cleaners do not carry radios, they communicate with the housekeeping office using phones available in the rooms. They can also use the housemen’s radio whenever they work together in a team.

Radio device also facilitates communication across department. The radio has four channels that enables several groups to communicate together within one communication window. People can listen to everyone speaking in the same channel. The channels are organized based on how a particular task is distributed and completed by workers within and across department. Channel one, for instance, hosts the housekeeping, front desk, security, and maintenance departments. These departments, most of the time, complete one another in task accomplishment. No matter which
department starts the communication, during a normal room cleaning activities, for instance, communication between the housekeeping and front office departments dominates the daily radio interaction:

A room cleaner, upon finishing the room cleaning activities, reports to the room inspectors or supervisors on duty at office. The room inspectors or supervisors will then check the rooms to make sure that the room cleaners have performed the tasks correctly. When the rooms are ready, they mark them by ‘punching clean’ on the guest room phone or directly call the housekeeping office, letting others know that the room is ready to sell.

Figure 4. Radio Communication Flow across Departments
The housekeeping supervisor will report to the front office staff that the room is clean, and this room is called a ‘vacant ready’ room. Alternatively, sometimes a front office staff starts the communication by asking the housekeeping supervisor regarding the room cleaning situation. The supervisor, through a houseman, or direct access to the guest room, finds out whether room cleaners have completed the cleaning activities.

Another radio-supported joint task that the housekeeping department has is with the security department. There are at least two incidents that will involve security officer to handle the task. First, in the case where guests left belongings in rooms, the room cleaners assigned the cleaning task should let the supervisor know regarding what items are in the rooms. Whenever they found valuables, supervisors would notify security officers to go to the rooms and secure the items. If the items are not considered valuables, the room cleaners would put them in the bags and put labels on them. These labels have Spanish translation. All guest’s belongings are stored at the housekeeping office until the guests contacted the hotel to claim them. The second case that involve the security officer is when Very Important Person (VIP) guests staying in the hotel. After being notified by the front officers regarding checking out schedules, the security officer would go to the rooms and make sure that these ‘vacant dirty’ rooms are ready to be cleaned. The housekeeping supervisors would then notify the room cleaners through housemen, or directly go to the floors and meet with them, regarding which rooms are vacant dirty. During this time, cellphones communication is considered more effective
than the previous two techniques. Supervisors would usually text the room cleaners regarding the vacant dirty rooms. Some housekeepers, therefore, have privilege to use their cellphones during work.

There is no rule on what language to be used for radio communication. When problems occur during interaction, someone will speak up to help considering everyone at the same channel can listen to the conversations. Some Native English Speaking (NES) housekeepers, however, were occasionally unhappy when radio communication were in Spanish because it was hard for them to keep up with the conversation. Tanya, a NES room cleaner was caught in a Spanish to Spanish interaction during her shift so, borrowing a houseman’s radio she notified everyone: “This is Tanya! Don’t speak in Spanish!” Tanya admitted that even though it has been frustrating sometimes to work with the majority of Spanish-speaking coworkers but she also admitted that she benefits from being able to learn a foreign language.

H. I Google Everything…

One afternoon when we were on break, Violeta told me that her heels hurt. I asked her if she fell down and injured her heels. On her smart phone, she showed me a picture of a doctor operating patient’s heels and said, “This is my problem, but I’m scared and I don’t want to see the doctor, no dinero (no money)”. The next day she told me about what has happened to Elmo, one of the housemen that was no longer working for the hotel. She did this non-verbally, by typing her sentence in Spanish,
copied it, and Google translated it so I could understand what she said. Violeta also sometimes texted the supervisors directly in Spanish and the non-English speaking supervisors would usually use Google translation to understand her messages. The hotel General Manager, Christopher specifically emphasized that sometimes he also makes use of Google translation site when working on his presentation slides for the hotel meetings. He mentioned that in the absence of bilingual assistants, Google translation has helped him translate his slides:

*We also use Google translation, you know, not perfect but sometimes it’s a matter of getting the point acrossed, right? So there are these multiple ways to do but there is nothing official [Christopher].*

Even though using cell phones is not suggested during the work, Angie said that this mode of communication has actually facilitated and speed up the task accomplishment. The function of cellphones, for some housekeepers, are beyond communication tools. Violeta, when she was a newly hired room cleaner, for instance, using her cellphones as part of her training support. She admitted that during the training she needs to remember a lot of items and details of tasks. The supervisor gave her permission to take pictures of room details so it will be easier for her to remember what amenities needed and where to put them in the room. During the break, while talking totally in Spanish, her coworker, Jack, also used cellphone to show others pictures from his country, Peru. One afternoon during lunch, I caught him surrounded by a lot of team
members when he, switching between Spanish and English, talking about traditional Peruvian food, and the beautiful tourism destination: Machu Pichu. He said his smartphone helped her visualize her explanation in Spanish and English.

The use of cellphones during work is not suggested in public areas. There are notifications on announcement boards throughout the hotel that team members are restrained from using cellphones during work, particularly within the guest’s sight. In addition to that, when VIP guests staying in the hotel, the use of cellphones in public areas is prohibited. As the hotel has a high concern on protecting the guests’ privacy, there were announcements written both in English and Spanish regarding the prohibition of using cellphones in public areas, taking pictures of guests and posting guests’ related events in social media. As most of the housekeepers use social media such as Facebook to communicate with friends and family, the company makes sure that the guests’ privacy is guaranteed during their stay at Brighton. The security officers keep track of the team members’ social media pages to make sure that nobody violates this rule.

I. The Life of a Housekeeper

As part of the research process, I shadowed two housekeepers from two different positions: a turndown attendant and a houseman, to further contextualize the work experience of the immigrant workers to supplement the observation and interview data. I observed Angelica a couple of times and during my shadowing days, I had an opportunity to work with her as her helper on the floors during the turndown service activities. As a
Angelica is a night shift housekeeper who has been working in two different roles as a room cleaner and a turndown attendant for over a decade. She told me that she hopes to retire from housekeeping activities soon and switch to another job in a restaurant as a cook. Taking care of two children by herself and her father, Angelica admitted that it is tiring to work as a housekeeper, “I am more and more old I am forty-five and to be a housekeeper you need to be strong” she jokingly said. Many of the housekeepers with whom I spent time shared similar stories. Some of the housekeepers are in their fourth or fifth decade of life and they confessed that they are just tired of working in labor-intensive jobs. Some of the housekeepers have worked since when they were pre-teens. When I worked with the housekeepers at Brighton, one of the housemen, for instance, was a younger man in his early 30’s. This man, Jack, also hopes to retire soon and returns back to his country to run a grape plantation.
I found that the housekeeping stories are poignant yet beautiful and honest because when I think of work, I think of a longer career path that typically ends when people reach a traditional retirement age in this country, 65 to 70 years old. Many of the workers with whom I worked with at Brighton were as young as early 20’s to mid 40’s or older and mostly spoke often of retirement aspirations. The career path for many persons who work in this service oriented and intensive physical labor occupations is that they work extremely hard for 20 years and retire at a young age with aspiration of enjoying many years still remaining in their lives.

Angelica’s case is especially interesting because she is one of the housekeepers who showed a significant development of communicative ability in English. When I interviewed her, it was her last two weeks of working as a housekeeper before she moved on to work in a restaurant as a pastry cook, the job she has always dreamed of. I remember her telling me when I asked about her age: “I am 45 years old, I know I look older, but that’s what this job can do to you only in 10 years, you become old [laughter]”. Highly energetic, extremely outspoken, and very personable, Angelica is one of the most fascinating immigrant workers that I met during my data collection activities at Brighton.

Migrating from El-Salvador with her parents in 2005, Angelica told me that as a farm girl she has never imagined she would end up living in America. She travelled to America because of fulfilling her father’s dream to change the family’s history, after her
mother passed away. Angelica admitted that she has never formally studied English prior to migrating to the U.S. Her only experience in learning English was in high school where she attended a class once a week, taught by an El-Salvadorian English teacher. Some of her ‘rich’ friends attended private English lessons, and she said it was unaffordable for her. Her favorite English lesson in high school was when the teacher asked the students to sing English songs. She said she learned about ‘how to pronounce English like Americans’ from the songs, even though she said that most of the songs that the teacher brought to the class were from ‘The Beatles’. After finishing high school, Angelica attended a two-year diploma business school and worked as a saleswoman in her home country. In her native country, she never had any chance to meet and communicate with native English speakers. She watched a few ‘American’ movies but most of them were dubbed in Spanish. Since she never thought she would migrate to the U.S. she did not specifically prepare herself with any English lessons in El-Salvador. Angelica admitted that she came to the U.S. with almost zero ability to communicate in English.

Being a housekeeper was Angelica’s first professional experience in the U.S. Her business school diploma she obtained from a college back in El-Salvador was apparently of no use. Armored with that diploma, she tried to apply for some jobs but no American companies were willing to hire her because the diploma was not issued by an American
school. She also believed that her limited ability to communicate in English was actually the major culprit for her no luck in finding a job that she wants.

Angelica’s father got a job in landscaping company owned by a Mexican man. Through his employer, he introduced Angelica to a manager of a staffing agency that sends Spanish-speaking workers to companies in the Midwest area in the U.S. Through the agency, Angelica could finally secure a job as a housekeeper in downtown Columbus Ohio. Communicating with people from the agency has shown how important it was to build network and the agency was obviously her very first professional network as she could always communicate with people in the agency without any problems. Working for the agency has made Angelica feel ‘at home’ because ‘everybody speaks Spanish’.

Fueled by her intention to expand her professional network, she decided to go back to school. Juggling her busy schedule between work and home, she managed to attend classes at a local community college in Columbus, Ohio. She took English classes twice a week where she learned mostly grammar:

*I thought the classes is fun but it is only grammar. I want to learn to write because it is hard. But I only need the certificate because I need it to get a good job. I finish the English class until level 9. Now I can speak better with people in the hotel, um speak in English, even though it is not good enough. At home I ask my kids to speak Spanish and English with me because the teacher told me it is good for us.*
After her children were born, however, she had no time to continue the English lessons. She spent most of the time at work, seven days a week. Both of her U.S. born children speak Spanish and English. Angelica decides to raise them to be bilingual speakers because she said her child’s pre-school teacher suggested her to do so. Even though she admitted that Spanish has been the language the family members to speak at home, she asked her children to speak English with her so she will be able to practice her English. She said that sometimes her children had problems in comprehending Spanish words so she had to give explanations in English.

Considering that Angelica can communicate in English well, the agency offered her a job at the food and beverage department, as a breakfast attendant, in a small hotel which is under Brighton corporate management. She was so happy with this second job because in addition to the extra income, she has more opportunity to explore different professional area. In this job, her main duty is preparing breakfast for hotel’s guests and serving the food in a buffet style breakfast station. Being able to communicate in English is absolutely required for this job as she needs to communicate with the guests on the job. Angelica believed that this job will serve as a springboard for her next dream job after retiring from the hospitality industry, a pastry cook.

As a night shift worker, Angelica said that it is relieving to see her children are well fed and vast asleep when she is at work every night. Even though Angelica thought
that the schedule works well for her, she admitted that working as a turndown attendant is not easy:

*Sometimes I meet a guest that is angry because his room is not cleaned by the housekeepers in the morning. Sometimes it is too much work, I have to check rooms whether the guests are OK in the night and clean a lot of rooms too. I don’t like when I have to speak with the guest in the room, I want to clean it but when there is no guest in the room. They ask a lot of question and you see my English is OK but not that good.*

As a turndown attendant, Angelica’s main task is refreshing the rooms so the guests will be able to take a rest conveniently. Technically, the rooms where she works on are already clean as they become the morning housekeeper’s responsibility to clean the rooms. There will be some occasions, however, when she needs to clean the vacant dirty rooms. These rooms are usually generated from late check out guests or leftover rooms from morning room cleaners who ‘hang’ some of their rooms. Hanging or leaving without cleaning is allowed due to emergencies that require a room cleaner to dismiss early. This, of course, would give more leftover tasks for a night housekeeper, such as Angelica.

Due to her busy schedule as a single mother with two children, a full-time housekeeper, and a breakfast attendant, I interviewed Angelica four times in two weekends, each of which lasted around ten to fifteen minutes. I observed Angelica
several times when she worked in a team with a houseman. I also had an opportunity to shadow her doing the turndown service tasks. The following brief narrative depicts a day in Angelica’s work lives, derived from the observation, including from the shadowing days, and the interview.

1. Handling the Turndown Service Tasks with Angelica

It was around 3:15 p.m. and a group of housekeepers who worked in the night shift assembled at the housekeeping office, waiting for Kara, the Supervisor on duty. There were 6 housekeepers working on that day: a turndown service attendant, a houseman, a runner, two lobby attendants, and a supervisor. The cacophony of sounds was simultaneously delightful and chaotic at the same time as the housekeepers talked to each other in English, Spanish, and Creole. These group of housekeepers truly represent the multicultural 21st century U.S. workplace. The United States is increasing in cultural diversity across organizational levels, but principally at the lower levels as seen in Brighton housekeeping department. Angelica speaks with her coworkers in Spanish but code switches to English to address the non-Spanish speakers. “Hola como están todos? ” (“Hi, how is everybody doing?”). La China, I didn’t see you yesterday, how are you, Chica?”, Angelica addresses everyone energetically, including me. Kara opened the housekeeping door, then greeted everyone. She had some announcements regarding the list of tasks for everyone: two meetings at the lower lobby, a pre-wedding dinner gathering at the atrium restaurant, and a couple of VIP guests that the housekeepers
needed to handle on that day. The housekeepers grabbed their keys and radios and went on their ways as the Kara wished them a good day and said, “Remember everyone, channel one, no cheating” as she gestured towards her radio. Before she left, she printed a task board and handed it to Angelica. Glancing at her paper, Angelica walked towards the elevator to start her work on the floors.

Angelica and I set to begin her shift. She opens a closet door in the 12th floor and grabbed a plastic housekeeping cart which is about the size of a large supermarket shopping cart with three shelves in its lower front shelf. The top shelf holds room amenities, the middle one is where she puts the cleaning tools and chemicals while the lower one holds linens and towels. As she prepared the cart, filling the shelves with linens, towels, and toilet papers, Angelica showed me her task board and marked on some of the lists with a pen, “I am doing DND first today, so I will know if I have to clean some rooms, then I will clean non DND rooms, then we can deliver the candies”. “Oh, ok” I responded. “I like it when I know all rooms are clean and all I need is just delivering candies”, Angelica continues. I cannot help but wonder about Angelica’s feelings as I noticed how quiet and spooky it was in the hallways and stairs. “Do you ever get lonely or afraid working here by yourself?” She replied, “Ah, not by myself, most of the time I work with someone. But, of course no. This kind of job? Oh, please. It doesn’t allow me to” [laughter].” “When I first started working at another hotel, old hotel, I found the building to be old and scary at night, but here, the restaurant is
downstairs over there and see? We can see many people.” Angelica continued, pointing at the atrium restaurant swarmed by the guests on that busy afternoon. I nodded my head and helped her arranging bathroom supplies in the cart. “Are you bored yet, La China?” Angelica asked. I insisted, “No, I am not.” I lied. We proceed to the hallways then checking the DND rooms, from the upper floors down to the lower ones; 15th, 14th, (there is no 13th floor), 12th, for nearly an hour and boredom already took over me. Angelica whispered, “thank God”, every time she saw the DND sign remained at the door handle, which means that we skip this room for any kinds of service. Suddenly Francis, the runner, spoke on the radio, “Angelica, room 1212 took the DND.” Angelica said, “OK we need to go there and see what’s going on in the room.” “OK, you’re the boss,” I said. We went to the room to actually find out that the room is clean and well organized. It turns out this room just needed some amenities like hand towels and toilet papers. We visited more non-DND rooms that night because Francis’ radio kept on bombarding us with the notices on guests removing their DND signs. We supplied a lot of missing amenities in the bedroom pantries and bathrooms. “Francis, please stop talking,” said Angelica, hoping that there will be no more guests needing service. Well, actually it’s not bad at all. VIP guests are nice people; they never trash the rooms” Angelica continued. Then she explained, when there are events in downtown, such as the body building, marathon events, football weekends, or other festivities in town, cleaning rooms were unbearable. Watching her moved like a ninja kept me a little distracted so I tried to
write notes and leaned back in the hallway rail. In the blink of an eye, it was already 5 p.m. and I noticed that my feet were sore from standing up and walking for almost 2 hours.

During the shift, Angelica shared some stories about her personal life. One of those stories is about her daughter. We arrived at this conversation topic because the last time I saw her, about a week prior, Angelica was talking on the phone in the break room and she said that she was talking to a doctor to schedule a regular check-up for her daughter. “How is your daughter? What happens, is she OK?” I asked. She parked the cart at the elevator landing and said, “you know my daughter is special?” “Why? Of course she is very special” I replied. “No, my daughter is a special she has a down syndrome”, she responded, showing me a picture of a little girl from her cellphone. “Can I hug you?” I said. “It’s ok”, she tried to hide her sadness. She shared with me her activities at home everyday, especially taking care of her daughter who has a special need. She visited a doctor in downtown once a month for a regular check-up. She admitted that her daughter has been one of the reasons for her to continue learning English. She wants the best for her son and daughter. Especially for her daughter, she told me about her plan to enroll her to a good school so she will have a good future. She told me that the doctor who took care of her daughter is very nice and understanding, “The doctor told me that my English is good”, Angelica continues as she looked at her cellphone and said that it is time for a break. “We skipped a 15-minute break earlier, at

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5:30 p.m., to take longer break for dinner, 45 instead of 30 minutes”. Angelica and I checked DND rooms and talked until 7:15 p.m., when we walked over to the cafeteria at the basement to grab some dinner.

In the cafeteria, we grabbed food from the buffet area and ran into two of Angelica’s coworkers who worked at the morning shift who are sitting in a booth. We join them and talk, laugh, and eat for several minutes. Sometimes housekeepers working in the morning shift had to stay late because they need extra hours and offered themselves to work on more rooms, which, for Angelica, was a total benefit because she would have less rooms to clean. The other housekeepers seemed curious about me and my motives for working together with Angelica and talked with them in a group. They say to the group, “La China! I have been here for so many years and no one was ever interested in us and what we do; you are the first one.” Such statements are both heartbreaking and gratifying, commenting my desire to work with Angelica, cleaning rooms. Angelica, her coworkers, and I laughed as we joked and poked fun at each other.

Among Brighton housekeepers, I was nicknamed ‘La China’, which is roughly translated to ‘Chinese girl’. They said that it is common for people of any Asian descent to be called ‘China’ in Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America, even though when I checked it with several sources, this term has both derogative and affectionate connotations. Considering how welcoming they are to me every time, I choose to perceive ‘La China’ as a term of affection. In addition to that, the Spanish speaking
housekeepers always regard me as the ‘Spanish learner’, which they set as one of the token to be able to enter their groups. Having further talk with the group during dinner I got to witness some of the housekeepers’ outside-of-work personas. I also got to be exposed to how these Spanish speaking workers feel about their native language, when one of them said:

*I have rarely felt humiliated; but he [the housekeeper] knows Spanish, he speaks Spanish to everyone, to the boss, but he always speaks English to me. Why? I don’t know about you, but I feel humiliated. We will understand it better when we use our language, he wants to test me or something?* [laughter].

One of Angelica’s coworkers shared with us how she felt when a housekeeper who understand Spanish chose to speak English with her and Spanish to everyone else. She felt humiliated and wondered if this person just wanted to ‘test’ her ability to speak English. She said speaking Spanish benefitted her as she sometimes can keep a secret from the English-speaking workers. We all giggled as Angelica’s two coworkers looked at their watches and announce that it was time to go back to work. They left Angelica and I talk for a few more minutes when we heard Kara notified the lobby attendants about coffee spill in the lobby, that they need to clean it. George, the lobby attendant sitting across from our table copied the message and left the cafeteria. We walked back to the floors to continue our tasks.

It was 8:30 p.m. and the task that awaits us is the same one that Angelica has been
performing for almost four hours-checking DND rooms. We continued to finish the remaining six floors, checking the door tags, cleaning rooms, until we finally arrived at the bottom floors. When we finally finished our seemed to be a never ending task, we walked to the housekeeping office to pick up the chocolate candies for the guests.

Angelica explained to me that these candies are presented to the newly arriving guests as a welcoming token. When we entered the elevator on the way to the upper floors, Suresh, the laundry attendant walked by and interrupted her explanation by saying, “Hola, como estas?” [Hi how are you?] “Muy bien, gracias”. [Very good, thank you] “You speak Spanish?” I asked Suresh, considering that he is a Nepali. “Everybody here speaks Spanish, so I speak Spanish” Suresh replied. “Suresh and I have worked together since this hotel was opened” Angelica said. Some of her coworkers are from different nationalities that she admitted, she has never heard before, such as Somalia, Haiti, Nepal, Laos, and Uzbekistan. She told me how amazed she is knowing that some of her coworkers, and especially the management staffs, are willing to learn Spanish because Spanish speaking workers are majority in the hotel. Angelica did not continue her story as she has no idea about those countries she just mentioned, instead she showed me the list of the rooms that we had to visit for turn down service that evening. There were 60 rooms in total. My feet hurt already before we even started this assignment. However, it turned out that this task was a bit fun for me, but not for Angelica. In this task, we knocked on rooms’ door to offer service, and saying, “Turn down service” outside the
door so the guests could hear us. “We have to say that, not anything else,” Angelica explained. Then, we waited for the guest to respond. We knocked on the door three times before we could enter the rooms and put the candies on the side table, switch on the night lamp, fold the duvet, and close the curtain in each room. Angelica said that there are a lot of unpleasant experience during this activity, and this makes her feel nervous every time she knocks on the doors:

I knocked the door, knocked again, no answer, knocked on the door again, ok, no answer, so I entered the room. 3 times, OK? When I entered the room, it was dark. It is the suite so you cannot see the bedroom because it is far away.

Suddenly she jumped from the bed and screamed. I was with Enrique and he saw it, not me, he saw the lady. She was naked. I just said sorry and left the room [laughter].

During the turndown service activities, it is possible that the guests are inside the room. When they are inside, they will respond to the housekeeper and let them know if they need service. Incident might happen when there is a guest who is not aware of the turndown service activity. When this happens, both guest and housekeeper might feel uncomfortable. Angelica shared with me an incident she and her coworker had when they were not aware that there was a guest inside when they entered the room. Because of this possibility, turndown attendants are usually those who has the ability to communicate in English so problems and misunderstanding can be minimized.
Angelica’s ability to communicate in English, coupled with her warm personality is perfect for this task.

Angelica and I proceed to count the number of rooms we had to visit as she prepared to move to our last task that night, cleaning the executive lounge that is closed at 10 p.m., the time when we have to clean it. We counted 56 rooms in total. It was around 9:30 p.m., so in around 5 hours we had cleaned 9 rooms and refreshed another 60 rooms. Angelica put away the cart and we went to the cafeteria to grab some snacks for our quick 15-minute break. The cafeteria was very quiet. The runner, a Mexican man was there, eating cereal, watching telenovelas. Angelica talked with him for around 5 minutes while I walked to the ladies’ room. After the break we went to the top floor. We exchanged a couple of casual greetings with two bar waitresses in the elevator. As Angelica prepares to continue cleaning the executive lounge, she asked me, “What stood out for you when working as a housekeeper?” I responded: The time when you have to work by yourself. I felt that this job would be hard for me to do as I did not have much contact with others. I am a social person. Angelica responded, “Really, OK; I know that you need to talk. I don’t really feel like that because I want to finish my work.” Angelica and I continued to talk about work, personal life, and other miscellaneous topics as we entered the executive lounge that was very quiet that night and it was a quarter to 10 p.m. Everyone must have left. “Please tell me a little bit more about how you feel about working by yourself most of the time and finish all these tasks” I inquired. Angelica
responded, “Like I said, I don’t really feel lonely working by myself most of the time. If I have a partner that’s good. If not, that’s also good, I actually like that I don’t have to talk to a lot of people all the time.” I asked her, “Really? Why is that?” Angelica responded:

Look, for example, the language problem. My English is I think OK, but not very good. For example, I have problems in giving explanations; I usually still struggle telling people something. So I usually write it in Spanish and translate it in English using my phone and show them, but that’s not good.

I nodded my head as a signal that I empathize with what Angelica had just said as she wiped the coffee tables. There was one more last thing to finish, cleaning the floor. Handling me the broom, Angelica said, “you can sweep the floor, and I will mop behind you.” As we worked on it, we continued talking about interacting with others in the workplace. I asked her, “By the way you said that you don’t like talking to people when you work. How are your relationships with your boss and coworkers?” She replied:

“They are OK for the most part; we must work together and finish our tasks everyday, because if one does a bad job, another person will suffer, because leave more jobs for our coworkers, for example, when the morning housekeepers don’t finish cleaning rooms, I have to clean them, I will suffer [laughter].” We have to be nice to each other because we spend time more with each other than with our family at home.” OK, what about boss? I asked. “Boss?” She replied and looked around as if she was worried someone was listening to our conversation. Lowering her voice, she said, “Some boss, they are
nice and I love it here because some boss they speak Spanish.”

While cleaning the floor, we continued talking about workplace relationship and other miscellaneous topic, such as how we view housekeeping daily activities and the workplace situation. “I will report today to Kara that I teach you good [laughter] cleaning rooms, rooms, rooms, and the lounge, no, actually it is boring” Angelica said as we said goodbye to the lounge hostess. She, once again, commented on the boring aspect of her work. I tried to brush it off by saying, “No, I have a great respect for the work you do and I learned a lot. You’re a good teacher”. Regarding the respect to the works that the housekeepers have done, Angelica shared with me that Brighton gives utmost appreciation to the housekeepers. She said that the housekeepers have a lot of achievements and have helped the hotel win numerous awards for hotel cleanliness and excellence in service. “We had a party every year on housekeeping week to celebrate,” she said enthusiastically. During this party, she said, housekeeping team members were granted freedom of “not working”, where they could enjoy food, festivities, and gifts. During this celebration, too, the they have a housekeeping ‘tradition of torturing the bosses’ by asking them one by one to sit on a chair that is placed backwards, above an iced-water pond. Then the housekeepers will hit a target placed at the top of the chair with a tennis ball. Whenever the target is hit, the chair will turn upside down and whoever sits on it will fall into the pond.

Other than the party, Angelica mentioned the hall of fame and housekeepers’
display rug to acknowledge the housekeepers’ achievement. “What do you think about that?” I asked her opinion on this ‘acknowledgement tradition’. “Honestly”, Angelica said, “I don’t like that, because in my culture, we need to be humble. If you do something good, it is better to remain a secret. The hall of fame and the achievement display will show you that you are snobbish.” Angelica commented on the difference of working culture in El-Salvador and the U.S. In her native country, achievement is not something that need to be displayed, while Brighton, as Carly, the assistant housekeeping manager puts it, displays achievement as a hidden agenda to motivate team members to do better on the job and to acknowledge and appreciate the team members for their hard work and achievement.

To celebrate our turndown achievement for the day, Angelica asked me to help her prepare a report to the supervisor, by marking the items listed on the task board. There were a lot of tasks that we have accomplished during the long 8 hours shift, exploring the entire 15 floors in the hotel and worked on the same tasks over and over again. In one of our engaging conversations on the elevator landing, Angelica asked me, “La China, do you know what I want in my life?” then she went on:

You know some people, when I told them that I clean rooms and bathrooms for a living they felt bad for me. But I think my job as a housekeeper is not bad because it is something that I do to help my family. Life is not easy in America but I enjoy my life in here, I go to church, I go to party, I go dancing, I go to casinos...
on the weekends, I raise my children in America; I like my life here that I have a job. My job as a housekeeper is only part of my life.

Angelica grabbed her task board from the housekeeping cart and gestured that we should leave as we heard Kara’s voice from the radio calling the housekeepers to come down to the office to report our tasks.

While walking to the housekeeping office, I think to myself how her ideas are poignant and her view of life is full of wisdom; the kind of wisdom that only life experience brings. I realized that I am in the presence of someone who, on the surface, appears to be simply a person who cleans bathrooms but beneath the surface there is a person who can have an intelligent dialogue about work life and some of life’s most important matters. We walked over the supervisor’s office where the housekeepers assembled to deliver their reports.

Like the beginning of the workday, I found myself standing in an area filled with a rich assortment of sounds and people. The American, Mexican and Haitian housekeepers chat with each other as a cacophony of sounds once again engulfed the office mixed with the beeps from the clocking out machine down the hallway. The housekeepers prepared to leave as I heard words in Spanish, English, and Creoles. “Ready to go home?” Angelica asked several of her coworkers. “Yes, you?” some people responded. “Yes, because I am tired today teaching La China about the turndown service [laughter]…” Another day in the life of a housekeeper has come and gone.
Another day that for many may have seemed like another mundane set of performances that resulted in cleaner, more organized, and more refreshed for others to occupy. For me it is much more than that; what I have experienced today with Angelica has been part of my life’s education.

Getting to know some of the housekeepers with whom I worked vastly expanded my horizons and reshaped my views about work and the workers who handle the job that is undesirable for others (i.e., physically demanding labor jobs). “What do I want in life?” is not the only thought with which I walked away that night. I also walked away with a sense that by getting to know people like Angelica and the work they do, I got a little closer to what I am after in life. After that work shift I learned not only about life as a housekeeper, but also about what I need to figure out in my own life. A lesson learned for me is encouraging others to be more flexible and willing to learn about who other people are and what they do for a living. Getting a closer encounter and being engaged with others can help us build our perspectives on them.

As I reflect on my workday with Angelica, she walked out towards the parking lot where her car is parked. I expressed to her my gratitude for letting me be part of her professional life. She said that it has been her pleasure getting to know me and that she is happy to help with anything that I need for my research activities. Getting to know Angelica has given me impression on how women immigrant workers navigate between families and work in the U.S. As their presence dominated the U.S. hospitality industry
entry level positions, I was challenged to find out how their men counterparts roles are portrayed both at home and at the workplace. To satisfy my curiosity, I shadowed another housekeeper, Jack who, just like Angelica, has worked at Brighton since when the hotel was first opened. The following narrative depicts Jack’s workday as a houseman.

2. Following Jack Everywhere

All participants in my study are in pseudonym and I asked them to choose their own ‘names’. Jack is the only participant who choose a non-Spanish sounding pseudonym for himself. When I asked why he chose his unique pseudonym, Jack said that he is inspired by ‘Jack Skellington’ from the movie ‘Nightmare before Christmas’ so much that he decided to use this name. I met Jack in the elevator landing at the hotel, loading trash, replenishing the housekeeping carts, and joking around with his coworkers in Spanish. Working as a houseman seemed to give Jack a lot of opportunities to meet more people at the workplace as this role requires him to be mobile, from floors to the elevators, from closets to the dumpster.

Even though he is from Peru, Jack always jokingly said that he is from Argentina everytime he introduces himself to others. In his early 30’s, Jack has a quite of achievement professionally in his native country as he worked for the government in Peru. Equipped with a dream to seek for life experience, he migrated to the U.S. with his sister in 2008. He admitted that he travelled to the U.S. with a very limited ability to
communicate in English. He said that he always speaks Spanish with her sister at home in the U.S. and expressed his frustration because his English is *no bueno* [not good] and that he speaks in *basura de lenguas* [language trash/mixed languages] most of the time. Just like Angelica, Jack started learning English in high school in Peru and he has never attended any English classes outside school. An interesting view on speaking English when he landed in America was when he found out that the English he learned in his native country is ‘different’ from the one he encounter in communicating with Americans:

*My teacher in Peru says, Hey what-is-your-name? But American says what’s your name, you know? And I said, what? And teacher says how-are-you but Americans say what’s up.*

He tried to tell me that words are pronounced differently in America by repeating his teacher’s articulated ‘what is your name’. Based on his experiences in working in different American companies: apparel factory, painting and construction, and hospitality industry, Jack revealed the fact that he always encountered Spanish speakers at work, and therefore he said, “*no megusta*” [I don’t like it] when I asked him why he did not communicate in English on the job. Jack does not like the idea of using English when he knows that speaking Spanish is the easiest way for him:

86 Jack : *My first job is at the factory [name of women’s apparel factory].*

87 Ani : *oh [laughter]*
Jack: [laughter] ah no no bra...lotion, spray.

Ani: oh ok, so in what language were you interviewed in [an apparel factory]?

Jack: Spanish

Ani: what language do you use there at the workplace?

Jack: Spanish

Ani: Why was that?

Jack: all speak Spanish, boss, friends, everybody...

Given that everyone speaks Spanish, he admitted that his ability in communicating in English has not significantly developed because he had a limited time to communicate in English on the job. After leaving the factory work, Jack worked in a painting and construction company, and almost predictably, even though the company is owned by an American, he was always surrounded by Spanish speakers as most of the painters and construction workers were Spanish speakers. Jack said, “if you are not the boss you don’t speak English”. Jack’s explanation reflected the U.S. Census Bureau (2003) report showing that the majority (54%) of foreign born workers held low-income jobs compared to only 38% of native-born counterparts. Our conversation was interrupted by Jack’s phone ringing the Korean popular song “Gangnam Style”. “Sorry my sister’s calling,” he said. “Take your time,” I insisted. “Why Korean song?” I asked him as I was curious about his ringtone choice. Jack shared with me his fascination on Korean culture. “I
learn English too by learning everything about Korea, because I like to Google everything about it in English”, he added. I understood what he meant by that. He further said, with regards to learning English at the workplace, he did not think he learned English from Americans or the workplace in particular, even though he did learn several professional-related terms, especially in his current job. In the workplace, his opportunity to speak English has mostly been with non-American coworkers and he viewed that in American workplaces, English is not for communicating with Americans but mostly with non-native English speakers. Jack’s view that English is used to communicate with other non-English speakers concurs with Yashima’s (2000; 2002) discussion on international posture, a view which regards English as a bridge connecting the non-English speaker’s self to the international community, rather than to any specific native English speaking groups. Jack believed that English is something that connects him to foreign countries, and people with whom we can communicate in English, including Asians and Africans, for instance. Even though sometimes he hoped to be able to communicate more often with native English speakers, he was never interested in identifying with them. “I don’t care if I speak English like Americans or not, if people can understand me, that’s good enough”, he said.

Jack’s work shift as a houseman starts from 7 a.m. in the morning and ended at around 5 p.m. depending on the hotel’s occupancy status. When the hotel is not busy, usually he leaves the hotel early, however that is quite rare considering that Brighton
almost always has high occupancy. He said that his shift is a typical work shift for workers and he enjoys it because that is the only job he currently has. In his native country, Jack attained some formal education in a career preparation school before having a career in government agency. Since migrating to the U.S., Jack has experienced a great deal of hardship in the workplace including working as a painter at a contractor company and sleeping in a friend’s living room for several months. When I met Jack, he had already been working at Brighton for several years and expressed that he felt very blessed to have found his job. His current job, he admitted, had brought much needed stability in his life.

From his education and professional journey, I can see that Jack is an exceptionally well-read and well-spoken man whose life’s circumstances landed him working as a housekeeper. I was actually awe at this man’s intelligence and wondered how someone with exceptional achievement would end up collecting trash at a hotel. During our many conversations he answered my internal question many times. The reason why he ended up working as a housekeeper: ‘language’. His stories of hardship with the English language include struggles with some expressions as simple as answering questions on his daily activities to finding English terms for hotel facilities, even though he has lived in the U.S. for more than a decade.

As I am learning Spanish with the housekeepers, I always try to address the Spanish speaking workers in Spanish. The follow up conversations are always in a
mixture of English and Spanish as my ability to speak Spanish is still very limited.

Jack is a very energetic man who is constantly on the move and his cellphone is his favorite vice. What makes him different from another housekeeper is that he always has an earphone plugged in one of his ears to listen to his favorite music while strolling the hotel’s hallways. He explained that he needs to be able to listen to others talking, especially communication strands through the radio while listening to music. Angie, the housekeeping manager gave him permission to have something that will keep him focused on the job, yet entertained at the same time.

On my shadowing day with Jack, I was not able to go to the hotel on time. Jack and the other housemen start working at the morning shift at 7 a.m. Clocking in and out must be punctual or housekeepers get disciplined. Arrived late at around 8 A.M., I found Jack already finished storing linens on 2 floors from his total 4 assigned floor closets. He was paired with four housekeepers who worked on the upper floors. Quite different from Angelica’s work that is based on the task board, Jack’s work has constant reminder’s from supervisors, room inspectors, or room cleaners on what he should be doing, where, and when. Angelica seems to have a clear-cut tasks and she has much freedom in managing the tasks according to time allotment she has or based on the order of importance. From shadowing two different housekeepers, I become aware of how tasks are delegated and distributed based on the nature of task accomplishment. When I shadowed Jack, it was rather hard to follow him as he always moves from one place to
another doing totally different tasks. He sometimes asked me to wait at the elevator landing so I can observe and catch up on what he was doing, and make notes. I followed him to the rooms a couple of times and saw how he helped the room cleaners strip the beds, take the dirty linens and trash outside. There is a lot of break in between and during that moment, Jack will be at the elevator landing, sweeping the floor or tidying up the linens, towels, and room necessities in the closets.

When I hesitantly followed Jack handing the trash, he moved energetically collected them from different areas: rooms, hallways, closets, elevator landings, piled them up, loaded the bags in carts, dumped them at the dumpster, and travelled back to the hallways and rooms for the same activities. The notion of time is well steeped in his head as he mentions how important time is throughout the day. In my first hour with him, Jack emptied 8 big trash bins from the elevator landing, stored linens and amenities in 3 floor closets, and stripped 17 rooms. When I followed him to the elevator, we met the other housemen, and he introduced me to them. “La China doesn’t like trash but she can speak our language trash,” he said, when his coworkers tried to address me in Spanish. Then, he grabbed a vacuum cleaner from one of the closets and started vacuuming the hallways. We talked about miscellaneous topics over his vacuum cleaner’s loud noise.

Jack explained how his supervisor often had to rotate the housemen’s working areas based on people’s days off during the week or whether people call in sick-in that case, their areas need to be covered by someone else. He also told me that sometimes he
was assigned to clean rooms when the hotel was in short of room cleaners. Jack also explained the reason why he was moving fast because sometimes there were cases during the hotel ‘high occupancy’, when the guests have already waited at the hotel while the housekeepers were preparing their rooms. I was fascinated the fact that I might be in that position of the guest, when the front officer asks me to wait for the room to be ready, without knowing that somewhere on the floors, the housekeepers are battling with time and energy, preparing the rooms for me.

Jack continues to steadfastly vacuum the hallways in the last floor and I continue to observe him. As he finished vacuuming, he tidies up the machine’s cable and explains “Here even though the housemen know what to do everyday, supervisors always assign tasks and we don’t know what they are, we have to be ready, we have to know how to do stuff, everything, and most of the time we have to do it fast”. Basically, as he said, the housekeeping management expects that all housekeepers, regardless of their titles, have mastered the same basic housekeeping knowledge: cleaning.

Jack gives me additional details about work life at Brighton housekeeping department regarding the time management:

Jack : I think you know here we have to punch in and out

Ani : yeah, what if you punch in or out late?

Jack : No good because you make the tasks messy. You know, guests don’t care, when they need room, they cannot wait. When guests check out, then
people need to know what to do, you see, they don’t care if, hey the housekeeper is late today, can you wait more till the room is ready?

[laughter]

Ani: Ah, I get your point. What happens if someone disrupts the flow of the tasks?

Jack: You get reprimanded and if it continues it can lead to you get fired [he makes a cut throat sign with his hand], you know

This conversation happened as Jack and I walked to the elevator when suddenly the supervisor radioed him to go back to the 12th floor as one of the room cleaners had a problem with someone vomited at the hallway that he has just vacuumed. Jack pushed the elevator button and he asked me to wait in the elevator and hold the door while he grabbed the chemical bottle and wet vacuum cleaning machine to clean the mess. As we proceed to the hallway, a room cleaner was there with rags and sweeper in his hands. Both housekeeper talk in Spanish. I did not quite catch what they were talking about but from the tone and gesture they made, I assumed that they were not very happy. I asked Jack if I could help and he firmly refused my offer and explained that if I got infected by the bacteria from the vomit, the hotel would not be liable for it and the agency would not do anything about it. He said, “Let me do it, I have the chemical and everything and this is our work, we are responsible if something happens, please you just watch.” “I understand” I said. Soon after the job is completed, Jack continued giving me his
perspective about the inner workings of housekeepers’ work life at Brighton: “Here we have to know all chemicals and tools, we wear uniform from the hotel. Here we have to say something to the guests if we see them. When we take a break, we need to go back in time”. From here I got the impression that Brighton also engineered (Katz, 2000) the housekeepers physically and verbally in a way that it will reflect the company’s mission.

It is 10:30 a.m. and Jack informs me that it is time for a coffee break. We walked to the cafeteria and found that the cook has just brought us leftover muffins from today’s breakfast at the restaurant booth. Jack and I enjoyed some muffins and coffee and talked about miscellaneous topics, which mostly about his work:

Jack : So what do you think of my job? I’m not sure if you enjoy it. I sometimes busy because guests can leave the hotel at anytime and they can come here at anytime too.

Ani : I see. I think it you accomplish a lot of tasks

Jack : Yeah. Sometimes busy sometimes slow. When slow, I will help room cleaners making beds.

Ani : Yes, I heard from the room cleaners that you are the best houseman.

Jack : ese soy yo [that’s me] [laughter]

Conversation with Jack often ended up in laughter just like the ones I had with Angelica. He is an example of a person who is always grateful for any opportunities he had in life. He further said:
You see, this is not the best job someone can have but it is a job that gives me what I need in my life right now. Honestly, I don’t like getting up early in the morning at 5 everyday but I still have the rest of the day to do something at home. So it is not that bad. I just do it, you know, try not to think about it too much, just be happy and do it. It’s much better that what I had before, when I work at the painting company or [an apparel factory]. We one day work up then the next day the boss will tell us no work tomorrow, then no work for a long time, so compared to that this is much better. At least this job allows me to rent a place and pay the bills.

Jack basically said that his current job at Brighton has given him much more stability as the hotel is always fully occupied. He also said that when hotel is slow, sometimes the agency offered him something to do in another hotel. He said that he would like to do something more such as working in different field but the language is his major impediment. This language problem has also prevented him from expanding his professional networks. When I asked him whether he would like to pursue other opportunities if he were better at communicating in English, he said that he is still relatively young so he would love to have other different opportunities. “Because in Peru it is hard at my age to start a new job, in the U.S. it is more still OK if you are old”, he explained.

From the radio, the supervisor notified Jack that a room cleaner in his floor need a
blanket for her room. Jack and I sprinted to the basement and grabbed a blanket, then rushed back to the floor, delivering the item for the room cleaner. From here I noticed that Jack’s job was hectic as he had to be alert at all time over radio interactions. Even though often times he found that the tasks are not directed to him, he had to be ready to jump in the conversation and help others when necessary. “The problem is”, He said, “sometimes it is hard to follow up because sometimes they are in English.” When it is in English, Jack would usually wait until a Spanish speaker clarified the message.

Despite of the language barrier that he has, Jack has showed me some of his intelligent trait. One of the signs of Jack’s intelligence is when he eloquently speaks of Peru’s phenomenal political history, from Alberto Fujimori to Alan Garcia and everyone in between, and how these figures are viewed in his native country and worldwide. He shares with me his native cultural values, and the struggles he has in adapting to different He also critically tells me how in Peru age and physical appearance are great determinants of job acquisition and career development. He said that although it is somewhat similar in the U.S.; there are more opportunities for career development in this country. What he said about age and professional life in Peru is very interesting to me, as others might also experience such discrimination that cuts across race, social class and sexual orientation. Jack also mentioned that although he struggles with English and he misses his home country, he feels a sense of stability here in the U.S. that is invaluable even if he works as a housekeeper.
I realized that the tasks that Jack has done has a variety of load, sometimes energy consuming and sometimes snail paced. Even though his tasks gives him a lot of opportunities to communicate with many people, it mostly happens with his coworkers and is almost always in Spanish. Conversation with native English speakers is most of the time limited to exchanging greetings. When I asked Jack whether he thought that the nature of his tasks influence his interaction with others, he said:

*Here in this job you see the schedule. You can talk to people but it’s not much because you must work. So the job don’t give time to talk to people sometimes for a long time, sometimes until finish your work.*

Jack’s statement captured many of my assumptions before I entered the research site, even though I have been affiliated with the site for over a year. Even though I am considered an insider in the workplace, I felt that this was definitely a job that did not allow for any substantial interactions with others due to its traditional organization structures. I also asked if Jack would like to have more contact with other people at work to which he responded:

*Yes, of course. Me, I like to talk to people. When I start work in factory and then here I feel not happy and I feel someone make me stupid or I look stupid. Before, in my job in Peru I always talk to some smart people, like the people who work at the government and they are respected people. Here in this job, and I must say I am sorry, but I don’t talk and I don’t meet with the smart [educated] people. I of*
course want to have a job that I can work and talk with smart people and I can discuss with them and if possible to have a good job.

Unlike Angelica who said that meeting with people is less favorable, Jack wished that he would interact with more people on the job. What Jack said with regards to discrepancies in workplace interactions for the entry level workers has alerted me that there are a lot of immigrant workers like Jack everywhere, that, because of the language barriers, have to swallow their prides of having more communication privileges in their former occupations in their native countries. I found that Katz (2000) has narrated it perfectly regarding the back-stage workers such as housekeepers who are usually positioned at the less presentable site in the hotels because people with this profession are not normally those who need to display their appearances by interacting with others other than their own counterparts.

The absence of communication with others during the last 5 hours of working with Jack showed me how the nature of most housekeeping tasks limit the workers in interacting with others. It was almost 3 p.m. and Jack is entering the last hour of his work shift. The last hour of his shift consists of, as he puts it, “random activities.” Jack needs to ensure once again that floor closets are full, elevator landings and hallways are clean. He also finds out if all room cleaners in his teamwork have completed their tasks, and that before the end of his shift his areas are well taken care of for people in later shifts. As the shift comes to an end Jack continuously asked if I had found the job boring.
Again, this question reminds me of the one I had when I shadowed Angelica as she also asked the same exact question. Many of the housekeepers seem to perceive that other people might find their job boring. I reiterate to Jack that I do not find this experience boring and reaffirmed that I have much respect for people like him who work on this kind of job. Jack and I walked over to the housekeeping office to clock out and return the radio. Some other housekeepers piled in and wait until 4 P.M. to clock out. Jack clocked out last and said goodbye to everyone.

J. Housekeeper’s Career Development

Even though Brighton acknowledged the team member’s hard-work and dedication, I did not quite witness significant career development at the housekeeping department within a year period. The upward mobility that I noticed so far limited only to the upper managerial position, when the previous executive housekeeper was transferred to another department, Angie, the assistant manager held the new executive housekeeper position. The only notable career progression within the housekeeping department was when one of the room cleaners was promoted as a supervisor. This room cleaner, however, has previously worked as a housekeeping supervisor in another hotel. One thing that need to be highlighted was the fact that the newly promoted supervisor is an immigrant worker who previously also worked for the staffing agency. Before he got promoted, he applied for the job directly to the hotel and left the agency. Other than the vertical upward mobility, horizontally, one of the housekeepers has a current career
development outside Brighton. This housekeeper, Angelica was able to secure a job as a pastry cook in a pastry store. Even though not quite a career development, as Angelica puts it, she is happy to finally get the job she has dreamed of. Angelica said that her soon retirement from the housekeeping job is what matters most.

I learned that it is hard for housekeepers who work for the staffing agency to climb the profession ladder. For this group, problems with communicative ability in English have been a grave issue and have limited their opportunity for career promotions. Greenberg, Mac’as, Rhodes, & Chan (2001) further suspected that literacy and fluency in English seem to be related to economic self-sufficiency. As they put it, immigrant workers who are literate only in a language other than English are more likely to have non-continuous employment and to earn less than those literate in English. Other than that, immigration status has also been one of the major obstacles for these workers to attain upward mobility which is why they work for the agency. With regards to the relationship between the immigrant workers’ language proficiency and their upward mobility Miller (2009) has actually notified us that the immigrant workers’ language capability provided no guarantee for the workers’ career development.

Christopher, the general manager, has actually noticed potential career developments among Brighton team members even though he said that there have always been some winding roads to success. Even though formal in class training has not yet been offered for the team members, Christopher told me how Brighton has been actively
participated in several training programs in the corporate company level. He said that the training has always been beyond the English as a Second Language (ESL) or language related enrichments. For the immigrant workers in particular, the training programs also offered personal well-being and living guidance in general, included sessions on how to survive and to grow as an immigrant in the U.S. Christopher acknowledged that in the past year, one of the entry level immigrant employees at the housekeeping department who attended the programs has been able to accomplish significant career development in another hotel and has currently bought a house. Most of the executive housekeepers or the managers, as Carly, the assistant manager also told me, were once room cleaners in their early careers.

K. Working for the Staffing Agencies

It is quite common for immigrant workers in hospitality industries to rely on staffing agencies in managing and organizing their professional lives. Immigrant workers working for staffing agency are often referred to as the contract or the temporary workers. They are usually needed in most housekeeping departments to cover tasks left by housekeepers working directly for the hotel or the permanent workers. In Brighton, however, it appears that contract housekeepers play a crucial role as they outnumber the permanent housekeepers. During my data collection period, Brighton had approximately 65 housekeepers in total and 41 of them work for staffing agencies.
There are two staffing agencies affiliated with the Brighton housekeeping department, however, only one of them is discussed in my study as the majority of the housekeepers work for this agency, *La Trabajas* (pseudonym). This staffing agency can be accessed from its website, Facebook, and LinkedIn sites. Headquartered in Indiana, the agency offers a wide range of hospitality staffing, ranging from front end to back of house. This staffing agency only operates throughout the Midwest and Southern parts of America. The position offered by this agency are entry levels hospitality positions such as housekeeping, houseman, public areas staff, bell staff/engineering, laundry, banquet server, banquet set up, grounds/maintenance, janitorial, food and beverage personnel, and all front and back house positions. The website is accessible in English and Spanish and it provides online application page in both languages. Interestingly, even though the website boosts its bilingual appearance, the staffs who manage the agency office in Columbus are all Spanish-speaking managers.

In its Facebook site, the agency displays pictures of different hospitality staffs in uniforms and some cards with guest’s appreciation on them. The site displays a picture of a note of appreciation from a guest. This “thank you note” was written by a little girl to one of the housekeepers working for the agency in the Indiana headquarters. This kind of note is displayed in social media site to impresses both prospective companies and employees. Prospective affiliating companies and employees can also learn about this agency through several job fair events conducted in strategic locations such as the
immigrant welcome centers in major cities where the agent operates. It seems that this agency targets immigrant workers to apply for positions offered. Even though it is shown in the website that this agency offered quite a wide range of positions, at least in Columbus area this agency only recruits mostly housekeeping positions. To apply for a position, a candidate simply needs to talk to the assigned manager to inquire available positions. For the undocumented immigrants in particular, the staffing agency has a strict rule regarding job inquiry, in which the agency requires the candidates to have an identity card (usually the Social Security Card) or the job will not be granted. Since the undocumented immigrants do not own such identity document, the staffing agency helps them create a ‘fake social security card’ and requires the job seekers to ‘purchase’ this document. Without purchasing the document, the agency will not release any job information which prevents the candidates from having the jobs.

The Columbus headquarter staffing agency is managed by Spanish-speaking managers. They shared with me that currently, 92% of the employees working for the Agency are Spanish speaking immigrant workers. Some of these workers have a little to zero ability to communicate in English, and therefore, the agency serves as mediator and translator for them. The agency usually facilitates the job interviews and some parts of job training. The managers also told me that some of their employees have left the agency to work ‘legally’ as they have developed their communicative ability or obtained
legal documents. Some others remain working for the agency for several reasons ranging from language and networking barriers to immigrant status-related problems.

Even though I initially thought that language-related problem has been one of the biggest reasons why the immigrants work for the staffing agency, I learned that this was not always the case. Violeta, one of the housekeepers who is able to communicate well enough in English explained:

*It’s easy. I just work. They know everything they will find me work. I just tell them hey I don’t like the job hey do you need a housekeeper in this hotel and they, if they have they will give me. If I must try if I must look for a job by myself, it’s hard. I must call call call and talk talk to too much people and I don’t know many people. They have people speaking Spanish there so they speak to hotel and find me job.*

It seems that networking issue has been the biggest factor that pushed some immigrant workers to rely on staffing agency for their job placement. For a housekeeper like Violeta, the agency functions as a professional organizer that assigns immigrant workers jobs in different workplaces based on companies’ demands. Angelica, another housekeeper who has no problem in communicating in English still believes that it is better to work with a staffing agency. Even though communicating in English is not her major problem, similar to Violeta, Angelica told me that she knows very limited people to help her find a job. Both Violeta and Angelica who have resided in the U.S. for over a
decade have found that staffing agency has been their first professional networking affiliation.

Taron, a housekeeper from Cameroon who has been in his first decade of career journey shared with me the reason why he worked for the staffing agency. For Taron who also has no problem with communicating in English as he speaks the language in his native country told me that working with the staffing agency is temporary. He said:

This is not my permanent job so that’s why I don’t work directly for Brighton. I am still looking for another job that is not like this. When I find a job that I really want of course I will not work for a staffing agency.

The housekeepers therefore said that language barrier has never been the main reason why they work for the staffing agency, even though there is a possibility that not being able to communicate in English has somehow limited some workers’ opportunity to expand their professional networking.

Furthermore, Jack and Raquel who have worked as housekeepers for over a decade with four different staffing agencies admitted that the staffing agencies have always functioned as mediators in all job interviews they had and conflicts they had with the workplaces. They said that the representative from the agencies always accompanied them in the job interviews and negotiations with the workplace. There will normally be join-interview with the presence of the hiring company and the staffing agency to accommodate housekeeping applicants who have problems in communicating in English.
McAll (2003) previously reported that English communicative ability has become the most significant aspect for immigrant workers with regards to securing jobs in the U.S. institutions, even though they are categorized as the non-language workers. Even though housekeepers are considered non-language workers, they are usually hired through interviews and paper-works in English. In Brighton, candidates who do not speak English are usually accompanied by translators during these hiring process. Alberto, the housekeeping supervisor highlighted that being able to communicate in English has never become a significant aspect to be hired as a housekeeper at the hotel. He explained:

\[ \text{Ani} : \text{... or there is no language related requirement for hiring the housekeepers?} \]

\[ \text{Alberto} : \text{There is no language criteria, we don’t strictly hire people just based on their um if they are bilingual or non-bilingual. Obviously it’s a huge influence if they are but it’s not. Being able to speak English is not one of the requirements for hiring the housekeepers.} \]

\[ \text{Ani} : \text{Ok, so language is not the criteria for hiring.} \]

\[ \text{Alberto} : \text{Yeah for some housekeepers working here they barely know English, so...} \]

Referring to Haviland’s (2000) observation, it is very common for a company to hire workers who do not speak English, then require them to use English on the job.

According to Haviland, this means that the company usually expects workers to learn
English on the job. This case is also true to Brighton as some of the housekeepers who work for the agency have minimum communicative ability when they are hired. As a multilingual workplace, Brighton has a very accommodative communication environment. Instead of requiring the housekeepers to use English on the job, the company gives them freedom to use languages they are most comfortable with unless the workers are in communicating face to face with the guests. Since almost 95 percent of the workers are Spanish speaking immigrants, Spanish is obviously the major language spoken in every corner of housekeeping areas.

The management staffs also believe that allowing workers to use their native language will be able to help them accomplish the housekeeping tasks more efficiently. Angie, the housekeeping manager recommended housekeepers to speak in Spanish with their co-workers if they have problems in communicating in English. Angie is bilingual in English and Spanish and she admitted that her fluency in Spanish has been fueled by communicating constantly with Spanish speaking housekeepers. Because of her fluency in Spanish, her voice is the most frequently heard on the radio, jumping on most of conversations among the housekeepers.

Considering that most of the housekeepers work for the staffing agency, the communication flow between the housekeepers and the hotel management regarding work matter is organized in such a way that it is transparent and manageable for Brighton, staffing agencies, and housekeepers. Work-related documents such as work
attire and ethics, task description, and scheduling, for instance, are prepared based on the agreement between the hotel and the staffing agency. Housekeepers from both parties wear the same uniforms issued by the hotel. The clock in and out devices, for instance, even though separated for both hotel and staffing agency employees, they are operated under the same regulations. The hotel does not differentiate the housekeepers’ task description based on their employment status. The tasks are distributed based on what positions they are entitled to. For scheduling, however, there are separated procedure for the housekeepers from both parties. For requesting a day off, for instance, housekeepers from the staffing agency have to notify the agency manager prior to talking to the hotel’s housekeeping managers about it. They also have to fill in a request off document issued by the staffing agency.

Whenever problems occurred between the staffing agency workers and the hotel, the management will usually notify the staffing agency managers so that they can find resolution. Often times, during the case where staffing agency housekeepers cannot meet the hotel’s expectation, the hotel will notify the staffing agency representative to find the person another job somewhere else. As Carmen, the former field manager of the staffing agency said, “Brighton is very strict in hiring housekeepers. If you don’t work well, you request day off too many times, you’re fired.” Staffing agency representatives visit the hotel on a regular basis, usually biweekly on the payday. For the remuneration, the hotel gives authority for the staffing agency to manage the workers’ salary.
Despite of the different opportunities and responsibilities entitled to housekeepers working for the staffing agency, Joseph, the former housekeeping manager admitted that most of the contract workers are among those who have a high commitment to their professions. Brighton has continuously been awarded prestigious award to recognize its excellence in service and cleanliness for two years in a row. The company has been particularly grateful for the workers from the staffing agency and continuously acknowledge their immense contribution to Brighton’s success.

L. An Afternoon at Brighton

At 04:30 p.m. on a crisp fall afternoon, I approached the gleaming automatic revolving door of a middle upscale hotel in the heart of downtown. On the sidewalk, the bellman cheerfully greeted passersby and guests who were busily coming and leaving the hotel. While he hailed taxis and loaded suitcases into the trunks of waiting cars, he waved to his colleagues who finished his shift for the day. “Take it easy, man!” he said abruptly, responding to his friend’s goodbye. Inside the plush interior of the hotel is the wide expanse marbled floor lobby charmingly decorated with a blend of modern and antique couches, mirrors, chairs and paintings. In the front right is the coffee shop that brews varieties of high quality of coffee and provides guests who prefer quick breakfast or the grab and go parfaits and granola bars.

Half of the lobby is carpeted and filled with lounging couches and coffee tables. The fireplace was lit as the weather was predicted to be around mid 40s for the rest of the
week. The huge TV just above the fireplace streamed the news. Across from the café is a long wooden concierge desk topped with nicely organized brochures and maps of the city. A guest service attendant is standing by the counter, looking over a brochure and a map with a smartly dressed young couple, locating some local restaurants and bars, gesturing directions, and enthusiastically assured them that they would have wonderful time in the city. At the very end of the wide marbled floor is the long front desk counter with a huge rectangular painting hung on the wall. Several front officers all dressed in lilac tops and black bottoms stood behind the counter helping customers with reservations and check out. Across from the front desk counter is the gift shop dominated by scarlet and gray colors that afternoon. It must be that time of the year, the football season, when the proud Ohioans express their supports for the football team. Several group of conservatively dressed ladies were conversing in hushed tones on in front of the gift shop. On sunny days like that day, the first floor lobby looks majestic because of the natural light poured from the 15,000 square feet atrium skylight above. A couple dressed in football jerseys walked down the spiral wooden staircase, hand in hand. A soft music played in the lobby sounds lullabying. It was such a soothing fall afternoon.

Surveying this quietly dignified scene, I waited in the lobby for Julio, the field manager of the staffing agency. He will be bringing a new housekeeper for an interview with the housekeeping manager. Julio entered the lobby and cheerfully greeted an employee dressed in all black who was descending the staircase into the lobby with a tray
full of wine glasses collected from the lobby lounges. The man’s halting response revealed that English was not his first language, and his polite goodbyes trailed after us up the spiraled staircase as I quickened my pace to keep up with Julio’s hurried step. “Oh, this is Jonathan, he wants to find an opportunity in Brighton,” Julio introduced the new housekeeper to me. “Hello, nice to meet you,” I said, extending my hand. He nodded his head, shaking my hand. Julio told me that Jonathan has a limited English ability.

On the second floor, we passed the huge lounge with a lot of giant couches and chairs. At the farthest end is the business center equipped with desktops, printers and stationaries. Across from the lounge, the atrium restaurant is filled with customers enjoying their early dinner with a nice view. On a sunny day like that day, the customers can also enjoy the warm ray of sunshine from the glass skylight above. Across from the atrium to the right is the Jacuzzi equipped swimming pool and a gym. The swimming pool was surprisingly very quiet on that day.

We strolled the hallway and stopped by the fragrant aroma of fresh brewed coffee from the machines where some young ladies dressed in all black prepared some artsy lattes. In front of us is the huge kitchen that was a bit chaotic that afternoon. Several cooks dressed head-to-toe in white joked around and bantered over spatulas and baking projects. We walked to the back of the kitchen, passed the food pantries to a long hallway connecting the general manager’s office and a huge office space filled with
cubicles where the sales and finance employees worked. Up on the wall were the “hall of fame” where employees’ pictures and bios were displayed.

Some employees dressed in neat suits lined up in front of the employee elevator, ready to end the day. We avoided the elevator and went down the staircase in the end of the hallway. Down at the underground floor we emerged into the “housekeeping department”. Jonathan tried to slowly read the slogan right above the big blue housekeeping door: “Through these doors enters the best housekeeping teams in the company – A treves de puerta entra el major equipo de housekeeping de la compania”. That was one of the many signs in the hotel which was accompanied by Spanish translations. On the wall, across from the housekeeping door to the right is half of yoga mat size rug attached on the wall. At a glance, the rug that displays roads, traffic signs, and buildings is meant to be used in children’s playing area so they can learn how to give direction. On this rug, all housekeeping team members are portrayed and displayed in little minions lining up on the biggest street, top to bottom. The front row minions are those with more achievement. Each achievement that a housekeeper makes will be granted points or rewards. The more reward a housekeeper gets the closer he/she will be to the top. Rewards are given based on comments given from others about how the housekeepers’ performance. External comments from the guests will result in bigger rewards than those coming from internal or hotel team members.
We stood in front of the housekeeping door as Julio pointed to a rectangular, tablet-sized screen projected on the wall behind us. He told Jonathan how to clock in and out through that machine to start and end the working shift. There was an instruction on how to use the machine on the wall, accompanied by Spanish translation. To the right was a hallway to another employee elevator. The Indian music was played from the chute room. From outside the chute room, it seemed that dirty linens and towels were flying by themselves to the big containers as it was hard to see Suresh the laundry attendant among the mountainous laundry items. Every fifteen minutes or so, Suresh pushed a huge cart out of the chute room and lined it nicely in the hallway for the laundry service company pick up. Chute attendant only works for the morning shift, except when the hotel is on the peak season and there is only one worker per shift. Suresh is from Nepal and he always plays Indian music in the chute while he is on duty. On the day when Marcos, the other chute attendant works, Latino music will be played in the work area. As chute attendants work solo, they play music to fight loneliness.

The housekeeping main office door is always open. The housekeeping department has two offices in both wings, the main office and the vice managers’ office. Both offices also function as storage areas for the rooms and public areas cleaning necessities. Outside the chute room were two bulletin boards where schedules and other housekeeping announcements were posted. The announcement board is full of decorations with fall-colored leaves and turkeys. Thanksgiving celebration is around the
corner. Everything on the boards were written in English and Spanish. Across from the chute room were stacks of pool and gym towels, bathroom curtains, and bathroom mats, nicely arranged in three stories metal shelves.

Multi-strands radio conversations welcomed us as we stepped into the main office. Through the radio, the executive manager’s voice is vividly heard, responded to a houseman’s question regarding a guest’s checking out time as a room cleaner was ready to clean it. Hearing Angie’s voice on the radio, we knew that she was away from her office. Edward, the security officer jumped in the conversation and informed others that the guest has left and the room was vacant. The involvement of a security officer in the conversation indicated that the guest was a very important person.

Juan, one of the first shift supervisors, interrupting a conversation in Spanish with a room cleaner, greeted us sweetly in English and switched to Spanish as he talked to Julio. His eyes never stop eyeballing an iPad screen on the desk. The iPad, in addition to the radios, is the new added tools at the housekeeping department. The iPad is operated by supervisors and it is used to manage housekeeping-related activities. Through the iPad the supervisor will know the status of rooms and all locations that the housekeepers need to handle. Everything is neatly organized through an app developed by Brighton corporate. Glancing at the iPad screen, Juan gestured to the room cleaner to dismiss to refresh her last room. Through iPad communication, room inspectors on the floors who are also equipped with iPad device notified Juan regarding the room conditions. As room
inspector’s main duty is to check the room status after it is cleaned by the housekeeper, he/she would make notes to be delivered to supervisors through iPad communication.

The elevator door opened, a young lady dressed in robin egg blue uniform pushed a lobby cleaning trolley. She waved to us and said “Hola”, stopped in front of the chute room, greeted Suresh in Spanish and threw a bucket of dirty rags into a big bin. Through the radio, another supervisor asked her to go back to the lobby area to clean coffee spilled by a guest. After saying “copy that” to notify the supervisor that she comprehended the message, however, Gloria, the lobby attendant, checked with Juan to make sure that she understood the supervisor’s message. Parked her cleaning trolley by the chemical rack, this lobby attendant loaded clean rags and toilet papers in it, then pushed her trolley in rush to the elevator.

Juan notified us that Angie would be back in his office shortly. Angie always spent time working with the room inspectors on the floors, especially when important guests stay in the hotel. As she is bilingual in Spanish and English, she always jumped on radio conversations, delegating tasks, giving instructions, and translating messages for and from housekeepers. A cacophony of sounds of housekeepers talking in Spanish, English, French, Creole, and Arabic engulfed the housekeeping office. They were housekeepers who have completed their tasks, handed in their paper works and returned the radios to Juan. One of them threw a plastic bag full of goodies into the lost-and-found box. On the counter, across from Juan’s desk was a stack of forms to be filled out
by housekeeping employees when the guests called in. On the wall above the counter was a bulletin board where lists of supervisors, lobby attendants, and housemen of the day were written in markers.

Just outside of the office to the right is a jumbo sized plastic jar, probably a used water jar, with almost half filled coins and dollar bills in it. This jar is labelled “swear jar” with an angry emoji sign attached to it. The swear jar is meant to prevent housekeeping team members from using bad words in the housekeeping office area. Every time someone uses bad words, he or she would have to throw coins or money in the jar. There must have been quite of swearing and cursing heard in the housekeeping office as seen from the nearly half-filled swear jar. In the right corner is the chemical area where the housekeepers filled in their color-coded cleaning bottles. Cleaning supplies, brushes and other cleaning devices were neatly stacked on the closets, all were labelled in English with Spanish translations. Behind the manager’s office was a large storage area full of piles of pillows. There was a set of washer and dryer for emergency use. To the right side were pantries full of guest bathroom and fridge necessities such as bottled water, coffee bags, tea bags, sugar, creamers, and cups.

The physical space allotted housekeeping-down in the bowels of the hotel-reflected the status of these employees in the institutional hierarchy, and its backstage location was consistent with their general invisibility, which was reinforced by their
uniforms, by the rules that additionally constrained employee appearance, and by the language they were taught to use when interacting with others.

Summary

This chapter offers an overview of the inner workings of the organization where this study takes place. I discussed the site, organizational structures, and salient physical features. I described the housekeeping department that becomes the host of my study participants, and the housekeepers and their relationship with me as a participant observer and worker. To provide a vivid picture of the nature work and the actors who play the roles in each housekeeping titles, I provided an impressionist tale (van Maanen, 1988) of the work life of a housekeeper in different work titles. Such narratives helped contextualize the work experiences of the immigrant workers at the research site. This chapter laid out the foundation for the following two chapters; chapters 5 and 6, which described the data collected at the research site and their analysis and interpretation.

In the next chapter I describe the data collected through interviews. The chapter presented a close look at the language use and learning illustrating how larger discourses operating in the workplace-discourses that overlapped and collided-served to blur the lines between work and personal lives and between public and private spaces, in ways that naturalized the backstage identities that “housekeeping” employees were encouraged to embrace. The chapter also contain detailed explanation, which attempts to shed light on parts of the stage where it is not normally meant to display its appearance, even
though it helps other parts to shine, explores how workplace practice, albeit the freedom in using native languages, are engineered (Katz, 2000) through company language use and teaching of language routines.
Chapter 5: Immigrant Workers’ Communication Experience

The primary aim of this chapter is to answer the following research questions formulated during the research process, as is typical of ethnographic studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Blommaert & Dong, 2010):

RQ1: What are the participants’ communication experiences within the workplace?

RQ2: To what extent are workplace orders, such as work routines and language use, relevant to participants’ communication experience in the workplace?

RQ3: How do the participants develop their communicative ability in the workplace?

Based on the above questions, this chapter lays out the findings obtained from in-depth interviews with 13 housekeepers. The first research question is aimed at mapping the participants’ communication experiences in the workplace. In order to answer this question, I included the participants’ narratives of their sociocultural backgrounds, such as race/ethnicity, native language, and prior education/occupation to understand the relevancy towards their communication experiences. Another significant aspect covered in the first question is how the participants communicate with different members of the workplace as a Community of Practice (CoP) (i.e., employer/superiors, coworkers, and guests). The first research question also presents findings on how the participants communicate through supporting devices. For the second research question, I discuss to
what extent the workplace orders, such as work routines and language use relevant to the participants’ communicative experience in the workplace. This question addresses the affordances and constraints, such as the communication isolation and the nature of housekeeping tasks that the participants are entitled to, and possible strategies that they use to solve their problems in communication activities in the workplace. Considering that the participants have different sociocultural backgrounds, it is paramount to understand how this factor influence the nature of the workers’ interaction with different members in the workplace. The purpose of the third research question is to understand how the participants develop their communicative ability at the workplace while at the same time educate each other about how to make sense of the workplace nature. Four aspects covered by this question are: how the participants perceive their ability to communicate in English, what repertoires are constructed within different events and contexts, what resources are involved in both communicative practice and language learning process, and how they educate each other about how to make sense of their distinct language and resources available in the workplace to engage in sense-making activities together to get the work done.

A. The Immigrant Workers’ Communication Experience at the Workplace

In this chapter I present as much and as vividly as possible the voices of immigrant workers to help the readers gain an understanding of the workers’ everyday language and work-related experiences. In order to illustrate their lived experience
naturally, I try to capture the workers’ voices based on their standpoints. Additionally, one of the study primary goals is to hear the voices of the non-native English speaking (NNES) immigrant workers in using and learning language in the workplace and, therefore, it is important to present their responses in their natural interaction. For this purpose, I also assigned some participants to listen to their recorded audios from the observations during the interview to allow them to recall some particular sequels of their communication experience and to hear their insights on those experiences.

With my assistance, most of the workers were able to express their insights on their communication experiences in English during the interview that were conducted in series of friendly conversation (Spradley, 1974). While I strive to present the workers’ narratives in English, there are a few simple ideas expressed in Spanish which I intentionally keep based on the participants’ original transcribed interviews, with as close as possible translations to English. Thus, the illustrative quotations from the interview transcripts display participants’ perspectives regarding the subject under study (i.e., their language use and learning within the workplace).

1. Sociocultural Backgrounds and Communication Experience

With respects to the sociocultural backgrounds, the following table summarizes the information of the participants interviewed for the research:
From the 13 immigrant workers interviewed for this research, 10 participants are NNES Spanish-speaking workers from Mexico, Honduras, El-Salvador, and Peru. The other three workers are NNES non-Spanish speaking workers from Cameroon, Nepal, and Uzbekistan. While all of the participants are obviously bilingual speakers with various degrees of communicative ability in English, two of them are multilingual speakers. All of the participants have resided in the U.S. for over 5 years with various immigration statuses. Four participants have attended college level education and held reputable jobs such as government officers, private business owner, sales person, restaurant owner, and clerks in their home countries. Some of the other participants have attended elementary schools to high schools in their native countries and had various occupations ranging from car mechanic, clerk, waiter, and plantation worker.

In the following section I presented the narratives shared by the participants.
regarding their perceptions of relationships between sociocultural backgrounds and their roles and positions within particular groups in the workplace as a community of practice. The purpose these narratives are aimed at allowing the participants’ voices speak about their workplace experiences from their race/ethnicity, native language, prior education/occupation standpoints. All of the participants interviewed indicated that these categories of sociocultural background are relevant to their communication experiences in various degrees. The goal of presenting these narratives in copious detail is for the reader to get an understanding of the workers’ workplace experiences from diverse points of view. In line with the preceding chapters, the excerpts displayed in this chapter were originally copied from the transcribed interviews without any grammatical and word choice modifications. However, explanations are occasionally added in brackets to help the readers comprehend the messages.

All of the interview participants expressed that their race/ethnicity shapes how they perceive that others perceive and communicate with them. The majority of the participants said that race-ethnicity is relevant to their communication and they admitted that they received various perceptions based on this sociocultural background component. The workers, for instance, admitted that they need positive perceptions regarding their sociocultural backgrounds from others communicating with them to feel motivated and ‘included’. When the workers feel that others positively perceive them, they have more confidence to communicate, especially with others from different language backgrounds.
Regarding the inclusive workplace environment, Christopher, the general manager explained that Brighton hotel has managed to accommodate the diversity in its human resources.

The followings are the immigrant workers’ narrative related to how race/ethnicities influence their perceptions on how others perceive them and communicate with them. Among the common feature related to the workers’ race/ethnicity is how housekeepers approach their tasks. For instance, I was interested in how a newbie housekeeper (Taron) viewed his technique in handling tasks during his training sessions, related to his status as an immigrant worker:

_This person said, “What are you doing? You must do it like us”, he said. I do everything my own way, not their (Mexican) way, Look, guys, I have attended the trainings in this hotel and another training in this hotel, and some of the techniques are not very effective so I do it different way and it’s faster. Then I talked to them, they said, OK, we have to believe in you and you have to teach me how to do that...[Taron]._

In the preceding narrative, Taron pointed out that no particular race/ethnic groups in the workplace should own and claim task-accomplishment strategy. This experience, he said, often made a worker feel discriminated and undeserved as members of particular group considering that immigrant workers from different ethnicities approach work differently including how tasks are to be accomplished. As a new member at the
housekeeping group, within the room cleaner group, and within the non-Spanish speaking group, Taron tried to figure out how to become a member in these various groups by negotiating his view on work-related strategies. Since his sociocultural background has very much influenced the way he approaches work, his view has often time been rejected by ‘more competent members’ in different groups within the housekeeping department. This particular practice on how workers from different race/ethnicities approach task accomplishment have always generated some communication practices on how they make sense, translate, and negotiate strategies to get the tasks done and often marked by a lot of repetition, imitation, or showing and telling activities based on the workers’ prior knowledge on the tasks (“Ok, we have to believe in you and you have to teach me how to do that”).

How different workers approach different tasks often determines their level of contributions to the workplace. Some of the participants feel that race/ethnicity becomes a relevant issue on how they feel they are generally perceived and treated by others related to their contribution to the workplace. For example, when I asked two housekeepers to share their experience on how the superiors assigned tasks, they stated that some supervisors have preference during task distribution on the job:

...oh the boss give me the task? She I think she give me clean room because we Latino always work hard. We no speak English good but we work hard because we just like to finish our work and work good, and so we can go home. Yeah we
work hard, we eat good and we work good, because we are strong and see my bed, beautiful, the bathroom? Clean clean clean [Violeta].

In the meeting the supervisor introduced the housekeeper because there is a new supervisor. She said, “This is Jasmine, this is Angel, this is Gloria” OK, we say, “nice to meet you”. Then she [the supervisor] said, “Gloria can do everything, clean room, runner, lobby attendant...she’s very (unintelligible) [Jasmine].

In the first excerpt, Violeta told me that her supervisor was always satisfied with how the she handled her room cleaning tasks. She said that working hard is one of the traits that she (Latino and Latina in general) has as a worker. In the same tone, Jasmine expressed that her coworker, Gloria was acknowledged in the workplace as a flexible worker who could handle most of the housekeeping tasks and that she was appreciated during a meeting in the presence of a newly hired supervisor. Violeta’s and Jasmine’s narratives drives my curiosity of how others explicitly acknowledged them in the workplace.

Furthermore, Esperanza, Isaura, and Ruslan explained how different workplace members such as the employer and the guests acknowledged the workers’ contributions:

We are in the housekeeping party and we Latina and some managers said that we work hard and we make the hotel win. We always work hard because we are the best, I said [Esperanza].
One of the guests wrote in a card, “the housekeeper who cleaned room #441 has done an amazing job and very friendly. She greeted me in the hallway and ask me if I need anything. She is friendly”. That’s me (laughter) [Isaura].

A guest was confused because he had a problem with printer when I cleaned the business center. I know how to fix the printer and I helped him. He could print his papers. The guest wrote a nice review and report it to the front desk, and I was acknowledged in the hotel. She said, “I was helped by a housekeeper, he deserved a promotion”. It was a good experience [Ruslan].

The preceding narratives illustrate how race/ethnicity backgrounds influence the way the workers position themselves and navigate their different roles across different groups in the workplace as a CoP based on how they accomplish the tasks assigned to them, and how others view their positions at the workplace as shown in their acknowledgement. Some participants who stated that race/ethnicity are relevant to how their communicative experience in the workplace also indicated that native language plays a significant role in determining how others perceive them and shape their communication experience in the workplace. With their coworkers, most of the participants stated that there is a mutual understanding from the coworkers, including from different native language backgrounds. The participants who share the same language background, in this case, the Spanish-speaker majority, perceived that speaking Spanish has been facilitating and motivating as communicating in Spanish with their
coworkers allowed them to accomplish the tasks more effectively. Native language also functions as a glue that seal their ethnic solidarity as expressed in the following narratives:

*Ani*: OK, so what language do you use when you work with your coworkers?

*Enrique*: I use Spanish with my friend, because they speak Spanish. I think it is good, because people speak Spanish...because we can understand when there is problems to do the job. That’s I think Spanish is good. My friends (coworkers) feel good because we can work together.

*Ani*: What about when you communicate with your coworkers who don’t speak Spanish?

*Enrique*: When I work with the people that don’t speak Spanish? It is English. It is good, but sometimes the problem is I feel good if I ask about something with my own friend (in Spanish). It is more easy.

Enrique, the preventative maintenance housekeeper always works with his Spanish-speaking coworker and admitted that communication was easy and tasks were accomplished faster and more effectively. Both the coworker and the language used in communication has facilitated the task accomplishment. On the other hand, Raul, a houseman who were always teamed up with room cleaners from different language backgrounds were also required to communicate through the radio. When I asked him how he communicated with others about the tasks, particularly through the radio, he said
that others almost always accommodated his native language (Spanish) and he had no problem with his task accomplishment activities:

They call me, but I don’t understand. People speak, in radio, Spanish and English. When speak in radio and we don’t understand we just wait people will speak Spanish. It’s like that no problem for me [Raul].

The narratives show that most of the workers expressed their gratefulness of the freedom to use their native language at the workplace. Considering that most of the workers are Spanish speakers, the supervisors often teamed them to work together. Obviously, there are housekeepers who work solo, such as lobby and chute attendants are non-Spanish speakers. Most of the non-Spanish speakers feel comfortable to work with their Spanish speaking coworkers in the same team as this experience allowed them to practice their English or to teach each other about their native languages. When I asked the workers to share their experiences on how they interacted with the NES housekeepers, Jack and Raul, the housemen who worked with some NES room cleaners said that they sometimes didn’t feel welcomed in the team:

They don’t say nothing but I see it that they don’t give to us the work because they become slow. We fast but we don’t understand the language. Sometimes it is OK. Sometimes I know it because when I don’t speak English good they don’t want to work with me [Jack].
She take my radio then she speak to supervisor, “this is (________), don’t speak Spanish. She looks mad because everybody in my team speak Spanish. You see, I speak Spanish not with her, but with my friend. Why I speak English to people from Mexico and I’m from Mexico. Crazy. She said she want to work alone [Raul].

The above narratives show that some NNES workers have problems in communicating with NES, including the ones that are considered as an expert or proficient speaker in his country. Their status as multilingual speakers are often underrepresented in the multilingual workplace (Blommaert, 2007). Taron, who speaks English on a daily basis in his native country, Cameroon, admitted that sometimes he didn’t feel welcomed at the workplace not because of his problem in communicating in English but because of his accented speech:

Ani : So you said you speak English every day in Cameroon and here with your family members. Do you have any problems in communicating with others in English at work?

Taron : I have a lot of problems. You see? When you are black, but when you start to talk, people automatically know that you are not Americans (African American). You will feel that you are not accepted (in that group).
The workers have mixed perceptions regarding the use of their native language at the workplace, some were comfortable, but others were discouraged to use their native languages and that their problems in communicating in English, especially with NES workers has perceived as slowing down the work. This experience has made me curious about whether the workers usually had any opportunities to communicate with NES in general and how those NES perceive their native language. During my fieldwork, I noticed that most of the housekeepers’ tasks operate within the housekeeping areas, only a few of them have the opportunity to interact across departments. Gloria, one of the lobby attendants, expressed her experience in interacting with the NES front office staff:

She said, “Gloria is good, yes, Gloria is good.” The girl can speak Spanish and I talk to she, I take the trash. Is good? And we speak and she can speak Spanish. She said if I can teach she Spanish and I want to speak English, but she always speak Spanish. I want to speak English so [Gloria].

Even though the immigrant workers are welcomed to use whatever language that are most convenient for them in the workplace, some participants stated that their ability in communicating in English has been equally paramount as they also communicate with NES and others who do not speak their native language. Being able to use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) strongly shapes everyday communication experiences of the immigrant workers both in and outside the workplace. Language ability becomes the springboard for the workers’ process of adaptation both socially and professionally, and
therefore, the overwhelming majority of the participants expressed that language ability can create a social barrier that causes much frustration and concern in their everyday communication. This problem related to language ability, as some of the participants shared with me, has also been triggered by their prior education and occupation. Some participants have completed college degrees and the majority of them have graduated from high schools with various respectable working experiences in their native countries.

The struggle with communicative ability that many immigrant workers experience in the United States do not start when they enter organizations, but before. Most participants, when I asked them how they landed their current job, indicated that they found it through a close friend or a family member (i.e., through their interpersonal network). This situation directly relates immigrants’ experiences finding work in the United States and their English-speaking ability. Due in part to language differences, finding work in the United States is challenging even if the person came to this country with a higher education degree from their native country-most of the participants did not. In Brighton, 13% of the immigrant housekeepers have attended college level education in their native countries, however, their limited ability to communicate in English has impeded their opportunities in finding jobs. For this reason, immigrants’ interpersonal network oftentimes becomes their only source to find employment, as most occupations require people to be proficient in English. Language use, therefore, becomes closely tied to immigrants’ ability to become employed in U.S. organizations—even if it is a lower
status blue-collar job. As a result, for many immigrant workers, their interpersonal network becomes the “ticket” that grants them entrance into the U.S. employment “game.” The following comments show participants’ descriptions of their experiences to acquire their current job and the role of interpersonal networks in the immigrant workers’ ability to find work in the United States. When I asked the participants on how they got their jobs, they explained that:

...because is a company that hires people to clean and is a job that is easy to start. My cousin, my cousin work in La Trabajas and he got me the interview with Carmen [Isaura].

I have a friend and I meet him in gatherings in our Nepali community. He work in another hotel in here (downtown area). When this hotel is new I got the job here [Suresh].

I come here because my cousin work here but I have no papers (immigration documents); my cousin help me to find social card to work in hotel. And a lot of people left because no have papers. I worked in restaurants washing dishes with Esperanza (another undocumented immigrant) and the factory. No good. The agency give me another job as room cleaner here and is good [Raquel].

The immigrant workers’ dependence on their interpersonal networks illustrates the role of language use in their ability to find employment in the United States upon arrival. The previous comment also highlights another major issue for many immigrant
workers, immigration status. Such situation is another reason why interpersonal networks are vital for these workers to find work in the United States. Such comments about job acquisition abounded across interviews and casual conversations during my observation activities with the workers. The previous narratives illustrate the role of interpersonal networks for the workers in their quest for work in the United States. Language related ability and immigration status have forced the workers to rely on family members and friends to land their first job in this country. With this condition, some participants admitted that their prior education and occupation didn’t help them much in securing jobs in the U.S. As part of their sociocultural background, I asked the participants to share with me their previous educational backgrounds and was fascinated to know that some of the housekeepers (such as Isaura and Ruslan) have attended colleges:

*I went to school in college in Mexico, and my program is called creative writing, but it is Spanish not English. That’s my problem, because I want to get a job with my what..my diploma and but I don’t know how so I just do this job. I cannot tell anybody about my school in here because they say, “you don’t need that if you just clean the rooms or restrooms.” My problems, I think my problem is my English. My school is no problem if my English is good because I can talk about it to apply a job. Now, I think I need to learn English more and more [Isaura]. I am here as a student that’s why I end up doing this job. I have a degree in computer science and I think I can speak English very well, you understand me,*
right? (laughter). *I am studying here because I think it will be easier later for me to find the job that I really want. This job that I have now is the only job that you can get when you don’t have the papers [legal immigration status], you know* [Ruslan].

Isaura and Ruslan have previous college degrees from their native countries. Both of them realized that there were a lot of reasons why their college diplomas were not able to help them find their dream jobs in America. There is often an unfair case when the immigrant workers whose expertise and knowledge do not match with the occupations on offer suffer from linguistic and cultural capital loss, which is in contrast with the transformation of others (the employers) gaining new cultural capital from them (Burns and Roberts, 2010). In support of this argument, Katz (2012) discovered that in many cases, some immigrant workers who hold particular degrees with distinctive knowledge, expertise, such as Isaura and Ruslan, and work experiences in previous trainings and occupations are not honored in the U.S. This particular case often exists because those workers are not proficient in English, even though, ironically, English proficiency offers no guarantee of upward mobility (Miller, 2009).

Most of the participants shared with me that their inability to communicate in English has been their biggest issue in finding the jobs in the U.S. regardless of their previous education/occupation they had in their native country. Not being able to communicate in English has created some kind of vicious cycle for them as this problem
impeded their networking opportunity. Limited networking resources have placed their professional opportunities to entry level positions, the particular positions that not everybody are willing to occupy. These are also the type of jobs that have left little to no time for the workers to pursue education, including to improve their English communicative ability.

Based on the participants’ perception on how others perceive them based on their sociocultural backgrounds, the following sections displays additional findings generated from the previous categories: the relevancy between sociocultural backgrounds and communicative experience in the workplace. These findings are paramount because they display genuine pictures for the readers to learn about the immigrant workers’ journey in working and living in the U.S. For the immigrant workers, some of the stories narrated in this section become their starting points for language use and learning:

2. Communication Experience with Different Members of CoP in the Workplace

Based on the interviews, the participants explained that communication in the workplace is very much organized by the following components:
Given that the nature of housekeeping job requires housekeepers to accomplish certain amount of tasks within a specific amount of time, it leaves housekeepers a little leeway for communicating with others. The findings show that housekeepers interact with different respondents in both working and non-working events. During work time in particular, some of the workers also had the opportunities to interact with guests. During work events, particular housekeepers such as runner and lobby attendant are also occasionally required to interact with the other hotel team members or the ‘hoteliers’ through radio. During non-work events such as break time, before and after shifts are the common occasions where housekeepers interact not only with their coworkers but also with wider communication partners in the hotel.

The following section portrays the participants’ communication experience with different partners (i.e., coworker, employer/manager/supervisor or ‘superior’, and guest) at the workplace. Based on the categories of communication in the workplace previously mentioned, for both spoken and written communication, the participants’ narratives indicated that language and topic choice dominated the findings on how the participants
with different speaking as depicted in the following chart:

Figure 6. Key Elements to Communication Experience with Different Speaking Partners

Mapping Brighton Housekeeping Department as a multilingual workplace, there are at least four different languages spoken by the housekeepers: Spanish, English, French, and Arabic. Some other native languages such as Uzbek, Fulfulde, Tagalog and Nepali were never particularly used at the workplace communication since there is only one speaker for each of the language.
The participants navigate their language and topic choices based on the four categories previously listed: communication partner, location, and event. Language and topic choice element was also applicable for communicating through different supporting devices and activities.

a. Communication Experiences with Coworkers

There are various communication climates at the housekeeping department due to the diversity existed in this area. Often time, the communication experience can be hostile resulting from the conflicting ideas from people from different backgrounds and interests. Regardless of the communication experience that they have, some of the workers maintain good relationships with many of their coworkers and a few supervisors

Figure 7. Language Use with Different Communication Partners
and guests. For some of them, coworkers are their primary source of interaction. The participants said that they mostly talk with coworkers during breaks and work time where they can talk about a variety of topics including work-related topics and current world trends, networking, native countries, entertainment, and families.

Most of the participants interact with their coworkers solely in their native language. Since most of the participants are Spanish speakers, Spanish become the major media of communication for these workers. Code-switching from the Spanish speakers occurs whenever they accommodate the non-Spanish speaking coworkers or when they responded to English utterances. Non-Spanish speaking workers almost always use English (ELF) in communicating with others, while those with some degrees of Spanish communicative ability will promote the communication in Spanish to practice using the language. The participants code-switch to accommodate or to show solidarity with different speakers and for some other particular reasons such as switching topics, showing social status, and showing affection.

The following excerpts represent what participants’ respond to my question on when and where they communicate at the workplace, what language is used, and how the housekeeping work shapes their interactions with their coworkers:

*I talk during lunch (break) and sometimes at work when I help my friend. If we have an emergency they go and ask me something and I go with them, sometimes the supervisor send me to floors to help making bed or rollaway and they tell me...*
please come help us with this beds. I’m happy because ah I can talk to my friend. When we sometimes talk during work hours and lunch (break) we talk in Spanish.

All the time Spanish with my Mexican friends. [Jack].

...during the work it’s not a lot because everyone stays in their work area. During the break we spend time together in the lunch (break) and talk or when finish work we talk at locker room. Sometimes I meet some people when at work and I talk in Spanish or English and say Hola and hi and are you OK that’s all [Gloria].

When I talk with friend? I talk everywhere, I talk on lunch and when we do the job cleaning room. I talk with friends about something fun because job make me tired and no fun. I talk about we will go to lunch together in the weekend. It’s fun [Jose].

The preceding three narratives exemplify how the nature of housekeeping tasks can both hinder and allow communication to happen. Jack’s and Gloria’s narratives show that when communication occurred during the work time, it would be very succinct except when housekeepers are paired to work in teams (Jack and the room cleaners), then they had the chance to talk until the task was accomplished. Sometimes, as seen from Jose’s narrative, housekeepers from different positions have an opportunity to meet at the ‘strategic meeting points’ such as the elevator landings, basement hallways, or floor closet, that allow them to talk in group. It also appears that the workers primarily interact
with their coworkers in particular times during their work shift: the break and the locker room talk. Both of these spaces also allowed the workers to talk cross departments with the other Brighton hoteliers. Given the opportunities that they have in interacting with others, I also asked what possible topics they talk about in such limited times with their coworkers:

...I talk with the houseman, about something happen to my daughter, my grandkids I take care, I feel I am sad, too much works, my father is sick in Mexico...he (the houseman) help me make beds [Jasmine].

When she [another housekeeper] help me with turndown service I talk [to the girl that helped her] about this girl that work for the hotel. She works for the hotel.

Why. OK, I will report to Joseph if it happens again because it’s too much.

Yesterday Joseph asked, “Did you check once again the DND (Do Not Disturb) rooms before leaving?” She said yes, but she did not. She laughed in the hallway and left. Then, I have to clean many many rooms. And...the new man that help me, no the supervisor, I don’t know, they don’t train him good. He help me OK one room then he take trash out OK one hour two hour and I already finish five rooms. Where is he? I’m sad. Yesterday I am sad [Angelica].

I work myself usually. Sometimes I meet my friend in hallways and just say hello how are you. Sometimes I ask always how much work, how much checkouts and ask if she needs help, but maybe not, sometimes I am very busy too [Raquel].
The above narratives display some topics that the participants have when they communicate with their coworkers. For the most part, it appears that location, event, and communication partner determine the topic choices during the interaction, however it also appears that there are some overlapped information regarding how the workers considered location as ‘private’ or ‘public’. In the first narrative, Jasmine shares with her working partner about her feelings and the family conditions when they work together cleaning a room.

The second narrative illustrates Angelica’s disappointment on the job and the coworker and her feelings about them. Both topics are considered private and therefore the participants share the story with the communication partners that help them with the room cleaning. The locations (guest rooms), even though they are physically public spaces, they became ‘private’ spaces without the presence of others (i.e., guests, supervisors, other workers). Private topics such as how the participants feel about the job or the family condition are usually discussed in private spaces even though it can happen during work time. As a comparison, in the third narrative, Raquel explains about her common interactions with her coworkers which usually consist of brief greetings and work-related topics. The locations where Raquel referred to are hallways, which are considered public as guests, supervisors, and the other team members are usually present in those areas, and therefore the workers need to look professional in that area. The topics that the workers have in communication are usually work-related, or brief
greetings to check in how everyone is doing in that particular time. Given that topics of
the talk tends to be formal in public areas, I asked the housekeepers to describe their
conversation topic at the break room:

*We talk together, about our country, about the TV, the movie, songs and music.*

*We talk about food. My sister making tamales. We talk and eat like a family. We
talk and all is very good* [Jack].

*We talk in Spanish and sometimes in English but we talk more in Spanish because
we sit with Mexican friends. Yes, work and food. We talk about the work we have
today but we like talk about food or we watch the TV and we talk about the TV
(laughter). We are tired and we don’t want to be sad we talk about food. Food
make me happy* [Jose].

*When that man enter the break room (laughter) then La China said, “muy gordo
chango” [translation: very big monkey]. We teach La China to speak Spanish but
we talk the wrong (laughter) the wrong Spanish (laughter)* [Enrique].

Jack’s and Jose’s narratives illustrate the topics he usually shared during lunch break
which were mostly about their home country and daily activities. It appears that it is not
because of the presence of food per se that inspired the participants to talk about food
during their break time. Food, according some of the workers, is the glue that stick them
together as immigrant workers, something that unites them in a place far away from their
native country where they grew up. During the break time, most of the participants had
chances to talk to wider communication partners and feel somewhat free from work-related activities so sometimes they also tease each other and joke around with their coworkers (Enrique). During this time, based the interviews with some participants, they also share nostalgic experiences from their home countries including children, families, and food, while sometimes enjoying food that they brought from home. The cafeteria where the workers have lunch, even though private, is considered a ‘public’ space by the workers. Most of the immigrant workers talk in their native language during the break, however, they admitted that they avoid talking about some private and sensitive matters, because as one of the room cleaners, Esperanza, said, “There is the camera and there are other people or managers speaking Spanish and even though they don’t they will Google it to translate.” The workers are worried that talking about some private matters in public spaces will get them into trouble and therefore they refrain from sharing private stories in the break room.

Another private space that is considered public by the housekeepers is the locker room. Given that others are present in the locker room; the housekeepers will not share sensitive-related topics in this area. All participants indicated that they have relatively positive communication experience with their coworkers even though in some occasions they also have superficial interactions. When I asked whether they also experience discomfort in communicating with their coworkers, they told me that they tried to avoid conflict with their coworkers regardless of the many misunderstanding that they have
with one another:

For example if someone does something wrong I can still talk to the person and I know its not his fault. I don’t like it, I am sad but I talk to the person. For example if someone don’t do the work correctly its not their fault and I can show him how to do it. It’s not his fault because the supervisor or the manager who train him.

So it is OK [Jasmine].

I have almost no problem when talking with my friend, but my friend who is talking English, yes. They speak too fast and I am embarrassing to say what? What? What? All the time. I want to learn. Just only the language is the problem.

But my friend that are not speaking Spanish, they it’s OK [Isaura].

Aside from the seemingly smooth interaction among the coworkers, some of the participants also experience discomfort when communicating with their coworkers. However, as Jasmine indicates in her narrative, usually the workers’ solidarity and sympathy function to alter the discomfort into understanding that as workers they need to unite and keep the harmony so they can work together more comfortably. Jasmine’s narratives show how the workers respond to the ‘work orders’ produced by the workplace (Heller, 2010), by confronting to them (“… because the supervisor or manager who trains him”), and accommodating her coworker at work (“…if someone does something wrong I can still talk to the person and I know it’s not his fault”). Another discomfort also occurred because of the participants’ problem with language barrier particularly
when they communicate with the native English speakers. However, as Isaura, one of the housekeepers said, instead of throwing the blame solely to their speaking partner, they think that this language problem increase their awareness of the need to learn to communicate in English.

While most of the participants seem to close their eyes to their language problem with their coworkers, this problem occurs more frequently with more serious effect when the workers communicate with their superiors. Topic choice, on the other hand, even though also existing in communicating with the employer/manager/supervisor, it does not particularly stand out as when the workers communicate with their coworkers. The participants mentioned that communicating with superiors required them to pay more attention to language choice (such as what language to use, and what words or expressions to choose) and speech function (such as asking question, reporting, giving information, showing affection, including joking around, etc.) than what to talk about.

b. Communication Experiences with the Superiors (Employer/Manager/Supervisor)

Most of the participants said that they had the opportunity to meet with the housekeeping superiors (managers and supervisors) on a daily basis and talk to them. When communicating with the non-bilingual superiors, the housekeeper admitted that their problems in communication have mainly been triggered by language barrier. This particular problem has hindered the workers to even start the communication, especially with the non-bilingual superiors. According to the majority of the participants, the
availability of bilingual superiors has actually facilitated the flow of communication between the superiors and the subordinate groups. The followings are the participants’ narratives on their communication experience especially with the managers and supervisors, responding to my general question on how they interact with them and whether they have any problems interacting with the superiors:

I talk on phone, I need help. I talk to supervisor I need houseman. I speak English to supervisor and she…(inaudible). I talk English and the supervisor said, anybody speak Spanish? There is a housekeeper here and I don’t understand what she talked about”. I am very confusing (confused), what I must say so she understands? [Violeta].

Yes, for example I talked to someone at the restaurant when I worked. I walked to restaurant everytime because I always clean the restroom behind the restaurant. This manager was angry and asked me not to talk anymore with the people at the restaurant. I want to explain to she but she said, “Don’t talk.” She doesn’t want to hear your voice? [Gloria].

I learn about the chemical ok, and I learn to talk English. I said, “boss, what I can say if the person come here?” The supervisor said to me, “If the person come here and asked you some questions, just pretend you don’t speak English.” I am sad because my English is not good but I can speak and I prepared for it. [Raquel].
Some participants admitted that they felt discouraged when they talk to some non-bilingual superiors because these workers have problems in expressing their opinions in English. This fact, according to the workers, has caused frustration and sometimes it demotivated them in engaging further conversation with them. In the first narrative, Violeta tried to consult with a supervisor about her problem in the room that she was working on, however, the supervisor had a hard time comprehending her so she spoke through the radio asking for assistance from Spanish speakers. As the conversation through radios is broadcasted publicly, this has made Violeta felt frustrated because everyone in the hotel heard about her inability to communicate in English. Violeta was frustrated of her inability to communicate in English considering that everyone in the group know that she has been in the U.S. for over 30 years. In the same tone with Violeta’s experience, Gloria, a lobby attendant shared her experience when she gave her opinion in interacting with the other team members during work time. Gloria, and some of her coworkers, admitted that she has a difficulty in comprehending the workplace ‘order’ regarding interacting with others during work, the type of knowledge that is learned in and through English (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Therefore, she was not able to figure out on how to express her thoughts to her supervisor due to her limited ability in communicating in English, coupled with her limited understanding of the U.S. workplace interaction rules.

Likewise, Raquel who admitted that communicating in English has been her
biggest problem in the workplace felt silenced when her supervisor told her to pretend that she was not able to speak English after she prepared herself in case an assessor came to her to ask questions. Besides discouraging the workers from expressing their opinions, problems with the language barrier that the participants have suffered from has also hindered them in communicating their needs:

Ani: So you said that not being able to communicate well with your supervisor is not good for the housekeepers? Could you give me examples why it is not good?

Jose: for example, if people want to have holiday (request a day off) I have a problem with that. I talk to the agency and they talk to the manager. If something wrong I don’t get holiday (request day off will not be granted). I feel that this is wrong; people are easy and... I have problems. I want to talk Spanish to tell this.

According to Jose, his problem in communicating in English with a supervisor has inhibited him from getting his personal-related needs such as requesting a day off. The above problems have made some workers to limit communicating with the superiors in order to avoid conflict and discomfort in working, as Jack and Suresh both told me in responding my question on what strategy the workers have in dealing with the problems in communicating with the superiors:

I am a person that I don’t like problems, and sometimes I try, for example if
sometimes I see something wrong, I keep my mouth shut, so that I don’t have any problems and I will have good relationship with people, because housekeepers work hard always and full of stress so I don’t like to have problems [Jack]. When I have problems I keep it to myself. I sometimes want to talk to the meetings but I always say to myself, don’t do that. If I have problems I can talk to a manager that is nice and she want to listen. If not, I will avoid to talk and just listen and finish work fast [Suresh].

In support of Jack’s and Suresh’ strategy in avoiding conflict: using silence, some participants said that time spent at work also became a primary reason to avoid conflict with superiors. Therefore, when I asked why they avoided conflict instead of trying to confront on how to fix the communication, one worker said:

… because we are here everyday; we have more communication, we are together more than at home. I see people here more than my own family, more than my father, because my father works nights and I work mornings, no, I see people here more and it would be frustrating to fight like a cat and mouse (laughter)… [Angelica].

In addition to the language barrier problem, the participants indicated that they have problems related to socio-cultural differences that emerged as a salient issue to communication experiences of the housekeepers with their superiors. Differences in ethnicity, custom, language and educational background pose significant communication
barriers for many participants. I further asked the housekeepers to explain and to give me examples of how differences in sociocultural backgrounds have been challenging for them, and Ruslan, the college graduated housekeeper said:

...when you come from different culture and speak different language, it is easy for people to say that people from the other country is wrong because you don’t understand the instructions. Because you don’t go to schools, because your English is hard to understand, because your job didn’t teach you this skill, and so on... [Ruslan].

The difference in sociocultural background sometimes creates disharmony in communication among the superiors and workers. Several participants admitted that they purposively keep a distance from the superiors because of the discomfort in their working areas. The disharmony at the workplace has made the workers suspicious with others, that created communication superficiality where they refrain from communicating with others.

While the workers admitted that the task accomplishment required them to communicate with the superiors, this didn’t apply to communicating with the guests. The room cleaners, for example, were expected to do their jobs when the guests were not in the rooms.

c. Communication Experiences with Strangers/Guests

When I asked the participants about their communication experience with the
guests, they most of them choired the same answers: “We rarely talk to the guests”.

Some other participants made use of every opportunity they have in communicating with the guests. The majority of the participants said that they enjoy talking with the guests regardless of the problems and misunderstanding they have when communicating with them. The followings are their responses to my question on why they would like to talk to the guests:

“I want to learn English with the guests” [Isaura]

“That’s what we do with the guest, be friendly to them” [Ruslan]

“The guest is nice and they think it’s OK if housekeepers don’t know English well” [Angelica]

“I think because the boss said I have to talk to the guest if I see them” [Gloria]

“Because I like talking to guests and want some tips?” [Jose]

“Some guest are big people (important people/VIP guests)” [Suresh]

“I want to know if they are happy with the room” [Esperanza]

“Because some guest are very nice” [Raul]

“I say hello, how are you, that’s all” [Maria]

“Maybe I can get a job?” [Jack]

Of the 13 participants I interviewed, 11 of them admitted that they actually do not feel confident to talk to the guests because of their limited language ability. However, as Christopher, the general manager informed me in the preceding chapter, most of the
guests understand that the non-English speaking housekeepers have language barriers that may impact their communicative ability. Regardless of their communicative ability in English, the workers admitted that they have both positive and negative communication experiences with strangers/guests. Participants cite the guests’ unpleasant attitudes, having embarrassing to frustrating encounters with guests, and language barriers as the chief reasons for avoiding communication with them. Overall, some workers reported that they have mostly pleasant communication experiences with guests. The workers’ communication experiences on the floors yielded most of the mixed results as the workers shared that their experiences are both positive and negative. Worker’s-guests’ communication at the other part of the hotel such as the lobby and public areas, seem to be mostly positive.

During the interview sessions, I asked the participants to explain what factors that prevent them from communicating with the guests and some of them said that problem with the language barriers has become the common reason. For example, Raquel said: I don’t talk with them, never, because my English, no good. I try to greet them and if they answer good, not all of them, some talk some no talk to you. Violeta added that the talk was usually very robotic: Not much, when I talk with them and it’s just hi, how are you, that’s all. Additionally, Enrique admitted that his problem in communicating in English forced him to avoid meeting with the guests: I cannot talk with them, I don’t understand them, and many times I try to hide so that they don’t ask [laughter].
In addition to the workers’ problem in communicating in English, some of them also mentioned that the guests’ negative attitudes towards housekeepers push them to avoid interacting with the guests. For example, Jasmine’s narrative vividly illustrates some of the negative experiences that the workers have with the guests because of their attitudes towards the housekeepers:

Ani : Could you tell me one example of your experience in communicating with the guests where they are not happy with how you communicate with them?

Jasmine : OK, most of the time the guests are happy to talk but sometimes not. I see them and I say good morning, how are you? They just walk. There some guests because sometimes they are hurry and me too and then they get up, they come from wake up then want breakfast then look mad at 7:30 in the morning and they talk to you like you’re trash [Jasmine].

Jasmine’s narrative told me that the reason why the guest was unhappy was not particularly triggered by the language barrier that she has, but something else, such as the guest’s indifference towards housekeeping as a profession. Another housekeeper who is considered a native speaker in his home country narrated his opinion on how the guest perceiving the housekeeping profession:

Ani : So you said that the housekeepers’ problem in communicating with the guest is not only caused by the language barriers, I mean the workers’
language barriers problem. Could you give an example based on your experience in communicating with the guest, the one that was not caused by language barrier problem?

Taron: ...yeah, like I said it is not because we have the language problem. This happens many times. I am delivering this stuff for a guest. The guest said to me, “Do you clean a room?” I said, no, Sir, not today. Then he said, “Can you tell your supervisor to send a maid to clean my room?” What? I said, Maid? Why don’t they just call us housekeepers? It sounds better for us. I feel like I don’t want to talk to this kind of guest. [Taron].

Taron, a room cleaner, was assigned a “runner’s” task one day so he did not specifically clean rooms. Taron indicated that referring housekeepers as maids is a form of discrimination as maid contains a pejorative meaning which degrade the housekeeping as a profession. He has a concern not only for himself as an individual and an employee, but also for the rest of his coworkers, the housekeepers. This experience has particularly discouraged him from communicating with guests.

Additionally, some participants admitted that talking to the guests are not the most salient point in working even though it is absolutely suggested by the superiors to be communicative with the guests. Greeting the guest, for example has become one part of work routine that the housekeepers learn at the work training. In the guidebook, there are particular expressions and terms that the new housekeepers learn during their training.
week. Some rules on how to greet the guests are also displayed on the housekeeping office wall. When I asked the participants how they learn to communicate with the guests, Jack explained that he learned how to communicate with the guest during the training week:

*In the training, the supervisor said, “OK if you see guest, greet them, say for example, hello, how are you, can I help you. So I just talk with them like that.*

*They sometimes talk more to ask me questions, for example, and I am confused but I can ask supervisor or somebody, my friend [Jack].

In his statement Jack also vividly explained that problem in communicating with the guest was not a serious issue for him as there were always people around to help.

Thus, in contrast to the preceding experiences, a number of workers expressed that they are very content with their communication experiences with the guests. These workers said that both they and the guests take advantage of the positive relationships they have with each other and use them as a laboratory to practice their language skills. Furthermore, the workers enjoy their relationships with guests so much that some workers refer to them as family. The following narratives show how some participants feel about their communication with guests:

*Ani*: So do you communicate with a lot of guests when you are at work? How do you feel when you talk to them?

*Gloria*: ...Not much, I mean they [inaudible] and greet me and yes I have two or
three guests that talk with me, how are you, like today I asked a man at the gym, right, what happened to your legs? Is it damaged? He says I sprint (sprained) my leg yesterday, but he see me like, what? And he.. laughing. So this was what I talking with him. And he is happy but I was a bit embarrassed because..because he is laughing; and this lady big lady yes, a lady gave me a mug. It is, thank you for work hard in mug. Yes, you feel good when someone gives you a mug; I mean you feel important, and they are always saying thank you very much for working hard, I said, no, thank you we have our job because of you (Gloria).

Learning from Gloria, the lobby attendant on how she enjoyed talking to the guest, in the interview I also asked the same question to Violeta, a room cleaner that is also a senior housekeeper who is always assigned to work at the upper floors, the floors where the VIP guests and presidential suites located. Violeta shared with me a special relationship she has with a guest:

The guest the lady has a little girl, the granddaughter and she is in sick the girl and I always talk to the girl and the grandma they are so sweet. I meet them in morning when they wake up and in afternoon when the girl come back from hospital or the school. She talk to me a lot about the girl and I listen to her always. They are good person. They call me if they need something...the girl call me nana [Violeta].
Some of the participants explained that they are able to maintain good relationship with some guests, especially the returning guests. Regardless of the level of communicative ability in English, some guests are satisfied with the service that some guests call the housekeepers by name. Regardless of their language ability, Christopher, the general manager, narrated that most of the guests have positive comments on the workers’ language use. Guests commonly understand the language barriers that the workers have and they have various options to seek for assistance whenever they have problems communicating with the housekeepers. The housekeepers also aware that problems can happen and that they are not able to get the message acrosed. Learning about how the housekeepers communicate with the guests made me want to know how the housekeepers overcome the problems in communicating with the guests. Some participants shared with me her strategies when they had problems in speaking in English with guests:

...for example when the guest confused I call the supervisor and I try to help (the guest) with here (moving her hands, forming some kind of gesture with her thumb) or keep on talking in Spanish and they are OK but sometimes they are not OK [Raul].

I ask the front desk if a guest ask me question because I have the radio or if there is a person I will ask him the question to help with the guest [Jack].

There is one experience the guest ask me the direction to the restroom but I cannot show direction so I just bring her to the toilet [Gloria]
Even though some participants admitted that they have problem in communicating with guests, most of them feel that guests commonly understand and that housekeepers have language barriers. Compared to communicating with the hoteliers (coworkers and superiors) where the participants have to pay attention to conversation topic, language choice and speech function, the participants indicated that they usually rely on the common expressions that they learn during the training on how to greet the guests.

d. Communicating Through Supporting Devices

The followings are the supporting devices used at the housekeeping department along with the corresponding housekeepers who operate them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devices</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>all housekeepers, except room cleaners</td>
<td>also used by other hoteliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>room cleaners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smart phone</td>
<td>Housekeepers</td>
<td>used solely for work-related purpose, not in public areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad</td>
<td>superiors: supervisors and room inspectors</td>
<td>also used across departments</td>
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Table 4. The Communicating Devices and the Users
Responding to the changing demand of the workplace entrenched in the ‘new work order’ (Heller, 2010), Brighton has created a ‘new word order’ in the workplace, and that the ‘word-force’ has replaced the ‘workforce’ depicted in the new facilities to support the communication activities applied in the workplace. In order to accelerate the flow of communication during work, various electronic devices such as radios, smart phones, and iPads are used within the housekeeping and across departments. Radio is the most frequently used device at Brighton and it is also used by all departments in the hotel. While smart phones are also used, they are not as noticeable as when they use the radio. Angie, the housekeeping manager explained that radios and smart phones are very helpful tools as the housekeepers are able to communicate much faster. The housekeepers speak in Spanish and English on the same radio channel which is shared with Front Office as well to accomplish particular tasks. The housekeeping department has also recently been using iPad device to control the rooms and housekeepers’ status. So far, only the managers, supervisors, and room inspectors use this device. Joey, one of the supervisors told me that in the future, room attendants may be equipped with an iPad so that they can manage their tasks including finding out whether particular rooms are vacant, what time guests in their areas check out, how many rooms has “DND” signs, which guests need particular attention/VIP guests, and so on. The discussion on communicating with iPad will not be included in this section as the participants do not use this device and I was not able to collect any data regarding the use of iPad device by
the housekeepers.

Brighton equipped some team members, including the housekeepers, with radio device to facilitate their communication. Some housekeepers, such as the room cleaners and chute attendants, for instance, do not carry radios because their communication flow is facilitated by other device, the hotel’s phones. The chute attendants do not especially use radio to communicate during work time considering this housekeeper is not required to team up with others to finish the laundry tasks.

The housekeepers told me that they noticed the benefit of using the radio during work and they said that this device assisted them in finishing the task quickly because everyone was aware what is going on through the radio. The housekeepers said that it was not complicated to understand tasks assigned through radio as the supervisor or whoever giving tasks will always speak slowly and articulated.

Most of the housekeepers admitted that they used Spanish most of the time. They only used English with non-Spanish speaking housekeepers. Some of the managers, including the NES ones accommodated the radio communication when speaking with Spanish-speaking housekeepers. The housekeepers also shared with me regarding their communication experience through the radio device, including when and how they communicate and with whom, how they feel about using the radio, what benefits they take, and what problems they have and how they deal with the problems. All of the participants give positive responses regarding the use of radio device as a communication
media at the housekeeping department:

It is good idea because we can talk faster if there is problem if the room attendant or my friend need something, and if the guest need something, it is faster because we don’t have to looking for people to ask for help and we just talk to the radio [Jack].

It helps us locating our coworkers because sometimes we need someone to help us but we don’t know where they are. Also, not only housekeepers but also some workers such as the Front Office and the Security and the Maintenance man. It helps us connect to others easily [Ruslan].

I usually listen to the people talking. I have a little English. When people talk I listen. And then, I try to remember the word. It is difficult but I learn the word and say a word in English and I listen and I can speak a little but it is good [Isaura]. Because all people listen to the radio, even the security and the front office and the other managers when I speak they listen so sometimes it is good if people know what I do and I feel happy because people say, “Angelica do this, she does a good job”. It is good for the housekeeper because people not all, not everybody know that we the housekeepers do a good job and we work hard so guests can use the rooms [Angelica].

Basically, as Angie has explained, the main goal of launching the radio device at the hotel is to accelerate the flow of communication within and across departments so
that the team members are able to accomplish the tasks efficiently, effectively, and on a timely manner. Besides facilitating the housekeepers in accomplishing their tasks, some of them admitted that they also gain additional benefits of using the radio, such as having a media to practice their languages at work and to get acknowledgement from others. For Isaura, for instance, communicating through the radio have helped her learn English. By listening to how people talk, Isaura learns English vocabularies and pronunciation. Angelica, likewise explained that communicating through the radio device allows others to recognize her accomplishment at work. Angelica admitted that the nature of housekeeping tasks does not allow the housekeepers to be acknowledged and radio enables others to always be alert of what others do at work as interaction is accessible across departments.

Inspired by Isaura’s comment about the benefit of radio in helping her learn English, I ask the other participants some details of what they learn from communicating through this device and some of them mentioned the followings:

...some words...shampoo, coffee, pillow case, shower caps, soap...[Raul].

I learn for example how people say something for example how to say when people say thank you and people say different thing and I learn it [Gloria].

To ask question...[Enrique].

Basically the way people talk. I have no problems in talking in English but people talk differently you know what I mean, like the black people talk different, the
Chinese people talk different...and of course I learn Spanish by communicating through radio with Spanish speakers. I think my Spanish is not bad (Laughter) [Taron].

I don't talk with the radio, but I'm afraid when I talk in radio, but I just listen. I'm nervous, but I learn so many things, about the works, some new words, I learn Spanish, oh it is too much but I like it [Suresh].

The participants explained that communicating through the radios help them learn about the job, the languages use to accomplish the tasks, and most of all the way different people communicate in the workplace. Aside from the positive comments regarding communicating through the radio device, some participants also explained about the problems that they have in communicating through the radio device. Some participants indicated that communicating through this device is more complicated than communicating face to face. The following housekeepers who are Spanish speakers said that they have problems in understanding people when they talk through the radios, including when they speak Spanish:

...yes, when they talk in English, it's so difficult I listen because they speak fast. Yes, Spanish, yes, also difficult too because you cannot see you cannot see the people. Sometimes I just don't talk I just wait because I don't understand [Jose].

...especially because they speak English and they speak very fast so I don't understand. But only sometimes. And sometimes I forgot the words because they
speak very fast [Isaura].

Yes, for example the manager try to speak in Spanish but...I don’t understand you know when for example she said OK this room number and this room, she speak Spanish but I don’t understand because she is no Mexican? In English? I don’t understand [Raul].

Some of the problems in communicating through the radio, as Jose and Isaura indicated, are mostly related to difficulty in comprehending speaker’s messages. They said that face to face communication is always easier to understand because they can see the speaker’s lips movement, facial expressions, and gestures. The other problems that they have are related to speaker’s strong accents both when they speak Spanish and English. In addition to communicating through radio device, the housekeeping communication activities are also facilitated by smartphones, particularly through text messaging.

The General Manager, Christopher specifically emphasized that sometimes he also makes use of Google translation site when working on his presentation slides for the hotel meetings. He mentioned that in the absence of bilingual assistants, Google translation has helped him translate his slides:

We also use Google translation, you know, not perfect but sometimes it’s a matter of getting the point acrosed, right? So there are these multiple ways to do but there is nothing official [Christopher].
Even though using cellphones is not suggested during the work, Angie said that this mode of communication has facilitated and speed up the task accomplishment. The function of cellphones, for some housekeepers, are beyond communication tools. Jasmine, when she trained a newly hired room cleaner, for instance, using her cellphones as part of her training support. She explained that during the training the housekeepers had to remember a lot of items and details of tasks. On training, she asked for the supervisor’s permission to take pictures of room details so it will be easier for her trainees to remember where to put amenities in the room. Jasmine also shared some translation applications to help the trainees communicate in different languages.

The use of cellphones during work is not suggested in public areas. There are notifications on announcement boards throughout the hotel that team members are refrained from using cellphones during work, particularly within the guest’s sight. In addition to that, when VIP guests staying in the hotel, the use of cellphones in public areas is banned. As the hotel has a high concern on protecting the guests’ privacy, there were announcements written both in English and Spanish regarding the prohibition of using cellphones in public areas, taking pictures of guests and posting guests’ related events in social media. As most of the housekeepers use social media such as Facebook to communicate with friends and family, the management make sure that the guests’ privacy is guaranteed during their stay at Brighton. The security officers keep track of the team members’ social media pages to make sure that nobody violates this rule.
Using smartphones are allowed under some particular circumstances to communicate with others about work-related matters. Considering that talking on the phone during work is disruptive, communicating through phone for work-related purpose is particularly through text messaging. Angelica and Enrique, the housekeepers who always relied on text messaging interaction with the supervisor explained:

*The supervisor used iPad so when she talked to the front desk with iPad too, then it is also easy for me to join the text conversation because I use iPhone. It is easier and faster than the radio because sometimes I put the radio in cart when I clean room so sometimes because of that too. I don’t answer the radio then the supervisor just send me text [Angelica].*

*Sometimes when there is special thing for example the important guest. For example the Rolling Stones come here and I have to check the curtain is ok, the tub is ok, the coffee machine is ok so the other people if she talk to the other people maybe no good because it’s too many people. Supervisor text me but in English then I used this [showing his smartphone app] to translate it [Enrique].*

Communicating through smart phones for work-related purpose becomes another alternative to get the tasks accomplished. Angelica, a turndown attendant is one of the housekeepers that communicate through smartphone the most. Smartphone is more effective for the tasks she handles, especially refreshing the rooms with the presence of guests, during which she needs to keep the noise as low as possible while the guests are
ready to take a rest. Angelica and the other housekeepers use translator applications on their smartphones, Google Translate, to translate English or Spanish text messages. Some immigrant workers rely on text messaging and use technology to mediate language barriers, learning new words, and phrases in the process. Despite the ease in using smartphone to communicate with others, some participants told me that sometimes they feel that they are limited in their ability to naturally communicate with others in more elaborate and complex ways during face to face interactions. To get around some of these issues, Angelica and other participants in my study use smartphone applications designed to learn foreign languages. These apps display English-Spanish translation, phonetic spelling, and audio on how to pronounce the words. These smartphone applications are often available as free downloads and are frequently used by the participants in my study. There are dozens of language education applications available for installation on smartphones, each with its own design and approach to teaching language.

Nearly all of my participants displayed their smartphones to me during interviews and while working. They are well connected through the text and talk functions, and are well aware of various multilingual programs available to smartphone users. Some of them also taught me which programs are most useful for my own Spanish language learning practice which has helped me a lot in learning the language. These smartphone technologies enable the workers to communicate and accomplish particular goals in the
multilingual workplace involving developing mastery of challenges presented by their work language environments. For the immigrant workers, technology has become salient to overcoming communication challenges as they attempt to accomplish the tasks at work while learning foreign language at the same time. In addition to language translation and language education application, smartphones are frequently used by the workers to listen to music and watch videos. Most of my participants access their native music and videos from their countries for nostalgic fulfillment. Some housekeepers who work in isolation such as the chute attendants play music at work to overcome loneliness.

B. Workplace Orders and the Immigrant Workers’ Communication Experience

McAll (2003) categorized housekeepers as non-language workers as the nature of their tasks do not particularly require language use to get the work done. The majority of the housekeepers work in solitary with minimum interaction opportunities as they rarely meet others during work. This fact is a dilemma for some of them between the need to interact with others because of feeling isolated versus the need to avoid communicating with others due to the limited time to focus on finishing the tasks. Nearly all of the participants admitted that even though communicating with others is necessary, most of the tasks that they have to accomplish leave them very limited time to talk with others during work. This section describes the participants’ communication experience based on the nature of activities in the workplace.
1. The Nature of Workplace Routines and Communication Isolation

Most participants indicated that they sometimes feel isolated because the nature of tasks that they do leaves them a little time to interact with others. This also means that at the same time they have to be on their own to complete the tasks and, thus, they cannot spend time talking with other people. Participants also expressed that, in addition to language use, their work does not allow for much interaction during work hours. With respect to the need to interact with others during work, the majority of the participants expressed the following opinions:

I don’t need to talk to anyone during work because I need to get the work done.

I need to talk to people so I will get motivated at work.

I need to talk to others because my tasks required me to do so.

I need to talk to others during work because I feel isolated/lonely

The majority of workers that I interviewed (9 out of 13) reported that they do not have time to talk with others because the housekeeping tasks (such as cleaning rooms and sorting the laundry items) require them to finish the job in a certain amount of time as those items or the service they do are usually on immediate guests’ demands. Therefore, this type of tasks impedes substantial interactions with others in the workplace. Since I noticed that most of the housekeepers are Spanish speaking workers, I was curious whether the communication isolation was also relevant to non-Spanish speakers in the workplace, and my concern is depicted in the following conversation:
Ani: So how come you said you don’t have time to interact with others? Is it because you’re the only Uzbek here?

Ruslan: No, not because of that. In working we need to focus on our location because we have to finish some job in certain time. Maybe also because most of the housekeepers are Mexican so, like me, I cannot speak Spanish so we don’t talk. I talk mostly with people in the public areas, not housekeepers, except when I go to the office. We greet each other when we meet them during work and ask about each other about the work. But that’s all.

Ani: I see. Do you think that this communication isolation makes you feel lonely?

Ruslan: No, because like I said I meet and greet people everywhere in the hotel, the workers, the guests, everyone. I talk with them even though only greeting. I never feel lonely at all, also, I am always busy, so...

My conversation with Ruslan’s shows the nature of works most of the time prevents him from communicating with others. Since he works in the hotel public areas as a lobby attendant, he has more opportunity to talk with non-housekeepers during work time. He also has more chances to greet the guests when he works at the public areas. When I asked whether the housekeepers feel lonely because of the seemingly monotonous tasks,
Angelica, the turndown attendant said that she worked by herself most of the time and
she said she never felt lonely because she always made time to talk with her families on
the phone. She also said that the nature of her work allowed her to meet and greet the
guests and talk with the other hoteliers. The radio also always kept her in touch with the
superiors and coworkers. In addition to that she also said, “… I don’t like talking when I
work because I need to finish work.”

While the nature of housekeeping clearly creates an environment in which
communicative superficiality becomes the norm. Several participants made similar
comments related to their daily work activities and communicating with others and
explain how their schedule affects the degree to which they interact with others:

Ani : Ok, so in addition to those mucho mucho mucho trabajo, what else
prevents you from communicating with others? I mean, what else makes
you um, not able to talk to others?

Enrique : I think it’s the time when I work. When I work morning there are many
people so I talk, but usually I only talk in lunch break because I have much
much work in hotel. When I work at night time (overnight shift) I work
only myself. There are my friends working but they do their job. It is ok to
work by myself and not talk with people. If I talk to people and I don’t
finish the job. That’s not good [Enrique].

Based on the above dialogue, I learn that housekeepers who work in the morning and
night shifts usually have more time to mingle with their coworkers and the other team members because most of the hotel employees are still around. Housekeepers who work solo are also experiencing communication isolation. Suresh, one of the chute attendants said that he is lucky to be able to work near the elevator landing, because traffic is usually very busy in this area. I asked him if he has any chances to interact with others during work, whether or not he feels lonely, and he vividly said:

*Me? just alone. But people come to the elevator always and I say hello, how are you? I talk to friends coming here to throw dirty rags but not much. Too much people, too much talk and I am not finish (laughter). But when I work, I’m just alone, but I have music [Suresh].*

Even though limited contacts with others will allow the housekeepers to finish the works faster, and some of them think that not having to interact with others is better, some workers also admitted they that they need to talk to others once in a while to avoid boredom. Given that it is common for housekeepers to have minimum interaction during work, I also asked another housekeeper to tell me whether she has an urgency to communicate with others during work. Violeta, one of the room cleaners admitted that: “I feel I need to talk. I work from 7 to almost 4 so I cannot be quiet all the time. I have to speak a little with people”. Jose who works as a houseman also mentioned that he has an urgency to talk to others during works in order to stay motivated:

*Yeah, I have to do the same things over and over again and in the same locations*
and it is boring. I sometimes try to bug people in purpose because I am bored. I go to the kitchen to find coffee and I know and talk to a lot of restaurant people more than housekeepers. My supervisor is mad when I did that and she will say, “Jose, tell me your location”, and I know she doesn’t have any reason to do that.

The preceding narratives show how work structures such as tasks and schedule affect the extent and communication frequency between housekeepers and coworkers, superiors, and guests. The immigrant workers’ language-related communicative challenges seem to pervade throughout a typical workday.

2. Communication Experiences and the Workers’ Language Barriers

Even though having language barriers is has been a typical ‘label’ for housekeepers, and that guests are usually aware of this issue, the large majority of participants in my study indicated that language use functions as a bridge to their routine interactions with the native English speakers in the workplace. The following narratives illustrate some of the daily difficulties that participants face even with the most mundane of circumstances when communicating with their supervisors, coworkers and guests:

Ani : Some housekeepers said that they have no problem in communicating with superiors, coworkers, and the guests, but you just said that you have a problem in communicating with the guests, can you explain to me what do you mean by that?

Gloria : ...I mean, yes, with the guests. The things that I want to tell to the guests.
For example when I put the sign, ‘cuidado’ [be careful, caution] when I mop, and they enter [the bathroom] and I want to tell them don’t go, but I have problem. When it is quick like that I want to tell and they think I don’t tell them. And I want to tell them, you see the sign, but I don’t say it, just think it in my head, and I say sorry and tell them the sign (pointed at the sign)? and they say sorry. They think that I don’t know anything. But yes, it is bad I don’t speak good English. It is bad, sometimes when the guests come and they ask me where is the bathroom, I know the bathroom, but... I cannot tell them. I take them there; that is how it is bad. If I could say go to there, go to the right and then left but sometimes I can’t I’m confusing (confused)? [Gloria].

Gloria’s narrative reveals one of the many communication struggles that some of the participants said they encounter at work. These everyday challenges even force some workers to keep their distance from the native English speakers, especially the guests. Violeta’s statement suggests that she would like to speak English to interact with others without fear: I would like to try you know, try. Know more English I mean to talk to people more and meet them more. Raquel mentions about seeing others but not being able to talk with them, and that not being able to talk English ‘correctly’ has also become a source of language difficulties for housekeepers: I see the supervisor or the housekeepers, the other manager I mean I see them, but I don’t talk because I don’t know
English how to talk English correctly like American. I sometimes I just smile. Many participants made similar comments regarding why they choose to keep a distance from people who do not speak their native language. Suresh also explained: We want to talk with them, I said hello and how are you and they ask some questions and I am afraid to talk because confused, so I stay here and wait somebody talk to me. When I asked the housekeepers whether the language barriers only occurred when they try to communicate with native English speakers, some workers from the same language group like Jasmine, commenting on the other Spanish speakers on their Spanish accents: Their Spanish is different than mine; we don’t understand each other well. Then she also said: The ones from Nepal and Arabia (Somalia)? they don’t speak much English; they speak their language so we don’t understand each other. Sometimes we have problems when we communicate.

Because of the language barriers, some housekeepers indicate their need to develop their communicative ability in English. The following two narratives are answers to my question on whether the workers need to develop their English ability and the reasons why they need to learn English:

... if I spoke English I would have more contact, at least with my friends, I know much friends in Facebook because all Mexican know all Mexican; but with the guests I want to talk and be friendly and because sometimes they are nice and they they like to talk with me and I with them and we only laugh, because I don’t
know anything else. I only greet them, good morning and things like that, but not more than that; and sometimes I feel bad because the girls ask me questions and I can’t answer them [Raul].

...I want to learn speak English, because the American people see at you as if you are a monster, a stupid human as if I was not their equal simply the language is and sometimes if I am near people I try to use English pure (?) English [Suresh].

Raul and Suresh explained how some housekeepers want to learn English to connect with others and change how they feel that others perceive them. The challenge of not being able to communicate in English well seemed to pervade the participants’ daily interactions with others. This particular challenge made them aware of the necessity to learn English. This urgency to develop their communicative ability in English becomes clearer to the participants as they reflect on their struggles to communicate in and outside the workplace. The reality that learning the dominant U.S. language is an impediment to advance socioeconomically heightens the workers’ awareness of this necessity. To cope with the struggles that they have in everyday communication and life in general, the some of the workers group together to create a space that accommodate their native cultures.

C. Immigrant Workers’ Perceptions of Communicative Ability in English

This section reports some participants’ thoughts and feelings about their English-speaking proficiency levels. These narratives serve as a strategic departing point and contextualize subsequent points regarding relationships between language use and
learning in various events and contexts within the workplace. I interviewed 13 non-native English speakers that consists of the majority of bilingual speakers in Spanish and English, and a multilingual speaker. All participants are able to communicate in English with different levels of proficiency in English.

1. Problems in Communicating in English

In the effort of tracing the participants’ language development, it is paramount to learn about how they perceive their communicative ability and how the nature of language use and learning are depicted in the workplace. Problems with language ability seems to be a major source of frustration for most immigrant workers. This is a noteworthy finding considering the large number of immigrant workers who live and work in the United States and who may be going through experiences similar to these individuals. The workers’ narratives about language ability suggest that speaking the dominant language (i.e., English) is a major problem for immigrants during the job search process and after they enter U.S. organizations. Consequently, they transport their communication challenges to their places of employment. For instance, language use is a grave problem for the immigrants as soon as they enter U.S. territory. Communicative struggles due to their inability to speak the English language pervade every area of their lives and affect their ability to find jobs and move up the socioeconomic “ladder.”

The workers’ negative attitude towards their language fluency emerges considering language barriers can serve as an obstacle to communication, exacerbating
suspicion and misunderstanding. More generally as Huntington (2004) puts it, the presence of foreign language, such as Spanish, can raise concerns among some Americans that immigrants’ retention of their native language and their failure to assimilate threatens American national unity. Considering the high level of importance that the United States, as well as other industrialized nations, bestows on its dominant language (e.g., recent heated public debates about English only), it is apparent why language is such a precarious issue for those who do not speak it.

Even though not having the ability to communicate in English has never been a major issue to attain entry level positions in Brighton, as Christopher, the general manager expressed, having some level of proficiency in English will give the workers significant benefits, particularly related to their career advancement. Regarding the housekeepers’ communicative ability in English, Angie, the housekeeping manager approximated that half of the housekeeping team (including the executive housekeepers) speak fluent English, bout a ¼ of the team speaks both Spanish and English, and the last ¼ of the team speaks exclusively Spanish. The team overall represents around 10-15 different countries that are all Spanish Speaking. There are another handful of team members from countries whose first language is not Spanish or English however these team members speak limited English. Overall, she said that there are only around 8 team members who are not able to communicate in English at all.

The housekeepers that I interviewed are bilingual speakers with various level of
communicative ability. Even though all participants admitted that they have problems in communicating in English, when I asked them to rate their ability to communicate in English from the scale 1-5, the majority of them were confident that they were in between 2-3, one of them said that he is in scale 0 and two were in scale 4. The following narratives illustrate the participants’ perceptions of their ability to communicate in English:

2. “Mi Ingles es No Bueno” [My English is not Good].

This section is not only aimed at presenting the housekeepers’ perception on their English, but also the trajectory of the development of their communicative ability over time. Ideally, interviews both in the beginning and the end of the period of data collection process is necessary to capture such trajectory of development of language ability. My more than two years of affiliation with the participants has given me the opportunity to observe them in a longitudinal manner. With a longitudinal perspective, it is possible to identify the changes experienced during the participants’ course of working at Brighton. Furthermore, trajectories can be traced by means of a focus on discourse which capture both participants’ views on the world and ways of speaking. Even though identity discussion is not the focus of my study, how the participants perceive their ability to communicate in English cannot be separated from how they identify themselves as English users. Studies in foreign or second language users have particularly focused on how speakers claim their idea of ownership, which, according to
Norton (2000), foreign language users either have or do not have. When speakers do not have ownership to a particular language, then they do not feel like legitimate speakers of the language (2000, ibid), which often times influence their repertoire construction. Under the studies of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), however, the speakers’ identities are viewed from their attachment to their native cultures (Seidhloper, 2006) and non-association from the native speaker model (Jenkins, 2007).

In order to find out how the participants perceive their English and position themselves as users of English, the interviews to 13 participants were analyzed using discourse analytic method focusing on the content of the talk and word choices relating to how they talk about themselves as users of English in a multilingual workplace. The first analysis is aimed at recording their perception on their English communicative ability, while the second follow up analysis is dedicated to find out their struggle resulting from how they perceive their English as users. Most of the participants indicated that they have poor skills in English by orienting their English ability to that of native speakers correctness and norms:

Ani : How do you perceive your English? I mean, what do you think about your ability to talk in English with others? Do you think it is good, it is not so good?

Violeta : ...‘no bueno’ [not good] English, I want.. speak like the um, American but my English is bad, not good. Yes, if you ask me from
0 to 5 it’s just 0.

Violeta’s narrative represents how most participants felt about their English-speaking proficiency level by comparing her ability to the NES. Since most participants indicated their English as ‘not good’ I was curious to further find out how they perceived their communicative ability in English:

*I mean, before, ..I think I can speak English and people understand me but I can see that my language, I mean, I speak different, for example if I compare to the American people. I feel that my English is not correct? Not correct? I know they understand me but I hope I can speak English like American. Sometimes I feel like that I see my friends, I know all of them speak like me, and it makes me feel OK, we can use the language. it’s not correct but if people understand so it’s OK.*

The participants of this study are all adults who have passed their ages of schooling, even though some of them have attended some level of education in their native countries where English was taught as a foreign language. In perceiving their communicative ability in English, the housekeepers orient themselves towards two different discourses, the academic and non-academic discourses. Based on the above narrative, for instance, Violeta perceives her ability to communicate in English based on the academic discourse: the idea of correctness and native speaker forms, by comparing hers with the NES’ English. However, she also admitted that her perception changes after realizing that communication in the workplace is hardly displayed in standard English.
(Young-Scholten, 2007), and therefore her orientation shifted from academic to non-academic discourse. Another housekeeper who reveals that his English is ‘not good’ also navigates his perception toward the academic discourse:

*Ani*: How do you perceive your ability in communicate in English?

*Jose*: What do you mean I perceive ..?

*Ani*: I mean, do you think you are good at English?

*Jose*: No, no good!

*Ani*: Why do you think that your English is not good?

*Jose*: Because I don’t study English at school.

Almost similar to Violeta who orients her English towards the native speaker’s standard of correctness, Jose demonstrates a firm opinion: “No, no good!” because he did not study English at school. The housekeepers’ perception of their ability to communicate in English echo academic discourses in which they position themselves as subjects’ positions characterized by deficiency, insufficiency, and inadequacy.

After finding out how participants perceive their English, I found out that they also narrated their frustration regarding everyday language use. Some participants illustrate their disappointment with their ability to communicate in English. Having resided in the U.S. for almost a decade, Enrique, for instance, indicated his regret that he has not started to learn English seriously. He said, “If I had good ability to speak English I would have left the housekeeping job. This job is OK but I need something more
The workers expressed several reasons for why they have a hard time learning English. Jack’s comment shows some of these reasons: *I haven’t learned it seriously because, well, to begin, I think that to learn English you have to go to school. I don’t have the time to go [to school].* Additionally, Angelica who has an experience of learning English in an American educational institution revealed her reason why she stopped learning: “*After my kids were born, I need to work more because I need more and more money and I need to take care of my kids. So I have two jobs and I work everyday. You see, when I can have time to learn English?*” Comments like Jack’s, and Angelica’s highlight two major issues for some immigrants, the lack of formal education that follows them to the new cultural context and a salient negative outcome of remaining communicatively detached from host society members. Immigrant workers’ English language proficiency level seems to affect their interactions at work. Some of the workers admitted that they want to learn English for various reasons, yet barriers such as time, transportation, and childcare may keep many from attending classes (Van Duzer, Moss, Burt, Peyton, & Ross-Feldman, 2003). The following statement displays how some the participants hopes to be able to advance their communication network:

*Ani*: Do you think that being able to communicate in English is important at work?

*Gloria*: Yes, in here the housekeeping no problem, because the manager and
many boss speak Spanish and English. But sometimes when we have something and we have a hotel party and they come here [the hotel managers] and we talk and we said things that we don’t like and, but with the big boss we don’t talk. We don’t talk with him because all of them. . .they don’t know Spanish. Yes, it’s only the housekeeping boss and the supervisor, and there is another one and another one with them we talk, but with the big boss no.

Ani: Why do you want to talk to the big boss? Your manager can talk to him I believe.

Gloria: If I know English, I want like to speak [with the hotel managers] but I don’t know English and the boss don’t know my problems.

The worker’s problems with English, such as Gloria’s case, appears to be an issue that permeates their social lives, including managing vertical communication with the hotel managerial staffs. I noticed that there are changes in some participants’ views about their language use and competence over time, along with the discourses they draw when talking about them. Their discursive choices shift from concerning about deficiencies to focus on survival in English in their daily lives, as Enrique explained:

“Yes, it is so difficult [at first] and I’m stress [stressed out] because I feel I cannot say something correctly, but it is better everyday because I use it, and I see people understand what I say”. Enrique compares the experience that he had when he was a
newly hired worker. He admitted that there have been obstacles due to his inability to communicate in English. There are three important points from Enrique’s statement. First, how he compares the ‘before’ and ‘after’ and his choice of the word ‘stress [stressed out]’ shows that his experience in communicating in English in the past has created negative feelings. Second, his experience also shows that a powerful discourse of using English in a correct way seems to exist, which can be inferred from Enrique’s reference about: “I’m stress because I feel I cannot say something correctly”, that is, he does not speak English the way he thinks he should. The discourse of correctness navigates Enrique’s orientation to his experience in using English at school. In his mind, there are norms to be followed to avoid a negative feeling (stressful). Third, however, Enrique’s efforts in “using” English eventually reflects some changes: from viewing language as form to viewing it from the meaning it carries; from being stressful to successful because of getting the message transferred to others. Similar to Enrique’s concern, the other housekeepers also express their positive feelings about their progress in their English communicative ability:

Ani : You said that your ability to communicate in English is becoming better and better. How do you feel about that?

Jack : Yes, I speak English better and I feel I’m success [successful] when I can say something in English.

Based on the above dialogue, Jack clearly indicates that the progress he has in
communicating in English (speaking English better) contributes to a positive self and creates a feeling of success. This experience further illustrates an English user’s effort in distancing him/herself from educational discourses, a shift from orienting self to academic discourse (a learner) to non-academic one (a user). Just like Enrique and Jack, the participants in this study are experience changes from viewing themselves as unsuccessful Standard English speakers to successful English users (Cook, 2009) who give contribution to their communities of practice. Cook further argues that this change in perspectives will positively affect the users’ ability to acquire the target language as it will increase their confidence to communicate in English (1999). The shift in participant’s perspectives on viewing language based on its ability to carry meanings contributes to our understanding of development in their repertoires constructions across timescales, which can be projected to their socialization into new discourse of proficiency and appropriateness. Jose’s development of repertoire construction can be seen in his statement below:

Ani : You said that your English is getting better. Could you tell me more about that?

Jose : Yes, my English is better. I know so much words for example and we have some words that I make with friends here that we use. I feel that I’m not so bad anymore and not, not afraid to talk to somebody
In the earlier dialogue, Jose admitted that his English is ‘no good’ by orienting himself to the standard of correctness (English learned at school). As his ‘words’ (vocabulary) develops, including the ‘words that he makes with friends’, he distances himself from the NES standard (‘I’m not so bad’) and builds his own self-esteem (‘not being afraid to talk to anyone’) and participates more in the U.S. society.

The participants’ narration about the language use also reflects their pragmatic typification (Agha, 2007), showing how they evaluate and characterize their ways of speaking as part of their repertoires. Metapragnostic typification of how NES use English, for instance, related to assigning particular values in it, depending on the discourse drawn on. Positive value is assigned when the participants associate the language with one’s own individual way of speaking and the progress the speaker makes. Negative value, on the other hand, occurs when a speaker orients his language to the Native speakers of English or a more legitimate speaker of English as a foreign language, or as a lingua franca. Suresh’ statement below illustrates how he views Englishes around him:

*I think I speak English fine, because people understand. My Mexican friends here maybe more like they speak different way but we also understand. But, maybe American sometimes say it is not nice to hear when we talk and they have problem. Many people maybe for example can speak English better and almost like American. Me, for example, I don’t want to speak fancy like that because it is
weird. I use English everyday and everyday I learn so I become better.

In this narrative, Suresh evaluates his way of speaking and considers that his English is ‘fine’ as it fulfills his expectation of being able to ‘be understood’ and ‘understand’ others in conversation. However, when he compares his English to the native English speakers, he values the NES group more by assigning them to judge his way of speaking ‘it is not nice to hear and they will have problem’. Interestingly, Suresh labels the NES way of speaking English as ‘fancy’ and that is why he avoids to use it as it creates negative feelings (weird). By doing this, instead of attempting to speak English like the NES, Suresh constructs his identity as a Nepali English speaker, distinguishes different ways of speaking English (Hispanic English), assigns values to them, and indicates an effort to make his English ‘better’.

Aside from the participants’ development of repertoires in different languages, they indicated their ‘ongoing’ desire to become part of U.S. society, primarily through learning English. The workplace is a significant element of the sociocultural integration process because immigrants partially learn about and become socialized into their new culture through their mundane workplace interactions (Li, 2000). According to Kim (2005), it is through interpersonal interactions that immigrants learn not only the language of that country but also about the culture itself. Many participants indicated that they desire to learn English so that they can talk with other people to learn about them and U.S. culture, in general. Jack’s comment vividly captured the sense of urgency and
frustration that many of the immigrant workers feel regarding learning English and integrating into U.S. society:

*Ani*: You said that you want to be able to use English at work and outside work. Could you give me example when you have problems in communicating in English outside work?

*Jack*: ...the neighbors, shopping centers; TV say with the English language. Sometimes I want to speak with friend [neighbors] in English and I feel angry because I can’t say...nothing. It is “hi” “hi” then nothing. I would like to speak more I go to a shopping center and I know basic things; to buy the groceries, what is basic, when they ask you for paper [?] or [inaudible]. But if I want to ask about something then I have to prepare; well you say that like this in English. I have ... one day that I go prepared and they don’t understand me...still (laughter). It affects me and make me angry because no English like this then I can’t take a study to have a better job.

Jack’s comment captures the thoughts and feelings of many of his coworkers. Even though they are spoiled to be able to work in a linguistically accommodative workplace like Brighton, they experience great frustration at work as they have aspirations of also talking to NES and non-Spanish speaking NNES at work, and particularly in other social contexts as they struggle with mundane interactions due to the language barrier. The
following statements are the answers to my question on how they perceive the need to learn English related to their experience and aspiration in integrating themselves to different cultures in the U.S.:

*We have to learn English, if I have good English I want to have good job, I would leave the housekeeper job and I want to be an interpreter in hospitals. I want to learn culture, many culture. It is very different culture. If I don’t know English I don’t know culture. I want to have development to myself and my family* [Isaura].

*The housekeepers like us must speak a little, a little English in America so we can talk to people. It is ok a little but we understand. We cannot work quiet all the time (laughter) and the people think we are stupid (laughter)* [Raquel].

Isaura’s aspiration to have ‘development’ represents some of the workers’ desire not only to adapt culturally but also to advance socioeconomically, which is also a primary goal for many immigrants. What needs to be underlined from Isaura’s statement is that she realized that she has the need to learn not only, one culture (i.e., the American culture), but ‘many’ culture, as she positions herself in a multicultural society in the U.S., both in and outside the workplace. In addition to making effort for cultural adaptation, Raquel believed that being able to speak English will be able to break the stereotypes of custodial workers like housekeepers who are generally regarded as obtuse or uneducated, and culturally ghettoized outside the workplace.

The need to learn to communicate in English is also obviously relevant to the
immigrant workers’ experience in integrating themselves outside the workplace, reflected on their perceptions of the need to learn English to integrate into U.S. society. For example, Jasmine stated, the problem is that I would like to have friends; especially friends at church. We would like to participate in charity or in some social activity but the language is the problem. Similarly, another worker responded, we don’t have friends and the place where this could happen … only at church but the problem is that we always go to a Hispanic church, because we cannot understand when priest talking in English and people speak Spanish there. These comments illustrate some of the challenges related to language use that pervade the workers’ cultural adaptation in the U.S. What they experience in the hotel also most of the time mirrors what they have outside the workplace, in that it is hard for most of the workers to escape their ‘same-language, same-ethnicity, same-culture clusters’.

Participants’ comments suggest that they have feelings of guilt due to their inability to speak English after living in the United States for so many years. The workers like Esperanza, Raquel, and Violeta, who have resided in the U.S. for over three decades admitted that they have no time to learn English because of the time constraints and same clusters dependency. Violeta who is an undocumented immigrant, for instance, has worked as a room cleaner in four different hotels with the same agency. She has tried to apply positions in restaurants as waiters, however, those places always require the candidates to have some English communicative ability and immigration documents.
Even though others’ perception on the immigrant workers is not the focus of this study, I asked the participants whether there are any external factors that incite them to develop their communicative ability in English. Some participants indicated that they felt the pressure due to their perception that some people might view them as unwilling to integrate and even rejecting of U.S. cultural values. Enrique who has worked for nearly a decade admitted that he felt bad and good at the same time, considering that he has learned to integrate himself in the U.S. society through work and activities at the church. As Enrique puts it: “They told me that I should speak better. People have to progress; we live in a country where people speak English and we should learn it.” The pressure from others that immigrant workers ‘should speak [English] better’ could sometimes create frustration and helplessness at the same time:

_Ani_ : I know you said that you need to learn English. Have others, I mean at work and outside work, for example in some places you visited or where you live, have they ever told you that you have to learn English?

_Suresh_ : No, they don’t tell me like that. Maybe they tell me but not like that. I feel it that people say that, hey you learn English because we don’t understand you.

_Ani_ : Oh you felt that way? Could you share with me an experience when you try to communicate but you find out that they don’t
Suresh: You know, I say that’s a thing(?) in your head that you think you have, but it’s not like that. We are talking and I tell them we are talking about this and they tell me again. So I know they don’t understand.

For an immigrant worker like Suresh, the pressure from lacking in the ability to communicate in English seems more intense as he is considered as an extreme minority in and outside the workplace. In the workplace, he has to make a decision between communicating in English as a team member, or accommodating the NNES Spanish speaking majority at the housekeeping department. The same-language cluster privilege does not particularly exist for him. The workers’ struggle with language dilemma in the workplace is also reproduced outside the hotel. The participants in this study indicated how they face the language-related dilemma outside the workplace between the need to learn English, the dependency on the same-language clusters, and the public pressure and expectation on integrating to the U.S. society. The participants’ communication practice also illustrated how they use and learn languages in different stages at the workplace.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings based on the research questions proposed. Data from in-depth interviews illustrated the workers’ voices and insights into their lived work experiences. The primary finding under the first research question showed that
sociocultural background was relevant to the immigrant workers’ communicative experience in the workplace as how the workers interpret others’ perceptions of the housekeepers define how they feel about communicating in a multilingual environment, coping with challenges in communication, and finding a way to develop their communicative ability. Furthermore, the participants reported that race/ethnicity, native language, and prior education and occupation have become the significant factors influencing how the immigrant workers perceive others’ opinion towards them that affect their communicative experience at the workplace.

Salient to the immigrant workers’ communication experience, three main findings generated on how the immigrant workers communicate with different members in the workplace as a community of practice (CoP): coworkers, employer/manager/supervisor (superiors), and guests. As the communication supporting devices are significant to the communication activities at the workplace, the findings presented two discussions on how two supporting devices: radios and smartphones. The second major finding revealed that the person with whom the workers interacted significantly shaped their communication experiences. For example, the majority of the participants said that they had problems in communicating with superiors due to language barriers and different cultural background that affect the nature of their communication activities.

The second research question that addressed possible relationships between workplace orders such as work routines and language use in the workplace generated
findings related to the relationship between the nature of workplace routines and communication isolation. Some housekeepers indicated the desire to communicate more, however, some others viewed the limited interactive opportunity as a benefit since they will be able to finish the tasks faster. Another finding showed that even though there were limited opportunities to interact at the workplace, the housekeepers revealed that they still have to ‘communicate’ with others to get the works done or to show hospitality (to the guests). While the housekeepers did not have a particular problem in communicating within the housekeeping groups, they admitted that they often had difficulties in interacting with the guests due to the language barrier. The problem with language barrier also discouraged the housekeepers in communicating in communicative routines in the workplace such as in the meetings. This discouragement in communicating openly in public within the housekeeping department has driven the housekeepers to create a fluid community that can accommodate them based on their sociocultural backgrounds as a networking media where they could share and consult with each other about the work and life related experiences. The discussion on how the immigrant workers create ‘same language, same ethnicity’ communicative culture is particularly discussed in the next chapter, followed by how they develop learning strategies on how to overcome language barriers.

Related to the participants’ perception of their English communicative ability, the findings show that the participants experience a major change in how they view their
ability. First, the participants’ perception of their ability in communicating in English shift from orienting their English to the academic discourse of correctness to non-academic discourse of getting the message transferred. Furthermore, along with their development in communicative ability (for instance as seen from the vocabulary development), the participants have more positive views on the Englishes spoken in the workplace, by maintaining their identity as speakers of English as a lingua franca and building their self esteem as a NNES through continuous language practice and creation of unique ‘workplace language’ to accommodate its members.

Chapter 6. Creating Communicative Culture in a Multilingual Workplace
The preceding chapter descriptively presents the answers to the research questions proposed in this study regarding the immigrant workers’ communication experience in the workplace, the relevancy of workplace orders, work nature, and communication experience, and the workers’ development of communicative ability in the workplace. The previous chapter also reported additional findings related to the workers’ problems with language barriers that prevent them from communicating in public easily.

This chapter is aimed at providing further elaboration on how the workers handle the challenges resulting from language barriers that have discouraged them in interacting with others in the workplace. This discouragement in communicating openly in public within the housekeeping department has driven the housekeepers to create a fluid community that can accommodate them based on their sociocultural backgrounds as a networking media where they could share and consult with each other about the work and life related experiences. In the current chapter I present the discussion on how the immigrant workers create ‘same language, same ethnicity’ communicative culture is particularly discussed in the next chapter, followed by how they develop learning strategies on how to overcome language barriers.

After presenting the narratives on the workers’ communicative experience at the workplace and how they perceive their communicative ability it is necessary to know what’s at stake for the immigrant workers in making sense of the workplace environment as a CoP, and how to deal with the challenges that arise from the ‘necessity to
understand’, regardless of the workers’ sociocultural backgrounds: race/ethnicity, native language, prior education and occupation. Based on the challenges that the workers encounter in the workplace, this chapter also discussed some strategies that the workers invented, communicated, negotiated, and practiced with the other CoP members at the workplace. These strategies included contextualization, the application of a single word to describe multiple situations, silence, imitation, verification, assessment, and positioning/honorifics.

A. Our Little Mexico

Since most of the study participants are Spanish speakers, I learned during my fieldwork that some of the Spanish-speaking housekeepers group together with other Spanish speakers to create a cultural space that fosters their native language and other national culture elements such as food and music. These fluid cultural “platforms” mainly do not only come to life during break hours, but also during work time, in the work stations. Many participants indicated that they typically feel most comfortable talking in Spanish with their coworkers during their breaks. Feelings of comfort get amplified as workers reminisce about their homelands and miscellaneous subjects related to their cultural commonalities. The following comments illustrate how participants discursively construct such cultural spaces:

*Ani*: You said that you have problem in communicating in English. You also said that it is hard to find chances to learn English considering the
working schedule that you have, and that you are not happy about it. How do you solve these problems?

Jack: Yes, it is so hard that I have to go to school because maybe we have no time and no money. But, ah, we want to feel happy too. No speak English it make me sad. But, ah, we have friends, and all friends have same problem, we have problem with speaking English. But we can do something together to help friends at work, ah, like so we feel everything is good.

Ani: I see. That’s good. Could you tell me how do you help one another at work to make everyone feel good?

Jack: Yes, we feel good, when we are with friends because we eat Mexican food, because the food here, Mexican food we feel we are family, like we are in home. Yes, because we all speak Spanish, the supervisor speaks Spanish, the other girl speaks Spanish, it’s like we all speak Spanish.

Ani: So you said, everyone speak Spanish and that makes everybody feel good?

Jack: Yes, we feel good. All speak Spanish we feel like family. All speak Spanish and we eat Mexican food together.

In his statements, Jack indicated that the Spanish speaking housekeepers created a ‘Spanish-speaking zone’ to cope with the problems they have in the workplace,
especially the language-related problem. Since they feel that it is hard to control or have ownership of the linguistic knowledge of the dominant language in the hotel (English), they find a strategy to build their own dominating language and culture to be able to stand out as legitimate members of the workplace. Even though the Spanish-speaking workers have different nationalities, the fact they all speak the same language is able to unite the members of the group. Angelica, the El-Salvadorian housekeeper stated that she always enjoyed talking about the situations in Latin American countries, such as Mexico, and admitted that in the group they often talked about their plan to return ‘home’ someday.

In addition to the workers, some supervisors also mingle in this exclusive group, and some participants expressed that their coworkers and some supervisors are the only people with whom they talk at work and it is in Spanish. This situation creates communication challenges that force some the workers to remain in these Spanish-language discursive spaces.

Since Spanish is the dominant language in the group, I asked the participants to share with me whether this applies somewhere else when the members step outside interacting with non-Spanish speakers. Esperanza shared with me her experience in interacting in the meetings at the housekeeping department. She stated that she made effort to use English in the meetings and that sometimes she wanted to use English, however, even in the meetings at the housekeeping area, everybody (i.e., the executive housekeepers and coworkers) speak Spanish as the meetings are delivered bilingually in
English and Spanish. This shows that the dominant ‘Spanish-speaking zone’ acknowledged outside the Spanish-speaking group interaction.

Additionally, Jasmine, one of the senior room cleaners, stated that the main reason why the Spanish speakers speak Spanish is because they want to maintain positive relationships with their coworkers. Speaking in the same language enable them to communicate and solve any problems that they have about work and life in general. This situation creates dependency and solidarity among workers in a bolstering and sustaining same-language and same-culture bands. Another reason that may have pushed the immigrant workers to (re)produce these discursive cultural spaces is the daily bombardment of communication-related issues and challenges that they encounter with superiors, coworkers, and guests due in part to language differences and problems with language barriers.

B. Language and Communication Accommodation at the Workplace

Even though the workers’ have felt accommodated by the same language clusters, they have struggle with language barriers in communicating with others outside the group. In addition to that, the ‘new word order’ (Heller, 2010) created at the hotel has required the workers to function better at work. Some workers indicated their need to learn English in an English-speaking environment. They also expressed that they need supports from others during this learning process. I asked the participants whether others support their language learning needs, and how and who accommodate their daily
communication at the workplace:

Yes, the friends the housekeepers and the manager and the supervisor they sometimes try to speak Spanish. Managers speak Spanish and there is the American manager who also speak Spanish. The supervisor one Spanish and the American supervisor try to talk in Spanish and sometimes I don’t understand it because of pronoun (pronunciation?), I talk in English with them so they can speak more clearly what they are trying to say if they are trying hard to ask something simple then it’s when I respond in English. If a person let’s say is from here (U.S.), then in English and if Spanish then I respond to them in Spanish [Jack].

Yes, it is good at Brighton that some people speak Spanish. Yes, others should speak Spanish so that we can understand each other better. For example, I just finished my classes that the ______ offers, English classes and I had a nice teacher who almost spoke Spanish very well, ______, and she spoke Spanish very well. If others tried to speak a little bit of Spanish maybe we could understand each other better [Angelica].

The Jack and Angelica narrated that some housekeepers tried very hard to accommodate others and, thus, they expect others to somehow reciprocate their communication accommodation moves. Esperanza’s comment supports this point: “I always send text to the American supervisor in Spanish and he translates it, and if he said
something in Spanish I reply in Spanish. I speak more slowly to him because it can get complicated if we talk fast. Sometimes we must talk in English because we are very busy, and he cannot speak Spanish”. Communication accommodation from others also made the workers feel acknowledged. Violeta, a room cleaner stated how the housekeepers appreciated the superiors, coworkers, and guests who managed to speak Spanish to them because it made the workers feel ‘at home’ and this also encouraged them to initiate more communication at work. Violeta further shared with me about her relationship with a returning guest who travelled to Mexico, and how she felt acknowledged as a NNES to be able to speak Spanish with the guest: “I talk in Spanish and I feel happy because she is trying. I usually respond in Spanish and when she can’t respond I tell her in English with my phone. If they (she) say a word in Spanish and it is wrong I try to correct them (her)”. 

The preceding narratives illustrated some of the immigrant workers’ workplace experiences with language use. Language use emerged as a powerful feature of the participants’ communication experiences in the workplace. The majority of the participants expressed that language use is a major issue in their lives. Specifically, issues related to language use and job acquisition through interpersonal networks, social integration, everyday communication challenges, and communication accommodation became apparent throughout the interviews. What also became apparent throughout the interviews was that the participant’ daily communication experiences with the persons with whom they interact at work showed some salient differences. For instance,
communicating with supervisors appeared to be a challenging endeavor for most participants due to language barriers and sociocultural differences.

While communication accommodation from others were facilitating in workplace interaction, some participants expressed their hope to be able to practice their English more intensively at the workplace as that was the only opportunity that they have to develop their English communicative ability. The participants vividly indicated their need to learn English on the job by communicating with non-Spanish speakers at the workplace. However, it was also equally often the case that some of the non-Spanish speakers tried to accommodate the Spanish speakers in communication by ‘speaking Spanish’:

Ani  : Do you expect others to speak more Spanish at work?
Jasmine : Yes, manager too speak Spanish, on the radio, Angie speak Spanish, she is American but always speak Spanish. Sometimes good but sometimes I want to hear English on radio from manager.

Spanish is the dominant language at the housekeeping department and the majority of the housekeepers use Spanish at work. This condition has stimulated communication accommodation from the other members in the workplace. The Spanish speaking group indicated that some of their non-Spanish speaking coworkers have intention to learn Spanish by accommodating the Spanish speaking group during workplace interaction. Suresh, the chute attendant, for example, always used Spanish and admitted that his
Spanish became better and better because he used it.


The immigrant workers candidly expressed that they are well aware of the need to learn English to communicate with others from different clusters in and outside the workplace. They also seem acutely aware of how the language barrier has negatively affected their work and social life. Many participants experienced that speaking a different language in public is disrespectful to others and in a diverse country like the United States. They could see that there should be a language that make everyone understand each other. The following quotes show participants’ perceptions about learning English and how language use affects their lives:

*Ani*: You said that speaking English at work made you feel more comfortable? Why is that?

*Isaura*: If I spoke English and if others spoke English, they would not feel uncomfortable because they would know what one is talking about, and I would not feel uncomfortable either because one is talking about something understandable. In the things that one has just said, words or conversations that, that do not sound bad to the people who are listening.

*Ani*: I see your points. Could you tell me any incidents when you speak Spanish and others were uncomfortable?
Isaura: Yes, when I work with an American. There are one, two, three, three working there. Two, I mean, me and my friend Spanish and I speak Spanish with my friend because she cannot speak English. The American girl is mad and she talk to the front desk that we talk bad.

Isaura explained that being able to communicate in English is necessary to avoid suspicion and misunderstanding when communicating in a multilingual environment. Ruslan, the Uzbek housekeeper indicated his understanding that he lives in a multilingual environment where communicating with others from different languages is made possible through one language that everyone can use: “...I know that I am in a country where you can’t speak in only one language, but there is one language here that people can use.”

Participants’ narratives about language use at the workplace stimulated their awareness of the need for a English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in a multicultural society in the United States:

Ani: You told me that you want to be able to communicate better in English. So what do you think um, could you tell me what is the function of this language in the hotel?

Jack: I think English is not for speaking with American but with people who don’t understand their language like you, when I speak with you with English because you don’t speak Spanish. I need to have good English because I can speak with all people if they understand.
Jack’s opinion about the function of English in a multicultural society concurred with the idea of “international posture”, that English is a media of communication among multilinguals (Yashima, 2000, 2002). Some housekeepers, such as Raquel, indicated their feelings of guilt and embarrassment for not speaking English after many years of residence in the United States: “…I want to learn English but I am old and it’s not easy. If I can speak (English), I am sure my job is better. But I want my children to have job, better, and speak English so they are good”. As a senior housekeeper who has resided in the U.S for over 30 years, Raquel admitted that her ability in communicating in English has not been the one that she can be proud of. Even though Raquel always said that working as a housekeepers have been able to fulfill her life needs in America and to support her in raising her seven children, she always wished that she was able to communicate better in English to function in a wider communication clusters in the American community. Taron, a housekeeper from Cameroon who considers that English is his second language added his opinion that immigrants need to “speak English, because we are in America and people speak English here, and I understand, it is your responsibility to speak English and you will look good, well it looks good to me.” Even though realizing that being able to communicate in English will be able to boost their overall quality as immigrant workers in the U.S., most of the participants admitted that they have problems with lack of English language fluency. One of the participants perceive their ability to communicate in English as follows:
...but of course if I knew English, I would feel better I feel that I would feel more useful I think I would be more important here if I could communicate it would be different, yeah, different [Jack].

Jack, who was a government employee in his native country stated that his lack of ability in communicating in English has made him feel less important in his communities. Since some of the workers (such as Jack) also admitted that he has no opportunity to learn English in the U.S., I asked some of the workers who has attended English classes at a local community college and she commented below regarding her language fluency:

Ani : How do you perceive your ability in communicating in English? Some of your coworkers told me that they are not able to communicate in English. Do you think you have the same problem?

Angelica : No, no definitely I speak it a little bit, speaking, writing and reading? I can write something but I don’t like reading, I mean I maybe like but I don’t have time. I speak it very little but I speak it like what, embarrassing, and not very sure what I say, I don’t know many things, I just speak, I try in the present, past, future, gerund, I don’t know, I use it, I try to speak it I think I speak well when I know people understand me but I only speak it very little and OK when I think about the grammar because I am very nervous when I think about grammar is it correct?

Angelica said that even though she has had an opportunity to attend English classes in the
U.S. she admitted that it was not able to support her much in interacting with others outside her Spanish-speaking clusters. Much like Angelica, some participants also expressed their awareness about how language use affects their social lives in general, not just at work. When I asked them how language fluency affected their social lives, they told me about how it has engendered some problems such as career advancement and other personal needs:

*I really need to learn English because sometimes I have wanted to apply to a, another job, and I stop myself because if the interview in English I will have problem, I want to go to the doctor and the same; I have to find someone who speaks Spanish, to go to the doctor yes, it is a stress (stressful) for me [Enrique].

I don’t speak enough English. I was OK to do anything and there is cleaning and I think it is OK, it’s good for now. In my country [Peru] cleaning is something not good. Here you clean and it’s normal. Here I did not have another choice. Other jobs were too [crazy]. I do to [?] perfume bottles and lotions at a factory in [apparel factory]. The work is crazy because I [?] go fast, fast fast without stopping [Jack].

I think it would be, it would be good you know if we spoke English well. It is very important because many times for example I want to have move housekeeping [?] and because of the language they don’t give you the job; I want to get more money, right, work um not too much like this and because of the English we can’t
Based on the above narratives, most of the participants admitted that they were not able to climb the professional ladder due to the lack of ability in communicating in English. The housekeepers want to have a career advancement, however, language barrier has hindered their dreams.

D. Using and Learning English at the Workplace in Different Stages

Previous research indicated that during the initial stages, the new language requirements of the workplace produce for immigrant workers and professionals a ‘linguistic penalty’ (Roberts and Campbell, 2006), since the communicative demands of the selection process maybe greater than those of the job itself. While this might apply to most of immigrant workers and professionals in the early stages of their career journey in the U.S., most of Brighton’s housekeepers did not experience this gatekeeping practice during the selection process. Considering the majority of the participants at the housekeeping department were Spanish speakers, the majority of interaction among the housekeepers was in Spanish. The Spanish-speaking participants explained that the workplace has accommodated their language background during the initial stage of their professional journey. Typically, the housekeepers were interviewed by both the staffing agency and the executive housekeepers from Brighton. Since both agencies are operated by Spanish speaking management, the majority of Spanish speaking housekeepers had no problem with their interviews. The NNES non Spanish had their interviews in Spanish,
and whenever possible, as Angie, the housekeeping executive mentioned, Brighton always managed to provide translators during the interview process. Some of the participants described their job interviews as follows, answering my question on in what language, by whom, and how they were interviewed as housekeepers:

My cousin works in the hotel and he got me interview with Carmen (the agency) and we speak in Spanish and my friends too. Together we have the interview also in Spanish with the manager here. And my friends here many friends Spanish [Isaura].

It was in Spanish with the agency. I met with the lady manager and she is American but, but she speaks Spanish. She is an American. [Angelica].

I don't apply the job but the lady from agency ask me from my friend in another hotel. She said if I want to work housekeeper in Brighton and I say fine because the hotel is good. I don't know this is interview? But I get interview with Joseph and it is easy he ask me where I work, can I clean room, can I do houseman. I say I can do everything [Raul].

For the NNES non-Spanish speakers, the interviews were in English with both the agency and the executive housekeepers. Responding to the same question I asked to the NNES Spanish speakers, Ruslan, a housekeeper from Uzbekistan shared with me about his interview experience with the agency:

I was interviewed by the lady from the agency, and I honestly had problems in
understanding her English (laughter). She speaks a little English with a heavy
accent. I understood at that time because I heard from my friends that the agency
employed the majority of Spanish speaking workers, even though in reality, there
are even Americans that were also worked for the agency so I don’t have any idea
why. The interview with the housekeeping manager was fine. The manager is
from Dominican Republic but he speaks excellent English [Ruslan].
The interview in English, with a woman speak English and I just said I need a job
and she said, OK. We have job working in the morning as housekeeper. Can you
clean room? I said, OK. She said OK, you clean room. But, the manager say to
me I work in the chute room and I say yes, I don’t know, but I say yes, I will do all
job it’s fine [Suresh].
... the interview was in English. I was interviewed by the manager of the agency.
He asked me about my available time and my previous work experience. I worked
as a car mechanic back in Cameroon and of course it’s not really related to what
I am doing right now, housekeeping. But, I said to him I can always learn and I
think everyone can do this job, it doesn’t require any specific skills. Then, I was
invited by the housekeeping manager and had a quick interview there. It was
nice, he’s a very nice young man. [Taron].
I also asked the participants on what points were discussed during the interviews and they
said that the candidates were not only introduced to the tasks that housekeepers
commonly handle but also the general work conventions and work-related communication pattern in the workplace:

> When I am in the interview, Carmen told me that for example I talk to she if I need day off and if there are problems, I talk to Carmen, then, I talk to hotel the manager. But before I (have to) talk to Carmen (the agency) [Violeta]. The agency told me about the process to request day off, the scheduling, the paycheck stuff and the management people, she actually told me one by one who they are and how I should approach them (laughter). She said that sometimes I need to use strategy when talking to some managers. The housekeeping manager told me that the housekeeping department was going to launch new communication device in a couple of months, which is so cool. The other stuff that they told me also about the other housekeepers and I know that like, everywhere, everywhere, the majority of the housekeepers are Mexican [Ruslan].

... she told me to punch (clock in and out) and lunch (break) and it’s nice because I have one hour to take rest. I also learn from the manager that I will go to the training and I will learn all the work before I work at the chute. I learn what chute? Is learn from the manager, before I ask what chute? It is, I know now it is working with dirty linen...[Suresh].

... the lady from the agency say that if I call off all the time I will get fired (laughter), she told me about the paycheck, the schedule and a lot of things about
the management people. It makes me so nervous. But, from the manager, I think he is very nice. Of course we speak Spanish in there, but we speak English too, we speak English and Spanish and English and Spanish. Oh and he said that my English is good. He ask me (if) I have Facebook? (laughter) because he said I cannot use phone in public areas. And, he said that I will work as the turndown housekeeper. So he explains because I don’t know. I learn in interview about this too (the turndown attendant) and he said I need to get the training as room cleaner before working my job. It’s ok, I said. [Angelica].

For the immigrant housekeepers, learning about how the tasks are organized is equally important with learning how communication is structured in the workplace. Violeta and Ruslan told me how communication flow was introduced during the interview. For the workers who work for the staffing agency, being able to navigate communication with both ‘employers’ is significant to avoid misunderstanding. Suresh and Angelica learned during the interview some specific work-related terms such as ‘chute’ and ‘turndown’ and how tasks are organized based on different types of housekeeping positions. For Angelica and her coworkers, the experience during the interview process gave them hints specifically related to how communication practice would be like in a multilingual workplace like Brighton housekeeping department: massive code-switching practices.
1. I Start Speaking in English, but _Y termino en Espanõl_ (I finish [talking] in Spanish…)

Most of the participants, regardless of their level of English communicative ability admitted that code-switching activities dominated their communication experience at the workplace. Spanish-speaking housekeepers used mostly Spanish in communicating with others. Code-switching occurred when they communicated with non-Spanish speakers based on different reasons as depicted in the following narratives:

...if they don’t speak Spanish I speak English, but they start first so..I know I use Spanish or English. I like to speak in English because I can practice, but I don’t know sometimes I forget some English words, you know. I use Spanish and English maybe a little, if the person don’t understand I try to translate it, the words in my phone [Jack].

I sometimes talk in Spanish with my friends but I mostly use English too. Sometimes I talk with my friend in Spanish, right? Then, well it is at the hallway then, when there is guest, I use English. Because, I want to..um, I want the guest to know that housekeeper can speak English [Angelica].

... I talk in English at the cafeteria but then I use Spanish because I talk about something like, something embarrassing or something that I hide (?), because you don’t want to know, you don’t want people to know it [Raquel].

Jack, Angelica, Raquel, and Jose code-switched when they speak with different
speaking partners and based on different speaking partners, especially the NNES non-Spanish speaking coworkers and superiors. Based on the above narratives, the immigrant workers have various reasons for code-switching. For Jack, switching from English to Spanish or the other way around was depending on his speaking partners, whether they used English or Spanish, which showed accommodation or solidarity from both sides. Several non-Spanish speaking superiors sometimes initiated the talk or gave responds in Spanish to accommodate the Spanish-speaking housekeepers. Whichever language was used to start the conversation, Jack added that code-switching typically occurred when one speaker found problems in expressing his or her ideas. In addition to showing solidarity to her speaking partner, code-switching from Spanish to English in public space in the hotel allowed Angelica to show her ‘power’ as an NNES who has a competence to communicate in English which concurs with Auer’s (2002) idea that code-switching carries a hidden prestige that can be made explicit through speaker’s attitudes in conversation. Another housekeeper, Raquel, said that her reason for code-switching in public spaces was often times driven by the changes in conversation topics (e.g., sensitive topics or taboos) to avoid expressing them in a language that the majority of the hearers speak in the hotel. While the majority of code-switcher were dominated by the Spanish-speaking workers, Suresh and Taron also admitted that, despite of their limited ability to communicate in Spanish, they code-switch from English to Spanish to show both solidarity and power as an NNES:
I like to say Spanish hola como estas? to everyone because people speak Spanish here and because I work with them everyday and it’s nice to speak Spanish. I know Spanish a little because I listen to my friend speaking Spanish for five years and I learn. My language? I don’t use, ah I use my language but not in job I use. No people speak Nepali here in hotel. Really, only me. [Suresh]

Yes, I also use Spanish sometimes because everyday I work with my Mexican friends. It’s cool, you know, I mean I am not Mexican, right, but I can speak a little and I learn this language everyday because I talk to them. Some of the housekeepers here don’t know how to speak English so I have no choice, but, it’s cool, it’s cool [Taron].

Language learning activities in the workplace have been facilitated by various elements: coworkers, superiors, guests, communicative devices, and written documents at the hotel. Some participants admitted that they learn languages by listening to others and being involved in conversations to practice their language ability. Even though most of the participants said that they particularly learn spoken language some of them were also exposed to written language through smartphone texts with others, especially with the superiors. Learning language in the workplace has allowed the immigrant workers to use different types of multimodal (Kress, 2009) activities including speaking, writing, listening, gazing, gesturing, and using visual forms to communicate with others. Based on the interviews with the participants, I documented how and what they learn, and who
helped them learn languages in the workplace.

2. How We Learn English at the Workplace.

The majority of the participants indicated that actually language learning is not their priority in the workplace. They, however, admitted that learning language became one of the ‘survival strategies’ to accomplish their professional goals. English became the primary language learned considering that it is the dominant language at the hotel level. Most of the participants indicated that being able to communicate in English will extend their networking and socializing opportunities that also benefit their professional life. Most of the participants mentioned listening, watching videos and TV, and memorizing words as their primary strategies in learning English at the workplace. Some of the participants came to the U.S. with zero to minimum ability to communicate in English. Working in Brighton, for all the workers that I interviewed, was not the first occupation that they had in the U.S. Thus, in their previous workplaces, these workers had developed some level of English communicative ability. Jack, however, admitted that his previous jobs actually has not helped him much in learning English: “My boss, speaking Spanish. My friends, all Mexicans, two Vietnam? Vietnam? Yes, so in there everyday I speak Spanish and only English in big meeting, and I only listen the people when they talking in there”. Angelica, on the other hand, said that she learned English from communicating with one of the long-term stay guest in her previous job. She said: “I have a guest that she and her husband stay in hotel for seven months and they were so
nice. I always clean their room. They kind of treat me like their daughter. They said my English is good and the wife is very like to talk so much. I like it because I can learn”.

Esperanza, a room cleaner also had similar experience in learning English by talking to the guests:

*I work housekeeper for a long time, for more than 20 years, so I speak a little when I work, only speak English a little because my friend Mexicans. They have American boss but there someone speak Spanish in all meetings so no speak English no need English when working. When they speak in English I just listen and I like listen because I can say some word to practice. I like this, I speak English with guest and many many guest they are very nice and say that I can speak (English) [Esperanza].

I like listen to the songs, oh music. I play a lot Indian music but also American music because I like it to listen to learn English. When I listen to the word in music that is the word that the American speak it’s like that. When I learn I listen to words again and I try to say and I listen again. For example, the song, wait like this song, “I become so nom...I become so nom (numb?) ”, I don’t know what its mean but it’s like that I learn English, many many song I listen [Suresh].

My strategy to learn English? Yeah I listen to people talking first, then I try to remember the words and I usually try it in sentence when I talk to someone. For example, I listen to people on the radio when they say thank you, then people can
say, not you’re welcome not only that, but no problem and no problem at all.

When I speak on the radio, I tell myself, tell myself, ok use no problem. I prepare it to say no problem, but it was great. I feel success when I can do it [Angelica].

The limited opportunity to interact with others at the workplace has encouraged some of the housekeepers to find strategies to develop their English communicative ability. Some of the participants such as Esperanza, Suresh, and Angelica relied on ‘listening’ as the primary strategy to learn English. They said that they listen to some words and expressions several times and memorize them, before they finally use them in communicating with others. This strategy, as Angelica said, gave her a feeling of success. In addition to listening strategy, some participants relied on their smartphones app to practice their English through translating activities. For them, translating will include some other integrated activities such as reading and writing. Esperanza shared her experience in helping a supervisor translating a message to Spanish:

I help the supervisor but I also help me, myself, because I learn when the supervisor ask me to translate the messages. The supervisor type the message and send it to me then I put it in the App to know the Spanish sentences so I can send it to the housekeeper. In here I don’t really write but I know and learn how to write the words in English and I memorize it so I can write it when I later I write in English [Esperanza].

One time I want to help a supervisor to write for the mirror at the office, ok wait
wait I have it (showing a text message through a smartphone), “the housekeepers must have a clean and neat appearance”. Then I say, OK “usted debe tener una apariencia limpia y asiada” and write it to her like this. But before, I put the message, her message in this (showing how he did it through an App) [Jack].

For Esperanza and Jack, smartphones have helped a lot in developing their English communicative abilities. When communicating with others in English, they always have their smartphones in their hands, including when they communicated with me during the interview sessions. In addition to using the smartphones for translating activities, some participants also used the smartphones for entertainment purposes, where most of the times they also learn English through some entertaining activities like watching videos and listening to music:

_Aní_ : Your coworkers told me that they learn English through your smartphones. Do you also have that experience?

_Isaura_ : Yes I learned by my phone and I watching movies with subtitles, when talk to guest and and people I try to remember something from movie like something that simple like “give me a second” for when I ask her to wait because I do something. I try to learn it and I wondering why only just one second?, its more than three minute. But this is American say so I use it [Isaura].

In her narrative, Isaura told me that she learned one of the many English phrases typically
used at the workplace, and smartphone has provided a perfect media for her to learn. Likewise, her coworker, Angelica also indicated how she made use of smartphone to support her English learning activity at the workplace:

When I work I like to listen to music with my phone. I listen to Latin music and English music. I know some English music like Michael Jackson? Like so many music is translated in Spanish. But I like listen to the English music because if it is translated to Spanish it’s bad. A lot of sentences I learn from music too and I also like it when I listen to music and watching movies because I want to learn pronounce the words correctly. Now I want to learn how to write because I want to write something for applying job [Angelica].

Movies, videos, and music are the major entertaining activities that the participants can access through their smartphones. Isaura and Angelica watch movies and videos with subtitles to help them enrich their vocabularies and pronounce English words ‘correctly’. They admitted that some of movies and songs have also been translated to Spanish. However, they would prefer movies and videos with subtitles, and songs in their original versions. The subtitles in movies and videos also helped the participants in learning how to spell some English words.

Informed by how Isaura and Angelica learn some English phrases through smartphones, I asked the participants to list some common language practice and strategies that the housekeepers use and learn at the workplace during the interview.
Workers teach each other, particularly the new comers these language practice and strategies informally and many learn them by listening, watching, and practicing. In order to master these strategies, it involves the workers’ awareness of various common housekeeping communicative strategies that enable workers to arrive at new positions and forms of knowledge. The following tables show common communication practice and methods for figuring out how to communicate in the workplace collected from the lists made by the interview participants (with similar phrases/modifications in parentheses):

- giving explanation
- giving instruction (asking others to do something)
- giving direction
- reporting/making reports
- reading/interpreting/understanding signs (forms, guidelines, posters, menus, package containers, labels, announcements, notes, comments) at the hotel and from the superiors/guests
- yelling at/scolding/reprimanding coworkers
- defending/praising/complimenting
- arguing
- showing respects/using honorifics/talking politely
- insulting/making fun of others
- gossiping
- joking around
- asking for permission (for requesting day off, early work dismissal, etc.)
- texting/sending messages
- translating
- using smartphone language Apps
- using/managing your language for radio communication

| Table 5. Common Communication Practice at the Workplace |
• listening and watching others speak and move around all day
• listening and watching music, movies, YouTube videos, etc.
• relating words and sentences with work tasks and objects
• creating list (glossaries)
• teaching each other informally at work (in rooms, on floors, in hallways, in cafeteria, in locker, when leaving the hotel, etc.)
• consulting with the coworkers/superiors
• using technology (smartphone Apps, dictionaries, books, etc.)
• using silence, just listening and memorizing
• pretending that you understand something
• seeking help from others

Table 6. Methods for Figuring out How to Communicate at the Workplace

E. Learning Experiences and Strategies in the Workplace

One of the strategies that the participants used for learning English at the workplace includes how to ask for others to help them, which became the key to survive at the workplace. Considering that they were in the process of developing their communicative ability in English, asking questions or seeking help from others was problematic because they had to construct questions or requests in English. On top of that, most of the housekeepers admitted that they had problems in starting up conversations with others:

Ani: So when you speak with others at the workplace, do you usually the one who start the conversation?

Angelica: I don’t like to start to talk to people but I know I have to do that. Why?

Because if I don’t talk sometimes people don’t want to talk. Why?
Because people see us maybe as Latina or housekeeper then people think we cannot talk in English. I sometimes must start to talk because I need help. When I need help to other people to American for example then I have to say it in English. I prepare for a long time and put it in my head before I say something to people. It is learning English too for me [Angelica].

For Angelica and most of the participants, seeking for help to non-Spanish speakers had double functions: to get assistance related to the task accomplishment and to learn and practice their English. When I asked the participants whether there were particular people at the hotel who helped them learning English, most of the participants mentioned that coworker, superiors, and team members from another department have helped them develop their English communicative ability:

_Anil_: Is there any particular person that has helped you learn English at the workplace?

_Suresh_: Some people help me. There is the manager, the lady manager. She help me and write for me some words and tell me how to say something in English. When I meet people I talk to them in English. With Mexican, I speak English but they speak in Spanish so I learn Spanish...

Suresh, and some of his coworkers admitted that English is not the only language they learned at the workplace as they work with Spanish speaking majority. The
participants mentioned that some of hotel team members such as coworkers, superiors, and hoteliers from the other departments have helped the housekeepers develop their communicative ability by becoming their ‘speaking partners’. Some of them mentioned, however, that the problem was always related to the scarcity of time for them to practice their English during work-time considering that their tasks usually left them a little to no time for workplace interaction to happen. During the work-time, some participants indicated that partnering with the other housekeepers has sometimes allowed them to display their instructional and educational aspects of their collectively constructed mutual intelligibility (Garfinkel, 1967) during which they try to figure out what to do to accomplish particular tasks given that they do not share the same language or professional experience. Work time is an event when the housekeepers learn the most, about the job, and the language used to get the job done. In the workplace as a CoP, the housekeepers are positioned as newcomers when they learn languages from others. However, their position sometimes shifted as experts particularly during the training sessions when some of the senior housekeepers train the new ones. When I asked the housekeepers how they train the newcomers, Jasmine, a room cleaner, for example, shared her experience when she trained a new housekeeper from Somalia:

She, Arabia girl. Yes, I told to her to do the room the cleaning, cleaning room and she, I told her, OK, make bed, make bed. Me? Me cleaning bathroom. I told her, OK, like this, beautiful, no…no, no fast, oh fast fast is OK, OK, but we make the
bed nice, beautiful, no fast is OK. See? I told the new girl, see? Beautiful.

Bathroom? Bathroom clean. Clean. OK. I told she, OK put the soap here, the shampoo, here, the what, the oh body lotion, here. Clean everything, nice, no fast is OK. We remember all in room, beautiful, clean. Later, we work fast, we can work very fast [Jasmine].

When training the new housekeeper, Jasmine taught her to remember the details and the quality of the tasks. She said, for example, that the product, i.e., clean and beautiful room, is more important than the time spent in finishing a particular task. Some educative activities were not only experienced by speakers of different languages. Raquel, another room cleaner, admitted that figuring out how to solve the work problems almost always happens when she worked with Spanish-speaking teams. When teamed up with the housemen during the room cleaning activities, for example, she always needs to solve problems in the rooms they worked on, for example in understanding the guests’ notes in stay over rooms: “There is the guest write something about the room, what they need in the room and things like that. I talk to my houseman to know what it is. If we can’t understand we will speak to the supervisor. But I talk to my houseman first.” The guests always wrote the notes regarding their room needs in English. Most of the time the room cleaners and the housemen were able to solve the problems by themselves, without the help of the supervisors. Otherwise, the housemen will radio the supervisor for assistance. This radio conversation will obviously be another educative moment for the
housekeepers (and superiors), regarding what task to be accomplished and how, and which languages used in the conversation. All of the participants indicated that they learn almost everyday from just listening to the radio conversation:

*I always find myself laughing all the time when I listen to the people talk in the radio. They always sound either funny, confused, angry, or stupid (laughter). But, I mostly learn Spanish from there because most of the conversation everyday among the housekeepers are in Spanish. Like, I found it funny when the supervisor tried to call a houseman in English from the radio and the houseman was not even aware of that and he kept on talking with his friends like nobody’s business (laughter), or someone talked about somebody else but that person was in the same channel (laughter). We are not allowed to be angry on the radio but people are angry most of the time and (laughter) curse a lot, yes, a lot of curse here you have to see the swear jar (laughter) [Taron].*

Taron shared his opinion on how radio conversation has become an everyday educative media, not only for housekeepers but also the superiors and everyone else in the same channel. In a community of practice, as Lave and Wenger (2000) put it, everyone can be a newcomer. Both in trough the radio and face to face interaction, several housekeepers revealed that sometimes they ‘teach’ the supervisors some Spanish words:

*When I speak with Angie it’s fine but I speak to Kara and OK, I speak in English because she cannot speak Spanish but sometimes I forget and I continue speaking*
in Spanish but Kara listen to me and ask something, like, what is it in Spanish or what do you say in English? I know she is learning Spanish. Yeah supervisor is learning Spanish from housekeepers. I told the supervisor to use the app like this but she said she don’t have time so when speaking with the housekeeper like that, she is learning [Esperanza].

Esperanza’s narrative showed that in a Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), a newcomer’s contribution is crucial and considering that everyone can be a newcomer, the supervisor who learned Spanish when communicating with the Spanish-speaking housekeepers shifted his/her participation from an old-timer to a newcomer based on the change of the elements learned in the CoP.

Outside the work-time, such as during breaks, it was hard for the housekeepers to practice their English because most of them chose to sit with the groups who spoke the same language. In line with this fact, as Ruslan and Taron, two housekeepers who have no problems in communicating in English indicated, even though workplace has been an ideal place for the housekeepers to practice and learn their English, some participants were not able to develop their English communicative because of several reasons such as limited time for interaction and minimum intrinsic motivation from the housekeepers themselves. Some senior housekeepers indicated that they had a little intention to learn English because they are happy with their current job and life. They further said that communicating in the workplace, even though it is obviously important for them, it has
never been the primary demand of the job they are doing. For most of the workers who are employed staffing agencies, they have been conditioned to be compliant since the very beginning of their career journey, when they seek for the jobs at the staffing agency.

F. Learning the Rules of Communication in a Job Hunting

As a participant observer, there is another important educative experience I learned from the immigrant workers, especially related to job seeking activities. I obtained my own lesson on the importance of reticence as a communicative strategy shortly after I embarked on a quest to find part time employment through staffing agencies. My participation as an insider and job-seeker allowed me to understand the restrictions and rules involved in communicating with the staffing agency employees. These rules are important to understand because all of my participants had experience with staffing agencies, which often serve as gateways or channels into hotel housekeeping jobs for immigrants in the U.S major cities. Being successfully connected with job opportunities also depends on how a job-seeker communicates with the agency employees, and how they respond to their questions and requests.

In the following section, I describe my learning process as a newcomer to the staffing agency system, and how I was taught by a Mexican immigrant, Esperanza about proper ways of behaving and speaking in employment agencies. I found my first staffing agency managed by Mexicans. The name of the business was written in English, but in its website and Facebook pages was a bilingual English-Spanish sign that read “employment
“agency/agencia de empleo.” I walked inside to inquire about getting a job, and was greeted by a Mexican woman who spoke to me in Spanish and asked me to take a seat. The woman who sat in the front desk. Behind her I saw a sign with the Spanish phrase “vamos a trabajar” (let’s go to work). I told her I don’t speak Spanish and I was looking for a part time job, and she informed me that the only available jobs were full time positions in as a room cleaner. I was interested in finding a housekeeping job as a runner or lobby attendant because I wanted to be able to reach as many areas as possible at the workplace for my study.

The day after my first visit, I got a call back from the staffing agency. I answered the phone in Spanish and a male voice responded in Spanish. He told me there were some jobs available for me and that I should go back to the agency office in order to find out more about the jobs. I went back to the office the same day and sat with the same woman and her younger male coworker. I told them I had received a phone call and the young Mexican male spoke up and said it was he who had called. He was surprised to find out that I was not ‘Mexican’, and therefore, we continue to speak in English. I inquired about the jobs and I was given a form to fill out.

After filling out some of my contact information on the form, I read the fine print where a signature was required. The male explained in English that I had to pay upfront in order to get the ‘identity card’ to be able to work in the hotel for the staffing agency. However, the contract fine print (in English) stated that the employment agency should
get paid only if the client is successfully hired. I asked the woman who sat at the front desk why I should give him money upfront if the contract stated I should only pay him after getting a job. She responded “that’s how the system works,” and that the agency wouldn’t be able to provide me with any information unless I gave him the money. The Mexican woman asked her coworker a question in Spanish, to which he responded in Spanish. She then reiterated in English what her coworker had explained to me. I restated my objection to signing something which did not reflect the actual policies of the staffing agency. My statement made the Latina angry, and she told me that if I didn’t like how it works then I should go somewhere else. I agreed and she snatched up my contract and threw it in the trash can. Surprised by their actions, I asked that she give me the contract back because it had my private information, which I felt uncomfortable leaving in their hands. At this point the woman was outraged that I could not have the contract; she then yelled in Spanish and fished my contract out of the trash can then sent it through the shredder.

Given this attitude, I walked out feeling a little frightened and curious about why they had been so sensitive about the whole thing. I had even tried to negotiate and give them half of my money to get the information, but their response was so cold and unfriendly that I chose not to insist on the issue any further. Disappointed and rejected, I decided to consult my friend Esperanza to get her perspective on what had gone wrong. Esperanza is a 30 years old undocumented Mexican immigrant who has worked in a hotel
for over 10 years. When I first met her, she was working as a lobby attendant in a small hotel near The Ohio State University (OSU) campus area. I became friends with Esperanza in a coincidence when I visited the hotel on campus related event. I was fascinated by how Esperanza greeted the guests so I asked if she would like to hang out with me sometimes. Esperanza and I had many deep conversations about her life as an undocumented immigrant. While sipping our coffee at the campus coffee shop, she has given me insight into how many immigrants in Ohio and some other states see their time working in the U.S. as a process of their career betterment. They understand that being an undocumented immigrant in America involves a lot of hard work and perseverance.

Esperanza said that Mexican immigrants usually built a very solid community, including in social media such as Facebook, to be able to help one another.

By consulting Esperanza for advice, I was doing what the immigrant newcomers do all the time when they face uncertainty: seek expert knowledge and consolation from a more experienced immigrant worker. Esperanza has a seemingly endless supply of optimism, which comes through when he talks about his life as an immigrant in Columbus. Esperanza is an “expert” in the sense that she can skillfully navigate relations with both Latino and non-Latino coworkers, teach and train newcomers with ease, and obtain the goals she has set out for herself during her time in the U.S. As an undocumented immigrant, Esperanza has a successful record of working with staffing agencies as her employers. Whenever her boss (a staffing agency manager) interview
workers in English, she always takes Esperanza with her. She is also affectionately known by guests and coworkers as the friendly worker who speaks English well, works efficiently, and makes the lobby areas ‘sparked’. There are at least 5 positive compliments from the guests displayed in the hotel and the most influential travel agency websites. Esperanza is proud of her work accomplishments, and frequently goes above and beyond her superiors’ expectations. She makes the effort to speak and learn English, develops new bilingual (Spanish-English) list of housekeeping items with her coworkers without being asked by his bosses to do so, helps translate for her Spanish speaking coworkers in hotel meetings, and greets everyone with a smile. She confidently interacts with guests and coworkers and unafraid to make mistakes while speaking English. She has also helped many undocumented immigrants figure out how to do their jobs and stay positive through the process. I knew she would be a valuable source of information on the peculiarities of gaining entry into the hospitality industry labor market.

Therefore, I asked Esperanza to help explain why I had been kicked out of the employment agency. I knew she could provide me with suggestions on how to navigate the system and improve my chances of being hired by a staffing agency, because she had used them successfully in the past. I also asked Esperanza to take me to the staffing agency where he had gone to find work several years before. During our conversation on the way to the staffing agency office, Esperanza informed me that the agency staffs commonly withhold information about job opportunities in order to get money from
immigrants in need of work. Immigrants who pay for information about the location of prospective employers are not always hired. They may discover they don’t like the job, or employers may decide they don’t want to hire the worker for a number of reasons (already hired someone else, has insufficient work experience, doesn’t understand enough English, etc.). However, if the job-seeker returns to the staffing agency and asks for a refund after being denied the job, in most occasions he/she will be rejected and told to wait until the agency contacted the person about a different opportunity. Esperanza explained that I had caused trouble by asking too many questions. I hadn’t followed the “rules” because I spoke too much and stood up for myself instead of just signing the paper and giving them money. She explained that immigrants who go to these employment agencies, just as she had once done, are often in desperate need of work and are not in a position to argue over the terms of the contract. All they hope for is that they get a job quickly, with as little fuss as possible. This works out for agencies who are weary of legal troubles involved with frequently channeling undocumented immigrants into some menial jobs. In the following conversation, Esperanza explains the agencies have learned that if they give information about job location before charging a fee, the candidates might go to the business themselves, rendering employment agency useless.

For both parties to get what they want (jobs and money), these agencies silently withhold information and require silent cooperation from clients.

*Ani*: The agency kicked me out of the office
Esperanza: Where, in downtown?

Ani: yes, all of them speak Spanish, that’s why I need your help.

Esperanza: OK

Ani: Well, I told them that I need to know where I will work, and then they said no, unless I pay for the identification fee. What is that?

Esperanza: If you pay them they will tell you to work and they need you to have card because if you don’t have papers so no.

Ani: But if I want to work...before I give the money

Esperanza: umm, ok but let me tell you, think, if they tell you everything what and where, you’re going to say, ah okay, bye, then you will go there without them calling the job, no?

Ani: Man! (Laughter) they’re smart!

Esperanza: Yes, they know everything, they do that all the time. They [look] like a snack machine...

Ani: ah, a vending machine?

Esperanza: I know, if you don’t give the coins you don’t get the snack (laughter).

I tell Esperanza I would like a job in a hotel, preferably as a front desk staff. She tells me it would be difficult to find a position as a front desk staff, and then jokingly boasts that she is a housekeeping manager and she can hire me directly. She explained that staffing agency only hires people who are willing to do ‘dirty’ jobs like
housekeepers, janitors, or dishwashing staff. I tell her I don’t know how to communicate with Mexicans in staffing agencies in order to get a job in the hotel. She then warns me not to ask too many questions in the next staffing agency because the staff there will assume that I expect to be able to bargain my wages. Thus part of my silence is meant to convey the fact I would be willing to accept whatever wages employers are willing to offer. Esperanza then teases me by suggesting that I wouldn’t be able to endure 9 hour work days, which are commonplace in a hotel housekeeping.

*Esperanza*: oh front desk is hard. I’m a manager [in housekeeping department] I’ll hire you

*Ani*: I just want to know how to talk to them about what jobs I really want, where, and how the tasks look like, and possibly the salary.

*Esperanza*: No, no, don’t ask too much questions, they will think you want to be paid more money.

*Ani*: But I only want to work for a couple of hours, you see, I have something else to do.

*Esperanza*: No, no, you can’t do that. You have to work for 9 hours like us.

*Ani*: Then I’ll do it 9 hours.

*Esperanza*: oh my god…

*Ani*: Yeah, afternoons and Saturday and Sunday

*Esperanza*: Ok, then you will not sleep (laughter).
On the way to the staffing agency, Esperanza points out several Latinos standing beside vans on the street in front of the agency. He tells me they are waiting to be hired for moving jobs. Another Latino walked past us and whispers “tengo social” (I have social security numbers for sale) to us. Esperanza then said to me, (they [Latinos standing outside] have social, they have ID’s, they have everything). I realized that on a single corner, there were people whose job is to get other people jobs (employment agency workers and social security dealers), people seeking jobs (myself and others seeking work at the employment agency), people with jobs working for others (Esperanza and other employed individuals), people making their own jobs (the movers with vans), and people whose job is to potentially swindle others without jobs. I was a little worried and suggested that we should leave to find another way to communicate with the agency. I asked if Esperanza would like to help me conduct a small “anthropology” experiment with me. We decided to call the employment agency where I had been kicked out the previous day. I was curious how they would respond to a Latina who was competent in the “language” of employment agencies. I provided Esperanza with some limited instructions- simply inquire about the available jobs and pretend to be looking for a job.

The Mexican woman who ripped up my contract answered the phone in English (SA), and Esperanza responds in Spanish, to which she then answers in Spanish. Esperanza asked the woman if the agency had available jobs as a runner or lobby attendant. Then the woman mentioned some hotels complete with the expected wages
and work shifts. By shifting the conversation into Spanish at the outset, Esperanza signaled her identity as a Latina in search of employment. She immediately responds by code switching from English into Spanish. This conversation demonstrates that the staffing agency employees can make sense with Latino immigrants, and vice-versa. Had Esperanza wanted the job, she could have walked to the agency, paid the fee, and been sent to the employer in a hotel on the same day for an interview or to work directly. When I pointed out that the woman was very helpful, she admitted that employment agencies were the immigrant first ‘best friend’ in America, but she then grudgingly acknowledged that they “are like angels” although they can act like “such assholes” sometimes. My own experience in learning how to communicate with the staffing agency showed the importance of identifying different ‘languages’ and traditions of interactions, especially when it is work-related.

G. Learning the Dominant Language at the Workplace

Having control and ownership of linguistic knowledge is critical for the immigrant workers to organize with each other when they feel taken advantage of, express grievances, and assert their rights. Getting a handle on the local languages and norms of interaction is a process that enables workers to shift positions within and across communities of practice with more ease, and become recognized as legitimate workers by employers with authority. Most of the participants in my study learn that it is very improbable they will ever obtain the same status or salary as their coworkers and
managers who work directly for the hotel. However, they fully understand that the hotel management favor NNES employees who make the effort to understand English. The employer, as Christopher puts it, view these efforts as signs of attentiveness and respect. The housekeepers understand that learning English is an effective method for gaining their managers approval, which may come in handy at some point. The housekeepers are proud of their ability to serve as translators and teachers of languages (whether it is English or their native languages) and culture for newcomers at work. Those who actively use this knowledge to negotiate work-related issues have more responsibilities and roles at work when compared to workers with little knowledge of English language.

In socializing with others at work, workers demonstrate their competence with English and Spanish in different ways, and much of this competence is acquired through trial and error. For example, for NNES knowing how to joke around with NES involves understanding of the local language, and a “good” sense of timing and delivery depending on one’s position in the workplace. Some Spanish speakers who joke and play pranks on other employees don’t always like getting it in return. A housekeeper explained that when he tried to get even with his NES supervisors a few days after they played a prank on him, the intent of the joke was completely lost, and the NES became quickly annoyed at him. The feedback was uncomfortably negative that he decided never to play another prank on them again. Poorly executed jokes or attempts to assert equal “pranking rights” may be considered as a lack of respect or awareness of one’s place as an
employee of inferior status, thus it is important to be mindful of these “unspoken” rules of conduct that can have serious consequences in workplace social interaction.

NNES housekeepers also learn the significance knowing how to talk with NES. The former group believes that in talking with NES knowing what to talk is as important as how to talk. Reflected from one of my observation audios from the locker room talk, Flora room cleaner describes the rules for conduct and communication at the workplace, related to ‘how to talk to a NES superior:

Flora: *I talk to the manager, you see, the lady manager. I have to listen always. When I talk she always said, don’t talk, don’t talk. But, I want to explain so she will understand.*

Ani: *Did you know why?*

Flora: *I know, this is when my friend talk with her. I know I have to listen and wait. When she finish talk, I can talk. No wonder she look mad.*

Ani: *Have you talked to her again, and listen and wait until she finished talking?*

Flora: *yes, I meet her at the elevator and she said, “Flora talked back, how about that?”*, and she was laughing. And I know if she was laughing she’s ok. *It is me I have to learn how to talk to American.*

Ani: *I see, so you’ve learned about turn-taking, when talking to others sometimes you need to wait until the person let you take the turn to talk.*
That’s good. What about with your friends who don’t speak Spanish? Do you think you get along well? Any problems in talking with them so far?

Flora: You see, we, all don’t speak the same language and with the people who don’t speak Spanish I want to teach them, because it is easy to talk. If not, it’s ok, we speak with English. Some friends are better than the other because when you work here for a long time, you will learn more and your speak, um, you speak language better, you speak English or Spanish better, and actually you know it is easy if people, all speak Spanish. I have a friend who work for eleven years and he speak Spanish so good, you think he is from Mexico. But, if I speak English with him, it is easy too, because he learn for a long time. It is easy too to speak English with some housekeepers, not Spanish housekeepers, because they don’t know good English too, is it easy or no? easy? Yes, easy because sometimes we speak very slow. When I speak with American, they speak so fast and I don’t understand.

Knowing how to partake in talk at work is a delicate matter, a dance of its own. Talk is organized around the powerful and the less powerful. In this case, power also sometimes reflect how well an individual knows how to communicate using a particular language. In the housekeeping group, interaction is most of the time organized in a hierarchical fashion. There are strict rules about status and position; newcomers cannot
assume they will get ahead of more experienced workers, and that kind of mentality would be heavily frowned upon, if not outright unacceptable. Less talk is better when the hotel is busy and there are multiple work tasks to attend to. Banter is accepted among employees as long as the work is being carefully attended to. The housekeepers have described the managers as very detail-oriented; so the workers feel the pressure to perform their work properly and fulfill their bosses’ expectations, before they feel any freedom to engage in relaxed conversation that does not immediately deal with work tasks and responsibilities.

As Flora explains, the longer a housekeeper works at the hotel, the more likely it is that linguistic exchanges with languages spoken at the workplace will become more complex and engaged. When a worker arrives for the first time, most of the interactions with the old-timer consist of directions and instructions for carrying out work tasks and responsibilities: throw out the trash, push the cart, bring an item to the guest/room cleaner, sweep the floors, clean the bathroom, make the bed, etc. Initially, much of this involves the use of gestures, imitation, and watching other workers do their jobs. More experienced workers will answer questions posed by newcomers: for example, what does that sign mean?, where do I find X for the rooms?, How should I respond to this guest’s question?, or when can I take my break? As workers become more immersed in the linguistic environment, the need for a mediator, teacher, or translator is lessened. They listen for sound patterns and memorize words and phrases in English or Spanish that have
the most immediate utility, such as “linen” “room” “here” “there” “radio” “I need” “give me”, “rapido [fast]”, “termino/finito [finish]”, “por pavor [please]”, etc. Workers with more experience and time learn to communicate comfortably in a mixture of languages. They become aware of appropriate ways of mixing languages together in ways that are comprehensible to NES and NNES coworkers.

The NNES housekeepers learn new sound combinations and words in English and Spanish, and they also learn to adopt transform language in new ways. Although most of the new workers, particularly Latinos and Latinas stick together when they first arrive, they eventually branch out. During my fieldwork at Brighton, I learned that communities of practice take shape in different ways according the workplace context and different “Company Society” arrangements. They are always tied to objects and activities of the workplace, the languages and communicative resources enlisted by workers, as well as the unwritten or unspoken norms of interaction.

H. Teaching Newcomers How to Understand Languages at the Workplace

Most of the immigrant workers at Brighton believe that they should have the attitude of “the necessity to understand” the workplace as part of the learning process. Gaining this understanding is a process which is facilitated by more experienced workers who help newcomers deal with the challenges of trying to understand a new language and work system. New NNES workers have this necessity, because without being able to understand the workplace ‘tradition’, they would be lost or confused at the workplace,
and in some cases, give up and quit their jobs as a result of misunderstandings or miscommunications. The necessity to understand means more than just learning words and pronouncing them correctly. Ottenheimer (2008) writes, “learning a language is more complex than merely learning sounds and forming grammatically correct sentences...understanding cultural expectations about language use is essential for knowing how to use a language” (Ahearn 2012, p. 115). Jose, a Spanish-speaking NNES, for example, explained that making sense of English as the dominant language at the hotel involves learning their ‘way of behaving’ or their culture, and learning their culture, as Jose put it, can take longer than learning the language. For example, Jose mentioned that the words and expressions that the workers use with the coworkers are different from those used to address superiors and guests. Even though nobody intentionally taught him how to speak in English with others, he learned in the field that, for instance, workers should speak in a formal way to superiors and guests and less formal or informal to coworkers. So far he noted that no negative comments have been received with regards to words choices that he used, no one got upset or offended by how he spoke in English. Jose said that he could feel the difference when he used inappropriate words during conversation. Further he explained that it is acceptable especially for the NNES housekeepers to make mistakes when communicating in English, as they don’t mean to be disrespectful-they are simply unfamiliar with a lot of communication convention including the word choices. During the observation, I recorded some conversations with
the housekeepers at the hotel’s coffee shop as part of the respondent’s interview, and
have some housekeepers recalled their experiences in being newcomers in the workplace.

*Ani*: Yesterday when I worked with you, you said to the big boss, “that’s cool”, in the elevator. I thought, wow, you are his best friend forever now?

*Jose*: Ah, yeah, oh the big boss, because I work here for five years already and big boss is ok, he’s very nice with everybody. I see people, other workers say that to him and yesterday I try, although, I am not sure, can we use ‘cool’ with the big boss? Because, if I speak with the other people, I mean the old one in this hotel, and I use the same word, maybe he will say, what? I know I have to see who the people I talk to, if I know so well then I can use more not very serious word.

*Ani*: I see. How do you usually make decision on how to talk to others at work? You said based on whether the person is nice or not nice, or how long you have known him/her?

*Jose*: yeah, and also the age is very important, in Mexico we address the elder using different words too. But, actually in here too if I speak with the older housekeeper in Spanish I mean Latino housekeepers? Do you know that, you know that, like when I speak to senor Ruben and senor Raul, or oh the supervisor too, he is not so old but he is a supervisor. How we talk is like
that. That’s why I sometimes use my phone to record the talk because I want to learn to listen to people talk in English with the American. Even when I talk with housekeeper (non-American) I record too because I try to remember the talk and I try to know if I can teach my friend, ok for example, this is ok, this is not ok.

Ani: I see. That’s a good idea to record some conversation during work. Just be careful, ok

So far in Brighton, I noticed during fieldwork that unfamiliarity with NES expectation has not created any significant problem for the NNES housekeepers because being able to communicate in English is simply not the most important part of working as a housekeeper in the hotel. Jose said that what the housekeepers do is “keep on learning and speaking more with NES”. Similar to Jose’s experience, Suresh, another NNES admitted that working for five years in Brighton has introduced him to a great deal of respect and status at his job, and much of this has been made possible by his efforts to understand English and Spanish and how those two different groups’ ‘ways of doing things’, and using this knowledge to educate fellow workers. He created labels in Spanish and English (even though he is not a Spanish speaker) without being told to do so. The act of informally educating coworkers about language and work is viewed as a sign of respect and appreciation of workplace’s values, which in turn makes the employer value the immigrant workers more. This can potentially result in more prolonged, amicable,
and socially and economically beneficial relationships (more flexible schedules, promotion chances, involvement in the hotel’s important events, etc).

Drawing from my personal experience as a participant observer while doing fieldwork, I also felt the necessity to understand especially the NNES Spanish speakers as I learned Spanish at work. The more observant and studious I was of Spanish, the more attention I received from Latino and Latina coworkers. The more I practiced the language, the greater access I had to their world. I was often praised by Spanish speakers for being “a student of Spanish,” which opened opportunities to engage in conversations with the majority Spanish speakers in the workplace. Once I displayed my efforts to learn (speaking Spanish, watching telenovelas, singing Latin songs, eating Mexican food), I was greatly rewarded with the attention and curiosity of Spanish speakers, who wanted to teach me more. For a newcomer like myself, learning the languages of dominant speech communities was key to developing and deepening relationships with the speakers. My efforts to understand Spanish also brought me closer to NNES non Spanish speakers, because we shared similar struggles and I depended on their knowledge to guide me. Their knowledge also gave me insight into the various problem they identify as important to know at work, and their ways of going about devising problem-solving strategies.

Experienced workers often play the role of teacher to new immigrants who are unfamiliar with the local work rules and norms of interaction. These educational activities are carried out by immigrants in different ways depending on the local contexts,
but they are all critical for helping newcomers make sense of their surroundings and
develop a sense of belonging in their workplace. Gabby, a Polish worker who work as a
part time housekeeper at Brighton also share her opinion during the recorded observation
I conducted at the hotel’s coffee shop:

*Ani*: I see you have no problem in communicating in English. Could you share
with me what are the most important thing to learn at the workplace,
especially for the new workers?

*Gabby*: Sure, I think we have to understand especially the Latino, the
communication and how they work, because they know a lot of things and
they can teach you. Sometimes it is better to understand from them (than
from the managers?) because you are completely confused when you
arrive, some of the immigrant who cannot speak English, or Spanish, you
don’t understand what they’re saying, you don’t speak the language, you
don’t know what the system is, what are the rules, you know none of that.

*Basically, when you arrive, you just do what they say, “you know what,
put this here, put that there…”*

*Ani*: How did you learn to do your job when you first arrived to the U.S.?

*Gabby*: Well, not in this hotel, but in another hotel. Luckily I can speak English
so I learn from the supervisors. But, like in this hotel, there were a lot of
Hispanic people too. So I learn a lot from them, and learn how to talk
Spanish too, everything. I learned Somalian too because I have a lot of Somalian friends there, not in this hotel.

Based on Suresh’ and Gabby’s explanation, it is very common for newcomers to learn from the majority. They see that it is the nature of Hispanic people to always help each other one way or another. Ruben said, “If you are doing something [at work] that isn’t what they [the managers and supervisors] are asking you to do, someone [a Latino/Hispano] will come over and say, you’re not doing it right, do it this way instead. And when you are new you have to accept what they are trying to tell you, and do it. They are not telling you because they know more than you, but some take it the wrong way. When there is an opportunity to teach someone that is new, we say, look, do it this way, yea? Because the manager likes it when you do things like this. Or she likes it when you do things like that. So you start learning. The manager and supervisor say, do things like this like this. Those bosses will tell a Hispanic [worker] “tell him to do it like this, like that.” It’s an advantage we have, us Hispanics.

A lot of senior Latino housekeepers have gained the trust from the superiors, who rely on them to translate their demands and expectations for new employees. Ruben personally believes it is important to help newcomers figure out the local workplace system, even though he realizes some of his coworkers aren’t always open to being told how to do things at first. He believes that some workers also have the advantage of relying on other workers for this informal education and knowledge exchange, which is
critical for workers to do their jobs well, gain the approval of their superiors, and meet
their ultimate goal of earning money to send back home.

According to Suresh, understanding the workplace rules and communicating in
multiple languages with the workplace members is a tricky process, for several reasons:

*Ani*: You said that speaking with the housekeepers is stressful and tiring, what
do you mean by that?

*Suresh*: The way they speak to me, it’s so confusing and makes me tired. For
ing example, one person speaks like this and the other people speak like this,
different, so I get confused.

*Ani*: You mean when people speak English?

*Suresh*: Yes, you see the lady supervisor speak like that, and the manager is
different, another supervisor is very confusing, and some of black people
is also different. But not only English, also Spanish, they speak different.
Maybe because they come from different place, not Mexico but like, that
black people speak Spanish too, but he is not from Africa, he is from
somewhere, not Africa.

*Ani*: I see. How well do you speak Spanish? I see your Spanish is good.

*Suresh*: Spanish, I will say it’s just words, not the language, why? Because
people here know Spanish words.

Suresh’ opinion on his communicative ability in Spanish “just words, not
language” specifically captured my attention. Suresh’ perception on his own language ability illustrated most of the workers’ experience in learning language at the workplace, that they know the most familiar words and practice using them multiple times, and build up more vocabularies along the process. I asked Suresh to ‘teach’ me some Spanish words. At the workplace, for example, Suresh described that some popular words include “bueno” (good) to say that something is alright, and “no bueno’ to say the opposite. If you have a lot of works to do, you say “mucho trabajo” (a lot of works). When you have “mucho trabajo” often times you will feel “cansada” (tired) and that is “no bueno”. If you have “mucho trabajo” and feel “cansada” all of the time then your boss must be “loco” (crazy) so you should “habla” (talk) to the managers. If you can “habla” to your boss then you are “mucho bueno” (smart). So, if the workers want to say that I am skilled, they say I am “bueno.” But when I asked them, whether “bueno” also mean “smart” they don’t really specify what they are referring to. The non-Spanish speaking workers have the same word for many activities, and their Spanish speaking counterpart usually don’t care. Likewise, to address the Hispanic ladies, or the female housekeepers in general, Suresh mentioned some workers use “chiquita” (sweet girl), although a few months later a Spanish speaker told him that he should have used “chica” (girl) instead because the former is usually used to address family members, or those with extra affections.

Like some of the housekeepers in my study, Suresh has never received classroom
instruction in English. He has learned most of the English he knows while working in hotels, including Brighton. He claims that it’s difficult to know the “correct way” to pronounce English words because not all Englishes he hears in the hotel are the same. He differentiates between “American” English spoken by white American, African American and “immigrants”. For Suresh, there are many different English accents, styles, and pronunciations in his environment. His experience of the language environment is not homogenous. The codes he hears are not all the same, each person has their own (way of speaking), and finding commonalities among everyone’s different language varieties can be a challenge.

Even though Suresh has knowledge of popular Spanish words, expressions, and signs, he believes this does not count as real knowledge of the Spanish language: “just words, not the language”. He positions himself as an outsider to the language because he views his Spanish (and English) language repertoire to be incomplete. At the same time, Suresh can speak at great length about the rules of speaking Spanish and how to understand Spanish when they speak. He also positions NES as outsiders to the Spanish language, when he asserts that NES have the same problem with Spanish that he has with Spanish speaking housekeepers—they only know some words, but not the actual language itself.

This outsider status arising from an “incompleteness” of linguistic knowledge motivates the NNES workers to learn and teach each other. During our conversation
Gabby goes on interpret non-Spanish speakers’ (such as Suresh’) usage of Spanish, and their strategies for communicating with the Hispanic group. This indicates that Gabby understands what non-Spanish speakers are trying to do with the Spanish language resources they have, even though he doesn’t consider this type of interaction as “real” language use. She identifies a principal communicative strategy used by the non-Spanish speaking minority at his workplace: applying a word or phrase to multiple situations. This general communicative strategy enables interlocutors to expand a word or phrase’s meaning in order to use or adapt it to multiple situations and thus increase its utility. She said, “they have the same word for many activities”, that is, they rely on sets of words that have acquired shared meanings among workers in the local context to multiple situations and activities.

In the above conversation, Suresh describes the workers’ use of the word bueno (good) for everything with positive connotation. When they say bueno to others, they don’t really specify what they are referring to. Despite this lack of “referent,” through his experience working with Hispanics, he knows they use bueno to mean “good”, even though specifically it may have more particular referents such as: inteligente (intelligent) or habilidoso (skilled), and on some other occasions when they use the same term to express that the meals are delicioso (delicious). He knows that in the workplace, the workers commonly use this word when praising others for a job well done, thus Spanish speakers do not have the necessity to describe exactly what they are referring to using
Spanish words—simply using *bueno* is enough to achieve mutual intelligibility. It is apparent that the lack of a more elaborate vocabulary to explain the referent doesn’t necessarily constrain or inhibit workers from coordinating in creative ways.

Suresh and some other non-Hispanic workers can contextualize Spanish language use by providing his own interpretation of the “missing” or ambiguous referent. Suresh can then pass on this knowledge to the non-Hispanic newcomers who might be initially confused by Spanish terms when they say *mucho bueno* (literally: a lot of good) in seemingly disconnected situations. In his role as a teacher and translator, Suresh tries to prevent miscommunications and helps facilitate orderly interaction at the workplace. It is possible that the non-Hispanic workers don’t actually mean *skilled* when they say *bueno* but Suresh’s positive interpretations and contextualization efforts may encourage more amicable non-Hispanic-Hispanic-NES relations, which can potentially lead to a more expansive shared language repertoire over time. Therefore, applying the same word or phrase to multiple activities and situations is a valuable strategy when speakers are learning a language, because it allows them to use the words they already know to express themselves in new situations. Even if the word or phrase does not quite suit the new situation, the speaker will try to adapt it to the situation in a way that the listener understands the context and can identify the intended application of the word.

Gumperz (1968) has explored the issues that arise during communication between minority populations whose language background is different than the surrounding
majority. Gumperz focuses on the key notion of “conversational inference - “discursive practices that actors employ in the pursuit of communicative ends and in negotiated shared understandings in the course of their everyday lives” (DiLuzio 2000, p. 37). He defines conversational inference as “the situated assessments by which participants in an encounter interpret what is intended at any one point in an exchange and on which they depend in planning their responses” (Gumperz 1982). Conversational inference sets a framework for making interpretive assessments, and this framing is part of the social process of meaning making necessary for coordinating action. Gumperz argued that it was necessary to identify the “observable traces” of this framing process in interaction. It is possible to see how frames “get built, and how they work” by exploring “contextualization cues” (those concrete modes of communication (whether verbal or not) which signaled not simply a neutral reference to an objective world, but rather constituted what was being talked (or written) about, which elements were important or new, what the speaker’s stance toward it might be, how she or he wanted interlocutors to react, indeed all elements of relevant frames of interpretation, and crucial to the core process of inferencing.

In order for conversational cooperation or coordination to occur, speakers would need to be able to “decode contextualization cues, interpret utterances and gestures or actions in a shared frame, and know which culturally-conventionalized actions would be not only interpretable, but also appropriate, next” (Heller 2013, p. 396). Suresh makes
inferences about the non-Spanish speakers, including some superiors’ common use of words like *bueno*, based on his ideas about what counts as locally acceptable behavior. He knows that some of his coworkers and superiors take a positive stance toward hard work, skill, and intelligence, and interprets their cross-situational use of *bueno* within this frame of shared expectations about work performance. Thus, those speakers provide contextualization cues that need to be decoded and situated in relation to these expectations, because their meanings (referents) are not immediately apparent (and may never be completely defined).

Constructing a shared frame for interpreting Spanish allows Suresh to figure out what to do in his future actions as well. He knows that particular activities may be considered more *bueno* than others, and being *bueno* at making beds, cleaning the restrooms, sorting laundry items, cleaning rooms, or communicating with guests and superiors, is far better than being considered an inept or incompetent worker. His inferencing of contextualization cues keeps communication from breaking down. However, Suresh also notes that there are many instances where communication does in fact break down between different group of speakers, resulting in misunderstandings, blaming, stereotyping, hurt emotions, and disruptions in the social order.

For Gumperz, the above instance of misunderstandings are “key situations” where “a lot may be riding on successful interactions” (Heller 2013, p. 397). Misunderstandings may be more difficult to repair in multilingual environments, because workers may be at
a loss for words needed to clarify and smooth over miscommunications in the moment they occur. Michael Agar (1994) discusses these “key situations” as “rich points,” or moments in which something goes wrong in a speech situation and something new is learned as a result. Rich points highlight contrasts “between the expectations of the speech communities involved” (Ottenheimer 2008, p. 111). Recognizing such rich points or misunderstandings encourages individuals to mobilize communicative resources to repair interaction, and they can be “instructive because they remind us that speech styles and competencies can be fairly fluid, and that you can develop multiple competencies” (2008, p. 113). Suresh describes rich points in the workplace as moments of despair that are situated in the particular language environment of each workplace - in some cases, there may be more at stake in learning to understand Spanish or English. Despair comes from the literal “crash” between languages.

Some workers also indicated that superiors may become exasperated with NNES workers when miscommunications arise and their expectations are not met. In our conversation at the hotel’s coffee shop, Jose candidly said that, the necessities of Americans, “it is sometimes weird that they are not going to ask you if you can [do your job]. If you need the job, you have to do it”. Some of the managers are NES and some of them are not bilinguals so they always speak in English. Jose said, “…and you have to open your brain in Spanish to think or find a way, very fast, because you have to understand them and to do the job, because if not they can be really upset. You feel like a
useless person because you don’t understand them.” Jose continued, “…and when you tried to use English that didn’t work either, I say, the language crash over there.”

Much like Jose, Suresh also argues that some non-bilingual NES usually have problems in explaining the meanings of words for newcomers, and Suresh indicated that they sometimes are not necessarily interested in modifying their language choices or ways of speaking to accommodate a newcomer’s ignorance. Jose’s use of the ‘open your brain to think’ expression is particularly interesting in this context because it implies a struggle to haul out a method for understanding. More than just “figuring out” what to do, the task of engineering a means for communicating can feel like urgent and hard work. And just digging up a method isn’t enough, it is necessary to “carry” it, for as long as it works. Sometimes workers come up with solutions that function well, and the burden is ultimately diminished as people learn, share, and distribute these semiotic resources, adopting them for their own purposes. But it can be an uphill climb where the weight and pressure of this “necessity to understand” is deeply felt. In the process, workers may falter, particularly in moments where miscommunications have real and potentially violent implications.

In some cases, the necessity to understand is not just motivated by the desire to do one’s job and earn money, or build friendly relations with the other members in the workplace, but to avoid verbal abuse in the form of harsh scolding and reprimanding that may arise from such misunderstandings. When there is misunderstanding, workers may
become infuriated, and many other problems may arise, such as: employers and other employees may get involved in the conflict, the work flow might be disrupted, work performance may become worse, guests may not receive proper attention and service, etc.).

Sami, a room cleaner from Ethiopia said that, “sometimes there are days when others wanted to irritate you”. Sami also added that the action of irritating others does not always occur verbally; a “clash” of languages is not always an audible clash. Sometimes workers described how a brief exchange of a look or gesture would create negative feelings and tension between workers. The “unspoken” or “silent” dimensions of interaction are important to consider as well, because people communicate a great deal without words, using their bodies to establish boundaries and transmit messages about social relationships and norms of interaction.

Some workers shared with me how they experienced being “moved around” to other work stations if they are perceived as “incompetent” as a result of miscommunications. If the NES superiors are unsatisfied with a newcomer’s performance, they will move workers to other positions that require less verbal interaction to complete the work tasks. For example, Carlos, who currently worked at the chute found it difficult to communicate with guests and keep up communicating through the radios during his former position as a runner. As a newcomer, he was quiet because at that time the executive housekeepers were mostly NES and they spoke almost in English
all the time, they only spoke English and it is hard for a newcomer like him to handle the tasks that sometimes involve talking to the team members across departments. He believes that the NES interpreted his silence as incompetence. As a result, he was moved to the periphery of the workplace, and told to sort laundry items by himself instead.

“They saw I couldn’t do it, so they sent me to this room (chute), to sort laundry items so I don’t speak with people (guests).”

However, being moved to more solitary jobs does not necessarily mean that workers are not learning anything. While they may be silent or separated from “busier” communicative spaces, workers still develop a great deal of awareness about their environments. Carlos and his coworker, Suresh, eventually learned to speak English solo, by themselves, including asking questions about what things mean). As Suresh is also a NNES, they tried to figure out how to make sense of the language spoken in the workplace by listening to others and occasionally seek for help from others. When newcomers don’t have a person close by to explain what to do, they often seek the advice of other workers by asking questions like (how do you do this, what is the name of that thing, what is the English/Spanish saying, where can I find X?).

Thus, constantly asking questions is a learning strategy that should not be underestimated. Not only does it help workers figure out their jobs in the workplace, it also helps newcomers in the United States in general transition into completely foreign environments. Seeking answers and advice by asking people is a strategy used by all of
my study participants to do things like find a job, find housing, figure out how to use transportation, how to understand people who don’t speak the same language, etc. Often times, asking too many questions can be irritating for others and it may cause problems.

Angelica, a turndown attendant, explained the importance of *preguntando* (asking) when he first arrived to Columbus, and how his constant questioning eventually enabled her to get a better position at her current job at Brighton as she worked as a room cleaner for a few years. Her constant questions also lead her to her future job as a pastry chef. In one of our ‘locker room conversations’ she explained:

*Angelica*: When first came to Columbus I asked about how to get a job to my father’s friends because I need money. I got a job as a room cleaner, then I asked questions about how to do other things to a lot of people at work. They sometimes were mad so asking too many questions is not good sometimes but I keep asking questions. I asked questions to guests, even though I don’t understand when they answer, I keep on asking more questions. The manager said that I am friendly and I have new task as a turndown attendant. *I learn a lot because I ask questions* and they give answers. That’s how I learn.

*Ani*: What do you mean asking too many questions is not good?

*Angelica*: I mean for example when I asked to the manager, sometimes, he is very busy so he asked a housekeeper to show me what to do, or the manager
ask me to figure it out by myself. But, I still ask myself, right, like, what do I do next, how do I do this...

Ani: Ah I get your point. You asked the questions in English all the time?

Angelica: In English and also in Spanish. In English is good because I can learn English too because I speak all the time.

Ani: That’s true. How did that helps you finding the new job though, I mean, the pastry cook, because housekeeping and um, culinary, they are both different. You know what I am saying?

Angelica: It’s because I like to cook and I like sweet food (laughter). I asked everytime I go to buy sweet to the person who cook, and I ask for the recipes or I go to see the recipes online and make the cakes or cookies. So, when I asked the lady manager at the pastry store, she maybe knows that I am interested in cooking pastry so much so she interviewed me. I can communicate in English well too. So, she invited me to cook one day and she said, I can work.

Asking about things is thus a very important strategy for any newcomer who wants to learn and understand new settings and the expectations contained in these settings.

Asking also involves knowing whom to ask, how to ask, and what to ask. Angelica’s problem in ‘asking too many questions’ which is often times problematic for others, demonstrates that there are rules and limits to this strategy. Asking questions to people
with experience and authority can be a daunting process, and sometimes it is discouraged by employers and others who believe workers should just watch how something is done and memorize it on the spot to avoid redundant explanations. Just as the immigrant workers from different native language backgrounds teach each other new ways of speaking, they can also teach each other how and when to accommodate others.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented some elaboration on how the workers handle the challenges resulting from language barriers that have discouraged them in interacting with others in the workplace. I discussed how the immigrant workers create ‘same language, same ethnicity’ communicative culture is particularly discussed in the next chapter, followed by how they develop learning strategies on how to overcome language barriers. Some of the instances of how to handle the challenges resulting from problems with language barriers was by accommodating others in interaction, including the use of code-switching. The workers’ journey of using and learning languages at the workplace were also illustrated in how they teach each other, especially the new comers on how to ‘dominate the language’ and the use of ‘accommodation/silence’ during the early stages of their careers, such as during the job hunting events.
Chapter 7: Educative Moments from Workplace Conversations: An Analysis of Immigrant Workers’ Language Use and Learning

In chapter 6 I presented how the workers handle the challenges resulting from language barriers that have discouraged them in interacting with others in the workplace, for instance by creating a fluid community that can accommodate them based on their sociocultural backgrounds as a networking media where they could share and consult with each other about the work and life related experiences. I also discussed how the immigrant workers actively learn the workplace language and orders by asking questions, accommodating others/being silent, and teaching each other languages.

Throughout this process, I also interweave how the findings approximate or move away from extant interdisciplinary research and theory. In this chapter, I am interested in how the workers create the ‘mixed language’ the language varieties that emerge from the workers’ contact at the workplace, that I witnessed during my roles as a worker and participant observer. I will present language glossaries, or vocabulary lists created by some of my study participants. I demonstrate the kinds of language a group of workers from different language backgrounds develop during their time working at the hotel, and the strategies they use to achieve mutual intelligibility with the resources they have.

A. Making Sense of Workplace Multilingual Interactions: Creating Basura de Lenguas (Language Trash)

For this study, I use Jack’s term basura de lenguas (a trash of languages/mixed
language trash) as a way to describe the language mixing that goes on at work. This term is appropriate because it comes from a worker who is experienced in mixing Spanish and English (and sometimes another language such as Arabic and French) on a daily basis to accommodate others at the workplace. His term also incorporates the term “trash,” a reference to his own daily work as a houseman, taking trash from the rooms at the hotel. Jack and his housemen coworkers viewed trash as something valuable as they said, “we thank trash because of trash we have a job”. Basura de lenguas demonstrates how ways of talking (and ways of describing this talk) about work language emerge from the activities and materials of the workplace. Jack shared with me how he communicated with others using his mix of Spanish and English:

At work I use mostly Spanish and English, and now I mix with Arabic to talk with my friends, I mix the languages to play with them I say “How are you” [in Arabic] and they say “what?!” (in Spanish) and I tell them, “I said, how are you” (in English).

When asked how non-Spanish speakers speak with him at work, Jack describes the process of exchange and mixing of languages, depending on the language resources other workers have:

The Spanish [speaking] people of course speak with me in Spanish, and this is easy because well, my language. The people who don’t speak Spanish? Also sometimes Spanish but a little and English because we know English and the
Arabia [Somalian] girls and some man, I learn just a little bit Arabic like ‘how are you’ ‘thank you’, come here’, ‘no’, ‘yes’. Sometimes I feel like I know what they say because they have the face and they use hands. And they also learn Spanish, and I learn their words, it’s like trash because from a lot of different colors and things.

Jack’s playful approach to language includes teaching Spanish words using English to non-Spanish speakers which creates instructive moments of confusion with his coworkers, who ask Jack in Spanish or Arabic for clarification, which he provides (in English). At his workplace, close relations among workers help this language mixing flourish. Through the learning process, Jack’s language mix becomes his ownership. Not only do various workers deploy their own language mix to communicate, they also “pick up” resources on the way, re-appropriate them, and use them in personally meaningful ways. As these languages become one’s own, they are incorporated into expanding repertoires, shaping new ways of speaking. Isaura, a lobby attendant also explains how he frequently practices mixing languages at work:

*Ani:* Have you learned some new words [in other languages]?

*Isaura:* Yes, I learned some words, from many languages because I speak with different people.

*Ani:* Have you learned anything at work that you like to do?

*Isaura:* Oh yes, you know, before, I was a room cleaner, then the manager asked
me to work as lobby attendant. I like it so much.

Ani: What do you like about it? How is it different from your former position?

Isaura: Well, different because the place different. I learn many things in room, pillow, shampoo, cups, blanket, um soap (in Spanish). But now, a lot of them more mix with something else, I learn mostly in English, there at the gym, a lot of things, treadmill, working out, and swimming pool thing, a lot, restaurant, I learn more some English words and I say it everyday many times so when I hear it on the radio I will know it.

For Isaura and Jack, practicing language with non-Spanish speakers is intertwined with their works. While working on their daily tasks they have encountered new words and phrases that helped them finding new ways of doing things. This also helped them function better at the workplace. Jack and Isaura felt familiar enough with some English words that they feel comfortable to pronounce them and use them in communicating with NES. They also accustomed of mixing the words from different languages in their daily conversation at the workplace to accommodate their speaking partners.

1. Learning New Words at Work

The work of Kalmar (2001) that presented a strategy of NNES in learning English at the farm by appropriating and negotiating how to pronounce and make sense of some new English words through ‘words matching game’ has particularly inspired me to
conduct a simple research replication with different strategies. I asked the participants in my study to volunteer making glossary lists of some words from another language they learned at the workplace. In the following section, I present on some workers who were willing to share their writing and language experiences with me, in their own ways, in the particular moments they found themselves able to communicate in the workplace. In order to gather a sense of what the workers know about what and how others, especially among those who are rarely heard, speaking it, language glossaries were an interesting method of discovery. Tomas Kalmar’s *Illegal Alphabets and Adult Biliteracy: Latino Migrants Crossing the Linguistic Border* (2001) stands as one of the only works that presents language “glossaries” or vocabulary lists created by Latino immigrant workers in the United States. In their attempt to speak English, Mexican farm workers in Cobden, Illinois played a language “game” of matching unfamiliar English sounds with familiar Spanish sounds to produce hybrid words, written in the Latin alphabet, which are neither one language or another, but a “grey no-man's land” (2001, p. 3) of language. Kalmar also notes how this practice of translating and figuring out new languages using one’s own languages is a game that has been played by anthropologists, language scholars, philosophers, missionaries, and many others.

The grey space is what language scholars have called “contact varieties,” “jargons,” or even “pre-pidgins.” Whatever the name, the phenomena is the same: people of different geographical origins coming together for a sustained period of time and
figuring out how to communicate with each other, exchanging and mixing their verbal and nonverbal communicative resources in novel ways. Some words in the glossaries seem to exist in a place that Kalmar calls the “no-man’s land” in between languages. These are words that originated in the approximation of known sounds, (much like ‘juellulib’ and ‘dolodasnt’ in Kalmar) but which do not seem to correspond with or originate from any particular language.

There were six participants created glossary list in English and Spanish and only one of them was involved in the interview, three of them are Spanish speakers. This made me happy because I was initially curious about how the workers with limited English ability learned words and phrases, made sense of them, and used them in communicating with others in the workplace. Therefore, I expected that my non-interview participants would be willing to create the list. It was interesting and confusing at the same time to see that there were words that were neither English nor Spanish in their lists. I Googled some of them but was still unable to find the meanings. I decided to ask one of the Spanish-speaking supervisors, Roberto, to help me identify and examine these strange words. I asked him to take a look at the terms on the list and identify words that did not seem to correspond with any known Spanish word, but which had been identified by non-Spanish-speaking housekeepers as examples of Spanish terms. I was wondering where did those terms come from? For example, Roberto frowned when I gave him the word ‘culo’, as in Spanish, this word means “ass”. However, he also added
that in some Latin American countries, this word has different connotations. He could not explain why the word appeared on Alberto’s list of English terms, since it might sound like both Spanish (culo) and English (cool) word, and we predicted that Alberto was familiar to this word because he is a very playful person who might use the word “cool” or “culo” frequently when interacting with others. When I asked Alberto where the word “culo” came from, and why it appeared on her glossary list under “English” terms, he could not exactly recall or remember where the word originated. He simply remembers using the word and being (seemingly) understood by others about its meaning. There were several mysterious words, according to Roberto, principally because they did not resemble English or Spanish on paper, and as a Spanish speaker Roberto said that he was definitely outsider to the context where the words had achieved local validity (within a CoP at the housekeeping group). Without Sami there to pronounce and explain the meaning of her particular Spanish vocabulary, for instance, Roberto was unable to understand words derived from his own native language.

These words included in the following glossaries were never taught to workers in school. Workers acquired these words through their interactions with others at the workplace. These lists are examples of how NNES hear and interpret their sounds, but they are much more complicated than that. When talking about these lists, many workers are shy and become hesitant to assert their knowledge of the language. Some claim they did much of this learning on their own, while others viewed their coworkers as the
primary source of their language learning. They did not go to school to learn these words, and a ‘formal’ teacher was never in charge of correcting or making sure they were “right.” Thus many workers convey a sense of apprehension about whether or not their knowledge is “good enough.” Also, the words are derived directly from their workplace interactions which may not have always been positive. They may have liked talking to their coworkers, but hated their jobs and their boss. They have mixed feelings about the workplace, just like most other employed human beings.

The glossaries were written by six different immigrant workers in Brighton. Three glossaries were written by non-Spanish speaking workers (Ahmed, Sami, and Suresh). Ahmed is an African immigrant from Nigeria who migrated to Egypt, who then migrated to the U.S. Ahmed never attended school but he said he knew how to read in Arabic. Sami is from Ethiopia and she attended elementary school in Ethiopia, while Suresh is my interview participant from Nepal that finished second grade of elementary school. The Spanish-speaking workers are Jessica, Mariana, and Alberto, all are Mexicans who attended elementary school in Mexico. All workers who wrote these glossaries admitted that they have problems in communicating in English at the workplace. The lists are not exhaustive and they do not represent the entirety of Spanish-speakers’ English language repertoires or non-Spanish speakers’ Spanish and English language repertoires. These glossaries were prepared individually by the workers and given to me as samples of their knowledge, all based on how they ‘romanized’ the words/phrases.
a. Samples of English Glossaries from the Spanish-Speaking Workers (See glossary lists in Appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Mariana</th>
<th>Alberto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Klien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sof</td>
<td>Oholo</td>
<td>Guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japi</td>
<td>Cofi</td>
<td>Homeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Telefon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cofi</td>
<td>Finis</td>
<td>Okey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chikin</td>
<td>Telefono</td>
<td>Luncho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreyse</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
<td>Dota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no guud</td>
<td>Ohmygad</td>
<td>Faesbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakumklinir</td>
<td>Blaket</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ves</td>
<td>Isgud?</td>
<td>Culo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toile</td>
<td>Kar</td>
<td>Piorofo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sop</td>
<td>Tirid</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirid</td>
<td>Clas</td>
<td>Meskyn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Samples of Spanish and English Glossaries from the non-Spanish Speaking Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahmed</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>Suresh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drash</td>
<td>Basura</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helo</td>
<td>Helo</td>
<td>See you later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay?</td>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>Room guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heppy</td>
<td>Nono</td>
<td>Okey?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Felis</td>
<td>Kofe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocola</td>
<td>Fenito</td>
<td>Goodbye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krazi</td>
<td>Loko</td>
<td>Finis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbuy</td>
<td>Mi uno</td>
<td>Sodo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toayas</td>
<td>Gues</td>
<td>Jabun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sampuu</td>
<td>Limpio</td>
<td>Ask</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mucaca | No tengo |
### c. Terms that Appeared More than Once in Different Glossary Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Mariana</th>
<th>Alberto</th>
<th>Ahmed</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>Suresh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(it’s) okay</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>It’s okey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>Kreyse</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
<td>Krazi/Loko</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>crazy/loco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goodbuy</td>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td></td>
<td>Klein</td>
<td></td>
<td>Limpio</td>
<td>Limpia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Me finis</td>
<td>Fenito</td>
<td>Finiso</td>
<td>Finish/finite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>Coca</td>
<td>Soda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sodo</td>
<td>Refreco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh my god</td>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Japi</td>
<td>Kofi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest</td>
<td>(room)</td>
<td>guest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Chikin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Polo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dras/basura</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Ola</td>
<td>Oholo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Telefon</td>
<td>Telefon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Heppy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some words and phrases appear multiple times in different lists, showing the workers’ familiarity with them. For example the terms “hello”, “goodbye”, “finish”, “coffee”, “soda”, “chicken”, “crazy”, “guest”, “it’s okay”, “how are you”, “not good”, “very good” are words and phrases that appear more than once in the workers’ lists.

Sometimes the workers agreed on the phonetic pronunciation of English or Spanish word: for example, the English phrase “oh my God” is written as “omayga” by both Jessica and Mariana, who work in different positions at the housekeeping group and rarely met with each other as Jessica worked for overnight shift at the hotel, while Mariana is a room cleaner who work at the morning shift. Almost everyone has an agreement on how to pronounce “okay” as “okey” or “oke” except for Ahmed who pronounce it as “okay”.

Other words do not have perfect agreement across the lists. For example, all of the workers have different way to pronounce “crazy” as “greisi”, “kreyse”, and “krazi”. Likewise, there are also various ways of workers to pronounce Spanish word “finito” (finish) as “finis”, “finite”, “fenito”. I also noticed difference for at least two participants in pronouncing the phrase “and you?” which should be translated in Spanish as “Y tu” (informal) and “Y usted” (formal). The former version is appropriate when speaking with a friend or a person of equal age. Thus Sami may be illustrating her familiarity with Spanish speakers by choosing to write down the informal version of greeting. This is not because she doesn’t know the formal version but simply that she feels more comfortable in pronouncing “Y tu?” instead of “Y usted?” at works as she usually interacted with her
Spanish speaking coworkers in Spanish and the supervisors and managers in English.

In some places, the workers show knowledge of the differences between casual and formal versions of a word. For example, Suresh writes the phrases “How are you” (English/formal) and “Qué pasa” [What’s up? Or what’s going on?/Spanish/casual] which is used in conversation with coworkers of similar age and status (as seen in the elevator landing conversation at the last section of this chapter). Some words only differ slightly, by one or two letters, such as the term “okay,” which is spelled “okay” and “okey,” the term “loco” which is represented as “loko” and “loco,” or “bueno [good]” which is written “wueno” versus “bueno”, as with “good” that is spelled as “gud” and “god” and “gut”. As with previous words with /t/ in final position, some workers also identified /t/ in initial position and final position interchangeably with /d/ as they spelled “trash” as “dras” and “tras”, maybe because the voiced /d/ and voiceless /t/ might sound identical for some of them. Some Spanish words differ slightly by one or two letters based on the way they are pronounced. For example some workers spelled the word “towel” as “toalla” and “toay”, “pollo” [chicken] as “pollo” and “poyo”. Likewise, some Spanish speakers swap /p/ sound for /f/ in writing some English words such as “teéfono” for “telephone” and “sof” for “soap”. There are also words originated possibly from another language in the lists under the English word category, such as culo, and meskyn.

Some of the terms on the glossaries fit into the categories of “love and
compliments,” (I love you, very good, bueno) “greetings,” (hello/hola/ola) “declaratives” (declarations or statements like ‘I’m tired’, ‘mucho trabajo’), “insults and jokes” (fat, monkey, crazy), “food and beverage” (soda, milk, taco, chicken/pollo), and “address terms” (guest, friend, amiga/amigo, señor, senorita). Differences in the kinds of terms that appear in each glossary are most likely a result of who the worker interacts with on a daily basis. Working on the floors versus working in the lobby areas in a kitchen versus working will produce different kinds of knowledge that are reflected on the glossaries. Jose, Ruben, and Suresh are the example of workers that have the most positive and friendly relations with others from different language backgrounds at the workplace. They express a “meta-awareness” of their language use, by actively playing, transforming, and explaining the nuances of different English and Spanish words they use on a daily basis. Thus, even a worker who are always have less direct contact with others because of the isolated work station, such as Suresh who work by himself at the chute are still actually surrounded by the sounds of English and Spanish all day, and can easily produce a glossary list of terms based on this indirect style of learning. Suresh and Jose also both included almost similar section in their glossary lists as ‘mixed words’ and ‘scrambled words’ which they explained as combinations between English and Spanish that are usually used by their coworkers from different language backgrounds. (see Appendices). According to Blommaert (2010), these combinations of “fragmented” (2010, p. 8) bits of highly context specific local language varieties form part of the
“multilingual repertoires” (2010, p. 102) of immigrants in globalized neighborhoods, where people of diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds frequently interact. The housekeepers have invented these improvised words that are useful for communication and draw on familiar language resources. For example, Suresh told me that Spanish speakers like to add the “o” sound at the end of some English words because “o” is a common ending in Spanish. Suresh’s observation correlates with other some of his Spanish-speaking coworkers’ explanations, such as Ruben, who claims that he frequently ends words (especially words ending in consonants) with “o” to help her pronounce the words easily. Several words in the workers’ list combine English with an “o” ending (lunch-o, cekout-o [check out-o], komprend-o [comprehend-o], culo [cool-o]). These examples are also “estimations” of English pronunciations; the workers use English to convey Spanish and English sounds as closely as possible, forming new, improvised words.

d. Additional Notes on Glossaries

After observing and examining the glossary lists, I would like to add some additional notes regarding the immigrant workers’ knowledge on other languages spoken in the workplace. Based on the glossaries they created, it showed that the immigrant workers were able to demonstrate their ability by:
• Their understanding of Spanish and English words
• Using English and Spanish or mixing both on a daily basis
• Identifying phrases used in formal and informal/casual interaction
• Demonstrating respect for status by using proper address terms
• Making use of words that are common in their environment; words are connected to tasks distribution
• Developing more than a strictly work-based relationship with others, playing and joking in other languages
• Mixing, transforming words and sounds; identifying mixed or new words
• Showing meta-pragmatic awareness of their language use and explaining others’ language styles
• Identifying different styles spoken Spanish or English (for example, different in honorifics, age, gender, etc.)
• Communicating with others using their version of spelling/pronouncing words (e.g., both Spanish and non-Spanish speaking workers use the words “cekouto” and “luncho” and both have agreement and understanding with regards to their pronunciation and meaning)
• Developing their knowledge of Spanish and English (and other languages) with time and experience in the workplace.
2. Connections between Language and Work’s Activities

For those who may believe that immigrant workers and English language learners are disabled by their language inabilities, the proof of human creativity is all around, in the basic and everyday facts of life. Rooms are neatly organized and cleaned, equipped with carefully organized amenities for beddings, bathrooms, pantries. Housekeepers also sometimes furnish certain rooms with electronic/digital equipment such as thermostats, radio-alarms, air conditioner, and room warmer with English manuals. These equipment sometimes need to be regularly checked and maintained too. A lot more details were also found in the entire hotel’s public areas where the housekeepers make sure that all facilities ranging from pool, gym, restrooms, auditorium/meeting rooms, hallways, are functioning properly. These multi-detailed arrangements are prepared and organized by humans who are paid to do so. As they carry out their task and interact with other people, tools, and materials, they develop a way of talking about their work. They communicate through their work and about their work. And sometimes their work communicates to them and through their language. This, according to Li (2000) shows double socialization on the job where the housekeepers are socialized through the unique work-related cultural practices involved (such as how and where to place the bathroom amenities, how to make the bed, how to fold blankets, and how pillows are arranged, etc.) and how linguistically those tasks are communicated (for VIP guests, use different towels and soap, if the room has a DND sign, don’t knock on the door, etc.). A bar of soap, for example, can
communicate many things, depending on the context and one’s relationship to the item. For a room cleaner in charge of cleaning and refreshing the rooms, soap comes in different shape, colors, packages, and functions, for instance, there is a soap bar for shower and face wash that need to be placed in different areas and arrangement according to the room standard. There are also different soaps for different type of rooms, for instance, presidential suites use different soap brands, with different colors and packages. Likewise, for the housemen, their knowledge of the type of soap are also required since they need to restock these amenities for different room types (for example, presidential suites use different type of soap, and therefore they have to provide this type of soap in the upper floor closets where the suites are located). For the executive housekeepers, for example, considering different hotels used different type of soap, they might conduct a constant research involving the guests’ comments to make sure that soap including brand choices is satisfactory for the customers. For others, there might be more complicated knowledge of soap involved includes what particular soap is suitable for sensitive skin, what soap is suggested for people who love sport, etc.

The relationship is further complicated when work entails objects that are unfamiliar and with which the worker has limited or no previous experience. Instead of soap bars, workers may handle, cleaning materials and tools, including chemical products. You can ask most any housekeepers in Brighton, and they will describe it in a variety of tools and how and where to use them and with what particular tools and
materials they are also associated with. The more interaction workers have with the object, the stronger their associations and the more expressive their vocabularies. The relation to the object and the relations the object enables, change, as the workers handle, utilize, organize, share, discard, and talk about it, and even banter on the tools with others. Cleaning materials become the most important part of the site. Everywhere I have observed, workers are always touching, organizing, sharing, exchanging, bantering, discarding, carrying, fixing, talking about cleaning tools. Even the executive housekeepers and room inspectors always carry rags and sanitizing chemical, roller, or air freshener when walk in the hotel area to do some inspection activities as they also make sure that they fix whatever that might be left behind by the housekeepers.

There are hundreds of cleaning tools and products, ranging from the tiny magic eraser to huge machine such as carpet shampooing machine and fork lift used by the housekeepers in cleaning, organizing, and refreshing activities every day and products such as room amenities: bedding, bathroom, and pantry amenities. Housekeepers from all positions have their specific tools for their specific tasks. Most of the time they also share, distribute, or exchange the materials with others. These materials are distributed by some outside companies and some workers in the hotel organize, restock, and utilize them. They can be in the housekeeping areas, the hallways, the office, the storage, the floor closets. Each room cleaners have their own carts filled with cleaning tools and materials, lobby attendants push their smaller carts loaded with tools and products such as
toilet paper, hand soap, towels, sanitizing wipes, etc to the hallways and public places, and share with their partners as only one lobby attendant usually push a cart. When I carry out my task, I organize the cleaning tools and materials based on the tasks I have on that day. For instance, when I clean the fitness center and swimming pool, I carry sanitizer, vacuum cleaner, duster, and glass cleaner, disposable water cups, and towels. When I clean restrooms, I add bathroom cleaning kits and a lot of toilet papers to my cart.

The cleaning products and equipment, and my own work (as a housekeeper and an observer) have allowed me to encounter new moments where I have come into contact with unfamiliar things of which I could make sense. The more and more workers carry out duties in different areas and interact with those products, I realized that almost every corner of the space has a potential for teaching people something new. There are countless opportunities for learning in these environments, and learning moments are happening all the time. One simply has to stop and look, touch, taste, feel, listen, and relate to make sense of things.

There are many who would argue that these spaces of learning and moments of learning are insignificant, given the larger and “more important” problems immigrants (and the politicians who have a say in the lives of these immigrants) confront on a daily basis. The point of this ethnography of communication in a multilingual workplace is not to say that those things don’t matter. It’s about providing a different account of the stuff people say and do with each other that matters to them in those very moments of their
lives. Focusing on “immigrants' problems” can itself be problematic, because it makes problems out of people instead of looking at how people themselves come up with solutions or even new spaces of participation that have evaded the “immigrant problem” debate or broader discourse. But the learning moments are real and the tasks they carry out have impact on others.

Education at work is desired and encouraged (whether or not for exploitative purposes, is a different issue). The constraints on the educative moment offer openings and opportunities to relate to the activities of everyday life in different ways. They lend complexity to our language, thus changing language at the same time. Workers transform language, sometimes because they need to (for instance: Raquel has a problem in understanding English instructions and it might take her 30 minutes to figure out an instruction in English and implement it in her tasks, therefore, the Spanish speaking supervisor needs to give her the instruction so she can handle the task that she can accomplish in 5 minutes), and other times because they want to. For example, Jose, a Mexican housekeeper who is labelled as a ‘trouble maker’ likes to tease Latino newcomers at work by using English words they don't understand. He teases them by calling them ‘fat monkey’, ‘gorrilla’, ‘cactus’ or ‘some Latina-sounding names such as ‘La Quinta’, ‘Conchita’ to address male housekeepers in front of his coworkers, some of whom are non-Spanish speakers. Jose deliberately makes Latinos feel like outsiders by insulting Latino newcomers using English words with his coworkers. It is not particularly
clear why Jose positions fellow Latino coworkers as outsiders (there could be multiple reasons). Yet he uses English to communicate with workers and assert his position. During these work encounters, Jose picks up and distributes new language resources related to objects, people, and activities of his everyday life in playful ways.

This evolving language use is distributed among participants in situated contexts. We move and learn through and with language. Language orients us and we orient language. And sometimes, when we have the opportunity to work closely with others who are doing similar “orienting” work, the overlaps and potentialities of these new expressive forms unfold.

3. Conversation in Workplace: Planning a Weekend Trip

In the previous section, I discussed how immigrant workers make sense of their workplace environments together using available materials such as housekeeping materials and glossary lists. I demonstrated how they exchange and mix language resources in the process of this sense-making. I have argued that the more we observe people in their concerted efforts to orient each other, the more we can understand what language teaches us, and how people use language to teach each other. In this section, I continue to expand on this argument by demonstrating the strategies the housekeepers use to work and plan activities together, deepening and transforming their relationships in the process. I will discuss how a group consists of Spanish and non-Spanish speaking housekeepers use various language resources to make a plan for a trip to the mall during
their work time.

I present a multilingual workplace conversation in which participants are trying to figure out whose car they are going to drive or what transportation they are going to use, who will pay for the gasoline, what restaurant to go to when they are hungry, who will be responsible for paying the bill, what time of the day/week they should go, what food they should eat, who should be invited, what the spending limit should be, and who should be in charge of calling coworkers who are invited to the trip. Their group can be considered a community of practice in the housekeeping department, working together to prepare for a trip, and instructing each other at various points on the order of events and what roles each member should play in the planning process.

I have divided the conversation into several parts, to illustrate how the workers arrive at new conclusions together by instructing, questioning, and positioning each other in different ways using specific communicative strategies and linguistic resources to do so. The principle interlocutors are Jose, Ruben, and Suresh; Gabby enters the conversation sporadically. Jose and Ruben are Mexican immigrants, Jose is in his early twenties, while Ruben is twice of his age. Jose has worked in three different hotels and he has worked since when he was 15 years old as a housekeeper and is the most experienced housekeeper in the group. Jose and Ruben are ‘buddies’ and they have worked with the same staffing agency for approximately 7 years, and Ruben was the one who introduced Jose to the staffing agency where they work together ever since. In the hotel especially
within the housekeeping department, Ruben is considered a ‘senior housekeeper’, not only by the age, but also by his more than 20 years of experience as a housekeeper and his expertise in housekeeping tasks. Suresh is an immigrant refugee from Nepal who is also an experienced housekeeper at the hotel, as he develops labelling for housekeeping facilities and tools. Gabby, a Polish immigrant who has lived in the U.S. for over 10 years and she works at the hotel as a part time housekeeper because she also has another job in another hotel. Gabby has started saving some funds to further her education as she wants to study in a local community college in downtown area to reach her dream job in a pharmacy field. These workers, even though they have different positions at the housekeeping department, always meet with each other in a group gathering once a week to hang out in a group on a weekly basis. They usually go out together for dinner to the local restaurants, to the casino, or just to the nearby café to spend their day off.

I chose to analyze this conversation because, even though I was present during the event (as an observer and a coworker) I was not able to record the conversation due the restriction from the hotel management regarding in which areas I was allowed to carry out audio recording activities. This conversation took place at the elevator landing when some housekeepers occasionally met with each other on the job. Jose recorded it using his iPhone as he said he wanted to capture an ordinary conversation with workers to share with me, and he chose the topic of planning for a trip because he said it was what they normally do to get his coworkers involved in the hanging out activities. It is not
surprising that he chose to talk about spending time together with friends during this recording since he and Ruben have two jobs, and going out or relaxing will be a good thing to do to keep them energized. When these housekeepers get together, they usually do some activities such as eating out, strolling around the city, or cooking out. During the conversation, these coworkers tease each other about being dingdong (silly, foolish), and try to negotiate how they are going to finance the trip (paying for the gasoline and food), to find out who is being culo (cool) and who is actually meskyn (poor/cheap). As they make plans together, they position each other according to who is more ‘meskyn’ and who is being ‘culo’ to actually have the most money to cover their one day hanging out trip. When the group go out, usually one person pays for everything in advance and everybody else give their shares the next day after they calculated all the money spent for the event. The conversation participants instruct one another about who paid the previous dinner bill, who has the most expensive apartment to pay, who can afford their phone bill, and who is trying to devise strategies for keeping the dinner bill down (invite more people, share the meat). While playfully assessing each other, they are also assigning responsibility for the bill according to who makes the more convincing case for not having financial resources (while not appearing too meskyn at the same time).

They each present their “cases” and suggestions, and move forward with plans by taking each other’s statements into consideration and devising strategies to avoid being responsible for paying the entire bill. Joking and addressing each other in tactful and
acceptable ways, making a case for oneself, and successfully negotiating competing interests, are all skills and strategies learned with experience and time. Not all workers can successfully organize and lead an event while also passing along the responsibility for the whole bill to someone else. For the system to work in a fair way, workers carefully keep track of who assumed responsibility for the bill in the past, and who is owed a meal in return, as a sign of balanced reciprocity.

a. Pre-Trip Rehearsal: Educative Lessons from a Multilingual Group

Conversation

29 Suresh : Senor Ruben you pay next? Me already one.

30 Jose : si, me only drink water (laughter) never eat

31 Suresh : Gabby? You?...Jose mucho cheap (laughter)(Gabby was there but she didn’t say nothing)

32 Jose : me no eat too much, yeah but is good. Pizza, pollo…pizza, chicken wings, lito burger...

33 Ruben : what? You dingdong too much food? But chicken pizza no good, I don’t want to pay (laughter), you eat too much, you make me meskyn

35 Suresh : you meskyn, you so much cheap, too much cheap. You no culo

36 Jose : Senor Ruben don’t be too much cheap, me help, ahhh but no dinero this week paying the bill...(laughter). Oh shit shit shit, me meskyn now.

38 Ruben : its culo Jose, I drive my car. Me no have gasoline. My car
meskyn (laughter). No my car very hungry. Gabby come with us? You pay gasoline.

40 Jose : No Ruben we don’t tell a girl to pay, no (laughter). You too much cheap.

41 Gabby : Ah gracias senor (laughter)

In the first part of this conversation, Suresh uses the English phrase “you pay?” to ask Ruben if he is going to pay for the hanging out they are planning, as he said he has paid for the group in the previous trip. He uses the term ‘senor’ to address Ruben, possibly because Suresh wants to address an older coworker appropriately, or he wants to ‘bribe’ his coworker to finance the trip. Since there is no response from Ruben, Jose chimes in and says that in the previous outing he only drank water (he did this trick so nobody is going to ask him to pay). Sensing Jose’s trick, Suresh instructs Gabby to pay instead, by saying ‘Jose mucho cheap’ combining English and Spanish words. Jose defends himself by saying ‘me no eat too much’, but, using English and Spanish words he accidentally mentions that he ate chicken pizza, chicken wings and sliders that has made Ruben laughed and he says that he doesn’t want to pay for the next trip (or the previous trip) because the chicken pizza was not good and Jose actually ate a lot or being a dingdong (silly, stupid, fool) person. Ruben said that Jose has made him ‘meskyn’. This particular term [meskyn] rings the bell in my head as I remember one of the workers wrote this word in the glossary list, under the English term. I asked Jose who helped me with the
transcription on how to spell the word and he scribbled the word for me: meskyn. As I suspected that this mysterious word is neither English nor Spanish, I crosschecked with Ruben about how he came up with this word, he said that this word has been popular among the housekeepers in some major hotels in Columbus and actually Gabby was the one to introduce this word to everyone at Brighton. Then he also explained to me that he learned this word when he worked with a group of Somalian housekeepers in another hotel. When I traced this word in a dictionary this word is originated from Arabic مسكين (miskeen), meaning, poor or unfortunate. In the process of improvising this word, the housekeepers created the Romanized form [meskyn] and attached another meaning to the word: cheap. Learning from Kalmar’s work (2001), this strategy of Romanizing words showed the ways workers put together sounds and played with alphabet to communicate and participate in activities with coworkers from the same CoP.

Being labelled as ‘cheap’ Jose begs Ruben to pay and don’t behave like a ‘meskyn’ person, just like him as he is broke because of paying bills. Ruben then says that he can drive his car but he jokingly says that the gasoline is empty, by assigning a new meaning to the word ‘meskyn’ with: empty or hungry. Then he asks whether their friend Gabby is joining them in the trip and wonders if she can pay for the gasoline. This time, Suresh, without the honorific term ‘senor’ says to Ruben that he is cheap to let a girl pay for the gasoline. They also use the term ‘culo’, an improvised English word ‘cool plus o’, that means ‘trendy’ or ‘good’. In Spanish, Gabby thanked Suresh by using the honorific
term to express her gratitude. Ruben feels challenged so he finally agrees to pay the gasoline, then he jokingly says that he is the big boss and he asks the group to mention what kind of food they want to eat.

42 Ruben : Okay me the big boss very rich, I pay my apartment and phone, now I pay for vacation, what do we eat? Restaurant? Please don’t eat cat like Suresh (laughter)

44 Gabby : oh my god, really Suresh you eat cat? Oh my god. No good. No eat cat please. I like cat. //Now I’m afraid (laughter)//


47 Ruben : Is true, Jose? Is true? People in Asia ... come la gatos? [my transcription]

48 Jose : I don’t know, ask to La China (laughter)

49 Suresh : she eat, me no (laughter), ok we go when? What phone you use, Ruben?
Me get in (___name of a store) and no good. You use what phone?

51 Ruben : Samsung um...AT&T, is no cheap

52 Suresh : no cheap? Tell me AT&T maybe I will buy

53 Jose : Ah, who you call, Suresh? You no need good phone just for call, if you need for. Facebook, you need

55 Suresh : yes, Facebook I need, ok what day we go?

The discussion about what food to eat seems to be distracted by Ruben’s joke that Asians
(referring to Suresh) generally eat cat. He is not sure about his source of knowledge and therefore he checks with Jose if he knows about it using English words but finishes his sentence in Spanish ‘people in Asia...come la gatos?’ probably he feels that the question he asks is something sensitive to others. Jose says that he doesn’t know and suggests him to ask La China, one of the Asian housekeepers in the hotel (which actually refers to me). Suresh jokingly says that La China eats cats, but he never does that, then he switches the topic of the conversation to what type of phone Ruben is using before directing the conversation back on the track of the trip planning. He initiates about the time of the trip, in which the group has agreed to go on Saturday morning. However, since Gabby will join them, they renegotiate the time into Sunday morning.

56  Suresh : Ok, I think what about Sunday morning? I cannot go Saturday late because I go with my wife to ah (.15) the Nepali gathering. Sunday morning?

58  Jose : oh no good, I go church on Sunday morning

59  Ruben : you go church? When? (laughter), cuando you bastard va a la iglesia? (laughter)

60  Gabby : (laughter) maybe he dreaming?

61  Suresh : I dreaming eating chicken wings. Sunday? por pavor people, I go back to laundry

62  Ruben : Gabby we go Sunday, we need a girl in group, Jose lazy wake up lazy on Sunday, cheap bastard (laughter)
The negotiation on when they should go doesn’t seem to run smoothly because Gabby is scheduled to work on Saturday first shift. As Suresh will not be able to go on late Saturday (housekeeping morning shift usually ends at around 4-5 in the afternoon) he suggests the group to go on Sunday. Again, Jose that seems to be the inhibitor in the conversation refuses to go on Sunday due to his ‘church’ schedule, that ignites Ruben’s sarcastic reaction to Jose in mixed English and Spanish ‘cuando you bastard va a la iglesia?’ (you go to church in your dream?) Gabby (possibly with her knowledge in Spanish) tried to save Jose’s face by saying that maybe he went to church in his dream. This phrase functions like a bait for Suresh to switch the conversation topic by saying that he is dreaming about eating chicken wings. Then, as a negotiator and initiator he asks the group to come up with the agreement to go on Sunday morning. Then he remembers that they haven’t decided on where to eat for lunch or brunch so he suggests everyone to pick a place. Suresh understands the bill can sometimes get too high and he is willing to eat a smaller meal to lessen the financial burden on Ruben. Even though Suresh concedes that a small meal would be okay with him, he is still suggesting that Ruben should pay the bill. Suresh’s clever strategy positions him as an understanding and considerate friend while still passing on responsibility for paying the bill. Ruben who will be responsible for paying for the bill sides with Suresh’s considerate money-saving strategy, and says ‘eating small is good’. Interestingly, by suggesting that he is content with the compromise, he is excluding himself from the responsibility of having to pay
huge amount of bill. Jose’s position as a ‘bad guy’ is apparent in the opening part of this
conversation. He accuses Ruben of being cheap, and suggests that he should be
responsible for the bill, while trying to find excuses so he will be saved from paying the
bill himself. Ruben then teases both Gabby and Jose (this time he adds an attribute as if
Jose is a girl, ‘Josefina’) to convince the group that actually he can afford the trip bills.
Suresh tries to settle the negotiation (his coworkers aren’t cheap after all: they will eat a
small dinner during the trip while Ruben will pay). He appears as a voice of reason,
summarizing everyone’s wishes in order to maintain order and come to a conclusion. It
seems that for the Latinos, being meskyn is a primary inhibit or to everyone getting along
and enjoying a fun dinner outside of work. The trip bill should be settled beforehand as a
sign of formality and acknowledgment of generosity. Suresh asks interlocutors in
English, and Spanish-English to confirm that they have no problem with the
arrangements discussed thus far:

64 Jose: Okay is good. Me eat poquito (a little bit) is good, no problem. You pay
mucho money not okay

65 Suresh: is okay, Jose. You eat is okay. No people meskyn, senor Ruben pay. I
give you

66 chicken wings (laughter). Is okay you no cheap, No problem, Ruben is culo?

67 Ruben: me no problem, we should enjoy restaurant and eat and go for walk at
mall, I go buy bra for (.10) Gabby (laughter)
Gabby: now you pay bra, what the heck, you cannot pay food, my bra is very expensive (laughter)

Ruben: oh you choose bra I pay, I pay for Josefina too (laughter)

Suresh: oh me dingdong (laughter) who Josefina? Your wife?

Ruben: the meskyn girl senorita Josefina (laughter, pointing at Jose), okay everything is good? okay, no problem, okay

Suresh: (laughter) okay I don’t know Jose beautiful girl, only one girl here. We ask another girl? I think Isaura can join, she is small she can join and eat a little bit. Is culo?

Suresh then asserts his authority by restating that he would like Isaura, another coworker, to join the trip too. This can problematic because both Jose and Ruben indicated their concerns that the bill will be too expensive, and adding another person to the trip will inevitably drive up the bill. This move is intended to incite a reaction from the group, and Jose ultimately threatens to back out of the trip. He responds in English that he’d rather go to church instead. For these workers who earn approximately 200-250 dollars per week, negotiating plans is important to make sure that they can afford the bills and to avoid giving everybody financial burdens, as most of the housekeepers have families to take care of. Participating in the arrangements of this dinner party is very common and is an equally important way for workers to indicate that they want to socialize with each other, but also need to be careful about their financial resources. However, they also
finally agreed that adding more people will lessen the individual share as they can divide up the bills to more person. Now the problems will be related to who should be invited and why.

Participants indicate they are comfortable and close enough to engage in conversation about money by commenting on each other’s financial resources, and how they should use those resources. Insisting, instructing, and questioning others in acceptable ways allows workers to move into positions of higher status and authority. They display their knowledge and experience about acceptable ways of speaking behaving in the process. Only those who have participated in several trip plans and kept tabs on each other’s finances can use these facts as evidence in their “case” to not pay the bill. The participants’ goal is to communicate generosity (not meskyn-ness) without being expected to contribute to the bill. Yet the communicative event is also about workers cooperating on a joint activity and building relationships together, regardless of whether the workers end up paying for the bill together or if one person pays for the whole thing, or if they even end up going out at all.

The first part of this conversation can be divided into different instructive moves enacted by speakers, which build on previous knowledge and allow workers to arrive to new conclusions about the trip plan. Workers use English, Spanish, and Spanish-English, and a variety of other communicative strategies, and arrive at the conclusion that Ruben will pay their shared bills, which then will be divided up as individual shares, usually the
next paycheck day. In addition to referencing locally intelligible or familiar words such as *meskyn, culo, santa maria,* and *dingdong,* they engage in repetition (repeat same phrase two or more consecutive times), they ask for clarification (by questioning each other), and bring in other participants to join and contribute to the conversation.

In the first part of the conversation, participants move on to deciding when the lunch or dinner should take place, and who should be in charge of organizing the actual gathering by broadcasting a formal invitation using their cellphone. This indicates that the workers are now collectively moving toward accomplishing a mutual goal: getting everyone’s physical body in the same setting, at the same time.

89  *Suresh:* okay, is good? *Jose* *por pavor* you go, you *habla* to friends, talk *Isaura?*

90  *Jose:* Me no time, you go. *Senor Ruben* use your phone *por pavor.* My phone *Santa Maria.*

91  *Ruben:* what happen? Your phono no more? I ask *Isaura,* maybe *Kara?*

92  *Jose:* No pay, *mucho meskyn.* *T Mobile Santa Maria,* no good, now no more, now use wifi

93  *Ruben:* oh no good. You want *AT&T mucho* cheap? go with me you *meskyn* bastard

94  *Suresh:* yes I want, but no want *Kara,* we want relax relax no supervisor (laughter), *Maria* is good, is *culo?*

95  *Ruben:* no *Maria dingdong,* *Jose* phone *Santa Maria,* dead. I speak *Isaura* when
I see her, *culo*? Your phone use wifi is okay, you go Facebook chat *culo*?

97 Jose: Me too, I talk to her and I use my phone but need wifi like this in hotel I use Facebook chat

98 Suresh: is okay you have phone numbers, okay. *Santa Maria* okay. Your phone good, you talk with wifi

It is interesting to listen to the group conversation, especially in knowing the language used throughout the conversation is always ‘mixed language’ of Spanish and English, this never solely in English nor Spanish. It seems that the group members try to accommodate each other, considering that the group consists two Spanish speakers, one Nepali and one Polish. Listening to this group conversation has made me realize that *culo* is actually one English-Spanish term that is frequently heard at the workplace conversation, that I have not previously been aware of. It is also possible that this slang word is also the first word learned by non-Spanish speaking workers, including myself, without knowing what it actually means. Suresh ask Jose to use his cellphone to invite friends to the trip by using the term ‘*por pavor*’ (please) and ‘*habla*’ (talk), which for Suresh, it is almost like he is testing his own knowledge on Spanish. This particular term that Suresh use also appears in his glossary list of frequently used Spanish words (see Appendices). This event has also become an educative moment for Suresh another non-Spanish speaker (Gabby and myself) to learn that the term ‘*Santa Maria*’ is a slang word for ‘dead’. Suresh misunderstood and thought that the Latinos plan to invite ‘Maria’ one
of their coworkers. Combining English and Spanish terms, Jose tells Ruben he doesn’t have a cellphone, and that his phone cannot be used without a wifi, after he was unable to pay his phone bill. Jose says that because he hasn’t paid for the “talk” service on his phone plan- he can only use the “chat” function. He draws on another interesting locally intelligible phrase introduced by Latinos in the workplace; he says “Santa Maria,” (done/dead) to express the fact the talk service on his phone no longer functions. This event provides multimodal educative moment involving the use of communication technology to know that people can communicate through social media such as Facebook chat and calling facility in order to survive without a phone. Playfully, Ruben suggested Jose to consider AT&T because it is much cheaper.

Although Suresh imitates Ruben and expresses similar suggestion over Jose’s dead phone, it is Suresh who yet again displays eloquent generosity and clever meskyn-ness. He tells Jose that “it’s okay” if he doesn’t have a fully functional phone plan because he still has everyone's phone numbers saved inside the phone. Therefore, Jose and Ruben can still be in charge of making the arrangements, and Ruben will be in charge of paying the bill, because the one who invites others to dinner is expected to have the financial resources to pay the bill. Suresh then offers possible options for lunch locations, including Fast food American, Mexican and Indian restaurants. Jose sees this as an opportunity to step in and ask Suresh what he would like to eat. By getting Suresh to vocalize his desires about some parts in the trip, Jose is asking him to take some
responsibility in organizing and paying for the lunch, instead of simply arbitrating and instructing others to do so. Suresh falls into Jose’s cunning trap and admits, with delighted laughter, that he’d really like to eat chicken wings.

99  **Suresh**: *(Suresh mentions names of three restaurants: Fast food American, Mexican, and Indian)* choose!

100  **Jose**: *(mentioning the American restaurant name)* what you want to eat, *amigo*? You ask friends to join *por pavor*?

102  **Suresh**: Ah chicken wings I want to eat a lot chicken wings hot, *culo*?

102  **Jose**: Okay go tonight is good? you want chicken wings is good and you pay the food, *culo*? Is okay?

103  **Suresh**: Ah I don’t know we go tonight but if you and me okay I pay, is good

104  **Ruben**: *vamos a comer hoy mismo, guey* (tapping Jose’s back)

105  **Suresh**: Okay what time we eat?

Jose also instructs Suresh to speak with friends and make a formal invitation to dinner (implying Suresh should offer to pay). Here, Jose is testing Suresh’s assumed authority and apparent generosity in front of the others; he basically tells Suresh “if you want chicken wings so much, then go ahead and extend a dinner invitation to your friends- and you will be the one who is responsible for paying the food bill.” Suresh realizes he has been challenged and, in order to maintain his generous and non-*meskyn* appearance, he immediately agrees to pay the bill- so long as he only has to pay for two people.
Fortunately for Suresh, Ruben interjects impatiently by stating *vamos a comer hoy mismo, guey* (let’s go eat today/right now, dude). This means that there will be three people eating and Suresh will be free from his supposed responsibility to pay for the food. He speaks a complete Spanish sentence without mixing other languages, interrupting the flow and sequence of previous multilingual utterances. In this utterance, Jose showed me how Ruben uses an informal Mexican address term (*guey*) to demonstrate closeness with him, who is also a Spanish speaker. Although Ruben’s move pressures others to respond, it also distances Jose from Suresh. This takes the pressure off of Suresh, and presents him with an opportunity to change the topic and once again assume his demanding, arbitrating tone: ‘okay what time we eat’, as if Suresh really comprehended Rubén’s sentence. Suresh’s strategy tells me that communicating in multilingual group involves a lot of ‘taking the risk’ attitude, such as predicting the meaning of a completely strange utterance. I wrote the Ruben’s sentence on a piece of paper and learned how to pronounce it, and decided to crosscheck with Suresh whether he understood Ruben’s sentence during the dinner talk: ‘*vamos a comer hoy mismo, guey*’ on the next day. Suresh admitted that he didn’t, and the only word that he was familiar with was ‘*comer*’ (*to eat*). He predicted the meaning of almost the whole sentence, however, he said, what helped him in predicting the meaning of the sentence was when Ruben tapped Jose’s back while talking, which, for Suresh, that gesture indicated something good.
As the group is not at the same page in terms of deciding where to eat, the third segment of the conversation shows how the participants work toward finalizing the location of the proposed place for lunch. Jose and Ruben debate restaurant locations, alternating between American and Mexican food options (No *Americano? Mexicano?*). Predicting on the direction of Jose’s utterance, Ruben tries to save Suresh by showing his ‘fondness’ to Suresh as well as his ‘non-mesky-ness’ by saying that Suresh doesn’t eat Mexican food, and that if he doesn’t eat his food, he will gladly eat it and pay for it’. Ruben’s seemingly positive remark gives a chance for Suresh to step in and states that he wants to eat at the American restaurant (…but I want chicken wings), which ignites Jose’s reaction to call Suresh as a very silly person (*mucho dingdong*) since it is uncommon to find chicken wings in a Mexican restaurant. Also, sensing Ruben’s greediness, Jose says that Ruben is a big monkey (*gordo chango*), even though by using ‘*senor*’ he still shows respect to Ruben. Suresh doesn’t give up and he suggests that Indian food might be an alternative if neither American nor Mexican food are their choice. Seeing Jose’s hesitation on Indian food, Ruben jokingly says that he will also eat Jose’s Indian food and pay for his plate. This time, Suresh falls for Ruben’s trap, and immediately offers his knowledge of a good Indian restaurant nearby. Suresh acts as a generous representative of Indian people by offering to pay the bill - “*you casa India, me pay is culo*” (when you’re in an Indian restaurant, you’re in my home territory, so I will assume responsibility for the bill). Jose demonstrates his appreciation of Suresh’s offer to
pay, while also expressing incredulousness at the sincerity of Suresh’s offer—“oh shit. Seriously you pay?”. Jose also exerts his authority by instructing Suresh to follow through on his promise to pay by reserving a place at the restaurant. At this point, he has found Suresh’s perfect spot for Indian food and cornered him into publicly acknowledging that he will pay the bill, using the same exact rhetoric Suresh used to get Jose to make the invitation in the previous conversation—“you habla” (you speak).

Suddenly Gabby who is at that time busy loading toilet papers into her cart steps in and offers her expert knowledge of another ‘Asian’ restaurant as her boyfriend works at a sushi place in downtown area.

106  Jose : No Americano! Mexicano? No? You comero Mexicano, Suresh?

107  Ruben : Suresh no eat Mexican food, that’s okay, me pay his food (laughter)

108  Suresh : No Americano food? Me eat Mexican food but I want chicken wings

109  Jose : you gordo chango senor Ruben (laughter). Chicken wings? No mucho dingdong

110  Suresh : Indian food is good. you like spicy food? Mexican spicy, you like

111  Jose : Me never eat Indian food, you Ruben?

112  Ruben : No but that’s ok I eat your food and I pay (laughter) I pay Jose plate, culo?

113  Suresh : No, you casa India, me pay, is culo senor Jose. I know a good Indian restaurant in here
Jose: Oh shit. Seriously you pay? You **culo amigo**. Here Ruben give me phone. Suresh you **habla** India restaurant now

Gabby: ssh...ok gentlemen don’t fight now. We can go to my boyfriend sushi restaurant. It’s good, no cheap, but my boyfriend has discount. He know we are **meskyn** (laughter)

In this part, participants agree to cancel the mall trip and switch to lunch gathering instead because the sushi discount seems like a good. The group members shift their focus to what they would like to eat, and how much they would like to eat. Gabby’s suggestion seems to save the reduce the group’s heated discussion and even though Suresh demandingly convinces Juan that he is sincere in his offer to pay the bill by addressing Jose with a honorific term, **senor** (older man, respected). In terms of age, Jose is actually 10 years younger than Suresh, so it is definitely insignificant that Suresh refers to him as ‘older man’ in terms of age (Latinos never address Jose using ‘**senor**’ honorific term in the hotel, workers consider him as the ‘young housekeeper’ at the hotel). Suresh’s strategy, however, demonstrates respect for Jose and the close bond they share. Suresh and Jose have worked at the same hotel for the same number of years and share similar amount of salary. However, conversation participants know that Jose should have more money than the average of workers at the hotel since he works for two jobs. Ruben’s insistence that Jose is ‘**cheap**’ perhaps serves to remind Jose that he is in a more secure financial position, and that he should feel obligated to redistribute his wealth by treating
his friends to dinner. After all of them decide to eat at the sushi place, Ruben reassures the group of his sincerity by using the Spanish phrase *todos come?* (everyone eats?) to suggest he would like all his Latino friends in the conversation to eat together. This time, Gabby’s position at the CoP shifted from the periphery position to legitimate one.

118  *Suresh*: yes, sushi good. I like sushi and I like hot sauce with sushi, no go to mall is okay

119  *Ruben*: yes, Jose can go church before we eat, mall next week. We go sushi. *Todos come? We ask Isaura so two girls is good*

121  *Jose*: No church senor Ruben, me *cansada* too much work so sleep until lunch time

122  *Gabby*: (showing her cellphone screen) Okay so this is the menu, if 5 people we can order the rainbow or the dragon um it’s 50 more or less

124  *Jose*: (grabbing the cellphone from Gabby) ok let’s see. And drink? Maybe water is good, oh here the martini only $7? Good

126  *Suresh*: Jose you make us *meskyn* and you will drunk, no good

127  *Ruben*: okay *amigo*, martini is okay we share (laughter), but if we get two rainbow sushi we pay $20 per person, not bad, not bad

129  *Gabby*: that’s true, see there are also small sushi plates and cheaper like $5 per plate

130  *Ruben*: that’s good we can add maybe 3 plates small sushi? Me have $300 so is
good

131 Suresh: that is good, oh my god, that is good mucho sushi, me amigos (laughter)
132 Gabby: you’re small, Suresh. Jose maybe eat more than you (laughter)
133 Jose: but serious, Ruben!?, you buy me martini? Gabby gracias! sushi fiesta

After everyone is convinced that the share of the bill will be affordable the group finalized the plan by asking Jose to invite Isaura since they live at the same apartment complex. With the help of her cellphone, gabby shows the group the restaurant’s website where they can see the menu list and the price of each meal. Ruben is sincere in his desire to pay the bill at the sushi place, and he said that he has no problem with paying the bill in advance, sharing the martini, and adding a couple more meals to the list.

Workers have so far agreed upon how they would like to share the meal in order to keep costs manageable for all, given their financial situations. This talk about food results in excited remarks from Suresh in rapid alternations between English and Spanish. This time, it is interesting that Jose didn’t address Ruben with the honorific term ‘senor’. This informal term indicates that workers consider each other to be of equal status at the workplace, since a person of lower standing would not refer to a superior in such informal ways without the risk of being seen as disrespectful or insolent.

In the last part of the conversation, the housekeepers assured once again that they are in the final agreement and everyone is happy about the result. Workers assure each other they are in agreement about this food sharing strategy by repeatedly saying “is
good?”. They move onto turn their focus to finding a possibility of inviting more people to the lunch event. In the final segment of the conversation, participants finalize their dinner plans and end the conversation by playfully making fun of a coworker who is not present in the conversation. Being made fun of for “eating too much” is a strategy used by conversation participants to set reasonable limits to the amount of food that should be consumed at eating out events. Because Japanese food like sushi is typically shared by all participants at the table, a person who eats too much may drive up the bill by ordering too much food.

134 Ruben : okay so five people, add Isaura, 5, Jose talk Isaura, is good? we need more people like Ruslan?

135 Jose : Ruslan too much come too much pay and he bring his wife and ninos and neighbor (laughter)

136 Gabby : yeah if Ruslan come $500, maybe (laughter) only for Ruslan (laughter)

137 Suresh : is okay 5 people is good. 2 girls is okay. See you later me work, is okay, is good?

138 Ruben : is good, manana Suresh

Their practice of humiliating workers who don’t observe proper eating etiquette can be seen as a “social leveling mechanism” that prevents members of the group from displaying future impoliteness during eating rituals. The impolite act of ordering too much food may result in a financial burden on the group or a potential cause for tension.
Jose shows his disapproval of Ruslan’s eating habits by saying that he will eat too much and he will bring more people to the event. Gabby states her agreement when she remarks “if Ruslan comes, the total of the food bill may exceed 500 dollars.” This is a cause for laughter in the group, at Ruslan’s predicted expense. No matter how “generous” and “non-mesky” coworkers try to appear, a person who consume too much food and breaks the rules and expectations established during the planning event will probably not be invited to dinner in the future. In his ethnography on food etiquette among the !Kung bushmen of the Kalahari, Richard Lee writes: “As I read it, their message was this: There are no totally generous acts. All 'acts' have “an element of calculation” (Lee 1969, p. 34). Similarly, words that may come across as innocent teasing may actually be a calculated message about the limits of generosity according to the group.

The group then dismissed and the members go to different directions. Jose put his phone in his pocket and walked with Ruben as both of them are housemen and they were ready to take their lunch break. Gabby continued her last task of loading materials into her cart, while Suresh has disappeared into the elevator. I followed the two housemen as Jose’s radio started to beep and we heard a supervisor’s (SPV) stern voice:

146 SPV : Jose where’s your location? What’s wrong with your radio?
147 Jose : I am walking, I’m going lunch
148 SPV : Can you stop by the closet and bring the yellow blanket to room 1222 before lunch?
Jose: I am walking. Okay, Kara, I will bring blanket.

SPV: okay thank you, see me after lunch, please

Jose: okay copy Kara

Ruben: no good, no good, Kara see him, it’s no bueno (he made a ‘cut throat’ gesture)

Jose realized that he turned the radio volume off as he was fifteen minutes from break. Kara might have tried to locate him several times when he talked to his group. However, admitting that he did so would add more trouble. He told the supervisor that he was about to go to lunch. When the supervisor gave him a task, he did not try to put it off, especially because the supervisor said that she needed to see him after lunch, which, according to Ruben, that was not a good sign. It was interesting to notice that Jose, who seemed to always be authoritative during the group conversation, suddenly changed his attitude when speaking with a supervisor. I still followed the two housemen when they went to the closet and took a blanket to be delivered to a floor. Three of us walked in the hallways on the 12th floor when a guest passed by. I didn’t say anything purposively to see what the two workers’ reaction would be like. Jose, in ten feet away, greeted the guest nicely, “Hello, how are you? you need something?” The guest stopped walking and told us that he needed some ice cubes. Ruben looked at my face and said, “La China, what he needs?” I whispered, “He needs some ice, ice cubes, there, go ice vending machine”. Then Jose turned to the guest and said, “oh sir, it is you go there, and there,
and there”. Seeing the guest’s confused face, Ruben said, “I take you to ice, follow me.” I was fascinated on how these workers, with their limited ability to communicate in English, make sense of utterance after utterance and try to understand various commands containing unfamiliar words. The moment that Jose took the initiative of greeting the guest has been a proof that immigrant workers were able to communicate, even when they have to take the biggest risk, such as being misunderstood by others. Moreover, Ruben’s strategy to be a problem solver by ‘taking the guest with him to the vending machine’ told me how the immigrant workers’ every day’s activities as a non-language workers (McAll, 2003), were actually consisted of problem solving activities verbally. I have learned from these workers about how they were engaged in conversation with their coworkers from different language backgrounds, to come up with agreeable solutions, while using language for different functions: directing, inquiring, suggesting, explaining, and creating jokes. I was so glad that Jose forgot to turn off his recording button that he accidentally recorded these educative events so we can analyze and learn.

3. Additional Notes on Pre-Trip Communicative Event

Jose chose to record this conversation because he believed it could teach me something about how workers talk to each other. After the lunch outing, Jose agreed to meet me at the hotel’s café to talk about the audio. We listened to the audio together and I asked him to explain the conversation. Interestingly, as I paused the audio ‘frame by frame,’ or ‘phrase by phrase,’ he only provided me with a rough sketch of what was
going on—who was talking to whom, the general context of the conversation, and what some of these unfamiliar sounds were communicating. Yet throughout the whole audio analysis activity, I was most fascinated by Jose’s disposition. Jose smiled and laughed as he listened to the audio. The sounds made perfect sense to him, even if he couldn’t explain why speakers mixed and improvised language in particular ways.

Their ways of communicating sounded foreign and incomprehensible to me. But Jose’s delight in teasing and communicating with his friends at work helped me understand their conversation. For Jose and his coworkers, making plans for hanging out is about having something enjoyable to look forward to with friends. Watching Jose listen to his conversation was an educative moment for me. His reaction to his language interaction is what Hymes (1974) meant as the “K” (Key) part of his S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G acronym. This “key” or tone is essential to pay attention to because it reminds us to not take learning moments for granted, even if they don’t fit into pre-established criteria about what counts as important or relevant learning. The tone invites us to appreciate and wonder at human creativity, instead of searching and identifying for gaps in understanding. In order to do so, it is important to focus on how speakers’ language codes do or don’t fit into pre-established language structures. The “key” is not contained in any specific word or conversational turn or in the analysts’ explanations of these components after the fact. I suggest the key is Jose’s amusement and amazement at his own language use, as he said, “what? I say that? Seriously I say that?” Ottenheimer (2008) writes,
As you test the water and attempt to develop competency in a new speech style, you need to pay attention to the reactions from members of that speech community...it is a never ending process, of course, and it is one that anthropologists make use of every time they enter a new field situation (Ottenheimer 2008, p. 115).

While listening to the conversation with Jose, I realized I was a language outsider who felt inadequate about my capabilities to understand. I sensed I had to get a handle on the language- a “necessity to understand.” In order to accomplish my work in at the hotel, I felt the need to control and structure the language according to something referenceable and familiar. As I observed Jose’s reactions to his conversation, I had many questions about the very specifics of the “actual substance” of their language. I wanted to know what new language they were producing, and how and why they were blending languages, and what motivating mechanism was behind this language mixing. Yet as I watched and listened to Jose’s talk about this hanging out plan conversation, his experience and comfort with workplace language became immediately apparent. Jose is no longer a linguistic outsider or peripheral participant in his communities of practice at work. He has the linguistic skills and strategies necessary to accomplish a lot with his coworkers. Language is more than a structured code; it is about evolving relationships. Language allows relationships like those between Jose, Ruben, Suresh, and Gabby to change and flourish. I also realized that much about language and communication evades
full or precise comprehension. There is always a gap between the “signified” and the “signifier” (de Saussure 1959) which is necessary for meaning to be produced with others members of the language community.

As a linguistic outsider to a community of practice, the tendency to look for recognizable structures in language can be productive but also dangerous. It can help the analyst parse out the information that is important and form associations or inferences about what people do with language, and what these means in terms of ‘language’ and ‘those people.’ But this can also take the analyst away from the participants’ active roles in the construction of these moments, and the system they have created for themselves to accomplish their own goals. The different terms workers use is embedded in the social context and the evolving relationships among workers in this particular community of practice. Their workplace language helps them organize their experiences in order to transmit knowledge, accomplish joint activities like hanging out plan, and establish their social roles and positions in relation to one another. The dinner outing planning process is a “communicative event,” involving a rule-governed, “sequential structuring of acts” (Carbaugh, 2007). Therefore, “the linguistic code is displaced by the speech act as the focus of attention” (Hymes 1964, p. 13). The workers’ patterned speech actions, situated in the hotel housekeeping setting, are the starting points of this analysis, more so than the specifics of their “linguistic codes.” From this perspective, workplace communities of practice are systems of communicative events that take shape around specific “ways of
speaking” and putting language into action.

The drinking rituals of the Subanun in the Philippines, described by Frake (1980) provide an example of a communicative event with an observable sequence of actions similar to those in the ‘trip to the mall’ planning event:

The Subanun drinking encounter...provides a structured setting within which one’s social relationships beyond his everyday associates can be extended, defined, and manipulated through the use of speech. The cultural patterning of drinking talk lays out an ordered scheme of role play through the use of terms of address, through discussion and argument, and through display of verbal art. The most skilled in “talking from the straw” are the de facto leaders of the society. In instructing our stranger to Subanun society how to ask for a drink, we have at the same time instructed him how to get ahead socially (Frake 1980, p. 172).

Frake argues that “variations in the messages sent” during the drinking encounter form part of four different qualities of the “strategic plan” or communication, which he calls “discourse stages” (1980, p. 168). These discourse stages in the drinking encounter include “invitation-permission, jar talk, discussion, and display of verbal art” (1980, pp. 168-169). Among the Subanun, Frake noted that invitations to drink often include address terms that indicating social closeness and distance. During the invitation to drink process, speakers “manipulate” different variables- “the order in which he addresses the other participants and the terms of dress he employs” (1980, p. 170).
In the trip plan conversation, Jose, Ruben, Suresh, and Gabby participate in “invitation and permission” discourse stage, by coming up with a plan to go out to the mall and eat together. Jose and Ruben propose a Saturday morning trip, and interlocutors begin to negotiate which workers they would prefer to include in this event, who would be able to join, the need to reschedule the event, etc. They use teasing about being “cheap/poor” to establish both closeness and distance—one can be included in the conversation and teased playfully for being cheap, but being too cheap can also be criteria for being excluded from the trip event.

The second discourse stage of drinking encounter, “jar talk” is marked by a focus on the drink itself, and information about how much “drinking and talking time” (1980, p. 171) should be involved in the gathering. In the hanging out planning talk, workers engage in “food talk” as they figure out what kinds of food to eat and what restaurant they should go to together. According to Frake, the third discourse stage, is “discussion,” during which litigation and debate take place in order to arrive at decisions. Putting decisions into effect depends on speakers assuming “a commanding role in the encounter and on debating effectively from that position” (ibid). As Jose, Ruben, Suresh, and Gabby debate, they attempt to direct the conversation toward particular outcomes. For example, Ruben, and Jose proposes possible restaurant settings (American or Mexican style), and Suresh proposes what food to eat and possible scheduling. Their ability to execute decisions and come to conclusions about their next move depends on their
abilities to effectively communicate their leadership through language.

As they give each other instructions, they demonstrate command of their social surroundings (Suresh knows the good Indian restaurants in the downtown area, and claims Indian restaurants to be his ‘casa’) and experience with locally valid communicative styles (language mixing, repetition, questioning, etc.). Suresh assigned a new meaning to the Spanish term ‘casa’, which actually means ‘a house’ to a ‘territory’. The underlying “litigation” involved is about debating who should assume responsibility for the bill at the end of the conversation. The last discourse stage, “display of verbal art,” (1980, p. 172) involves play with messages that follows “stylized patterns” of verse composition. During this stage, debates turn into “verbal artistry,” the most prestigious of which “require the mastery of an esoteric vocabulary by means of which each line is repeated with a semantically equivalent but formally different line”. The last stage also typically involves a sense of euphoria and “good feelings among all participants”. In the hotel conversation, workers increasingly participate in laughter together, creating “good feelings” toward the end of the conversation. For example, once Ruben takes responsibility for the bill, workers begin making fun of Ruslan (one of their coworkers and a potential person to be invited to the event) for eating too much, and the conversation ends with everyone’s laughter.

Much like the Subanun drinking encounter, the trip plan encounter at the hotel demonstrates how workers negotiate their relationships in an ordered scheme of
interaction. Taking charge of paying the bill and organizing the gathering are ways of practicing leadership and conveying mastery and knowledge of sites, amenities, service, (cleaning) tools, language, and the social dynamics of the hotel. The most skilled and experienced workers use improvised words, draw on multilingual resources, and practice argument or “litigation” strategies to get what they want and achieve greater status within workplace communities of practice. Not only must workers be aware of each other’s different language abilities, they also have to take into consideration context-specific rules and expectations for how to communicate about scheduling, transportation, food, task distribution, etc.

In this community of practice, it would be unacceptable for a worker to overstep his boundaries by overtly coercing a coworker into paying for the bill. The operational structure of this communicative event means outing event planning must be debated and discussed in ways that are acceptable to the group. Thus participants must feel they can present their cases, subtly display their knowledge and authority, and arrive at conclusions together. At various points, different members of the group assume authority to make decisions and instruct others. Less experienced workers who are not as familiar with the languages of their workplace or previously established rules for outing event planning, are positioned in more peripheral ways and have less authority to determine the planning outcomes. However, in this conversation, participants ultimately work to maintain awareness of equal status as workers and friends using humor and the
appropriate address terms.

On occasions when workers are feeling *meskyn*, they may not want to invite outsiders, and thus choose to strengthen their bonds with only their closest coworker friends at the housekeeping group. This group of workers will deepen their relationships and continue to expand their verbal repertoires as long as they have the opportunity to socialize and work with each other. Even though seemingly peripheral, Gabby plays a significant role for her coworkers as well; she acts as a restaurant guide for her coworkers, introducing them to new cuisine (sushi) and “ways of eating” in addition to “ways of talking” about food. Sharing food, talking about food, referencing food, and food-related activities is not directly related to the workers’ daily lives, and therefore, it provides a chance for those workers to learn about shared resources outside their routines. Yet this is more than simply hangout events for these workers. The chance to socialize and spend their hard-earned money with friends is a special occasion that must be carefully planned, and occur under the appropriate circumstances.

I quickly learned this after I tried organizing trips with these workers on several occasions. Out of my own ignorance, initially I didn’t see why it should take so much deliberation to simply go out to eat after work. I was an outsider to their “procedures” and rules for selecting an appropriate setting, figuring out what an acceptable bill looks like, who should pay the bill, and who should be invited. When the housekeepers finally invited me to participate in a lunch gathering, I was surprised to find that almost
everything about the event had already been planned hours and days before. This group of workers from different backgrounds knew what they were going to eat, in what order, and who would be responsible for paying. In fact, I was shown everything from how to eat appetizers in the correct order, how to hold my food properly, and how to respectfully accept a beverage from an elder and return the favor in a Japanese restaurant, and I am an Asian person learning the Asian-related matters from the non-Asian people.

In my own socializing rituals with friends, I was accustomed to being relatively flexible with arrangements, or simply taking them for granted. My usual way of relating to food, money, and people in dinner outings was not useful for building relationships in this new context of fieldwork participation. As an outsider to this group, I was quickly checked and instructed when it came time to joining them for an event. This learning process allowed me to appreciate the time and effort spent on the outing plans even more. I felt more like a “full participant” because they chose to share their time and money to socialize with me and teach me about their ways of doing things. This learning process has also allowed me to get insight into why Jose’s recording of this conversation is significant. It is an activity of the workplace which is not necessarily about work but which has arisen from circumstances of the workplace. They have found a place to laugh, tease, express financial concerns, and share food and conversation together- all things which make life and work in America much more bearable, particularly as an immigrant worker.
The fact that workers are able to organize such trips through multilingual conversations indicates that they have achieved enough mutual intelligibility to coordinate and cooperate. According to Garfinkel (1967), checking for common understanding is an ongoing process or operation that is important for the conversation to move forward. Shared agreement refers to various social methods for accomplishing the members’ recognition that something was said according to a rule and not the demonstrable matching of substantive matters. The appropriate image of a common understanding is therefore an operation rather than a common intersection of overlapping sets (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 30). What Garfinkel says here is relevant for multilingual workplace language environments, such as the hotel setting. Shared agreement among immigrant workers from different language backgrounds in a multilingual environment does not entail a perfectly recognizable “overlap” or blending of two, three, or four distinct sets of linguistic codes. Instead, language mixing occurs in an operation of utterances and actions that follows rules according to the particular work context and community of practice. They also draw on unique improvised or combination words that have emerged from their interactions at the workplace (meskyn, culo, dingdong, Santa Maria, etc.) to get their messages across.

Jose, Ruben, Suresh, and Gabby all use English, and Spanish, and improvised words in sequences which make sense to the speakers in the conversation. At each turn, they are confronted with the need to speak in a way which the others will likely
understand, given the languages they each know. Enough of a sentence must be understandable, given a worker’s environment, the degree of familiarity with an interlocutor, and previous knowledge or familiarity with foreign signs and sounds. Actors must choose what course of action to take to make themselves understood and accomplish their everyday responsibilities, especially when working toward common goals (such as properly cooking and executing a food order, or establishing a work schedule that suits both employee and employer).

Speakers such as these housekeepers may not view their own language varieties as valid ways of communicating, since they do not resemble or conform to idealized notions of language competency. Auer (1999) argues that “some people consider hybrids to be impure and detrimental to the speakers, while others consider such mixing to be creative, possibly even constituting a new language together, called a monolect or fused lect” (Ahearn 2012, p. 133). Instead of viewing language mixing as an inferior means of communicating, it should be considered creative and meaningful acts by capable individuals. Without language education classes in schools or other institutional contexts with planned language learning activities, individuals invent their own solutions and devise their own instructional methods to achieve linguistic competency.

The speech communities I have observed in the hotel are developing what Auer (1999) believes is a “thorough intermixing of codes, to the point that it is the alternation between...codes that itself constitutes the ‘language’ of interaction” (Ahearn 2012, p.
Auer focuses on the processes by which this intermixing occurs in bilingual communities where bilingual speakers draw from two recognizable language codes for communication. Although the conversation above between Hispanic workers and their non Hispanic counterparts demonstrates a speech community where at least two language codes are present in this intermixing process, Auer’s analysis of bilingual language mixing is helpful in trying to explain how this process occurs over time. Auer claims that there are range of ways that speakers alternate, mix, and transform language codes, from “code-switching” to “language mixing” and ultimately “fusedlects” (Auer 1998, p. 1). He represents the alternation of language codes in a continuum, with “code switching” and “fusedlects” on polar extremes, and “language mixing” (1998, p. 1) in between. Code-switching depends on the speakers using the alternation of codes in semantically meaningful ways. That is, speakers who code-switch will do so in order to elicit a “pragmatic effect,” (1998, p. 1) a purposeful introduction of a second language code for a specific discursive function.

The transition from code-switching to language mixing on Auer’s continuum occurs in cases where “the juxtaposition of two languages in which the use of two languages is meaningful (to participants) not in a local but only in a more global sense, i.e. when seen as a recurrent pattern” (1998, p. 1). Frequent alternations may not appear, from the outside, as pragmatic choice or serving a discursive function, thus this more generalized pattern of language mixing needs to be investigated “on the level of how
speakers perceive and use the ‘codes’ in question”. For example, a Spanish speaker may combine an English phrase with a Spanish word that indicates status according to Spanish honorifics (a term to respectfully address an elder or superior). This switch is a purposeful positioning that serves a discursive function, but it may not be the norm in cases where Spanish and non-Spanish interlocutors perceive themselves as sharing more equal status (and use of honorifics is diminished). There may be occasional pragmatic code-switches for these purposes, but the overall norm is a shift toward code mixing that does not necessarily serve a discursive function within any specific utterance. Ahearn (2012) explains:

the shifts in language mixing, according to Auer, do not involve the same sort of indexicality and shifts in footing that are involved in code-switching; indeed, the shifts back and forth between the two codes in language mixing do not seem to have any specific discursive function, except insofar as the mixing of the two codes in and of itself might index a particular social identity or set of meanings (Ahearn 2012, p. 133)

In some cases, language mixing leads to what Auer (1998) identifies as fused lects – stabilized mixed varieties where there is “a reduction of variation and an increase of rule-governed, non-variable structural regularities” (1998, p. 1). The recurrent pattern of language mixing becomes more stabilized in fused lects. Particular types of mixing become recognized as normative, rather than sporadic introduction of new terms for
specific pragmatic functions. In the ‘basura de lenguas’ (language trash) of the hotel housekeeping conversation, particular types of language mixing have become recognizable to participants, and are repeatedly incorporated into everyday speech in increasingly rule-governed ways. For example, in this CoP, participants draw from at least 2 languages in each of their utterances throughout the conversation. Thus, the mixing becomes the norm, although the specific introductions of multiple language codes are not necessarily meaningful in each conversational turn. In the above conversation, English is more frequently employed by speakers in instances where only one code is used in a conversational turn.

Ultimately, sense-making is achieved by people in their local environments when they have the opportunity to teach and practice language together, shaping unique ways of speaking. From the outside, no one in the above hotel housekeeping conversation appears to be competent in any single language, and the result appears to be a disorderly and ineffective kind of communication. However, as we have seen, these immigrant workers are not incompetent with language. Linguistic competency is not about mastering a single language or multiple languages. This idea of language competency arises from notions of language abilities as cognitive process and function. As such, it ignores the learning and teaching moments involved in communication- in favor of identifiable and legitimate codes and code arrangements. Full mastery of a language is an idealization, and the idea of a “complete” or whole language that can be mastered is a
myth. An individual’s language and ways of speaking are never “fully” functional across all settings and scenarios. People are *bricoleurs* (Levi-Strauss, 1962) with language, mixing up the pieces they have acquired in different (effective or ineffective) combinations, imbuing their own style, devices, and pronunciations for as long as they are able to participate in the conversation, given the constraints of each situation and context.

In addition to the verbal interaction, the reading and writing paths taken by Latino immigrants like Jessica, Mariana, and Alberto in creating the glossary lists, for instance, resemble the strategies used by Joséph Jacotot’s Flemish speaking students who developed their own strategies for reading French without being taught how to do so (Rancière 1991). In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière describes how Jacotot, a French teacher, assigned his students the task of learning the French text contained in *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1794), a French novel by Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon, with the help of a Flemish translation of the same book. Even though Jacotot had not explained anything about French spelling or grammar, his students were still able to read the text and produce French “sentences whose spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book.” His students figured out how to read, write, and speak French without the “aid of explication” from a master explicator (Rancière 1991, p. 9).

Without a formally appointed English or Spanish language teachers to provide
lessons in grammar of both languages or spelling, these workers learned to read by
“observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to
know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done”
(1991, p. 10). Just as Rancière’s students used *Telemaque*, workers referred to accessible
and commonly used material resources—such as labels, cellphone, colors—as reference
tools to aid their translation of foreign text for work activities. In the process, they have
learned something they did not know before about a new language, and their ability to
participate as fuller members of their various communities of practice has increased.
Spanish speakers became “emancipator masters” by providing non-Spanish speaking
coworkers with the task of reading Spanish without teaching them how to do so. Perhaps
paradoxically, challenging new language environments in the immigrant labor system has
the potential to exploit and educate at the same time (Gundaker 2007).

Rancière describes Jacotot’s emancipatory role: “his mastery lay in the command
that had enclosed the students in a closed circle from which they alone could break
out...by leaving his intelligence out of the picture, he had allowed their intelligence to
grapple with that of the book” (1991, p. 13). Workers leave it up to each other to figure
out their system and come up with their own locally legitimate strategies. The workers’
“ignorance” about new or foreign terms and conventions at the workplace produces a
sense of urgency and necessity to understand. In leaving it up to Suresh, Ruben, Alberto,
and the others to figure it out (managing housekeeping inventory, translating for the
hotel’s communication events and the staffing agency, translating multiple languages on the job), workers are also demonstrating that they have faith in each other’s abilities and competencies. An experienced immigrant worker in hotel can be considered an emancipator master as well. Experienced immigrant workers also play important emancipatory roles by teaching newcomers “that which they do not know.” Experienced workers pass on their strategies for reading and writing in foreign languages even though have never been formally taught on spelling, grammar, or punctuation. They encourage newcomers to believe in their own abilities, using “all possible means to convince the ignorant one of his power” (1991, p. 101). And over time, the immigrant workers find that they are more capable and competent, developing greater sense of ease and mastery of different languages practices involved in everyday activities.

The problem, as Rancière states, is “not to create scholars” but to “raise up those who believe themselves inferior in intelligence...” (1991, p. 101). Even those immigrants who consider their language skills as inferior or incomplete are able to use language in legitimate and valid ways. The point is that Spanish speaking immigrants do not need to become proficient in English, or other languages according to measures of language competency defined by outside institutions such as schools and government bodies. They don’t need language instruction experts to teach them language skills to navigate their new linguistic environments. Immigrants are capable of teaching each other the knowledge they need to know to survive in their environments, for their own purposes.
The constraints they encounter as newcomers to distinct environments are not always predictable.

I understood this as a newcomer myself, when the Spanish speaking housekeepers had to instruct me on proper ways of eating Japanese food, while using honorifics with older participants in Spanish. As an ignorant fieldworker, I didn’t know what problems would present themselves until I was actually in situations where details about language and communication mattered. And immigrant workers design their own ways of learning and teaching, they also change their environments by introducing new interactional orders through which they incorporate their unique ways with language in home and work environments.

B. Suresh’s Color-Coded Strategy and Language Skills

Suresh is one of Brighton housekeepers that has worked as a chute attendant for nearly five years. He migrated to the U.S. in his early 30’s as a war refugee from Nepal in 2008. In his country, Nepal, Suresh attended an elementary school, however, he had to quit school at the second grade because his parents needed him to help them at the farm. Even though Suresh can barely read and write in Roman alphabet, he knows how to read and write simple things in his indigenous language, Nepali, using the Devanagari alphabet. He can write his name and address in English. He was only recently taught how to read and write some English and Spanish, by his coworkers at the hotel. He describes his knowledge of English as very limited and says he doesn’t understand much
Spanish either, although he is slowly learning to recognize particular words, phrases, and gestures used by his coworkers. At the housekeeping department, Suresh always worked by himself at the chute room. Whenever he was off duty, his Latino coworker, Juan, handles his tasks. Chute attendant is responsible for taking care of the hotel’s laundry sorting activities, both in organizing the dirty items and the clean ones, as Hilton assigned outside company for the laundry process.

Every afternoon the laundry truck driver retrieves deliveries from a truck and loads the laundry carts in the basement hallway, arranges them in a ‘train like’ neat lines paraded from the elevator landing area to the housekeeping office. There are usually a total of 15 to 20 big carts containing clean linens and the other items such as towels, bathroom curtains, pillow cases, table cloth, aprons, napkins, and rags to be used by the hotel team members in different departments, for room, public areas, kitchen, and restaurant needs. These linen items are to be sorted out, organized based on the usage, and taken to various locations or closets and storages in the hotel. Each of the carts have actually been labelled by the laundry company according to the item details. For the non-English speaking housekeepers, however, reading those labels are problematic, and since some of them know very little English. Before Suresh found the labelling system to organize the laundry, it was always a nightmare to see the housekeepers fighting over linens or grabbing wrong linens, resulting in the slowness of room cleaning activities. Not to mention there were usually also defective items (e.g., stained, frayed, or badly
soiled) that, even though they were already labelled, the housekeepers were failed to identify the labels. Using defective items can cause problems for the housekeepers because as Suresh explained:

_The housemen sometimes stupid so I have to talk with Angie. I say, this is no good, this is no good. Guest mad, the linen no good, because the housemen and the housekeeper take the bad linen. Stupid people. It’s the bad linen. Don’t use the bad linen. No good. the guest mad, the manager mad, and the manager mad to me. Because I don’t say to people this is the bad linen. But I say, housemen don’t take bad linen, don’t take bad linen. The don’t listen because hurry hurry hurry. So I give the color for the bad linen, for the good linen, color for the towel, color for the bath curtain, color everything._

When I asked Suresh about his responsibility on the laundry item, he said that his main duty is making sure the laundry items go to the designated places. In addition to housekeeping department, laundry items are also needed by the restaurant and the bar, especially the aprons, uniforms, table clothes, and napkins. During rush hours, especially in the morning when the housekeepers prepared themselves for the tasks, getting linen from the hallway looks like, as Suresh describe it, “tsunami”. During that time, it will be possible for the housekeepers to grab wrong linens designated for others. This experience can disrupt the flow of the tasks for the room cleaning or other housekeeping activities.
Suresh who is assigned in organizing, stocking, and keeping inventory of the laundry quickly realized that he was confronting a serious challenge that had to be solved efficiently to avoid disruptions in the housekeeping work flow. With limited English and Spanish, he had difficulties in explaining to the housekeepers about which cart a particular linen is stored, or how to write notes to any workers who need the laundry items. When he was hired, Suresh received no formal training on how to deal with laundry items as he applied for a housekeeping position and he imagined that his task would be cleaning rooms. As a newcomer positioned in the periphery of his housekeeping communities of practice, he could not afford to give up or complain. He had come too far to quit, and whole reason he was there was to make money to help his family survive in the U.S. Every objects and materials were foreign to him. So, without any training from coworkers or bosses, Suresh came up with his own solution. He realized that the majority of the housekeepers in Brighton were Spanish speakers, including his partner at the chute room. He wanted to help everybody and himself and therefore he created the idea of color coding the laundry items to make it easier for the housekeepers and others in identifying the laundry items, especially the linen. He said that he remembered the colors and pictures better than words. Since the majority of the housemen were Spanish speaking workers, with the help of his smartphone, Suresh added Spanish letters or words for each of the linen color groupings. With the help of his coworkers, he searched pictures of items, then provided each with matching colors using
a smartphone app. This, at the same time, also helped him and some of his coworkers identify letters and words, both in Spanish and English. This strategy, he said, has not only helped the housekeepers in identifying the laundry items, but also allowed the non-Spanish speaking workers to learn Spanish. The laundry item details with the color-coded description created by Suresh are depicted in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>color</th>
<th>additional description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bedding sheet</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>K (king)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>green</td>
<td>Q (queen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>G (gemela)[twin]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blanket, comforter &amp; duvet</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>K, Q, G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pillow case</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>K &amp; Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towels</td>
<td>pis (piscine) [pool]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>toa (toalla) [bath]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pan [wash cloth]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restaurant items</td>
<td>black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rags</td>
<td></td>
<td>R (rags)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Suresh's Color-coded List of Laundry Items
Suresh said that he only came up with six different colors as he only the major color such as red, blue, green, yellow, black, and white. He said that using color has made it easier for him and the housekeepers to locate the laundry items. Previously, he labelled the cart with colored chalk. However, the labels were erased every time people use the cart so he had to create new labels every time. The executive housekeepers acknowledged his creativity so since then each linen and chart is labelled using permanent paint. They also taught Suresh how to use a computer to type in letters and choose pictures so he could label more of the housekeeping tools and materials. Using the computer and printer gave another experience for Suresh to be introduced to some forms of multimodality including choosing letters, pictures, working with keyboards, searching pictures from Google, and use the printer device.

Additionally, Suresh also applied this color coding method and letter labelling to organize dirty laundry items to be sent to the cleaning company. He sorted the items one by one, from the mountainous piles of dirty linens and towels and organize them based on the color coded and letter labelling carts he created. This strategy, according to a staff handling the cleaning/washing activities, has saved them a couple of hours of sorting and organizing the carts.

Using this color coded system, Suresh gets his work done effectively while facilitating his coworkers in doing their tasks. He gained respect and acknowledgement from his managers and coworkers, because as one of the supervisors said:
Suresh is a good worker. When he was hired, we need a laundry attendant so even though he applied for a room cleaning position, we put him there. We sent him on a training with a senior housekeeper, so he could learn from him. Handling the laundry items needs a lot of details and it can be tiring because we eventually use the items every single day. We know Suresh never attended any schools, maybe he did, but when we hired him, we actually had difficulty in interviewing him because he doesn’t speak English nor Spanish and we could not find anyone speaking Indian here. He could not write his name either, I guess he doesn’t know Roman alphabet. We need him so we were happy to give him a chance. And there he is, he came up with this brilliant idea that has not only helped himself in identifying the laundry items, but also the entire team members that use those items. Yeah, we are, we are very grateful to have him [Kara, supervisor].

Suresh’s interaction with colors and labelling provides an interesting example of a strategy adopted by an immigrant worker to overcome a linguistic barrier he encountered at his workplace. The particular task he was assigned involved interacting with completely unfamiliar signs, so he adapted to his environment in order to fulfill the work responsibilities he was given. Suresh’s work environment is a multilingual one where Spanish dominates the language used for communication activities. Yet, because workers interact with a plethora of material objects during work activities, they are sometimes required to “read” the signs and texts they handle throughout the day. The color coded
strategy and letter labelling strategy that Suresh created has been able to facilitate communication with other workers who rely on Suresh to his job. This is a kind of communication strategy that involves multimodal objects and workplace technologies used to achieve local order and intelligibility. These color coded symbologies and letter labelling are strategies used by workers accomplish complex acts and generate ongoing series of interactions. Instead of viewing Suresh as an incompetent language user lacking basic literacy skills, Suresh’s coworkers and employers describe Suresh as a competent worker who has created a unique system for dealing with the challenges of his environment. Thus, he has become a fuller participant in his workplace communities of practice, by identifying product’s names and inventing matching colors and letters through the use of some technology/tools. According to Jacquemet, this merging of technology and language can be described as “newly acquired techno-linguistic skills” arising from the “intersection between mobile people and mobile texts” (2005, p. 261).

Supporting tools and materials used by the housekeepers are mostly labelled in English and some of them are accompanied by Spanish translation and pictures. It is assumed that the labelling is standardized and universal for those who have difficulties in understanding texts. For the immigrant workers, however, the labelling can cause confusion. The materials handled by immigrants, such as the laundry items described above, can be considered “multimodal ensembles” (Kress 2003) – materials that combine a variety of modes (images, numbers, colors, shapes, texts) that provide their handlers
with multiple “affordances” or resources. These affordances offer openings for “choosing how to read” (2003, p. 56) the object being handled. Reading can occur “across” multiple modes, such as text and numbers, “allowing for the transformative action of the reader in any reading” (2003, p. 157). Readers like Suresh and his coworkers perform a “modal visualizing” of materials like color coding and picture labelling, providing a strategy for reading the material in new ways. In this modal visualization, readers identify:

chunks, elements, units of meaning, of differing function, structurally in their relation to each other and in their meaning-relation. The first scanning might give sufficient sense to the experienced ‘reader’ of such a page for her or him to proceed with a reading ‘below’ the level of these elements. ‘Experience’ here would indicate both prior encounter of such pages or texts, and membership of the relevant social/textual community, that is, someone who both understands what is at issue socially and culturally, and understands usual modal forms of realization of these issues (Kress 2003, p. 159).

This scanning enables readers to choose different “reading paths” and construct “profoundly differing readings” depending on the experience of the reader, his or her familiarity with the multimodal ensembles, and knowledge of the local rules and norms of interaction. The correct or appropriate reading path may not be immediately obvious to newcomers, depending on the social context and situated nature of the reading activity. For example, Suresh was initially unfamiliar with the multimodal ensembles presented by
English labelling. Through multiple modal “scannings” he developed his own reading path over time to make sense of the products for which he was responsible.

Kress also distinguishes between reading *as interpretation* and reading *as design*. The former “tends to go with the established reading path of the traditional written text, the latter with the to-be-constructed reading path of the image, or the to-be constructed reading path of the multimodally constructed text” (2003, p. 50). As workers with various experiences and language resources or “funds of knowledge” gather around new tasks and new materials, they will continue to develop different reading paths that have yet to be constructed, and which go beyond established or conventional readings. For example, other possible “designs,” given the affordances of the laundry items, might center on colors attached to the materials, rather than the items’ names. Ultimately, the “reading paths” chosen by workers enables them to participate in the workplace in new and more involved ways. These activities also demonstrate that the immigrant workers and others who may be considered “illiterate” or incompetent language users are actually not “lost” but actively creating new solutions and problem solving strategies to deal with everyday problems.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented an analysis on how the workers create the ‘mixed language’ the language varieties that emerge from the workers’ contact at the workplace, that I witnessed during my roles as a worker and participant observer. I also included
language glossaries, or vocabulary lists created by some of my study participants. I demonstrated the kinds of language a group of workers from different language backgrounds develop during their time working at the hotel, and the strategies they use to achieve mutual intelligibility with the resources they have.

In responding to several arguments presented in Chapter 2 that immigrant workers are often portrayed as ‘uneducated’, ‘illiterate’, and problematic in their legal status; having “limited English proficiency” and are considered inadequate and unfit members of the workforce; and therefore, focusing on the language practices of immigrant newcomers can help us understand the education they give each other.
Chapter 8: Conclusions

A. The Immigrant Workers in the U.S. Workplace: Languages and Professional Integration

Immigrant workers have grown and spread significantly over the past several decades in the United States, and there are more immigrants from diverse countries employed in the U.S. workforce than ever before. Immigrant workers that work for the entry level positions have been underrepresented in research due to the complexity in carrying out an ethnographic, holistic, longitudinal, naturally-occurring data driven research (Garett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002) in a noisy, dirty, hostile workplace, particularly when the researcher decides to immerse him/herself as a participant observer (Holmes, 2009). As the immigrant workers transition into the United States, they encounter new languages and cultures, help other immigrant newcomers adapt to difficult situations, and simultaneously transform themselves and their communities in the process.

This dissertation has documented how immigrants engage in educative practices with each other in various settings outside of school classrooms. As immigrants adapt to new workplace environments in the United States, they encounter more experienced immigrants from a variety of ethno-linguistic backgrounds, who distribute their knowledge to newcomers in the workplace as a Community of Practice (CoP).
Immigrants teach each other the rules, expectations, and norms for becoming competent members of their diverse multilingual workplace CoP, using various language resources and communicative strategies. In the process, they transform and produce locally intelligible language varieties and adapt to new social positions through increased participation and cooperation with each other. Immigrants become increasingly skilled with language in the scenarios and moments that matter most to them. Their labor contributions and communicative competencies are acknowledged as they perform roles as coworkers, employees, friends, and family members.

However, in the U.S. today, particular language education, and work skills are valued more highly and considered more legitimate than others. Too often, immigrants’ abilities are discounted, ignored, and categorized as inferior to the skills acquired through schooling, formal language instruction, or workplace training programs. Research on immigrant education has focused on whether or not immigrants assimilate or conform to pre-established standards of language or work competency. Other times, their creative collaboration strategies are subsumed and overshadowed by dominant discourses centered on labor migration and capitalism, racial and ethnic identity politics, or theorizations about individual subjectivities and shared beliefs. As a result, the observable and ordinary details of immigrants’ informal educative activities and communication strategies are not given adequate attention. For this reason, the goal of this dissertation is to show examples of the education immigrants provide each other.
outside of schools, in spaces and ways that often escape the gaze of educators, policymakers, and social scientists.

The examples discussed in this dissertation demonstrate how immigrants successfully meet the challenges and problems they encounter using available resources in their environments, and how a multilingual workplace like Brighton has been able to accommodate the workers’ freedom in using their native language and to embrace linguistic diversity. The accommodative and inclusive workplace like Brighton has allowed the housekeepers to develop complex ways of describing their language and education practices, and are profoundly aware of the constraints and opportunities presented by their surroundings. Their experiences demonstrate that immigrants are neither trapped nor lost as a result of their legal status, exploitative labor conditions, or inexperience with classroom settings or the Standard English dialect. Without appointed instructors or education experts, productive cooperation is possible even in settings where speakers come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and education backgrounds. Immigrants are competent members of society who have valuable insights and experiences worth exploring in detail.

The communication experiences of immigrant workers in the workplaces are examples of how global processes of migration bring people and their language resources together, resulting in new mobile repertoires and language varieties. Recent research in the sociolinguistics of globalization and (Blommaert, 2010) reveals that language
resources are highly mobile, albeit unevenly distributed. Within the sphere of global relations that have produced the conditions for immigrant workers from different sociocultural backgrounds to work together in a hospitality industry like a hotel, some communicative practices are valued more highly than others, resulting in particular hierarchies and social divisions visible in workplace contexts. However, it is only by paying attention to specific interactions, situated in particular contexts (such as the workplace), that it is possible to see how individuals contest, redefine, reevaluate, and remake values regarding language and social relationships.

Although the focus of this dissertation is the production of local orders of interaction (through the use of multiple communicative strategies and resources), set in particular observable language environments, these interactions are all connected to broader political and economic processes that shape immigrants’ movements and forms of labor participation. In a hotel housekeeping, the CoPs are not tied to a single language or ethnic group, but form around particular activities, materials, and workplace spaces embedded in larger power-relations and economic systems. This dissertation demonstrates connections between local and global processes by showing how immigrants engage in joint activities together involving the movement of languages, materials, tools, technologies, electronic devices, and money, among others (i.e. multilingual speech varieties, smartphone technologies, communication devices, etc.) across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. Through these multiple, ongoing
communicative practices that span various borders, new CoP emerge, along with new ways of making sense of and dominating the resources involved in these practices.

This dissertation draws on concepts in ethnomethodology Garfinkel (1968) and sociolinguistics Hymes (1996, 1986, 1972, 1962) that were developed several decades ago, but which have been revived in more recent sociolinguistic work (Blommaert 2013, 2010, 2009). Although language and culture studies have changed and evolved tremendously in the past several decades, in this dissertation I revisit concepts developed by early ethnomethodologists and sociolinguists to make sense of the multilingual workplaces. As Blommaert argues (2009) “Dell Hymes’s oeuvre was explicitly political” (2009, p. 257) and much of Hymes work can be considered a “critical discourse analysis long before anyone laid claim to that term” (2009, p. 273). I focus on Hymes’ insistence that “the fundamental vantage point must be what means of speech are available to a group and what meanings they find in them and give them” (Hymes 1996, p. 83).

This dissertation documents the voices of immigrants who are often ignored or undervalued; as such, it is rooted in a critical sociolinguistics that “offers us a way into the concrete linguistic shape of sociocultural inequality in societies” (Blommaert 2009, p. 272). Demonstrating the patterning and order of speech events through ethnography can “enhance respect for an appreciation of the voices of others,” (Hymes 1996, p. 219) such as the voices of immigrants in the U.S. that are sometimes silenced or considered inferior to others. Because the languages that result from super-diverse contemporary workplaces
are not often recognized as legitimate languages, it is necessary to carefully explore the
details of linguistic diversity and variation in such contexts.

This ethnographic approach, rooted in the history of sociolinguistics, is thus an
instrument with “critical potential and emancipatory value” (Blommaert 2009, p. 272)
where the notion of social context is not static or neutral, but a “lived environment full of
inequalities and constraints” (2009, p. 273). Also, by using my own ignorance about
language and social relations as a primary method of investigation in the hotel
housekeeping, I was able to gain first-hand experience of inequalities and constraints
produced in the workplace environments. In this dissertation, even though I was a
participant observer, I demonstrate how I was positioned as a newcomer and linguistic
outsider in the process of establishing relationships in the workplace. Immigrants with
experience instructed me on how to understand the languages of the workplace, and how
to navigate communication with the staffing agency. As a result, this dissertation
demonstrates that ignorance can be instructive, and that immigrants are skilled teachers
and expert navigators of local languages and the complex nuances of social relationships
in the workplace. As an anthropologist, learning the language of the field through “formal
instruction,” (i.e. classroom language instruction) before beginning fieldwork, is not
necessarily essential. Languages (and social rules for using language) learned informally
through these kinds of educative practices may prove more useful than formal language
education in schools, for example. By consulting local knowledge of community experts,
anthropologists can learn what they need to know in order to survive and build meaningful relationships in their field environments. The more we allow ourselves to be educated by those who are often categorized or stereotyped as “uneducated,” the more we can value this emic knowledge and make it known to larger audiences through ethnography.

B. Workplace as an Umbrella for Various Communities of Practice

The detailed illustration of the workplace as a CoP is presented in Chapter 4. In addition to describing the site, this chapter also narrates some stages of immigrant workers’ personal and professional trajectories in working in the U.S. The workers’ professional life is inseparable from their language development as language becomes one of the essential media that helps them accelerate their career advancement. The discussions on the complexity of the site and the study participants also reflect their language use and learning incorporated in their day to day activities in the workplace. Drawn from my experience as a participant observer and generated from the observations, field-notes, interviews, and public documents collected from the site, the aim of the site and study description is to gain familiarity with and to understand the workplace’s relationship with the participants, and how the activities in the workplace were organized and distributed, which helps in exploring their language use and learning over time. Furthermore, this chapter provides a detailed a vibrant picture of the organization and how interactions among the members in the site as a community of
practice are portrayed. I also presented some immigrant workers’ activities on the site in narratives, illustrating their relationships with the managerial staffs and other workers through the complexity of tasks they perform and their professional and personal journey of working in a U.S. institution. The workers’ professional journey in the U.S. cannot be separated from the contribution of the staffing agency as it facilitates the development of the workers especially with regards to their job management and professional networking. In this chapter I also presented one of the two staffing agencies that has sent most of the housekeepers in the last five years. The description on staffing agency covered the workers’ affiliation with it and the agency’s contribution to their professional life.

C. The Immigrant Workers Communicative Experience

The immigrant workers’ communicative experience at the workplace presented in chapter V becomes one of the major findings in this study. I organized the findings according to the research questions that this study advanced. Data from in-depth interviews showed how the immigrant workers felt about the issues raised in the research study. The workers’ voices revealed significant insights into their lived work experiences. The primary finding under the first research question showed that sociocultural background was relevant to the immigrant workers’ communicative experience in the workplace. The participants reported that race/ethnicity, native language, and prior education and occupation have become the significant factors influencing how the
immigrant workers perceive others’ opinion towards them that affect their communicative experience at the workplace. Additional findings were also reported related to the relevancy of socio-cultural background to the participants’ journey of adapting themselves to the multilingual workplace. Salient to the immigrant workers’ communicative experience, three main findings generated on how the immigrant workers communicate with different members in the workplace: coworkers, employer/manager/supervisor (superiors), and guests. As the communication supporting devices are significant to the communication activities at the workplace, the findings presented two discussions on how two supporting devices: radios and smartphones. The second major finding revealed that the person with whom the workers interacted significantly shaped their communication experiences. For example, the majority of the participants said that they had problems in communicating with superiors due to language barriers and different cultural background that affect the nature of their communication activities.

The second research question that addressed possible relationships between workplace orders such as work routines and language use in the workplace generated six findings. The nature of workplace routines and communication isolation left the housekeepers with a limited time to interact with others. Some housekeepers indicated the desire to communicate more, however, some others viewed the limited interactive opportunity as a benefit since they will be able to finish the tasks faster. The second
finding showed that even though there were limited opportunities to interact at the workplace, the housekeepers revealed that they still have to ‘communicate’ with others to get the works done or to show hospitality (to the guests). While the housekeepers did not have a particular problem in communicating within the housekeeping groups, they admitted that they often had difficulties in interacting with the guests due to the language barrier. The problem with language barrier also discouraged the housekeepers in communicating in communicative routines in the workplace such as in the meetings. This discouragement in communicating openly in public within the housekeeping department has driven the housekeepers to create a fluid community that can accommodate them based on their sociocultural backgrounds as a networking media where they could share and consult with each other about the work and life related experiences. Interestingly, not everyone in this particular networking group shared the same sociocultural backgrounds as interactions were facilitated by the members’ mutual understanding, for example shown through communication accommodation. The participants realized that being able to speak English they learned English particularly by using it in communicating in the workplace. They admitted that, despite of the urgency of having the English communicative ability, learning English formally outside the workplace was hard to do due to time constraints.

As depicted in the third finding in this study, the participants indicated their desire to contribute more to their future professional and social communities in the U.S. despite
of their limited English language ability. As a CoP, Brighton housekeeping department accommodates multiple and overlapped groups with diverse members. As shown in the narratives, learning activities were facilitated by code-switching, creating language mix, and problem solving activities. This finding also highlighted various educative experiences at the workplace as shown by the construction of mutual intelligibility among the workers and superiors who shared different sociocultural and professional backgrounds.

D. Educative Experience of Immigrant workers at the Workplace: The Double Socialization

With regards to the workers’ educative experience in the workplace, in chapter 7 present further discussion on how the workers handle the challenges resulting from language barriers that have discouraged them in interacting with others in the workplace. This discouragement in communicating openly in public within the housekeeping department has driven the housekeepers to create a fluid community that can accommodate them based on their sociocultural backgrounds as a networking media where they could share and consult with each other about the work and life related experiences. This chapter presented the discussion on how the immigrant workers create ‘same language, same ethnicity’ communicative culture is particularly discussed in the next chapter, followed by how they develop learning strategies on how to overcome language barriers.
After presenting the narratives on the workers’ communicative experience at the workplace and how they perceive their communicative ability it is necessary to know what’s at stake for the immigrant workers in making sense of the workplace environment as a CoP, and how to deal with the challenges that arise from the ‘necessity to understand’, regardless of the workers’ sociocultural backgrounds: race/ethnicity, native language, prior education and occupation. Based on the challenges that the workers encounter in the workplace, this chapter also discussed some strategies that the workers invented, communicated, negotiated, and practiced with the other CoP members at the workplace. These strategies included contextualization, the application of a single word to describe multiple situations, silence, imitation, verification, assessment, and positioning/honorifics.

Chapter 7 also demonstrated that workers have many rich ways of explaining their own language practices and language environments at work. One worker describes his communication at work as a “language trash” to explain how people weave multiple language varieties together at work, while the other workers describe how language and work activities are deeply interconnected. This chapter also presents an analysis on a multilingual non-work related conversation involving two NNES Spanish-speaking workers and their two non-Spanish speaking coworkers. I demonstrate how these workers incorporate Spanish, English, and a locally intelligible, improvised language variety to communicate and plan a trip together. They use various communicative strategies, such
as teasing and humor, questioning and repetition, debate and argument, referencing peripheral participants, compromise and negotiation, testing and challenging each other, among others, to appear generous and avoid paying for the bill. Workers use these strategies to be seen as experts and leaders in their group, and to build friendships with each other while being mindful and respectful of each other’s finances. They establish norms and expectations for proper trip planning and eating etiquette, which is learned through increased participation in communicative events about hanging out on gatherings. To receive a gathering invitation and avoid ridicule, members in this CoP have to understand the locally defined social boundaries for appropriate talk. Newcomers must show awareness of rules about generosity, reciprocity, cheapness or “meskynness,” and language play.

There are forms of learning outside the classroom that need to be valued and examined more carefully because we live in a system that values institution-based learning more than “informal” learning. The above cases demonstrate that valuable education takes place in non-school settings, where language and communication occurs in many ways. Learning happens in groups with increasing experience and participation in goal oriented and linguistically mediated activities through communities of practice. All of these examples also demonstrate that immigrants are competent language users who educate themselves and each other in order to accomplish their duties and build relationships with each other.
Differences in language do not restrict individuals from learning and working together; newcomers and language outsiders come up with many unique strategies to feel and be seen as competent workers. In Koreatown, some people use language to flirt or serenade each other, while others use strategies like linguistic silencing to control or abuse people. Thus language education at work is critical to preventing exploitation and establishing rules and expectations about appropriate and acceptable behavior. This dissertation contributes to knowledge about language phenomena in multilingual immigrant workplaces in the U.S. in general. These observations may be helpful for understanding the experiences of immigrants in other culturally and linguistically diverse settings in the U.S. My own method of using ignorance to understand process of how workers are educated about their surroundings is also a unique contribution. My success in forming relationships and understanding the communication strategies used in different workplaces is evidence that ignorance can be productive, and that being a language outsider is not a fixed barrier to becoming a skilled participant in many communities of practice. Below, I summarize some of the main themes that run throughout the cases presented:

1. In multilingual CoPs language exchange and instruction in multiple languages happens spontaneously throughout the day, and is directly tied to objectives and activities of the workplace, but is not restricted to work demands.

2. Members in the workplace CoP use multimodal resources to communicate, such
as labels, smartphone language applications, radio talkies, and cleaning materials and tools. They incorporate these practices into their daily activities to do many things including: praising or reprimanding each other, sharing personal stories, learning new things about satisfying curiosity about each other, for instructing others or joking around, and seeking advice or help about a variety of matters.

Language interaction between immigrants from two or more different places (a Nepali and a Mexican, for example) is not simply about two separate, bounded cultural and linguistic systems coming together and overlapping. Cooperative sense-making and the construction of mutual intelligibility is an ongoing process that builds new interactional orders based on awareness of social roles and expectations. This ongoing, collaborative construction is instructional and transformative. Constructing mutual intelligibility doesn’t mean people understand everything that is communicated. When faced with uncertainty, people can often “pass” as understanding, which is important for avoiding communication difficulties and being seen as a competent worker.

The workplace context is an educative space that entails new problems and opportunities for workers every day. In the hotel housekeeping, learning at work is not measured according to standard language assessments or skill evaluations. Immigrant workers are not passive learners, and workplace education is more than a “unidirectional” transfer of information and knowledge. Ways of speaking and knowing are co-constructed by multiple active CoP comprising individuals with a range of abilities and
linguistic styles. Language is tied to work activities and relationships, changing status, participation, positions at the workplace and beyond. Nobody should perceive immigrant workers as uneducated, ignorant, or unskilled; they are highly resourceful and are constantly engaging in instruction, translation, teaching, and learning activities using language abilities learned at work.

Diverse language varieties and local ways of communicating evolve over time, in ways that make sense in different social contexts. Historically, populations have been mingling, mixing, developing, and exchanging their languages, styles of speech, and communicative techniques for a long time, creating local contact varieties. In the hospitality industry environments, such as in hotels in Columbus, Ohio, Spanish speaking majority and non-Spanish speaking counterparts have been interacting and sharing neighborhood spaces for several decades. This has created new and dynamic conditions for the emergence of hybridized speech patterns. Sometimes, words and utterances produced do not correspond with just one language code. While preference for one language or another may exist in the workplace, improvised words and innovative strategies for communication are almost always likely to occur.

E. Implications of the Study

This study has implications for various fields of theory, research and practice and for discussions on the nature of communicating in a multilingual environment, language competence of immigrant workers, and workplace communication. The study has shown
the usefulness of conceptualizing communicative ability as locally and contextually defined, as a constellation of communicative resources with varying values. Studying such a language related abilities requires various perspectives related to how the workers talk about their language ability and languages in use, and how they educate each other about how to make sense the workplace. Furthermore, an investigation of communicative ability and repertoire construction requires adopting a multidimensional approach and attention to micro and macro contexts, and the resources (different modalities, materials, tools), and trajectories that are involved. This study thus contributes to our understanding of the construction and the characteristics of a communicative repertoire as dynamic, changing, and context-bound. It has filled a gap in research, which to date has not yet focused on communicative repertoire construction and its trajectories in lingua franca contexts, in multilingual environment detached from the academic boundary: the workplace.

Related to different fields of inquiry, this study contributes to language socialization research which focuses both on the processes and the outcomes of socialization (Duff, 2010). Referring to Li (2000), this study showed that there is a connection between language and work socialization. Socialization into both the profession and language practices in English are facilitated by the languages used in the workplace: English and Spanish. Analyzing the workers’ interaction and participation within different communities of practice reveal their nature socialization that involve,
most of all, learning appropriate ways of speaking, and of doing the job and its interconnected language practices. Thus, the traditional novice-expert framework is inadequate to explain professional socialization (Roberts, 2010), which should be approached holistically and critically, involving such aspects as profession, speech communities, ways of speaking, values, norms, discourses, global working life, workplace order in different cultures and lingua franca contexts, in all their complexity.

The heterogeneous character of socialization, multi-semiotic ways of communicating and repertoire construction witnessed in this study can be attributed to the nature of today’s workplaces as new global economies where, as part of the world forces, individual workers are subjected to the discourses of the ‘new work order’ (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Roberts 2010), where immigrant workers are required to have flexibility, to engage in global assignments, to take responsibility for their own work and to find strategies to communicate with others about making sense of the workplace to get the job done. This study indicated that tensions mainly resulted not only between ‘local’ and ‘global’ resources, but also between conflicting different ‘locals’, related to the workers’ prior language and professional backgrounds. Even though the workplace’s accommodation, such as the lenient language-related rules and the availability of bilingual superiors have been able to reduce this tension, the constant exposure to global discourses have forced the workers to maintain their heterogeneity and create ‘localized’ ways of speaking (basura de lenguas) and safe spaces (for example, ‘my little Mexico’),
which showed the implications for learning. Because global working life is driven by innovation, everyone, including the most experienced workers, managed to be ‘expert learners’ by using and learning the language constantly (Farrell, 2001). In fact, Gee et al. consider ‘learning a job’ and ‘doing a job’ as synonymous (1996, p. 165). In the fast-paced working life of today individuals need to rely on their own language proficiency, while at the same time autonomously learn other languages for work-related purposes. As shown in this study, workers often have no time to formally learn languages, nor the need, for English language teachers to teach them: in fact, when needed, those who know the most will become such and perform the teaching activities. Hence, through socialization, individuals gain different types of expertise linked to language and profession. Moreover, as expertise emerged as relative in the workplace contexts studied here, it deserves to be studied in a holistic way in the future (Blommaert, 2007; Iedema & Scheeres, 2003). For example, it is important to ask what kind of expertise is needed in specific contexts (for example, in hospitality industries), by whom (for example, housekeepers), and in what specific genre (for example, reading/writing/speaking)? What is the urgency for every worker to know English in a multilingual workplace? Furthermore, to understand expertise, it is essential to note that it will most likely appear as even more multifaceted had other types of discourse than the spoken been investigated, such as written, electronic devices-mediated (e.g. online chat, text messaging, email communication) and visual discourse (drawings and pictures) and their particular ways of
speaking (perception on accents).

Aimed at exploring the workers’ workplace language practice, this study has implications for our understanding of the role of English in workplace communication, professional discourse, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and their users. The findings revealed that English gradually develops into an intrinsic part of global professionals’ work, even when English is not the major language spoken in the workplace. The findings lend support to the widely acknowledged establishment of English as an international language and as a lingua franca in a multilingual workplace (Seidlhofer, Breitender & Pitzl, 2006). For the immigrant workers in this study, English language manifested itself as not only a language of the international posture (Yashima, 2000) but also as a language embedded in processes of globalization (Pennycook, 2007), processes which are complex. In other words, rather than holding out promise of social and economic development to anyone who has learned English, English emerged as a language tied to particular professional positions and possibilities of development; moreover, rather than being a language of equal opportunity, English clearly created barriers as much as it presented possibilities (Pennycook 2007; Heller 2002). The present study has shown how language is part of multiple globalization processes affecting the individual: while for one individual English represents a factor for professional development, it does not function in the same way for another, and, moreover, it is a language that represents both a possibility and a problem for individuals in ways that only
a multidimensional, longitudinal approach can capture.

Having narrowed the focus from the role of English in workplace communication in general to the entry level immigrant workers, this study has shown what counts as English, particularly in workplace communication, for the workers studied, and what the possibilities are for repertoire construction and how communication practices are facilitated in those contexts, i.e. what the reality is in linguistically, socially and culturally multilingual workplace. The development of the workers’ repertoires in different languages spoken in the workplace resulted from the workers’ active participation in interacting with others where transfer of knowledge to happen within communities of practices. The communicative repertoires identified and constructed reflected the sociolinguistic conditions of workers’ lives: the demands of the multilingual workplace on the one hand and regimes of normativity and ideologies of language proficiency on the other. These demands and regimes can be captured in the interplay, or rather tension, between the two ways of speaking English as established in the introduction of this study and as displayed by the studied participants: the local English used in real practices and English on the ideological level (Blommaert, 2010). Two poles seem to exist, as suggested by Higgins (2011): the existence of dominant ideologies of modernity (creating inequality) and the practice of localizing English (enhancing equality) in late modernity. These two ways of speaking English have implications for our discussion of what kind of English exactly is being used and referred to in multilingual workplace communication
(Blommaert, 2012). Although discourses and ideologies about English on the meta level are ‘invented’ (i.e. English on the ideological level), they are real for the people affected by them (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). The workers involved in this study realized that being able to speak English is important to secure a job in America. However, they soon found out that the workplace facilitated their languages by accommodating them at the job selection process. During work, housekeepers were also exposed to working and interacting in a multilingual environment where standard English is hardly spoken (Young-Scholten, 2007). Thus, the discourses of correctness and the ideology of proper English was non-existent, and therefore the workers’ repertoire construction drew heavily on how messages were transferred, instead of how utterances should be grammatically constructed. When they moved to communicating with different members of communities of practice in the workplace, they encountered another language was spoken by the majorities and noticed that there were different norms and ways of using languages based on different contexts and events. Consequently, through constant interaction with the members of different communities of practice, the workers gradually socialized into different language establishments at the workplace. By adopting these different norms, they succeeded in their daily tasks and created more linguistically accommodative spaces the contexts where English was spoken alongside with Spanish. Hence, over time, a native-like way of speaking English as a dominant ideology was replaced by local norms and ways of speaking, i.e. the English used in real practices.
The findings on English used in real practices contribute to the discussion of global communicative competence, since, unsurprisingly, being competent in English at work appeared not to be a matter of mastering a fixed set of rules of English, but rather as a matter of having a special kind of communicative competence (cf. Hymes, 1972), a view guiding current English language teaching (Leung, 2005). Competence and appropriateness were shown to be extremely context-bound and individual-sensitive: the meaning of appropriateness in one speech community and for one individual may signal inappropriateness in another community and for another individual. According to Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), communicative competence comprises four areas of knowledge and skills: grammatical competence (words, rules, pronunciation), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness), strategic competence (appropriate use of communication strategies, including verbal and non-verbal) and discourse competence (knowledge about how to achieve cohesion in form and coherence in meaning). Referring to Canale & Swain’s (1980) conceptualization and compartmentalization of knowledge and skills in using a language, it may be inadequate to explain global workplace professionals’ communicative competence: a fuller explanation should consider the nature of the actual language used that arises in the actual context of global workplace communication and professional needs, which is different from the “natural” language spoken by its native speakers. Despite the fact that various ways of using English exist in the world, with the majority using it as a lingua franca rather than a mother tongue.
(Graddol, 2006; Crystal, 2007), discourses about appropriate language use continue to stress the mastery of certain pre-determined rules in order for a learner to be qualified as a competent language user. If one is critical to analyze the spoken discourse studied here in terms of appropriateness as understood in traditional, ‘rule-based’ language pedagogy, the participants’ language use would be termed inappropriate, non-standard, broken, against the rules, and even incomprehensible. Although the interactions had typical characteristics of English as a lingua franca, they revealed how individuals aim at achieving understanding by using particular, context-specific bits of their communicative repertoires which consisted of various communicative resources in addition to, as Hymes (1972, p. 64) argues with reference to Goffman (1967, pp. 218–226), “capacities of interaction”, such as courage. These issues were important for getting the job done, regardless of the number of mistakes made in speaking and thus of deviation from native-speaker norms. Hence, the compartmentalized, ‘top-down’, perspective on competence as in Canale & Swain’s (1980) theoretical framework fails to account for the complex ways in which different competences interact in actual communication; for such an account a revised description of communicative competence is called for (Canale, 1983) in which the actual resources utilized by speakers and the reality of English used as a lingua franca are respected (see discussion on global communicative competence. It is thus necessary to investigate actual language use by actual language users, that is, English used as a workplace lingua franca which provides a ‘bottom-up’ perspective on
competence. The portraits on how immigrant workers interact in a multilingual workplace showed that different communicative resources cluster in local, English as a lingua franca ways of speaking in working life, which, to a certain degree, could be seen as simplified and highly dynamic codes. Rather than classifying English as a lingua franca ways of speaking as belonging to a certain structurally defined variety, they could be characterized as local, interactional constructions (Mondada, 2004) that are “complex, multiple, and intricately connected to experience of participating in linguistically mediated activities” (Vickers 2008, p. 239). This study has highlighted that local practices are important in understanding competence since “what counts as legitimate language is always contingent” (Higgins 2009, p. 149).

Thus, it is essential to take into account the fluid nature of ways of speaking as they change continuously as professional cultures change (Widdowson, 1998; Agha 2007). How to negotiate shared understanding at work with the knowledge of one’s repertoire should be a central focus of foreign and second language teaching today which should also consider the multimodal nature of contemporary communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2013) involved in the developing ‘word order’. Moreover, dealing with various types of problems and misunderstandings related to language and content should be rehearsed with an aim to mirror real-life practices as closely as possible. An implication for educators, this requires learning from the learners (Ehrenreich, 2009). They should also be equipped to understand the social practices surrounding the highly
context-specific use of language (Duff 200). Such knowledge will be applicable for preparation program for staying abroad/exchange, sojourner and expatriate trainees who need to be able to accommodate to new contexts and deal with often unfamiliar ways of speaking.

The results of this study have implications for discussing the notion of ‘awareness of appropriateness’ as part of language users’ metalinguistic awareness. Importantly, an adjusted view on appropriateness has been projected in applied linguistics (e.g. Crystal 2002; Canagarajah 2007). Canagarajah notes that we need to increase our understanding of local ways of speaking and to promote an idea of metalinguistic awareness and sensitivity so as to identify differences in them across communities. Moreover, a focus on communicative repertoires rather than on correctness “entails a new approach to pedagogy” (Rymes 2010, p. 536). This does not necessarily mean a new curriculum, but “a change in culture and attitude – a change that recognizes teaching with a commitment to build knowledge of our students as much as to build knowledge in our students” (Rymes, 2010, p. 539). As Rymes (2010, p. 532) strongly argues, constructing metalinguistic awareness of communicative repertoires is a longitudinal, life-long process. It requires socialization into new ways of speaking, which enhances the construction of one’s own repertoire, recognition of its value and tolerance of linguistic inadequacies. To see oneself as using appropriate language and as a multicompetent user (Cook, 1999) requires the kind of reflexive, discursive, interactional and semiotic work
performed by the participants in this study rather than reference to an essentialist notion of language as a well-defined, bounded entity. Metalinguistic awareness also relates to contextual sensitivity, accommodation and tolerance of communicative incompetence (Saville-Troike, 2003) according to which in some situations it is appropriate or advantageous to appear as ‘not fully competent’. One is sometimes forced to be a ‘bad speaker’ purposefully and exploit a noticeable simplified, non-standard, language with its own local norms. This shows how even so-called ‘privileged resources’ can occupy a marginal role in a repertoire (Blommaert & Backus, 2013).

Based on the discussion on repertoires and metapragmatic activities and processes, this study also contributes to sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropological insights on superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). As Blommaert & Rampton (2011) note, metapragmatic processes have begun to attract interest in the field because “shared knowledge is problematized and creativity and incomprehension are both at issue, people reflect on their own and others’ communication, assessing the manner and extent to which this matches established standards and scripts for ‘normal’ and expected expression” (p. 8). This relates to the tension emerging in the globalized new economy between standardization and authenticity, the former of which relates to modern ideas about normality whereas the latter is linked to late modernity and the legitimization of local forms of language varieties, individuals’ agency and power and resistance to centralized norms (Heller, 2010).
F. Directions for Future Research

As workplaces offer an abundance of researchable data, they offer a number of possibilities to conduct future research. As has been pointed out, the role of different modalities and modes in communication could be incorporated in a workplace study to stress all the resources in use and as part of and exploring a repertoire (cf. Blommaert & Backus, 2011). In particular, it would be interesting to explore how a professional communicative repertoire is used in, for instance, workplace device-mediated communication, such as text messaging or computer mediated communication and whether there are similarities or differences between such a repertoire and repertoires used in speaking. Future research could thus aim at a more holistic understanding of professional repertoires, investigating how they associate with locally emerging semiotic registers (cf. Goebel, 2010). For instance, the participants’ ways of speaking consisted of such linguistic resources as language play and code-switching, all of which were necessary for conveying an effective message to others from different hierarchies in the workplace. Using such resources the workers were clearly trying to navigate their communication strategies in a multilingual workplace. A closer analysis of such dimensions would add an important angle to what constitutes, for instance, how humor contributes to workplace communication and how speakers develop their language play repertoires in different languages over time, in a multilingual workplace.

Hence, the participants’ multilingual repertoires could be looked at and the kinds
of resources that are attached to different languages, and not just to English in a similar way as in Blommaert & Backus (2011, 2012, 2013; see also Blommaert, 2012). For instance, the participants in this study possessed linguistic resources from Spanish and some other languages spoken in the workplace, which they used on a daily basis in sophisticated ways. Possession of such linguistic fragments would further shed light on individuals’ biographies not only as global workers but also as mobile individuals who encounter and acquire various resources during their lives. Furthermore, the role of their first languages (L1) could provide important insights on the mechanisms of repertoire development. During the early stage of socialization some of the participants indicated the influence of L1 in their use of English. Jack, for instance, claimed how he “prepared list of terms in his head and translate” from Spanish to English before speaking English, which he saw as a problem, or Jose who suggested his coworkers to “open their Spanish brains” to help them find words in English. Expanding the study of a repertoire to include more modalities and languages could be intertwined with a further theoretical exploration of the concept of repertoire and its various dimensions (see Duranti, 1997; Blommaert & Backus, 2013).

Related to the methodology applied in this study, I believe that they are also applicable for communities beyond a multilingual housekeeping environment. Knowledge about diverse, multilingual communities in workplaces and other out-of-school settings could provide a more holistic picture of demographic and linguistic
changes occurring in cities and towns across America. I believe future researchers would benefit from a grounded approach to understanding the details of what people actually do every day and how they cooperate to accomplish these activities together in different ways. I suggest that future researchers collaborate in multilingual research teams involving anthropologists, language, and education scholars. Scholars can learn from each other’s language resources and strategies to create new ways of talking and writing about education. Also, more efforts should be directed to understanding how immigrants organize their own education and ways of learning and communicating. Derogatory and discriminatory practices against immigrants and their language and labor skills can be combated through careful observation and documentation of their creative and resilient strategies for participating in society. Additionally, future research on learning in settings like workplaces, parks, houses of worship, sport groups, and many others may inform how we approach education and literacy in school settings. This research would also illuminate the processes by which values and norms about language competence and work skill are constructed over time. Anthropologists of education are especially positioned to highlight peoples’ accomplishments in ordinary educational moments happening all around us.
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*United States Census Bureau; Census 2010 Demographic Profile Data “Table DP-1-Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics”* Accessed November 24, 2013 (http://factfinder2.census.gov)


## Appendix A: Samples of the Workers’ Glossary List

1. Samples of English Glossaries from the Spanish-Speaking Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Mariana</th>
<th>Alberto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Klien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sof</td>
<td>Oholo</td>
<td>Guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japi</td>
<td>Cofi</td>
<td>Homeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Telefon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cofi</td>
<td>Finis</td>
<td>Okey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chikin</td>
<td>Telefono</td>
<td>Luncho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreyse</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
<td>Dota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cekc</td>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>Me finis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no guud</td>
<td>Ohmygad</td>
<td>Faesbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakumklinir</td>
<td>Blaket</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ves</td>
<td>Isgud?</td>
<td>Culo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toile</td>
<td>Kar</td>
<td>piorofo</td>
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<td>Sop</td>
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<td>music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tirid</td>
<td>Clas</td>
<td>meskyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its</td>
<td>Bru</td>
<td>Kofi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swip</td>
<td>Kriminator</td>
<td>Dast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remot tv</td>
<td>Dnd</td>
<td>mopi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brum</td>
<td>Launge</td>
<td>Londri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash</td>
<td>Culo</td>
<td>Dras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirer</td>
<td>Go home</td>
<td>wasklot</td>
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### 2. Samples of Spanish and English Glossaries from the non-Spanish Speaking Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahmed</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>Suresh</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drash</td>
<td>Basura</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helo</td>
<td>Helo</td>
<td>See you liter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay?</td>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>Room guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Nono</td>
<td>Okey?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Felis</td>
<td>Kofe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca</td>
<td>Fenito</td>
<td>Goodbye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krazy</td>
<td>Loko</td>
<td>Finis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbuy</td>
<td>Mi uno</td>
<td>Sodo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tut brah</td>
<td>Toayas</td>
<td>Gues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me go home</td>
<td>Wueno</td>
<td>Sampuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finis</td>
<td>Finito</td>
<td>Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>trabaho</td>
<td>Meskyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>She angry</td>
<td>Loco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No more</td>
<td>No mas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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3. Terms that Appeared Frequently in Different Glossary Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Mariana</th>
<th>Alberto</th>
<th>Ahmed</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>Suresh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(it’s) okay</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Okey</td>
<td>It’s okey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>Kreyse</td>
<td>Greisi</td>
<td>Krazi/Loko</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You crazy/loco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goodbuy</td>
<td>Goodbye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Klein</td>
<td>Limpio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Me finis</td>
<td>Fenito</td>
<td>Finiso</td>
<td>Finish/finite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>Cocola</td>
<td>Soda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sodo</td>
<td>Refreco</td>
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<td>Oh my god</td>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td>Omayga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Japi</td>
<td>Kofi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest</td>
<td>(room) guest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Chikin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Polo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dras/basura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Ola</td>
<td>Oholo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helo</td>
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<td>Telefon</td>
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Appendix B: Sample of Workers’ Written Glossary Lists
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingles</th>
<th>Spanish / Español</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OKAY</td>
<td>ESTA BIEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>JABON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAPI</td>
<td>Felis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O MATE</td>
<td>QUE PASA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIKIN</td>
<td>PULPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEYSE</td>
<td>LOCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHECK</td>
<td>CHECADO</td>
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### Appendix C: Samples of Observation Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| October 6  | Houseman, Public areas attendant | Housekeeping office | Divina: “You’re still cleaning it?”                | Billy: Yeah  
Divina: with what?  
Billy: with this shit!  
Divina’s reacted negatively Billy’s statement, and she said, you know “Mexican’s enemy is another Mexican” |
| October 7  | Supervisor, Housemen      | Radios            | Kara asked whether all “Hockey rooms” are well taken care of. | They both said, “termino”  
Hockey rooms are rooms where hockey players stayed in. |
| October 8  | Houseman, room cleaner    | Radios            | Martin let Maria know a room without the DND sign. | Maria said, Martin spoke different Spanish  
Maria said in the end of the conversation that people want to test ‘her English’ |
| October 8  | Room cleaner, lobby attendant | Break room       | Maria complained why Martin talked in Spanish with most of Spanish workers but NOT to her. | |
Dear guest is an honor to serve you at any moment you feel at home. Make your stay as enjoyable as a fantastic day pass.

Housekeeping

Schedule has been changed
Please check!
El horario ha cambiado
Por favor de Checarlo