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## Language Diversity and Leadership Effectiveness

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## **Keywords**

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## Abstract

This article addresses whether language diversity is relevant in leadership effectiveness. The research employed mixed methodology in a two-phase study examining language diversity and leadership effectiveness in the U.S. labor market using the language-as-resource (LAR) conceptual framework (Ruiz, 1984). The first phase analyzed 2010 General Social Survey data using proxy variables describing the relationship between languages other than English (LOTE) and occupational achievement. The second phase explored the role of LOTE in the leadership function with a focus group discussion. Insight about language diversity and leadership effectiveness was captured, with five themes emerging from the focus group discussion. This research is timely, given shifting U.S. demographics, and encourages organizations to hire leaders with LOTE skills, as well as to promote LOTE study.

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## Introduction

In an attempt to help the United States citizenry better understand and respect other cultures, former President George W. Bush introduced the National Security Language Initiative in January 2006 (Bureau of Public Affairs, 2006), which was pivotal in revisiting issues relating to language diversity in the nation. In addressing university presidents at an international education summit, the former President proposed an increase in cultural understanding by learning a language: “It’s a gesture of interest. It really is a fundamental way to reach out to somebody and say, I care about you. I want you to know that I’m interested in not only how you talk but how you live.” The sentiment crossed the aisle as in a 2008 Democratic debate, in which then Senator Barack Obama expressed, “It is important that everyone learns English and that we have that process of binding ourselves together as a country. . . every student should be learning a second language. . . leadership in the world is going to be our capacity to communicate across boundaries.”

The need for cultural understanding in a post 9/11 world, coupled with a shifting U.S. population landscape, has created dialogue concerning language diversity. In 1980, 11% of the population spoke a *language other than English* (LOTE), whereas 20% reported doing so in 2010 (U.S. Census, 1980; U.S. Census, 2010). Given this

upward trajectory, focus should be on the role of LOTE in the nation. Changing demographics have increased languages such as Vietnamese, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Persian, and Tagalog (Shin & Kominski, 2010), while presence of the *big six* European languages (Fishman, 2004) — except Spanish — has decreased. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 12.8% of the population spoke Spanish at home. Spanish importance is longstanding, as highlighted in a 1946 article outlining foreign languages for occupations, with Spanish having highest demand (Burke, 1946). Little has changed as far as respect for today’s demand for Spanish. Among international businesses in Wisconsin, approximately half indicated Spanish as the most valuable language (Waldman & Soma, 2007). In fact, employers in areas with large Spanish-speaking enclaves regard Spanish as *innate talent* (Alarcón & Heyman, 2013).

Language discourses also consider a sustainable environment for language prosperity (Robinson, Rivers, & Brecht, 2006). The challenge in sustaining language diversity, per Romaine (2008), involves the way in which communities guard their languages in view of diffusing languages such as English. Global relevancy of English threatens linguistic diversity (Phillipson, 2009) and generates the need for a sharing milieu for English and LOTE (Shenk, 2011).

An exploration of language in 21st century globalism provides context for language diversity. The profundity of globalization today is unique, as evidenced

in economic, political, and cultural activities. Within global economic activity, English is deemed the *lingua franca*, or described by Phillipson (2008) as the *lingua economica*. Despite English dominance, globalization shrinks national barriers, increasing the need to understand other languages and cultures (Brecht, 2007). Moreover, global marketplace expansion, combined with a weakened U.S. dollar, has made American-made exports attractive, increasing affairs overseas (Feldstein, 2011). In conducting commerce abroad, LOTE skills facilitate communication, planning, and operations (Williams, 2010), indicated by U.S. international businesses requiring LOTE for engineering, accounting, consulting, sales, and service (Waldman & Soma, 2007). When organizations are not equipped with foreign language capacity, *bridge* individuals fill gaps (Harzing, Koester, & Magner, 2011), giving rise to questions about the human resource value of LOTE.

Despite convincing evidence on language diversity value, market inefficiencies continue to exist. In an analysis of language diversity and economic outcomes for India and China — two of the most populated countries in the world — Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín, and Wacziarg (2012) found that, of the two growing economies, India trailed China due to a wider language range found in India that hinders efficiency. In the same manner that language is a “powerful unifying force in nation-states” (Kelman, 1972, p. 197), a common language in business fosters integration and growth (Lauring & Selmer, 2011).

Compounding the discussion is the lack of an official language policy in the United States (Potowski, 2010). Measures have been taken to confront language issues chiefly in education and national security (Brandes, 2009; Brecht & Rivers, 2000), although public arguments continue to involve political ideologies for official English (Hayakawa, 1992). Social action groups have promoted English (U.S. English, Inc., 2013) and English-only legislation, specifically the English Language Unity Act (2013) introduced by the 112th Congress to declare English as the official national language.

### **The Groundwork for Language Diversity and Leadership Effectiveness**

Research has revealed the impact of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004; Kreitz, 2009), as well as the role of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007; Offermann & Phan, 2013) for effective leadership, and the connection between emotional and cultural intelligence (Alon & Higgins, 2005). Emotional and

cultural intelligence can develop with LOTE. Therefore, exploring the relationship of emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence to effective leadership offers a platform for the manner in which language diversity relates to effective leadership.

**Emotional intelligence.** In assessing qualities of effective leaders, Goleman (2004) discussed emotional intelligence as involving self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Emotional intelligence is an ability to interpret and respond to emotions of others, while regulating one’s personal emotions (Earley & Ang, 2003). In business leadership training programs, emotional intelligence is deemed a top 10 competency of successful global leaders (American Management Association, 2012). Even institutions of higher education consider emotional intelligence as integral in leadership (Kreitz, 2009).

**Cultural intelligence.** Ang and Van Dyne (2008) defined cultural intelligence as a “capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings” (p. 3). In view of the relation between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, cultural intelligence can serve as a transfer tool, as it transmits meaning (Alon & Higgins, 2005). Earley and Ang (2003) observed that cultural intelligence differs from emotional intelligence, as it affords effective adaptive behaviors (Offermann & Phan, 2013), hence cross-cultural context. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE), a 10-year study involving 62 societies, 17,000 managers, and 951 organizations, identified a relationship between culture and leadership (House, 2004). Culture influences style and behavior of leaders (Ayman & Korabik, 2010), enabling effective interaction with those of foreign backgrounds (Ang et al., 2007; Offermann & Phan, 2013). Cultural intelligence also permits the understanding of existing organizational subcultures and establishing more appropriate matches between individuals and functions (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008), as well as influences the quality of information collected, observed, and used in decision making (Mannor, 2008). Cultural intelligence facilitates cultural understanding, and language diversity helps to achieve both. As a nation of immigrants, the United States retains LOTE capacity with immigrants and their children raised with bilingual and bicultural traditions (Chadraba & O’Keefe, 2010). Folding such LOTE capacity into organizations potentially enhances overall cultural intelligence.

**Language diversity.** Contributions of language diversity exist in nations, firms, and individuals. First,

in the case of the European Union, individuals retain a cultural identity and mother tongue, yet may speak other languages to improve understanding across nations (Glaser, 2005). Next, globalization increases foreign clientele and suppliers for U.S. firms; therefore, using multilingual employees with foreign affiliates results in improved communication (Piekkari & Zander, 2005). Finally, individuals experience enhanced cognitive (Bialystok & Martin, 2004) and social (Chen & Bond, 2010) skills with bilingualism. Seminal research by Peal and Lambert (1962) measured cognitive performance of bilingual and monolingual groups, revealing significantly better performance for bilinguals, in that a foreign language provides greater mental flexibility.

Despite the suggested value of LOTE, the U.S. labor market does not necessarily reward LOTE skills with wage premiums (Fry & Lowell, 2003). For bilingual minorities, studies have shown no meaningful return, other than a handicap for limited English proficiency (Oh & Min, 2011; Shin & Alba, 2009). Yet, small returns exist for certain LOTE (e.g., German) and for some occupations in services or management (Saiz & Zoido, 2005); nursing (Coombs & Cebula, 2010); and professional employment among Hispanic and Asian groups (Shin & Alba, 2009). It remains ambiguous as to whether leaders value LOTE.

Arguments have emerged relative to social cohesion. According to the linguist Kloss (1998), purposeful assimilation calls for non-English groups in the United States to use English for unity. Likewise, Kelman (1972) explained that language diversity does not contribute to unity by stating, “common language is a potentially powerful unifying force for a national population” (p. 194). Ironies appear in the workplace as well. Luring and Tange (2010) observed fragmentation, resulting from *contained* communication, in which individuals congregate with others of their own language and *dilute* communication, whereas they withdraw from group interaction due to language inadequacy. Thus, the rationale for a common corporate language to create organizational cohesion (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006) resembles the concept of a national language in order to create social unity.

Despite fragmentation, foreign languages beget various perspectives and shape thinking. Multicultural thinking for building relationships is critical in diverse organizations (Chin, Gu, & Tubbs, 2001). A multicultural mind influences thinking flexibility for foreign cultural concepts (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000), allowing for cultural frame switching (Ramírez-Esparza,

Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006). For example, *guanxi* means *relationship* in Chinese, yet it involves more than a literal translation because it means establishing a *long-term* investment in personal life and business (Chin et al., 2001). Unawareness of this underlying meaning may cause misunderstanding, even insult. Multicultural minds involve cultural constructs that guide behavior and affect perceptions (Hong et al., 2000; Ramirez-Esparza et al., 2006). Combined with cultural perceptions are language differences exposing personality expressions based on social contexts of given languages, which enhance understanding and interaction with others (Chen & Bond, 2010). When individuals are bilingual, and thus bicultural (Chen & Bond, 2010), they switch between cultural lenses — *frame switching* — contributing to understanding (Hong et al., 2000; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006).

**Effective leadership.** An examination of the meaning of effective leadership helps to create a connection to language diversity. To this end, certain leadership qualities are noted. First, effective leaders demonstrate *cultural intelligence*, which improves decision making (Ang et al., 2007); permits adaptive behaviors (Offermann & Phan, 2013); and affords competitive advantage (Grosse, 2004). Second, effective leaders possess *emotional intelligence*, described by Northouse (2013) as “the ability to understand emotions and apply this understanding to life’s tasks” (p. 27), thus enhancing self-awareness and social skills (Goleman, 2004). Third, effective leaders display *empathy*, a key attribute of servant leadership, in which leaders focus on follower needs (Greenleaf, 2008). Language diversity and cultural intelligence lend themselves well to servant leadership; when one learns another language, one is a guest in another world. Fourth, effective leaders have *skillful communication* skills, identified by Robles (2012) as a top 10 soft skill.

As languages contain knowledge, viewpoints, and join individuals (Dicker, 2003), the skillful use of language is crucial for leaders. Fluency in LOTE frees leaders from obtuse thinking, melting ethnocentrism of the *lingua globale* — English. As organizations evolve with culturally diverse members, a LOTE creates capital in terms of employee knowledge (Dhir, 2005).

### **The Connection between Language Diversity and Leadership Effectiveness**

In analyzing leadership theories, Northouse (2013) suggested germane leadership qualities found in the trait

approach: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. As these qualities are relevant in the profile of effective leaders, an examination of studies connecting language diversity to these qualities creates a case for language diversity as a potential tool for effective leadership.

**Intelligence.** A review of studies by Bialystok, Craik, and Luk (2012) revealed enhancement in bilinguals' executive control system — the network of the brain. The executive control system includes cognitive functions such as memory, inhibition, and attention switching, for which bilinguals, compared to monolinguals, show superior mechanisms (Bialystok et al., 2012; Bialystok & Martin, 2004; Salvatierra & Rosselli, 2010). Cognitive skills in this control system resemble the emotional intelligence of leaders (Goleman, 2004). One dimension of emotional intelligence is self-regulation, in which individuals control impulses, much like bilingual cognitive control of word retrieval (Bialystok et al., 2012). This alignment of self-regulation in emotional intelligence, and cognitive control in bilingualism, illustrates a potential leadership quality by way of LOTE. Bilingual cognitive abilities also include creativity, a desired management skill (Shuayto, 2013). A study of nonverbal creative abilities found significantly higher scores for bilinguals compared to monolinguals, attributed to more than one cultural and linguistic framework (Kharkhurin, 2010). A wider range of options provides more time and creative solutions. Another study found a positive relationship between creativity and bilingualism — as the ability to speak another language increases, creativity increases as well (Lee & Kim, 2011). Organizations with LOTE-competent leaders may capture such cognitive abilities tied to LOTE.

**Self-Confidence.** In personal development, language diversity contributes to self-confidence. The GLOBE research identified self-confidence as a major attribute of cultures — referred to as *assertiveness* (House, 2004). Self-confidence resulting from cultural experiences and acquired language skills (Grandin, 2011; Mistretta, 2008) is an additional quality potentially bolstered with LOTE competency.

**Determination.** This leadership quality involves appropriate dominance when followers need direction (Northouse, 2013). Determination requires focus, which Maxwell (1999) identified as concentration on major, rather than minor items. Focus equates to the selective attention described in bilingualism (Bialystok & Martin, 2004). Hence, determination joined with focus illustrates

yet another leadership quality potentially fused into LOTE competency.

**Integrity.** According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), exemplary leaders act with integrity. Synonymous to honesty, integrity forms trust. Leaders build trust with language diversity, as knowing the language of another fosters reciprocity. Glaser (2005) expressed that language diversity shows “the world can be viewed from different angles” (p. 207), promoting empathy. Concerning job performance, bilingual leaders have a significant effect on production and quality due to an ability to show empathy to LOTE-speaking workers (Madera, Dawson, & Neal, 2012). LOTE-skilled leaders can potentially empathize and foster integrity with followers.

**Sociability.** This quality involves interacting with others by speaking and listening (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). An example of language in social interaction is American Indian communication, in which silence is a communicative expression (Covarrubias & Windchief, 2009). Cultural awareness prevents the misunderstanding of such mores. LOTE provides leaders with various perspectives to respect cultural differences and potentially enhance sociability.

Implications of language diversity are relevant for leaders, as LOTE can be learned, refined, or recruited by organizations. However, monolingual contentment (Ward, 2010); ethnocentrism (Ayman & Korabik, 2010); and English prevalence present obstacles for LOTE in the nation. LOTE competency potentially provides cultural understanding and linguistic expressions to soften both monolingual contentment and ethnocentrism. Yet, English unites individuals of different cultures in the United States, obscuring the value of other languages and cultures which, combined with the lack of a national language policy, creates general intolerance for language diversity. Globalization raises questions on ways to better prepare leaders; thus, the challenge is to develop a valid appeal for language diversity in the leadership function. It is unknown whether LOTE matters in leadership effectiveness.

## Conceptual Framework

This discussion borrows the orientation of language-as-resource (LAR), a conceptual framework used in language planning, and one of three orientations viewing language as a problem, as a right, or as a resource (Ruiz, 1984). Examining LOTE in the leadership function using LAR offers an understanding of the human resource value of language. Similar to Harrison (2007), who

used language orientations to view language diversity in the social work practice, this study used LAR to view language diversity in the leadership function, targeting the current gap and allowing the discussion to move forward.

## Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this investigation was to determine to what extent and in what ways LOTE and leadership are connected. Considering world changing events, improving understanding is critical, and language diversity is a potential means. However, evidence regarding language diversity is mixed, with debates that it does not unite (Kelman, 1972; Kloss, 1998), as well as studies revealing its value (Grosse, 2004; Harrison, 2007; Madera et al., 2012). The literature has been silent as to whether LOTE is relevant in leadership effectiveness. Information is nonexistent on whether leaders with LOTE skills are more effective than those without. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of LOTE on the effectiveness of leaders. Insight on the potential human resource value of LOTE can motivate leaders to study or maintain LOTE skills, as well as to inform employers of the value that prospective LOTE-competent leaders bring to organizations.

## Methodology

This study used a mixed methods two-phase approach. The first analyzed relationships among proxy variables in the 2010 General Social Survey (GSS), a secondary dataset and leading U.S. societal trends survey. The GSS is a full probability sample representative of the U.S. population age 18 and over. Proxy variables were identified to measure LOTE-speaking, LOTE-fluency, specific LOTE spoken, occupational prestige, and income (General Social Survey, 2013). The use of GSS secondary data for this study was comparable to the use of (a) the American Community Survey in LOTE research by Shin and Kominski (2010), (b) the National Adult Literacy Survey in bilingualism and U.S. labor market research by Fry and Lowell (2003), and (c) the 5% Public Use of Microdata Sample in bilingualism and wages in U.S. minority groups research by Shin and Alba (2009).

The second phase qualitatively explored the role of LOTE in the leadership and professional careers of 12 purposefully selected LOTE-speaking participants

by means of a focus group discussion. LOTE-speaking leaders were identified in an alumni database of a research institution in upstate New York. These alumni majored or minored in one or more of the following languages: Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish from 1983 to 2013. Guiding the focus group discussion were open-ended protocol questions based on the conceptual framework of LAR (Ruiz, 1984).

## Results

The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings offered a comprehensive perspective on the relationship between language diversity and leadership effectiveness. This broad perspective provided insight on LOTE as a potential human resource for leaders.

**Quantitative findings.** In the first phase of this study, empirical results found no evidence that speaking a LOTE predicts either occupational prestige or income, after controlling for a set of demographic variables. This finding was similar to that of Fry and Lowell (2003), suggesting LOTE-speaking has no meaningful wage return in the U.S. labor market. Particularly, no evidence emerged that speaking Spanish predicts income, analogous to other research concluding that speaking Spanish had no significant returns in the U.S. labor market (Saiz & Zoido, 2005). In addition, no evidence emerged that LOTE fluency predicts either occupational prestige or income. An analysis of LOTE fluency identified both Spanish and French fluency, on average, as a disadvantage to income in the U.S. labor market. Relative to Spanish fluency, findings in this study were comparable to Shin and Alba (2009), in which bilingual workers (Mexicans) suffered economic penalties, as well as in Kalist (2005), in which Spanish-speaking nurses suffered income disadvantages in Spanish-speaking population areas. Exacerbating this reality was limited English, which Oh and Min (2011) suggested is more relevant than bilingual ability in the U.S. labor market.

**Qualitative findings.** In the second phase of this study, findings provided another understanding of the connection between LOTE and leadership effectiveness. Twenty-five percent of focus group participants grew up with a LOTE at home, similar to Robinson et al. (2006), who observed that 26% of the sample ( $n = 1,398$ ) grew up in a home with LOTE-speaking parents. Participants expressed LOTE as valuable in their leadership role, with five common themes: (a) cultural acumen, (b) relational insight, (c) communication savvy, (d) impetus for development, and (d) social civility.

**Cultural acumen.** Cultural acumen is a potential outcome of fluency in a LOTE. Focus group participants discussed adding depth to their acumen with the two subthemes of cultural acuity and cultural malleability. Leadership qualities that surfaced within cultural acuity were understanding, awareness, insight, and empathy. One participant (company president; German) commented, “my LOTEs have given me kind of a set of metalinguistic skills that I can take with me that help me penetrate other cultures a bit more easily.” Cultural malleability was characterized by leadership qualities of flexibility and nonstereotyping, with participants noting that LOTE knowledge clarified cultural misunderstandings.

According to House (2004), cultural knowledge improves performance by mitigating conflicts between individuals of different cultures. Contributing to acumen is a mindset shaped by given LOTE, consistent with Chen and Bond (2010), who described personality changes as a function of language use. Adding to acumen is the bilingual ability to express culture-specific values elicited when switching from one language to another (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006), as well as adapting via culture-specific personalities (Chen & Bond, 2010). Culturally astute leaders foster collaboration through understanding and, therefore, improve the organizational environment.

**Relational insight.** Relational insight is potentially achieved by way of LOTE. Participants expressed improving relational insight with two subthemes: building relations and enhancing rapport. Leadership qualities transpiring from the subtheme of building relations were trust and respect. One participant (director; Chinese) who regularly used LOTE commented, “... they’re really happy to have a lawyer that speaks their language.” The subtheme of enhancing rapport involved the leadership qualities of connection and acceptance. Participants related the power of LOTE in enriching client and colleague relations, as well as in enhancing leadership performance, concurring with research that LOTE use results in more effective job performance (Madera et al., 2012). Leaders with relational insight interact with others on the same wavelength to improve work relations, thus enabling organizations to welcome changing demographics and challenges of foreign activity.

**Communication savvy.** Communication savvy potentially develops with LOTE. Participants related the acquisition of communication savvy with two subthemes: refined communication skills and heightened perceptions.

Leadership qualities in the refined communication skills subtheme were English articulation and LOTE accuracy, described by one participant (healthcare; Spanish): “Knowing a certain phrase we might use in English and then thinking about how it would sound and what it would be in Spanish...” The heightened perceptions subtheme involved qualities of adaptability and intuition, described by another participant (healthcare; Spanish): “I think I’m able to easily adapt to reading other people or knowing someone who might be uncomfortable...” These findings related to that of Conrad and Newberry (2011), who pointed to the general value of communication skills. Communicating in LOTE directly increases understanding similar to Madera et al. (2012). LOTE indirectly improves perceptions to overcome barriers and to enhance interaction, as in Kassis-Henderson (2005), in which language diversity ameliorated work team relations. As global proximities diminish and activity abroad grows, organizations can prepare with communication savvy leaders.

**Impetus for development.** Impetus for development is potentially nurtured with LOTE. Participants conveyed experiences of their own development with three themes: professional opportunities, personal development, and personal enrichment. In the area of professional opportunities, one participant (healthcare; Spanish) stated: “I’ve always encouraged hiring people that are bilingual... because they can relate and understand what it is to be from a different culture.” The subtheme of personal development consists of the leadership qualities of cognition, courage, patience, and sensitivity, as related by another participant (healthcare; Spanish): “I think for me it brought me more patience and understanding... being able to understand that someone could have Cerebral Palsy and they might not be able to physically tell me or show me...” Concerning personal enrichment, participants commented on general activities enhanced by LOTE, such as travel, art appreciation, and the study of other languages.

As a resource for professional opportunities, LOTE skills allow access to specific positions, with 33% of focus group participants securing employment due to LOTE, relating to Harzing et al. (2011), who suggested using bilingual employees as bridges for language barriers. Moreover, findings in this study, in which half of the focus group participants used LOTE at work, related to the investigation by Grosse (2004), revealing that slightly half of employees with LOTE and cultural understanding used this knowledge in business activities.

For the personal development of leaders in this study, the qualities identified within the impetus for development concurred with existing research indicating LOTE use improves cognitive ability (Bialystok & Martin, 2004; Salvatierra & Rosselli, 2010); forms courage (Grandin, 2011); builds empathy (Madera et al., 2012); and enriches general life activities (Mistretta, 2008).

**Social civility.** LOTE skills potentially lead to social civility. Participants described expanded world awareness created by LOTE with two subthemes: fostering global awareness and promoting community concern. In fostering global awareness, the qualities of tolerance and benevolence emerged, fittingly expressed by a participant (director; Chinese): “It really changed me... about injustice in that world system and I think now the world is becoming smaller and we’re going to get a little poorer and hopefully other people will get a little richer.” The promoting community concern subtheme entailed qualities of altruism and heritage appreciation.

Similar to the resource value of language in mitigating tensions between minority and majority language communities (Ruiz, 1984), LOTE-speaking leaders are a resource, as they nurture tolerance. Half of the focus group reported expanded awareness of social issues due to LOTE, with one participant (analyst; Chinese) highlighting dissolution of stereotypes she held about Chinese after learning the language and culture. This finding concurred with Hise, Solano-Mendez, and Gresham (2003) regarding the importance of U.S. executives recognizing culture and history in conducting business abroad. For community concern, one participant (broadcasting; Spanish) volunteers as an interpreter, as well as maintains Spanish heritage skills, resonating with longitudinal research on LOTE retention along with English acquisition (Tran, 2010).

## Implications of Findings

The LAR framework conceptualizes LOTE as having discreet, indirect effects. The broader perspective of this study provided evidence that LOTE contributes to the human resource value of leaders. Acknowledging this value that is potentially gained with LOTE brings to the forefront the most appropriate approach for improved leadership. To this end, institutions of higher education play an integral role by (a) encouraging LOTE in academic programs, (b) hiring LOTE competency, and (c) promoting LOTE study among organization employees.

**Encourage LOTE study.** Institutions of higher education can increase LOTE courses and can merge

LOTE into academic programs. Such is the case at the University of Rhode Island, in which an International Engineering Program was designed to combine engineering studies and foreign languages. A qualitative study based on selected graduates of this program highlighted outcomes such as personal confidence resulting from uniting LOTE study to engineering (Grandin, 2011). In another case involving Thunderbird, the Garvin School of International Management, foreign language study is required for a particular graduate business program, with evidence of competitive advantage resulting from this requirement (Grosse, 2004). Joining LOTE to academic programs better prepares students for professional and leadership positions, as evidenced in this study, in which professionals and leaders recounted tapping into LOTE for client interaction. These findings concurred with Rathod (2013) in bilingual U.S. law practice, as well as Harrison (2007) in bilingual social work, to enhance practitioner-client relations. As the LOTE-speaking population grows and joins the labor force (Shin & Ortman, 2011), the need for LOTE competent leaders grows as well. Institutions of higher education can prepare leaders by promoting LOTE study and designing LOTE-friendly academic programs.

**Recruit LOTE competence.** U.S. LOTE capacity is increasing (Shin & Ortman, 2011). Given the findings in this study, institutions of higher education should recruit leaders with LOTE to reflect this changing landscape. Two leaders in this study preferred hiring staff with any foreign language due to enhanced sensitivity captured with such skills. Consequently, a compelling group to consider is *intercultural* individuals, described by Chadraba and O’Keefe (2010) as U.S. educated children of immigrants raised with bilingual and bicultural experiences. As LOTE skills are a medium to cultural intelligence (Offermann & Phan, 2013), they enable leaders to adapt to culturally and linguistically diverse followers. Culturally adaptive leaders are better able to embrace the growing diversified U.S. workforce.

**Promote LOTE competence.** Institutions of higher education should promote LOTE as an organizational asset by encouraging employees to maintain LOTE ability, as discussed in Welch, Welch, and Piekari (2005) — or to develop it. Such efforts add to human capital. Although learning LOTE is costly in terms of effort, time, and expenditure, organizational initiatives and employee tuition reimbursement can support this challenge. Himmelein (1995) observed an in-house German program at a U.S. manufacturing company, in which the training not only improved

colleague communication, but it also contributed to the organizational communication strategy. Along with expanding employee skills, these initiatives ameliorate cultural-related conflicts.

## Conclusion

Although the United States has a rich language history, the pursuit of nationhood has folded language resources under the umbrella of English. However, globalization obliges collaboration and raises questions about LOTE and cultural insight in the nation. In viewing language as a resource, current LOTE capacity should be mobilized; as more individuals communicate in different languages, the benefit to society increases. The diversity of language promotes understanding, as knowing the language of another involves knowing the culture of another, linking LOTE skills to a potential leadership resource for melting prejudices and creating harmony. Ultimately, the diversity of language is a compelling approach to social justice.

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