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Health & Human Services

Employer Language Guide: Talent Development



REFUGEE
SERVICES

September 2025



Helping workers grow through language support

When companies invest in helping employees build their skills- especially those still learning English- it leads to stronger teams and better results. By offering clear training and career steps, local English learners can succeed at work and feel more confident in their roles.

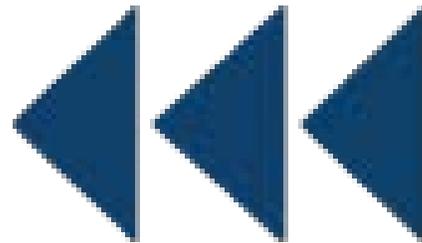
- Train workers using simple, job-focused language
- Support them through on boarding and early tasks
- Create learning paths that lead to new skills and promotions

Language skills strengthen teams and open doors

To work well together, employees need to understand each other—through both language and culture. This helps with teamwork, learning, and serving customers.

Many workers want more chances to grow. But if their English isn't strong, they might miss out on training and new roles. That limits their success, and the company's too.

When employers support language learning, everyone benefits. Teams become stronger, and more workers are able to reach their full potential.



Peer mentorship for language learners

Pairing local English learners with bilingual coworkers is a simple and powerful way to support training and build confidence.

How it eorks:

- Match new hires with peers who speak the same language.
- Teach tasks through hands-on, side-by-side training
- Encourage questions and repeat demonstrations
- Build trust from day one

How it works:

- Helps new employees feel supported
- Speeds up learning and reduces mistakes
- Builds strong relationships
- Improves retention and teamwork

"Shoulder-to-shoulder" training helps new employees learn by doing-while feeling seen and supported.



Use visual tools for training and onboarding

Replace written materials with pictures and videos to help English learners succeed at work. Visual tools show tasks clearly and reduce confusion- especially in jobs with repeated steps.

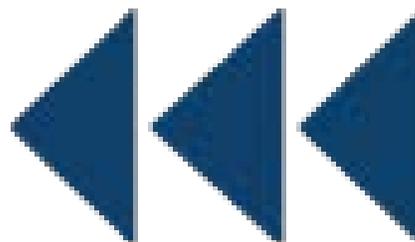
How it works:

- Turn job descriptions into picture-based guides
- Use videos to show tasks step-by-step
- Post visuals around the worksite (e.g., exits, breakrooms, safety zones)
- Offer materials in multiple languages when possible

Why it matters:

- Makes training easier to understand
- Helps workers remember tasks
- Creates a safer, more welcoming workplace
- Reduces mistakes caused by language barriers

Visual tools help everyone learn faster- and feel more confident on the job.



Building supportive teams for language learning

Place English learners on teams with fluent coworkers to help them learn faster and feel more connected. This setup encourages teamwork and breaks down silos across departments.

How it works:

- Assign language learners to teams with supportive managers
- Include coworkers who are patient and willing to help
- Use shared tasks to build language and job skills together
- Encourage daily interaction and peer support

Why it matters:

- Speeds up learning and builds confidence
- Strengthens relationships across the company
- Creates a more supportive and welcoming workplace
- Helps everyone grow- together

Integrated teams help language learners succeed while building a stronger company culture.

Multilingual workers are valuable leaders

Speaking more than one language is a strength- not a barrier. Local English learners bring unique skills and lived experience that help them succeed and support others.

Why it matters:

- Multilingual workers often connect well with new hires
- They understand challenges and offer strong peer support
- With training, they can lead teams and mentor others
- Promoting them builds trust and strengthens company culture

What employers can do:

- Focus on job skills and leadership- not just language fluency
- Use bridge solutions to support growth (e.g., visual tools, bilingual coaching)
- Create clear paths to promotion based on performance and expertise

Multilingual employees help build stronger teams- and deserve opportunities to lead.

Multilingual workers are valuable leaders

Employers can support refugee talent by offering programs that combine job training with English learning. These programs help new arrivals adjust to their community and succeed at work.

How it works:

- Partner with schools, nonprofits, and community groups
- Offer job placements with hands-on training
- Include English classes and social support
- Set clear goals and track progress with regular check-ins

Why it matters:

- Helps refugees build confidence and workplace skills
- Supports long-term success in the labor market
- Strengthens community ties and employer reputation
- Creates a fair and transparent path for growth

Integration programs give refugees the tools to thrive- at work and in their new community.



Case studies: Examples of talent development

Case study: McDonald's - Training for all languages

With over 1.7 million employees in 100+ countries, McDonald's uses flexible training tools to support workers of all language levels.

What they do:

- Provide 24/7 access to training videos on tablets
- Show tasks like making fries or managing the drive-through
- Offer instructions in multiple languages
- Help employees learn by watching and doing

Why it works:

- Makes training easier for English learners
- Builds skills and confidence from day one
- Supports a workforce that reflects the local community
- Promotes growth - no matter the employee's language level

McDonald's shows how digital tools and language access can create strong, skilled teams.

Case study: Cloverdale - Training multilingual teams with flexibility

At Cloverdale, new hires speak many different languages. To support them, the company uses flexible tools and peer support to make training clear and welcoming.

What they do:

- Create PowerPoints and videos in multiple languages
- Use bilingual staff to check translations for accuracy
- Add captions to training videos for better understanding
- Share materials through Redzone, a training app on iPads
- Use handheld translators like Vasco when needed

Why it works:

- Helps new hires understand policies and procedures
- Builds trust through peer-led tours and translation support
- Encourages a family-style environment where everyone feels welcome
- Promotes communication- no matter the language

Cloverdale shows how creativity and care can make multilingual onboarding smooth and supportive.



Best practices in language training

To make language training truly effective, companies should build programs that meet real workplace needs and support every learner.

What works best:

- **Industry-Based:** Focus on job-specific language tied to daily tasks and real work settings.
- **Accessible:** Offer training during work hours, on-site, and at no cost to employees- partner with local organizations when possible
- **Incentivize:** Celebrate progress with rewards, recognition, and visible growth opportunities.
- **Welcoming & Equitable:** Promote belonging and empowerment. Make training available to all, and share best practices for working with English learners.
- **Tech-Enabled:** Use tools like live translation and captioned videos. Include hands-on practice and group learning.
- **Data-Driven:** Track learner progress to adjust lessons and personalize support.

Additional resources and references

This guide offers practical ways to train, support, and advance English language learners in the workplace. It includes strategies like peer mentorship, visual tools, inclusive teams, and case studies from leading employers. The goal is to build a welcoming environment where every employee can grow and thrive- regardless of their language level.

References:

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