


Monolingual? Your Bilingual Team Faces Surprising Challenges



In the business world, companies are charged with fulfilling the needs of not only their US Hispanic customers, but also of the bilingual professionals they employ to deliver their products and services. Much has been written about targeting and retaining Spanish-speaking customers. Less attention is paid to the other half of the equation: the bilingual professionals who serve them. If you are a monolingual speaker, like 80-85% of the American population, the challenges of bilingual

professionals who serve Spanish-speaking customers in the workplace may surprise you.

In our 23 years of hands-on experience training tens of thousands of contact center and branch associates, we have found that most bilingual English/Spanish speakers in the US are heritage speakers who were educated in English and learned Spanish informally. Some learned to speak at home and others from watching TV or visiting relatives in another



country. Most heritage speakers are able to demonstrate verbal proficiency in Spanish; they can effectively communicate and understand spoken Spanish. However, few verbally fluent heritage speakers are able to read or write in Spanish. Surprisingly, in our surveys of bilingual learners, very few took a high school Spanish class which limits their understanding of the structure and rules of the language.


With compliance regulations rearing its head in almost every industry, precise communication in Spanish, both spoken and written, is no longer a luxury. “Dinner table” vocabulary is no substitute for workplace terminology, industry specific jargon, and legal compliance. The ability to accurately answer customers’ complex questions about banking, credit and collections, financial services, insurance or healthcare is now a must. When confronted with fluent and literate Spanish-speaking customers, many bilingual heritage speakers find themselves lacking the knowledge needed to effectively communicate professionally.

Heritage speakers in the professional world need assistance

in learning industry-specific vocabulary, basic grammatical structures and cultural insights to serve the geo-demographic diversity of Spanish-speakers in the US.

Arial International’s “Business Spanish” multicultural, multilingual team supports bilingual heritage speakers in the work place. Our clients count on our decades of expertise to evaluate and improve the Spanish language communication of bilingual employees to improve customer retention and reduce compliance vulnerability. Our “Business Spanish” toolbox includes:

- **Spanish Proficiency Tests:** Verbal and written assessments objectively evaluate the Spanish proficiency of telephone and e-Skills associates before you hire or pay a bilingual differential.
- **Bilingual Training:** Instructor-led, Train-the-Trainer and e-Learning seminars focus on improving verbal and written communication and comprehension proficiency of heritage learners in real-world business settings.
- **Translations:** Our team of linguistic experts are subject mat-



ter experts who share a wide variety of business expertise ensuring translations are accurate, consistent and retain their original tone and meaning

How many of these tools are in your company's resource kit to support your bilingual professionals who interact with your Spanish-speaking customers?

- **English/Spanish Glossary:** For more information about our products and services, I invite you to visit our website at www.arialinternational.com, email me at astrid@arialinternational.com or call toll-free at 1-877-866-1578.
Our *Financial Services Glossary for Bilingual Professionals* is available in three formats: an e-Book (at online bookseller lulu.com), a license for the searchable PDF format for publication on your company's Intranet and a desktop job aide.