

Polyglot Employees: Their Motivations to Apply to and Remain in the BPO Industry

Debrah Grace R. Ong*
Virgel C. Bingham**
University of the Philippines

Abstract

This study explores what attracts polyglot or multilingual employees to work for business process outsourcing (BPO) or shared service business firms and how many, through their human resource (HR) department, remain. It adopts a pluralist industrial relations (IR) perspective to assess polyglot employees and BPO companies as distinct units driven by different needs and motivations. The survey reveals that more than the salary, work schedule attracts polyglot employees to work in BPOs and shared service industries, while career advancements and harmonious relationships are what help companies retain them. Despite the high salary and benefits, HR managers still struggle to recruit polyglot employees due to their scarcity. Thus, HR must improvise strategies to ensure employee retention.

Keywords: Motivation, Polyglots Employees, BPO/Shared Services, Attraction and Retention of Talents, Human Resource Management

* Debrah Grace R. Ong is an HR practitioner. She holds a Master's degree in Industrial Relations and a Bachelor of Arts in European Languages from the University of the Philippines Diliman.

** Dr. Bingham is Professor and Director of the Center for Industry Productivity and Competitiveness, School of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of the Philippines Diliman. His email address is phdbingham@gmail.com.

Introduction

Filipinos are known for their ability to speak foreign languages, especially the English language. This is because— first, the Philippines was colonized by the Americans, and their style has gained popularity throughout the country until present (Chavez, 2014). Aside from the beginning acts of Americans in imparting the English language, Filipinos also exerted great efforts in maintaining its usage, unlike Japan, that decided to abandon the English language the moment the US occupation ended in 1972. Moreover, in other countries like China and Korea, the English language is merely taken as a course/subject in school and not as a means of communication (Rappler.com, 2013).

One of the significant efforts that can prove the inclusion of the English language in the lives of every Filipino is an examination of the educational system, precisely the K to 12 program of the Department of Education (DepEd), wherein English is already introduced as early as Grade 1 focusing on oral fluency (GOVPH, n.d). By the time these students enter high school, they have the option to participate in the Special Program in Foreign Language of DepEd (2008), wherein third-year high school students can have foreign language electives such as basic Spanish, French, Nihonggo (Japanese), German, Mandarin (Chinese) and Korean. These classes are offered twice a week, with a duration of 120 minutes per session. Furthermore, students have the option to continue their foreign language class on their fourth year, but this time, on an intermediate level. At the end of the two-year program, students are expected to understand the culture of different countries, and most importantly be able to engage in a meaningful conversation in the global workplace.

Another aspect in the Philippine educational system that heightens the knowledge of Filipinos on foreign languages is the emergence of language courses or degree programs. Most schools have a bachelor's degree in English. Other universities, such as Mindanao State University, offers a bachelor's degree in Islamic (Arabic) Studies (Mindanao State University-Main Campus-Marawi, 2019). The University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) also offers a bachelor's degree in European Languages, a master's degree in Spanish, German and French and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature (Office of the University Registrar, n.d). Additionally, in terms of student training, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has a Student Internship Abroad Program that provides students from different universities

with level 2 accreditation from CHED, a chance to render their on-the-job training abroad for three to 12 months. The courses covered by the program are: Business Management, Agriculture Education, Engineering Education, Health Related Education Programs, Science and Mathematics, Social Sciences and Communication, Humanities, Information Technology, Criminology, and Teacher Education (CHED Memorandum, 2013). At UPD, under the Office of International Linkages Diliman, undergraduate students have the option to apply as exchange students in partner universities in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, and France (Office of International Linkages Diliman, 2016). Through these programs, it is likely that students learn about other countries' culture, language, and work ethics.

On a technical/vocational level, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) offers, free of charge, a 100-hour training program each for English, Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish and 150 hours of Japanese. The courses offered are: English proficiency for customer service workers, primary Japanese language and culture, basic Mandarin, Chinese language and culture, primary Arabic language and Saudi/Gulf culture and primary Spanish language. Interested applicants must be Filipino, male or female, at least 18 years old and a high school graduate. Classes are conducted from Mondays to Fridays. Participants can also choose which session they want to participate in, either in the morning or in the afternoon.

In addition to TESDA are other institutions conducting training or courses in foreign languages such as Japan Foundation Manila (Nihonggo or Japanese for aspiring Filipino teachers, the Japan Foundation, 2019); Alliance Française de Manille (Diploma in French Language Studies, Diploma in Advanced French); and Goethe Institut Philippinen (Extensivkurs and Superintensivkurs classes and the online community Deutsch Fur Dich, where interested individuals can learn the language for free). Learning the Spanish language and culture is also possible at Instituto Cervantes while the Chiang Kai Shek College offers short courses in Mandarin. The Korean Cultural Center offers Korean language classes (basic to intermediate) and speech competitions while learning the Italian language and culture is also possible at the Societa Dante Alighieri Manila. Communication enhancement via advanced studies (CEVAS) also offers courses in English, Japanese, Mandarin, Korean, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and Bahasa, among others (CEVAS, 2019). The Ateneo

Center for Asian Studies also conducts seminars, workshops, lectures and courses on Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Russian and Vietnamese language and culture.

Aside from language institutions, embassies also provide language training programs. The US embassy, through its English Language Specialist Program, caters to English teachers to enhance their ability to teach English as a second or foreign language (U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, n.d). The Embassy of Czech Republic in Manila conducted their first month-long Czech Language and Culture Course in 2012, where students learned necessary conversation skills as well as the country's food, history, geography, arts and literature (Embassy of Czech Republic in Manila, 2012). Lastly, the Philippine Embassy in Myanmar has provided free Myanmar Language classes to Filipinos who, upon completion of the 15 sessions, received certificates as proof of participation (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2018)

Upon obtaining a degree or completion of any language course or training, skilled individuals have the option to choose to work in the Philippines or abroad. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2018), there were 2,112,331 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in 2016. The number is growing because Filipinos keep seeking better job opportunities abroad to provide the best for the families they leave behind (Reyes, 2007). The Philippines has been deploying various types of workers, be they professionals like doctors, engineers, nurses, and teachers or semi-skilled like technicians, production workers, caregivers, and entertainers (Macaraeg, 2005).

Unfortunately, for many OFWs, the time to stay in a different country is limited. They eventually return to the Philippines due to the following reasons: end of the contract, deportation, recall, and evaluation due to turmoil, destination country's political decision, phase-out of overseas workers and personal goals (Bayan Academy for Social Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Development Inc., 2014, p. 3). Upon their return, OFWs are faced with the problem of what comes after or the phenomenon called community reintegration. It is defined as "the re-introduction and re-insertion to the community under three identified dimensions namely economic stability, social networks and psychosocial" (International Labour Organization, 2018, p. 3). However, on the positive side, these returnees now possess "social remittances" through the acquired skills and ambitions which can, later on, help them obtain new or even better jobs (Garchitorena, 2007). Foreign language skills are a plus for them. The Philippines has

a dual citizenship law. Those holding such status and who have lived outside the country for a long time can capitalize on their proficiency in foreign languages if they choose to return to the Philippines.

Globalization, with its off-shore operations, changed the global business environment. Advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have spawned business process outsourcing (BPO) companies in the Philippines. The Department of Trade and Industry defines BPO as “delegation of service-type business processes to a third-party service provider.” It can be classified into the following sectors: contact centers, back-office services, data transcription, animation, software development, engineering development and game development (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2010, p. 1). The resulting change in the global business environment pushed companies to look for employees with highly globalized skills, prompting a so-called “war of talent” (Chambers, Foulun, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels III, 1998). One much sought-after skill is the ability to work and converse in different languages. As such, multilingualism is in high demand because it allows companies to secure a broader range of clients and opportunities for business expansion. McKinsey Global Institute revealed that BPOs chose to locate in the Philippines due to its low labor cost, strong English proficiency, and the availability of potential employees (McKinsey & Company, 2005).

The growth of BPO industries, more commonly known as call centers, facilitated the increase in employment possibilities and investment in the Philippine economy. It allowed for more than 720,000 employment opportunities and grossed more than \$13.5 billion in 2012 (Bordadora, 2013). It was projected that by 2016, the industry would expand to accommodate an additional workforce of 1.3 million. It also facilitated the outsourcing of other company functions, such as administration and marketing, to offshore operations to effectively use their capital in the form of a shared services industry (Rouse, 2012).

Two trends in the BPO industry are currently emerging. First, foreign clients look at the Philippines not merely as a service for transferring, not just for taking calls but also to do more critical, end-to-end process and highly-skilled jobs (Gidda, 2016). Second, with the emerging technology, more BPOs and shared service would be aided by robotics and artificial intelligence which leaves repetitive tasks to machines and allows for upskilling of workers and training

on more critical and highly-skilled work (Vibar, 2017). Accounting, Consultancy, and Data Analytics are just a few of the emerging facets in the outsourcing industry introduced in the country.

To become the leading BPO center in the world, Philippine BPO industries are now looking to expand to emerging market economies, most notably in the Eurasian region. This requires increasing communication networks from an English-speaking base to accommodate other languages, thus fostering demand for multilingual speakers. Language becomes an essential skill in everyday life as well as in the workplace (Seelyes & Day, 2001). This requirement opened up the industry to hiring even visiting foreign tourists, returning OFWs and their children in place of Filipino polyglots with high educational background and language training.

With the training and opportunities given to Filipinos, why are BPOs still finding it challenging to employ polyglot workers? Despite the increasing opportunities provided for polyglots, why are they discouraged from entering such a line of work? The current workforce still prefers to migrate to foreign lands or to work for other local industries in search of better livelihoods and careers.

Like any other industry, BPOs also encounter problems, and one of these is related to employees. A study by Errighi, Bodwell & Khatiwada (2016) found that BPOs are having a hard time finding and retaining skilled employees, especially the polyglots. These employees complain of the high level of stress as well as the increasing cases of HIV/AIDS. It is compounded by the angry customers that they have to deal with. The unpleasant situation is aggravated by the nocturnal work arrangement and often erratic work shifts.

It is established that finding and retaining suitable talents, especially the polyglots, is a serious business issue in the BPO industry. It is in this context, therefore, that companies had to adopt new strategies to attract and retain polyglot employees. The latter is a part of their emerging globalized workforce. This paper attempts to understand what attracts multilingual employees to BPOs. Moreover, it also examines how companies recruit, select, develop, reward, motivate, and retain their polyglot assets.

Research Problem. This research aims to answer the questions:

1. What attracts a multilingual employee to work in a BPO/ shared services company (SSC)?

2. What human resource strategies have been utilized by BPOs/SSCs to attract motivate and retain polyglot employees?

The principal objective of this study is to identify the factors that motivate polyglot employees to work in a BPO in Metro Manila. In so doing, the research intends:

1. To describe the basic profile of a multilingual talent in a BPO;
2. To identify the factors that attract polyglot employees to a BPO;
3. To understand the perception of multilingual employees of their actual job and working in the BPO in general;
4. To evaluate the reasons that keep polyglot employees in their company;
5. To identify the HR strategies developed and implemented by BPOs concerning recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and benefits, and employee relations; and,
6. To recognize the overall employee value proposition that companies use to acquire, motivate, and retain their polyglot talents.

Significance of the study

A pluralist Industrial Relations (IR) perspective was used to explore the answers to the question of employee attraction and retention. This perspective looks into the relationship of the actors, both employer and employee, within their work environment. Moreover, an HR approach was adopted, which views employees as independent beings who are crucial to the company's operation. Furthermore, multilingualism is understood as a strategic and quantifiable skill essential for aspiring employees and employing companies. Possessing such skills increases the competitiveness of companies and employment opportunities, allowing both employer and employee to see its value in a highly competitive globalized industry.

This study is inspired by the fact that there are no previous studies found, so far, on the attraction and retention motivations of multilingual employees in BPOs and SSCs locally. This research also seeks to assess whether there are differences in practice for bilingual and multilingual employees within the company and may yield understanding that can promote more significant employment opportunities and ventures for Filipinos.

Scope and delimitation

This exploratory study focuses on the attraction and retention of bilingual employees in BPO industries. They are employed because of their language skills and capabilities to perform specialized tasks for the company. As such, this study assesses their motivation in contrast to their perception of ideal working conditions. However, this study excludes, yet acknowledges, variables such as employee attrition and value proposition. This research utilized descriptive statistics to assess the demographic indicators of bilingual employees in BPOs. Besides, qualitatively derived data inspired by the HR model supplemented data gathering and analysis of critical responses.

Selected points of view on motivation and HR management

The literature on motivation to work encompasses a wide range of understanding. It includes vital concepts from corporate culture (Jocano, 1998; Luthans, 2011; O'Reilly, 1996; Sayles & Wright, 1985;), organizational climate (Glisson, 2007; Rusu & Avasilca, 2014; Schneider, Bowe, Erhart & Holcombe, 2000), employee value proposition (Chambers et al., 1998; Lowe & Schellenberg, 2002; Page, 2016; Trost, 2014; Turner & Kalman, 2014) and total rewards management (Berger & Berger, 2004). Employee motivation also refers to various psychological concepts and theories (Adler, 1997; Davis, 2014; Hall, 1994; Latham, 2007; Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn 2008; Steers, Porter & Bigley, 1996), and motivation to work is derived from among these according to four distinct factors: money, need for affiliation, need for achievement and desire for meaningful work (Steers et al., 1996). Also, Learned Need Theory argues that individuals develop their needs from their environment (McClelland, as cited by Steers et al., 1996).

The motivation for money. Business employers compensate work and contribution to the organization in terms of salary and non-monetary rewards that serve to motivate employees to participate and perform. Rewards may be extrinsic or intrinsic. Rewards help to influence success, attract and retain employees, drive performance and skills development, promote organizational culture and reinforce structure (Lawler, 1987). While there is no established correlation

between a person's pay satisfaction and job satisfaction, focusing attention on specific rewards has negative consequences for personal development. Instead, rewards should directly impact an employee's subjective well-being (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2013; Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaaw & Rich, 2010). A survey revealed that employees prefer long-term financial and flexible benefits packages (Towers Watson, 2012). Since employees are not primarily motivated by salary, organizations, therefore, carry the responsibility of offering recognition and promotion benefits in its place (O'Reilly, 1996). Thus, employers must strike a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to avoid damaging both company and employee performance and ensure that employees are duly satisfied with their conditions.

Need for affiliation. Organizational culture is an integral component in facilitating a person's need for affiliation. Need for affiliation is satisfied by developing strong relationships that reinforce a positive and supporting environment. Employees consider social relationships when choosing to remain in the company (Manegdeg, 2007). Besides, employees profoundly feel the company's image as part of their identity (O'Reilly, 1998). Given this, a company must consider its image and staff relations in seeking to retain key members. Gering and Conner (2002) suggest enforcing proper management training and development to prevent employee attrition.

Need for achievement. The need for achievement is satisfied by accomplishing challenges and performing tasks driven by competition and excellence. It is defined by four characteristics: a strong desire to assume personal responsibility; a tendency to set moderately tricky achievements; a strong passion for robust performance; and a single-minded preoccupation with accomplishing the task. These are just several characteristics of a person with a high need for achievement (McClelland, as cited by Steers, 1996). Often, a company's training and development program promotes the need for achievement alongside promoting influential culture and expanding learning opportunities. A good development program produces employees who can handle tasks with improved performance and excellence.

However, job performance and job satisfaction are two separate and unrelated categories. The latter refers to how employees perceive rewards in comparison to their expectations (Porter & Lawler, 1968). Also, components of mental health, namely affective well-being,

competence, autonomy, aspiration and integrated function (Warr, as cited in Newell, 1995) comprise a person's satisfaction with his or her work. As such, company innovations in the workplace adjusted to employees' mental health improves their happiness and day-to-day operations. Satisfaction among BPO employees often comes from company relationships, career progression, salary, policies, authority, and working conditions (Marasigan & Beerepoot, 2015; Sengupta, 2011). Work hours and conditions, especially concerning sleep schedules, negatively affect employees' satisfaction and performance as well their well-being. These often result in fatigue and stress at work. Empson (2018) observes that overworking has since become a culture in BPO industries, which is further reinforced by social control and rigid performance-based culture.

Overwork and working conditions directly affect an employee's stress levels, which leads to poor performance and work dissatisfaction (Adan, 2015). However, employees are well aware of these conditions and often adjust their lifestyles to their work. Others view these conditions as an opportunity as there is barely any competition, and these offer a higher degree of autonomy and pay (Alegado, 2013; Oscar, 2016).

The desire for meaning. As much as organizations have specific qualities they look for in an employee, employees also have desires, motivations, and preferences regarding their ideal workplace (Caplan, 1987). Employees can derive economic and/or moral meaning from work. Herzberg classifies this into motivators, which include intrinsic rewards such as the desire for self-improvement, learning, achievements, and recognition, or hygiene factors such as salary, co-worker relations, and promotions, with the latter being given more premium (Herzberg, as cited from Steers et al., 1996).

HR management. HR handles recruitment, which, among others, is tasked to attract and select the right employees for the organization. (Barber, 1998). The HR unit is no longer responsible for simply hiring new members of the organization; it must also ensure their retention. Employee retention cannot be understood in terms of a single issue since it consists of many interconnected factors, namely: development opportunities, autonomy, compensation, workload and work-life balance (Kossivi, Xu & Kalgora, 2016). HR's role is vital in making sure that ethical behavior is always observed by the members

of the organization (Lim, Mahis & Jackson, 2016). The role has since expanded to accommodate the changing environment to include strategic HR, legal compliance, talent management and development, total rewards, risk management, worker protections and employee and labor relations (Lim, et al., 2016). Through identifying employee values and reasons, companies can adjust their working conditions to secure employee retention (Flower & Hughs, 1973).

Research Framework

Theoretical framework. This study adopts a pluralist perspective, which views the organization as composed of its members, with varying interests and objectives often managed by a governing structure (Jackson, 1977). The organization is comprised of the governing agency, which ensures fairness and manages the whole social system; the owners of the business, who communicate with the workers to set and agree on concrete actions and demands; and the group of workers, who are considered valuable economic resources essential for the company's operation. The research likewise inspects various theories of motivation within the HR model such as money, need for affiliation, need for achievement and desire for meaningful work (Steers et al., 1996) and integrates these with the employees' choice and the idea of work. A third approach would present a critical analysis in response to the recruitment and selection policies of HR management.

Conceptual framework. The research tested 12 motivation factors, namely: security, advancement, type of work, company, co-workers, pay, supervisor, hours, working conditions, benefits, work-life integration balance, and performance and recognition. These are categorized accordingly into Money, Need for Affiliation, Need for Achievement and Desire for Meaningful Work, plotted against each of the basic demographic profiles comprised of Age, Sex, Tenure and Citizenship/Residency status of the polyglot employee to see which attribute influences employee attraction to work the most (Barber, 1998). The assumptions below have been culled from available related literature. It is evident in the research questions, framework and methodology that this paper focuses only on the polyglots and does not attempt to compare and contrast the motivations of the polyglots vis-a-vis the non-multilingual.

Assumptions. This research assumes that when an employee's needs and expectations are met, attraction to the company eventually leads to retention. Retention can then be driven by the company's recruitment process and supplemented by HR interventions. Thus, this study explores the presupposition that a polyglot employee's decision not to leave is influenced by the same job attributes and reasons for the attraction.

1. Polyglot employees take on the job in a BPO/SSC if it can provide pay, compensation and a set of benefits they think are fair or equitable for their own needs and wants.
2. For bilingual employees, company image or brand is a significant factor when considering to work for a BPO or SSC.
3. Polyglot employees consider an excellent impression and relations with managers and colleagues crucial in their decision to accept and stay on the job.
4. Polyglot employees consider opportunities for career advancement and training in their decision to work in a BPO or SSC.
5. Good performance ratings and recognition programs can help sway an already-hired or even a potential polyglot employee to choose to work and stay in the industry.
5. It is essential for polyglot employees to see that the nature of their current job is aligned with their skills set, competencies, and career aspirations.
6. Favorable work conditions, such as when an organization allows employees to feel safe, secure, and respected in a workplace is significant in attracting and keeping polyglots in the company. Factors such as office location are also considered significant in choosing the company to work for.
7. Work schedule or hours of work is a vital job attribute factor, but it does not bear considerable weight in the decision of polyglot employees to work in the industry.
8. Security/job security has a significant implication on the decision of polyglot employees to work in BPOs and SSCs. Employees need to know that their company affiliation is economically stable.
9. A company that demonstrates a balanced work-life program could attract and keep polyglot employees.

Further, it is presumed that the polyglots' different demographic profiles contribute immensely to their decision to work or remain in the job. Company management, as represented by the HR representatives, also crafts people-management strategies that focus on driving satisfaction in the areas of recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, training and development, and employee relations.

Research Methodology

Data gathering and sampling design. This exploratory study utilized data derived from qualitative and quantitative techniques, namely a survey and interviews.

The first phase of the research was a polyglot employee survey consisting of three parts: a general profile, attraction and retention. The instrument was pre-tested before use. The study was electronically created through the online survey application Google Forms, and distributed through the participants' email and social media accounts.

Polyglot employees use a foreign language other than English as their means of communication at work. They could be (a) Filipinos who studied/learned the foreign language in the Philippines, (b) Filipinos who acquired the language from staying in a foreign country or being born of either/both multinational parent/s, or (c) foreigners staying in the country.

Participants were chosen through snowball sampling, relying on referrals by identified polyglot employees working in BPOs and SSCs within Metro Manila. The criteria for selection were: tenures must range from one month to 10 years; held either voice or non-voice jobs; and maybe rank-and-file or supervisors such as Team Leaders or Operations Managers. Data gathering lasted seven months.

With snowball sampling, the second phase consisted of a separate face-to-face interview with three polyglot employees. The names and companies of the participants were not revealed as per their request. The interview had four main parts: employee profile; work experience; job satisfaction; and motivation and needs. The questions revolved around the motivating factors, namely: money, need for affiliation, need for achievement, desire for meaningful work, and attraction to work in the industry. For each factor, two to three questions were asked. Respondents were chosen based on the earlier criteria. The guide questions were pre-tested before use. The third

phase consisted of separate interviews with four HR practitioners from different BPOs/SSCs. They were picked based on the criterion that they must have polyglot employees. The interview questions and session revolved around crucial areas such as their strategies relative to sourcing, attraction, selecting, developing, motivating, managing, and retaining their polyglot resources.

Data processing and analysis. As mentioned earlier, the Philippines has no statistics on the total number of polyglot employees in BPOs/SSCs. Exploratory in nature, this study was designed to have at most 120 participants, but only 73 completed the survey within the given timeframe. The resulting data from the survey yielded three clusters of results.

For the first cluster, a demographic profile was generated. Demographic elements were used as categories for statistical comparison between the sample population's job attributes and the decision to work. In compiling the general profile of polyglot employees, only Sex, Age, Nationality and Tenure were used for comparison while Civil Status and Educational Attainment were left out because they presented no significant implication on the analysis. They were only used as a demographic reference. Residency/citizenship status was explicitly chosen to test the component of culture or national culture concerning attraction and retention and to check if it was indicative of any shared or dissimilar information.

The second part of the survey consisted of choosing five from the 12 descriptive attributes they considered most, namely, (1) Pay, (2) Benefits, (3) Company, (4) Co-Workers, (5) Supervisor/Leadership, (6) Advancement (including Career Development), (7) Performance & Recognition, (8) Security, (9) Type of Work, (10) Working Hours, (11) Working Conditions, and (12) Work-Life Balance. It aimed to determine which job attributes were chosen the most. The job attributes were presented as statements to bring context and make them easier to understand. The resulting top five were arranged in increasing order of percentage, as this inquiry aimed to ascertain whether the same attributes or level of importance for the attraction were consistent with the employees' decision to remain in the company. Aside from presenting summary statistics, comparisons between the categories of the demographic variables were also made.

Lastly, the third part delved into job retention. It determined the significance of the 12 job attributes mentioned earlier to the

polyglot employees' motivation to stay in the company. The job attributes were grouped into four: Money, Need for Affiliation, Need for Achievement and Desire for Meaningful Work, each with a 5-point Likert scale measurement. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from strongly disagree to agree strongly. Agreement Rating is defined as the percentage of respondents who answered 4 or 5 as their agreement to an account. Therefore, only the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses were considered in deriving the agreement level percentage.

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the statistical test of proportions were conducted at 0.05 level of significance to check if agreement ratings among the groups of demographic factors differed. It meant that the agreement levels between demographics were generated by comparing the significant differences in proportion between percentages. The demographic variables Sex, Age, Nationality and Tenure were used for comparison.

To determine if the proportion of responses between the demographic profile groups differed, a z-test for proportions was used. The z-test is a parametric statistical test used to determine if the data provide sufficient evidence that two proportions, denoted as p_1 and p_2 , are not equal. These proportions represent the members of two groups that have the characteristic of interest. In the case of the agreement ratings, the proportions represent the members of two groups that answered 4 or 5 in each item. It is of interest to test the null hypothesis that the two proportions are not equal against the alternative hypothesis that the two proportions are equal. The decision rule in choosing whether or not to reject the null hypothesis is based on the calculated p-value of the test, wherein any p-value less than or equal to 0.05 suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis. The rejection of the null hypothesis meant that the collected data provided sufficient evidence that the two proportions were significantly different.

For the polyglot employee interview sessions, three were tapped and selected through a snowball sampling technique. Their responses to the question categories were combined. The interviewees come from the same industry but were affiliated with different companies. They did not know each other, and they were not participants in the survey phase of this study. The data gathered further supplemented data derived from the survey. On the other hand, in the interviews with the four HR practitioners, their answers were combined using the above-mentioned categories of HR functions. Several practitioners were contacted, but reasons such as unwillingness to reveal company information and

unavailability to accommodate interview were cited for declining the invitation to be interviewed.

Results and Findings

Socio-demographic profile. The first part of the survey revealed the profile of polyglot employees. Respondents were mostly single (72.6%) and female (61.6%). Majority of the respondents were between 21 and 30 years old (60.3%), a third was around 31 to 40 years old (32.9%), while less than a tenth were 41 years and older (6.8%). Almost all have a college degree (75.3%). In terms of nationality, at least half of the respondents were Filipinos (53%) while the remaining were non-Filipino tourists or those with a non-Filipino parent. Non-Filipino respondents with working visas have stayed in the country from four to seven years. Seventy-three percent of the respondents have worked for their company for not more than three years, of whom 52 percent indicated this was their first work experience. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents earned at least P30,000 a month, inclusive of salary, language premium, and other monetary incentives. Most of the respondents (47%) learned about the job opportunity from an online advertisement while many were referred by friends (38.4%) and print media (2.7%)

Job attraction. The second part of the survey showed that 63 percent of employees considered work time as most favorable. It agrees with Ahmad, Idris, and Hashim's (2013) asseveration that promoting a flexible work arrangement has a positive effect on employee job satisfaction and motivation, and likewise work-life conflicts and health. It also confirms that the work shift and hours can increase the stress level of employees and may lead to poor performance and also work dissatisfaction (Adan, 2015). High salary (58.9%), accessibility (47.9%), job security (46.6%), and advancement (45.2%) followed in this order. It validates Sengupta's research (2011), which revealed that interpersonal relationships, career progression, salary, company policies, working conditions, and authority have significant implications on job satisfaction. Only 5.5 percent answered that they do not have any job preference.

Comparing the sexes, females preferred the right work-life balance and males, opportunities to grow. In terms of age, the younger

age group preferred self-development compared to the older age group, which tended to value employment. Favorable work shifts were the top priority of Filipino respondents, while career growth and skills development was the top choice of non-Filipino respondents. It supports Gering and Conner's findings (2002) that development programs provide employees the potential to perform well on the job, which in turn gives them the feeling that the company values them for their contributions.

Table 1. Statements that respondents would consider most when taking/accepting job in a polyglot BPO company

Statements	N	%
The work shift is favorable to me.	46	63.0
The salary they are offering is high.	43	58.9
The work location is accessible, and the office environment seems safe.	35	47.9
I am assured of regular employment.	34	46.6
There is an opportunity for me to grow my career and gain more skills.	33	45.2
On top of the monthly salary, the company offers a good set of benefits (monetary and/or non-monetary) suited for my needs.	32	43.8
The company promotes the right work-life balance.	28	38.4
The work offered is the kind of work I want/enjoy doing.	24	32.9
I would like to be a part of the company as I've heard great things about it.	17	23.3
They have the kind of management (managers/supervisors) and a management style that I want.	13	17.8
The people in the company are the kind of people I would like to work with; a friend of mine also works in the same company.	11	15.1
The company has a sound performance rating system and good rewards and recognition programs.	6	8.2
I would go with anything; I have no defined job preferences. The efficiency of the company's recruitment efforts (i.e., job vacancy posting/advertisements, interview flow, recruitment feedback, the quicker the response, etc.) would be enough for me to take it.	4	5.5

Those who have been working for more than three years preferred tenure and regular employment. Those with at most three years preferred career and skills development. Meanwhile, those who worked for less than a year chose a high salary. This supports Schneider’s (1995) reasoning that the attraction processes a person goes through in selecting a company to work for “concerns the fact that people’s preferences for particular organizations are based upon an implicit estimate of the congruence of their characteristics and the attributes of potential work organization.”

Employee retention. The third part of the survey was divided into subcategories according to Money, Need for Affiliation, Need for Achievement and Desire for Meaningful Work. In terms of Money, most (67.1 %) of the respondents agreed to the statements “I would transfer to another company for an increase in my monthly salary.” It refutes the argument of Chamorro-Premuzic (2013) and Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich (2010) that there is a low correlation between pay satisfaction and job satisfaction. There is a significant difference in the proportion of those who have been working for more than three years to those who have been working for barely a year for the statement “I just want a job and be employed.” The employees interviewed were all satisfied with the compensation received, even citing company health assistance and giveaways in their interview.

Table 2. Agreement Rating for (Money) Compensation and Benefits Items

Statements	Agreement Rating (%)
I would transfer to another company for an increase in my monthly salary.	67.1
I am here because of the good salary offered.	52.1
The salary I am earning in this job is enough for me and/or my family’s needs/spending.	52.1
I am happy with the bonus, commissions and other extra monetary rewards that the company offers on top of my salary.	38.4
I just want a job and be employed.	35.6
With lesser pay, I would still do the job because I like the work I am doing.	16.4

In terms of Need of Affiliation, 74 percent agreed with the statement “The company makes me feel comfortable and included in the organization—There’s no discrimination on sex, age, race,

tenure, etc.” However, no significant difference was observed among the categories. The results support McClelland’s (cited in Steers, 1996) claim that people with a strong need for affiliation will be productive when management can provide them with “a cooperative, supportive work environment where positive feedback is tied to task performance” (Anonymous, n.d.). It also reinforces two areas of Schein’s (cited in Luthans, 2011) “psychological contract” for the side of the employees: the need to be treated fairly and some level of security in exchange for their loyalty. The employees interviewed responded positively regarding their company and teammates. This supports Manegdeg’s (2007) research that regards social relationships (with peers, friends and colleagues) within the industry as one of the highest factors which make employees stay in the company; and Gering and Conner’s (2002) assertion to focus on the proper management training and development of their managers and to supervise staff as a way of retaining the right talents. Interviewees expressed a sense of pride in their respective companies, which motivated them to accept the job in the first place.

Table 3. Agreement Rating for (Need for Affiliation) Organization/Company

Statements	Agreement Rating (%)
The company makes me feel comfortable and included in the organization – there’s no discrimination on sex, age, race, tenure, etc.	74.0
I have a good relationship with my boss and other direct supervisors (e.g., team lead, manager, etc.)	71.2
I value teamwork and feel at ease and comfortable working with my team/group.	65.8
Having a good relationship with my colleagues is a significant reason that kept me in this company.	56.2
It gives me great pride to be working in this company.	53.4
I receive proper feedback guidance and mentorship from my boss.	45.2
The company does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting them.	38.4
I see myself in this company for 3-5 years or more.	31.5
I prefer working alone. I wouldn’t say I like to mingle with my office mates.	16.4
I feel like I am over supervised and monitored too much all the time.	16.4

Table 4. Agreement Rating for (Need for Achievement) Performance, Career and Skills Development

Statements	Agreement Rating (%)
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	50.68
The company provides me with the right platform to develop my skills. I am always encouraged to take part in training that improves my performance and develop my skills.	49.32
The work that I do here gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.	39.73
Opportunities offered by the company for career advancement such as job advancement/promotions, mentoring with experts, internal job postings, open training programs are always made available to me.	35.62
I am happy with the bonus, commission and other extra monetary rewards that the company offers on top of my salary.	27.4
In this company, I am given the chance/opportunity to innovate, create/develop projects, and put my ideas into practice.	27.4
The company provides the right incentives and recognition for excellent performance.	24.66
I feel that my work here is aligned with what I really want to be or do.	20.55

In terms of Need for Achievement, many responded with a low agreement rating to items about personal accomplishment. Table 4 shows that 50.68 percent agreed with the statement “My job makes good use of my skills and abilities,” while the lowest response (20.55%) was to the statement “I feel that my work here is aligned with what I really want to be or do.” It affirms Caplan’s (1987) argument that employees are in search of a company that would enable them to make use of their skills and abilities, and which would cater most to their specific needs. There is a significant difference in terms of tenure in the statement “Opportunities offered by the company for career advancement such as job advancements/promotions, mentoring with experts, internal jobs postings, open training, programs are always made available to me” and “The company provides good incentives and recognition for good performances.” This may be because according to Roberson (cited in Nyfoudi & Shipton, 2014), individuals themselves have an inner inclination towards learning and an inherent willingness to take on the responsibility of education. This thus affirms Chambers et al. (1998) who suggested allowing people to move in jobs even before they are ready in the belief that people learn when placed in certain and uncertain situations that test their skills and practice their

autonomy. The second statement supports O'Reilly's (1996) argument that organizations carry with them the responsibility for the creation of a culture that looks at reward as not merely monetary but instead as a system that focuses on recognition and approval that, given more frequently, can promote or increase motivation more than money.

Table 5. Agreement Rating for (Desire for Meaningful Work)
Work-Life Integration

Statements	Agreement Rating (%)
The work location is accessible to me. The venue is a safe and secure environment.	74
I am happy with the work arrangement/schedule I have.	60.3
It is important to me that the company/management has a venue or process where I can share my concerns.	58.9
The company provides employee programs such as flexible working arrangements, flexible hours, medical benefits, etc. that are suited for my needs.	56.2
I consider my job as an integral part of my daily life.	53.4
I like the kind of work that I am doing here.	46.6
The company creates a fun working environment.	43.8
The company ensures fair employment conditions.	41.1
I like that the company holds non-work-related activities and events (e.g., family day, company outing, CSR, etc.)	38.4
My work is the right fit for me; it reflects my personality and passion.	26
I am always willing to put on extra hours of work because I enjoy what I am doing.	16.4
I feel like I am over supervised and monitored too much all the time.	16.4

In Desire for Meaningful Work, work location scored the highest with 74 percent responding with "agreed." It proves that risk management programs are implemented to address workplace, employee and financial factors to ensure organizational and employee interests are upheld as claimed by Lim, Mahis and Jackson (2016). Work schedule or arrangement follows with 60.3 percent. There was no distinguishable difference in the demography. In the statements "The Company ensures fair employment conditions" and "I am happy with the work arrangement schedule I have," there were significant

differences in the case of tenure, especially among groups with the lowest and higher mandate. The interviewees responded positively to statements on their work environment and conditions. This proves, according to Berry (2003) an individual would be guided by factors within himself, as well as within his environment, and process the decision to work in a company depending on his current circumstances within his environment. As the employee's decision considers external factors, local and international economic conditions need to be considered as well, and therefore it is necessary for organizations to take into account the country's laws, politics, organized labor, culture, social science and likewise, technology to shape a winning deal with their employees.

Key findings from interviews. The interviews revealed that polyglot employees were motivated by work shift, salary, company image, and opportunities for growth and skills development. In essence, these were the four of the top five job attributes chosen by the participants in the second part of the survey of the first phase of this research. Contrary to Staw (1996), this disproves that the employee's work attitude, behavior and likewise work ethics determine job satisfaction and reinforces three factors: development opportunities, autonomy, and compensation as claimed Kossivi, Xu, and Kalgora (2016). The researchers revealed that employee commitment might not be studied by looking at a single issue as it is a cluster of "interconnected factors." The interviewees revealed that flexible work arrangements provided them a balanced work and personal life; likewise, with a well-maintained colleague and supervisor relationships. It agrees with the data from the survey that flexible working hours is the top job attribute chosen by the participants when taking a job. They also agreed that the company name, profile, and brand were significant factors in their decision to accept and remain in the post. It boosts O'Reilly's (1996) proposition that some people feel pride in belonging to their company because of the image or the brand it is recognized for.

However, the interviewees noted the lack of opportunities for growth and skills development, especially the loss of language premium upon promotion. Besides, even if there were training and career development programs, they found it difficult to attend due to their workload and shifts. This concurs with Bird and Ernst (2009), who stated that although the BPO industry generates jobs, it does not necessarily do well in upskilling or elevating the competencies in its

employees and therefore the industry should now move to more skill-intensive tasks. Although the interviewees revealed they were pleased with the benefits and incentives (such as health assistance, company giveaways, and souvenirs) given on top of the salary, the survey and interview suggested that they would look to other companies that can provide higher pay and benefits. This refutes Barber (1998) who stated that applicants are most likely to choose positions with firms they believe can meet their psychological needs. As most employees are starting work in the industry, higher salary compensation and skills development are what they look for in a company, thus providing managers with the opportunity to enhance their attraction and retention packages.

Key findings from the HR practitioner interview. All interviewees acknowledged the challenge of recruiting polyglot speakers since not many people in the Philippines speak a foreign language other than English, which is the second language of the Filipinos.

As such, companies have offered competitive incentives and salaries to attract new employees. It is the right way of encouraging people to work for the company as the survey and employee interviews revealed that employees are attracted to a higher salary. The managers stressed the importance of assessing employee motivations and matching their skills once they are accepted to avoid investing in an employee who would leave for a higher salary after a short period. It conforms to Connolly (1991), who suggested that the motivational profile of the company's most successful employees can help in the recruitment of excellent talents. An excellent rewards package promotes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The interviews revealed that there are no differences in terms of training and development opportunities between polyglot and non-multilingual employees. However, the challenge for companies comes in providing incentives to retain their polyglot assets and advance their careers in their company. This guarantees employee job security and a higher competitive salary. Despite their technical advantage, all employees receive a fair amount of salary and benefits depending on their work experience and skills. However, polyglot employees receive an added language premium. It follows Gering and Conner's (2002) assertion that competitive salaries involve combining a compensation rate based on market standards with a work environment that is unique and can compete with others. Although this is the case,

the respondents acknowledged that there are indeed less career progression opportunities for polyglots because there would be a pay cut (loss of language premium) when they transfer or get promoted to a non-foreign language role. Hence, some employees prefer to job-hop or transfer to another company. According to an HR interviewee, their company addresses this by offering very competitive salaries for supervisory and managerial positions so that polyglot employees would not have to worry about losing a fair amount of pay when they consider taking on the job.

The interviews indicated that conflicts might arise between company employees and in some cases between the non-polyglot and polyglot employees due to cultural, interpersonal as well as remuneration reasons. HR interviewees claimed they respond to the crisis by promoting the company's core values and fostering an environment which would allow employees to socialize and interact more with their colleagues and strengthen their sense of belongingness within the company. They also remind everyone that they have equal access to opportunities and representation within the company. One of the interviewees said their company's culture of transparency and empowerment were significant factors in retaining employees.

The interviews also revealed that it has been harder for the HR management of BPOs/SSCs to look for polyglot employees that fit their specific requirements and technical demands. Companies are keener to accept employees who intend to stay and grow in the company, and thus HR adopts ways to provide the training and development tools that can embed the employees to the company's services and culture. This goes by Matuson's (2013) argument that the entire objective of the recruitment practice in attracting new employees would be senseless if there is no intent to get talent to stick around. It likewise confirms that in today's work environment, organizations are compelled to shift their attention towards attracting, developing, and retaining their critical talents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A general overview of the survey revealed that the general characteristics of those who answered the survey are Filipinos aged 21 to 30, single and at the prime of their careers. The research determined several factors that most polyglot employees consider when applying

for a job in the BPO industry. These are working hours, pay working conditions, security and advancement, with flexible working hours as a top priority. Employees consciously weigh in all motivating factors such as money, affiliation, achievement and meaningful work in their decision-making process. It was found that statements relating to the need for success and desire for meaningful work scored low, indicating that this is something organizations must address to prevent attrition and loss of employees. All 10 assumptions of the study reflected how polyglot employees were attracted to work and how BPO companies responded to such actions. For HR managers, providing a workplace environment that caters to a productive and social atmosphere attracted new employees and retained their essential polyglot assets. Access to more extensive opportunities and skills development, especially language premiums, must be improved as suggested by most employees.

Further exploration of the topic of polyglots working in BPOs and shared service industries is recommended. The government and BPO associations need to conduct investigations and compile statistics regarding polyglot employees because of the lack of data. These investigations should have a sample size that would allow more rigorous statistical analysis on employee retention and job attraction. Similar studies should be conducted with different variables and using various theoretical and analytical tools.

Possessing language capabilities is an essential and highly sought-after skill in the globalized business landscape. It is suggested that more and Filipinos start looking at the potential advantages of training and learning various languages to expand their employment opportunities. It provides the government, through its various agencies, several prospective projects in developing language proficiency to equip workers and expand investments in BPO industries. They could also tap returning Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as prospective language trainers, thus providing inbound OFWs economic opportunities.

Lastly, HR managers should improve and innovate their recruitment and selection strategies to attract polyglot employees to their company, while simultaneously providing more and more favorable working conditions to ensure that their employees choose to remain with their company.

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