The Strategic Role of Language Training Across Industries

Insights from Global Talent Leaders

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Executive summary

How are industry pressures reshaping learning and development priorities?
What makes a language program successful in today's global workplace?

This industry-focused report explores how high-performing companies are using language training to deliver strategic value: from talent development and engagement to market expansion.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with HR and learning and development (L&D) leaders from multinational companies, the report looks at how high-maturity language programs are designed, delivered, and embedded into business strategy.

This report shares key insights to help HR leaders:

o Navigate industry-specific trends and pressures
o Build targeted, high-impact language programs
o Use AI and personalization to scale learning and boost outcomes
o Effectively measure success

Whether you're refining an existing program or building the case for investment, this study offers practical inspiration from organizations leveraging language training for business success.

One-on-one learning, personalization, 24/7 access, cultural immersion, and interactive content are the features HR leaders listed as most important.

Why language program maturity matters

Earlier this year, research by EF Corporate Learning introduced a new approach to measuring the impact of corporate language training by tracking the overall business results of 1,300 multinational companies offering language programs.

Language programs were scored from low to high 'maturity' according to the following characteristics:

○ Program content and learning methodology
○ Personalization of learning journeys
○ Regularity of review & update of training program
○ Alignment with business and performance objectives
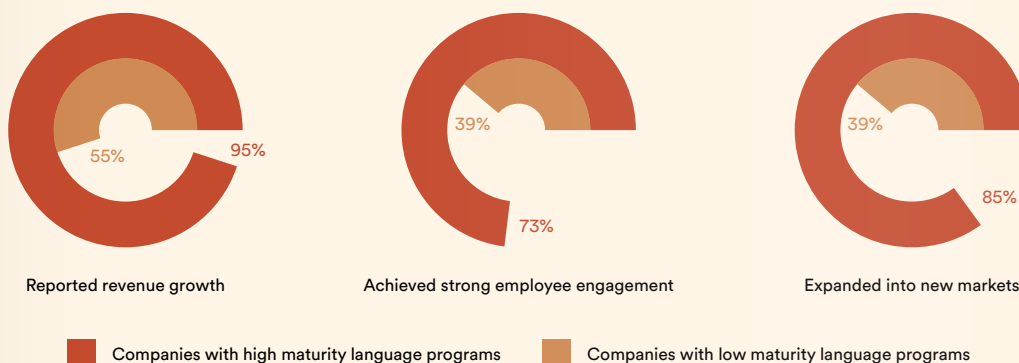○ Embedding in company learning culture

The results were groundbreaking. Companies with language programs with very high maturity scores were significantly more likely to:

○ Report revenue growth (95% vs. 55% of low-maturity peers)
○ Achieve strong employee engagement (73% vs. 39%)
○ Expand into new markets (85% vs. 39%)

Despite the range of language learning options available to global businesses today, from digital apps to in-person classes, few programs combine these features in a way that drives measurable impact. Fewer than 15% of companies have reached the highest level of maturity. And fewer than one-third offer personalized learning tailored to specific roles or goals – despite one-on-one learning, personalization, 24/7 access, cultural immersion, and interactive content being the features HR leaders listed as most important.

This report builds on the discoveries of the maturity report with a cross-sector lens. It delves into what organizations with the highest language program maturity levels across different industries are doing differently.

High vs low maturity language programs comparison

| Reported revenue growth | Achieved strong employee engagement | Expanded into new markets |

■ Companies with high maturity language programs   ■ Companies with low maturity language programs

About the research

This industry-focused report draws on qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with senior HR and L&D leaders. The participants represent primarily multinational, high-revenue businesses (86% of which generate over USD $1bn annually), spanning different industries and continents, including:

○ Anonymized interviews conducted by a third-party research agency with leaders from organizations with high-maturity language programs, defined according to EF Corporate Learning's maturity model.
○ Interviews with thought leaders from EF Corporate Learning's clients and partners, selected for their strategic roles in shaping language and workforce development programs in industry-leading organizations.

Key findings

Language learning is being used to address critical talent challenges across industries.

Organizations are increasingly using language training to respond to sector-specific pressures, from frontline capability building in manufacturing to client-facing communication in professional services. By learning from best practices across sectors, leaders can harness language training to tackle key business challenges, from improving workforce readiness to boosting retention and enabling internal mobility.

Companies are moving toward more intentional language training strategies – with clarity of purpose being the key differentiator.

Some organizations offer language training broadly to support engagement and inclusion across their workforce. Others take a more targeted approach, linking training to specific talent goals such as leadership development, promotion readiness, or client delivery. A defining factor of high-maturity programs is not the breadth or focus alone, but the clarity of purpose behind them, and how well learning pathways are designed to serve that purpose.

## Technology and AI are enabling scale and personalization.

Digital platforms allow organizations to expand access to training, particularly in dispersed or frontline populations. Meanwhile, AI is offering new possibilities for building learner confidence, delivering real-time feedback, and supporting recruitment testing. While AI adoption levels vary now, there is broad recognition that thoughtful integration is necessary to build employee skills, rather than erode them, into the future.

Impact is measured in a variety of ways, both quantitative and qualitative.

Most organizations use proficiency tests and participation data to track progress, but many are also considering broader indicators such as internal mobility, retention, and performance in cross-cultural contexts. While calculating ROI remains complex, a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures is helping to demonstrate value.
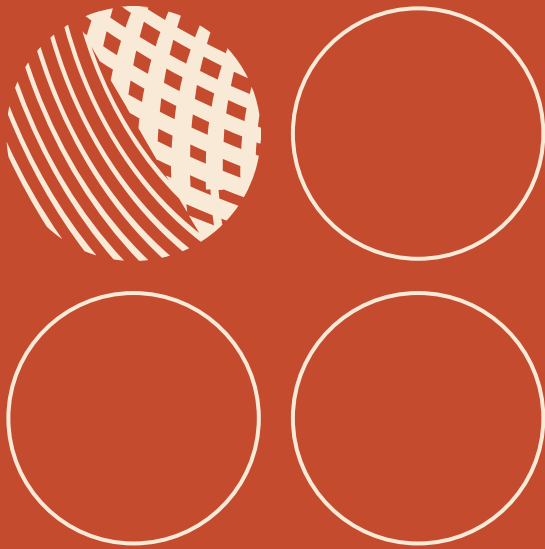
Introduction

In a world shaped by global operations, hybrid teams, and rapid technological change, the ability to communicate across borders, cultures, and time zones is now central to how businesses operate and grow.

For HR and L&D leaders, this creates new urgency to ensure language learning is both accessible and aligned with strategic goals.

At the same time, organizations across sectors are grappling with many of the same workforce pressures, from skills shortages to digital transformation, and are increasingly turning to language training as part of their response. While the operational realities may differ, the most effective strategies for designing, delivering, and scaling language programs are proving transferable across industries.

Featuring the unique perspectives of senior HR and L&D professionals across the professional services, manufacturing, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, and technology sectors, this report uncovers how mature language programs are driving impact, in learning outcomes and broader business success.

By surfacing both industry-specific challenges and cross-sector trends, it offers practical insights for leaders looking to elevate the role of language learning in their own organizations.

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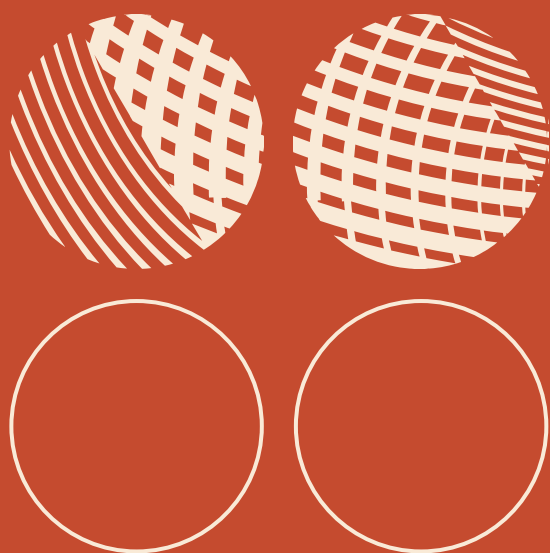
How are industry pressures reshaping corporate language learning?

As global talent markets tighten and organizational needs evolve, language learning programs are no longer generic. They're being adapted to address industry-specific pressures – helping companies to close skills gaps, manage compliance, and expand internationally. This section explores how language learning is being leveraged to achieve business outcomes across sectors and what L&D leaders can learn from a cross-industry lens.
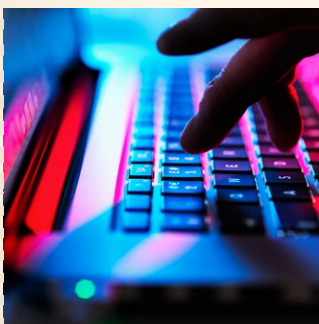
Technology

Adapting to a faster-moving digital workforce

In the technology sector, transformation is constant, and language learning must evolve just as quickly. One of the defining concerns for tech employers is the shortening "shelf life" of skills. As technologies change, so do job roles, requiring employees to continuously develop new competencies, with language and communication among them.

"There's a workforce shift happening [...] the lifespan of a skill is getting shorter and shorter."

– Rodrigo Souto, Human Resources Director, IBM Brazil

This dynamic puts pressure on organizations to deliver highly relevant, adaptive language training programs that build communication capability in a way that keeps up with the speed of innovation. AI is increasingly central to this, not just in how content is delivered, but in how learning can be personalized and scaled. However, with that scale comes responsibility.

Leaders in tech are also mindful of how language fluency intersects with data privacy and security. One HR leader in the US observed that language training was helping them to reduce privacy risks linked to sharing data with external suppliers.

"As we deal with the financial sector, we have a lot of confidential data. When language was a barrier, we had to give this to a third party to translate. But since, people are learning so that [the] confidentiality of our company is being retained."

– HR and L&D senior manager, technology firm with $1bn+ revenue, US

In this way, language programs are playing a crucial role for technology companies by mitigating risks linked to handling confidential data.

Lessons from the industry: technology

The sector's response to rapid change holds lessons for all industries. Prioritizing language and communication as part of digital transformation can help organizations future-proof their workforce, retain knowledge in-house, and enable faster, safer collaboration.

"The lifespan of a skill is getting shorter and shorter."

Manufacturing

Building sustainable talent pipelines

In manufacturing, a major challenge facing HR and L&D leaders is talent access, not only finding skilled professionals but also being able to deploy them where they're needed most. From local skills shortages to geopolitical restrictions, the barriers can be significant.

A shortage of qualified professionals, especially in remote or industrial regions, is driving intense competition across the sector. Many companies struggle to fill critical roles and keep operations running smoothly.

> *"I joke that it's like Game of Thrones, everyone is fighting over the same professionals, and they just keep rotating between companies. So, as a way of making the market more sustainable, we're now placing a big focus on training with the community, meaning we're thinking long-term."*
>
> **– Fernanda Kruse, Senior Manager in Talent Development and Management, Bracell, Brazil**

At the same time, the ability to move skilled employees across borders is increasingly constrained by geopolitical dynamics. Even when companies have the talent, they can't always deploy it internationally due to conflicts or visa restrictions.

> *"There are about 91 active conflicts in the world right now, and our business is present in most of those countries. So, while we want our best talent to move to different geographies, sometimes these factors do not allow us."*
>
> **– HR and L&D Director, manufacturing and FMCG firm with $15bn+ revenue, India**

Faced with these pressures, leading manufacturers are investing in internal pipelines and local development. By offering English training tailored to their operational needs, companies are helping their teams express their ideas in meetings, as well as expanding the number of people able to participate in technical and benchmarking visits.

"As a way of making the market more sustainable, we're now placing a big focus on training with the community"

Language proficiency also plays a critical role in international sales. Products created in one market will then need to be effectively sold in others, both in terms of promoting the concept to stakeholders and the finished product to customers, requiring an understanding of local language and culture.

> *"[A language program has helped with market expansion] indirectly [...] when we are selling our ideas and a product concept globally, because the global counterparts will then sell it and bring it to the market as new ideas [...] something which is created from a region in India, if it has effectively been influenced to the global stakeholder, they in turn sell it to the market."*
>
> **– VP of L&D, manufacturing firm with $5bn+ revenue, India**

Language training in this context is integrated with other technical or compliance-based learning and designing to future-proof the workforce. Beyond enhancing retention and internal mobility, it enables companies to collaborate across borders and compete globally.

Lessons from the industry: manufacturing

Manufacturers show how language training can be used for improving talent access, both by expanding internal pipelines and by enabling communication across geographical and political barriers. For companies navigating uncertainty, embedding language training into upskilling efforts can unlock participation, reduce dependency on external hires, and prepare teams to lead and contribute wherever they are.

Leading manufacturers are investing in internal pipelines and local development
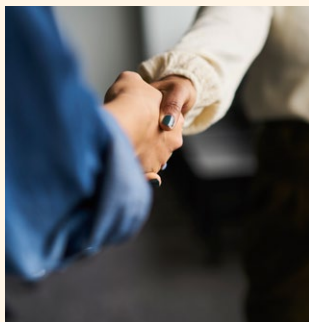
Professional services

Enabling global delivery and business resilience

In professional services, English is the operating language. Fluency directly impacts one's ability to serve clients, lead projects, and access the most lucrative opportunities – making language proficiency a foundational skill.

> *"It's basically a mandatory skill [...] If you don't have it, you can't do your job."*
>
> – L&D senior manager, professional services firm with $1bn+ revenue, Argentina

For this reason, professional services firms often require a certain level of fluency as a condition of entry, leveraging company-wide language testing as part of the recruitment process.

However, other professional service firms prefer to invest in building these skills in-house. At EY in Latin America, language programs are aligned to revenue outcomes and global competitiveness, including mitigating financial risk.

> *"Working in Latin America where we have extreme currency volatility, I invested in professionals who could become fluent in English, to be able to place them in global projects where I would get a much higher rate per hour. This ensured that currency volatility was not as impactful on my P&L."*
>
> – Paulo Espindula, Chief Learning Officer, EY Latin America

With language tied so closely to revenue and risk, firms have become more intentional about how training is deployed. High-potential, client-facing, and globally mobile professionals are prioritized for advanced training, while foundational programs remain available at scale to ensure a pipeline of talent can move upward.

Lessons from the industry: professional services

Professional services illustrates how language proficiency can be tied to business performance. HR leaders in other sectors can take note of how this industry uses language training as a tool for resilience and growth. By clearly defining which roles need which level of fluency, and aligning investment to strategic goals, firms ensure training delivers maximum impact.

"[English] is basically a mandatory skill [...] If you don't have it, you can't do your job."
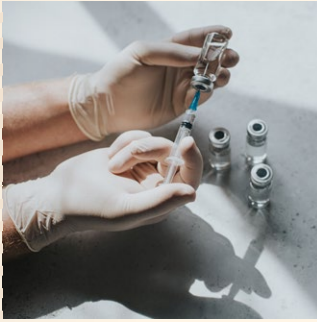
Healthcare & pharmaceuticals

Addressing talent shortages and upskilling for complexity

The healthcare sector faces two simultaneous pressures: a growing shortage of skilled clinical professionals and a sharp rise in demand for care, driven by aging populations across much of the world. To meet these demands, organizations are increasingly hiring across borders and, in doing so, are placing renewed focus on language and communication as essential workforce capabilities.

> *"We now arrive at this space of looking to identify where nurses can be sourced from and how they are crossing borders [...] What is the role of language, and how do we accelerate their proficiency to provide that really good quality care in that healthcare context?"*
>
> – Laurie Pankow, Chief Learning Officer, Signature HealthCARE, US

Another HR leader in the sector highlights their organization's "train and hire" approach, which invests in early talent. They partner with academic institutions to prepare candidates to meet future workplace demands, ensuring a ready pool of trained professionals.

When more specialized and complex topics are involved, as in healthcare, industry and workplace-specific language training becomes even more important to ensure compliance and patient safety. One healthcare firm in India has implemented a custom language training program aligned with its operational processes, designed to bring new hires up to speed on the communication skills needed for frontline roles.

> *"We have onboarded some nurses and they don't understand how the operation communicates. So this [language training] tool helps them [...] understand the core competencies required to drive the operations."*
>
> – VP, healthcare firm with $5bn+ revenue, India

This highlights a critical point: in healthcare, language training must support both clinical accuracy and internal coordination. Beyond clear communication in English, language training is being utilized to align messaging across roles, ensure shared understanding, and reduce the risk of error in high-stakes environments.

Lessons from the industry: healthcare and pharmaceuticals

In healthcare, the consequences of miscommunication can be life-threatening. For HR leaders in any complex or regulated industry, this sector offers a powerful reminder: language proficiency must evolve beyond general fluency to include workplace-specific terminology, team coordination, and cultural understanding. With a global shortage of clinical talent and growing reliance on cross-border recruitment to fill vacancies, language training is playing an increasingly central role in supporting international recruitment, onboarding, and operational consistency.
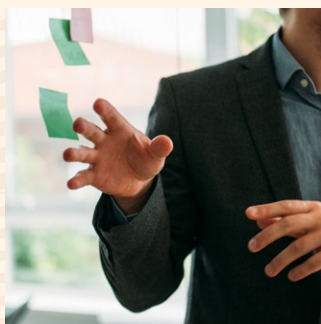
Cross-industry trends

While language programs are increasingly shaped by industry-specific realities, many of the most strategic decisions reflect shared pressures facing global businesses. Across all sectors, companies are not only using language training to solve immediate workforce challenges but also to future-proof their organizations.

Several shared trends are shaping the evolution of language training in global businesses, including:

○ Addressing talent shortages by building internal capability
○ Expanding access through digital platforms and AI
○ Personalizing learning for different roles
○ Responding to generational shifts in learning expectations

In the following section, we explore how high-performing companies are putting these shared priorities into practice and the features defining effective language programs today.

Companies are not only using language training to solve immediate workforce challenges but also to future-proof their organizations.
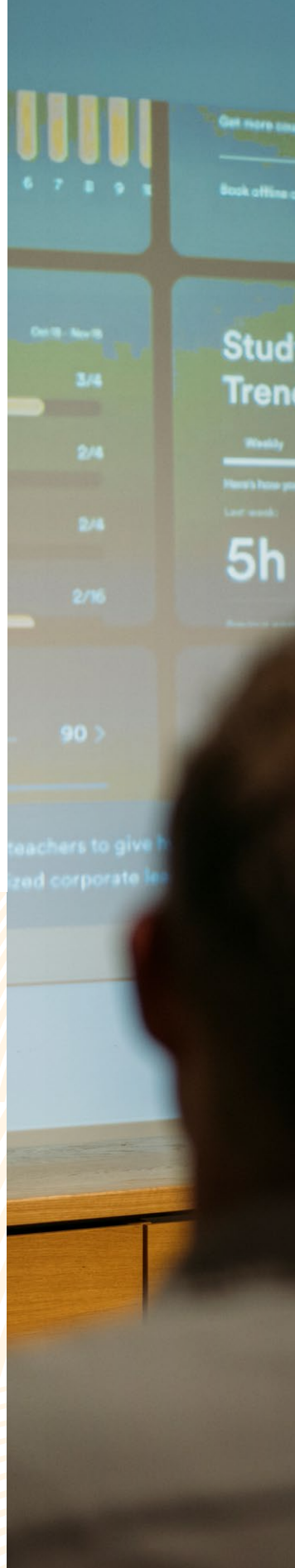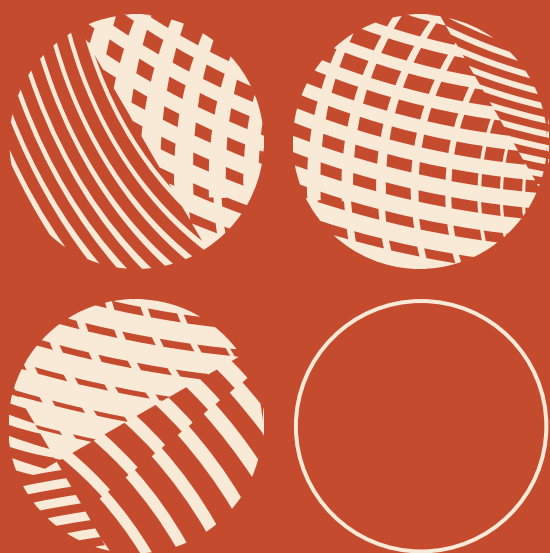
What sets successful language programs apart?

Drawing on the insights from senior HR and L&D leaders across sectors, this section examines three defining features of the language programs of leading organizations. These include intentional program design that aligns to business priorities; use of technology and AI to scale access and enhance personalization and learner confidence; and human-centered success metrics that prioritize inclusion, engagement, and long-term value.

Intentional program design

Aligning learning with values,
talent, and opportunity

High-maturity language programs are defined not just by
what they offer, but by why and how they are designed.
Leaders in these organizations align training with broader
business priorities, talent needs, and cultural values.

This often begins by asking a fundamental question: Is
language training seen as a benefit, or as an investment?

> *"Be clear about what you want to achieve,
> do you consider English as a benefit for your
> employees or as an investment into your
> employees?"*
>
> – Véronique Junqua-Salanne,
> Global Talent Director, Vallourec, France

Organizations that treat it as an investment make deliberate
decisions about who receives training, how it is delivered,
and what success looks like. Some adopt a broad-access
model to drive engagement and belonging across a global
workforce. Others prioritize internal mobility or prepare
high-potential talent for international assignments. In either
case, the program is designed to serve a defined purpose.

For some companies, this means widening the talent
pool by opening roles to technically skilled professionals
who may lack fluency but bring deep expertise. Bracell,
for example, made a deliberate shift toward developing
internal talent through targeted English training:

> *"Sometimes we would hire someone who
> wasn't technically the strongest, but they
> had excellent English skills. Meanwhile, we
> were losing technically strong professionals
> to the market because they didn't have the
> opportunity to study English. So that was the
> main reason we decided to have a program
> that genuinely focused on our internal talent."*
>
> – Fernanda Kruse, Senior Manager in
> Talent Development and Management, Bracell, Brazil

Others take a tiered approach. For example, one HR
leader in a manufacturing firm highlighted that language
training goals are targeted for different employee groups.
At the junior level, the focus is on building foundational
communication skills; at the mid-level, it is on technical

"Do you consider English as a
benefit for your employees or as an
investment into your employees?"

conversation and persuading global audiences; and, for leadership, it is on storytelling and articulating vision.

> *"[It's] classified into multiple categories [...] and depends on what layer the organization is looking to enhance the language skills of."*
>
> – VP of L&D, manufacturing firm with $5bn+ revenue, India

Common program models include:

- Broad access for inclusion and global consistency
- Targeted investment for leadership or client-facing roles
- Tiered pathways combining foundational digital learning with immersive training

Language training also supports cultural fluency and greater inclusion. For globally mobile employees, or those working in a second language, communication skills are closely tied to belonging, confidence, and cultural integration.

> *"Moving from abroad [...] and integrating, it can be hard [...] How do you feel that you belong in the country? We know that language is a big part of that."*
>
> – Director, manufacturing firm with $10bn+ revenue, England

This lens adds depth to the learning experience. Programs are no longer just about vocabulary and grammar, but about opening doors to leadership, collaboration, and cultural participation. As EF Corporate Learning's Maturity Report shows, the impact is measurable: 73% of companies with very high maturity language programs report very high employee engagement, compared to just 39% in the low-maturity group.

Takeaway for HR and L&D leaders

Language training is a powerful tool for inclusion. Leading companies are using it to open up roles, resources, and influence to employees who might otherwise be held back by limited fluency.

Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all model, they're adopting tiered pathways, tailoring learning by role, seniority, and strategic need. This allows them to extend access while focusing investment where it drives the greatest impact.

The impact is measurable: 73% of companies with very high maturity language programs report very high employee engagement

Use of technology and AI

Scaling access and confidence through digital tools

Technology is playing an increasingly central role in how language training is delivered. One of the most immediate benefits is reach. Digital platforms allow companies to extend training to broader populations while keeping costs down. This has been especially impactful for organizations with large frontline or dispersed teams, where traditional classroom models are harder to sustain.

AI is also providing new possibilities for delivering personalized learning and feedback at scale. Among the most mature programs, three applications of AI stand out:

1. Company-wide testing

Language proficiency assessments, once resource-intensive, are increasingly being supported by automated tools that can evaluate writing and speaking at little or even no cost.

"It depends a lot on AI, you can make different exercises [...] or provide speaking tests that will be corrected by an AI."

— L&D senior manager, professional services firm with $1bn+ revenue, Argentina

2. AI-powered conversation practice

Speaking role play scenarios that use generative AI allow employees to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment and build confidence.

"I really think AI can help improve proficiency by removing that initial barrier. Especially when you start from lower levels, you don't have the confidence, you don't have the words, you don't know how to say things. AI is a non-judgmental tool that can help develop confidence by practising."

— Véronique Junqua-Salanne, Global Talent Director, Vallourec, France

3. Instant, tailored feedback

Unlike traditional models where feedback often arrives too late to drive meaningful change, AI enables in-the-moment corrections and coaching. This supports more effective self-directed learning and quicker progression.

"The issue that we presently have is that we find out [feedback] too late. So that's why I'm really excited for AI to provide more of that real time feedback."

— HR and L&D senior manager, technology firm with $1bn+ revenue, US

Digital platforms allow companies to extend training to broader populations while keeping costs down.

The adoption curve still varies. While many organizations are actively integrating AI-powered tools, others remain cautious, particularly around AI translation tools, with concerns about accuracy or the erosion of core skills.

> *"We see AI as a possible constraint, because we are not particularly in favour of automatic translators [...] we prefer direct knowledge, and we don't want to [...] risk losing some personal and basic competencies."*
>
> – HR Director, multinational technology firm, Italy

At the same time, a generational shift may accelerate adoption. As digital-native employees enter the workforce, they bring greater openness to AI-enhanced learning, including coaching and feedback.

> *"The new generation entering the workforce are digital natives, so for them, this is all easier. They're more used to looking for alternative ways to learn."*
>
> – Rodrigo Souto, Human Resources Director, IBM Brazil

Takeaway for HR and L&D leaders

The next evolution of corporate language learning is being shaped by the careful integration of AI. High-maturity organizations are focusing on where AI can improve learner outcomes, build confidence, and scale access without losing quality. The opportunity lies not in automation for its own sake, but in deploying technology to drive more human-centered, effective, and inclusive learning.

Measuring success

Complementing test scores with person-centered metrics

Measuring the value of language learning can be complex. ROI is not always immediate, but high-performing companies are developing broader, more human-centered ways to evaluate impact.

Most start with formal assessments to track learner progress and proficiency gains over time.

> *"We tested people at the beginning of the classes [...] and then we tested them again, and so we see how their level has progressed."*
>
> – Director, pharmaceuticals firm with $15bn+ revenue, United Arab Emirates

Reporting tools are beginning to offer more sophisticated capabilities, including bespoke learning targets and real-time progress tracking segmented by level, role, and business unit. This helps organizations align learning outcomes with strategic goals.

Many leaders are also looking beyond test scores to assess how language learning drives confidence, career mobility, and meaningful participation in cross-cultural teams.

> *"We have two amazing partners, in Mexico and in Brazil, who spoke absolutely no English when they joined the firm. We took the time and made the investment to make them fluent in the language, and today they're both in high leadership positions. To me it's clear that there is a very visible ROI there."*
>
> – Paulo Espindula, Chief Learning Officer, EY Latin America

"The new generation entering the workforce are digital natives, so for them, this is all easier."

How HR and L&D leaders can demonstrate value:

Quantitative metrics	Qualitative insights
Standardized language assessment results (e.g. CEFR levels pre/post training)	Observed improvements in communication quality and fluency in real work settings
Progress tracking across learning stages or sub-levels	Feedback from managers on learner confidence and collaboration
Participation and completion rates across programs	Evidence of increased engagement in global or cross-functional settings
Internal mobility or promotion rates	Stories of development and advancement linked to improved language skills
Engagement survey data tied to language initiatives	Perceived improvements in inclusion and team cohesion
CSAT / NPS or client feedback scores where communication is a factor	Fewer misunderstandings in client or partner interactions

One of the most immediate indicators of success is inclusion. In many organizations, language learning has allowed more employees to participate in international projects and client interactions.

> *"The company has operations in Canada in the gas sector, in Spain in the energy sector, and the pulp and paper business is also in China and Indonesia. So when we host technical visits, or even when our teams go on technical visits, English has been a barrier. [...] Now we've been able to include more people and broaden that knowledge base."*
>
> – Fernanda Kruse, Senior Manager in Talent Development and Management, Bracell, Brazil

Engagement metrics are also emerging as a measure of value. Some companies are seeing correlations between improved language skills and higher employee engagement, as better communication unlocks understanding and belonging.

> *"We run an engagement survey once a year, which we call our employee voice survey [...] we track what language people take it in, and there's more and more people taking it in English. When that happens, we also see that that typically the engagement goes up"*
> – Director, manufacturing firm with $10bn+ revenue, England

Other leaders highlight pulse surveys and post-training interviews, with participants seeing a positive change in conversations with their managers. Likewise, the impact can also be tracked across external metrics, such as CSAT or NPS to demonstrate impact in client-facing teams.

> *"To leadership, what works is more on the numbers, [...] if you bring in customer satisfaction, and the CSAT says that customers are happy with these interventions and gives an opportunity for positive remarks from your customers, then it certainly gives you a stronghold to convert the proof of concept to an org wide initiative.*
>
> – VP, healthcare firm with $5bn+ revenue, India

Takeaway for HR and L&D leaders

High-performing organizations are expanding how they define success. While test scores and completion rates still matter, the most mature programs also track real-world outcomes like increased participation, career mobility, and stronger communication at critical moments.

For HR and L&D leaders, the opportunity is to balance traditional metrics with broader indicators of inclusion, culture, and global performance.
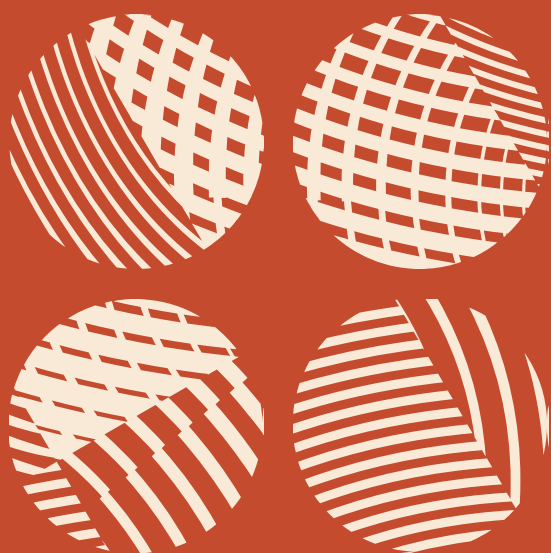
Conclusions and recommendations

While delivery models and goals vary by sector, high-performing organizations consistently use language training to unlock broader business value.

Conclusions

Across industries, language programs are being shaped by distinct operating pressures: reducing communication-related risks in healthcare, building strong talent pipelines in manufacturing, accessing valuable new markets in professional services, and adapting to a shortening lifespan of skills in tech. Yet, despite these differences, three themes unite the most effective approaches.

Clarity of intent is essential.

Some companies use language training to deepen engagement and inclusion across a dispersed workforce. Others apply it narrowly to accelerate readiness for global roles or client-facing work. Both can be effective, but only if the program is designed with purpose, and success is measured accordingly. L&D leaders should ensure program goals are explicit and aligned with business priorities, whether the aim is operational fluency, career mobility, or cultural onboarding.
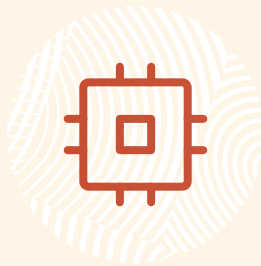
Technology is reshaping the learning experience.

AI and digital tools are transforming language training delivery, but not all solutions are alike. Many providers now market AI-enhanced learning, yet few go beyond surface-level features. Leading companies are seeking out partners that combine meaningful data insights, pedagogical expertise, and advanced personalization capabilities. The opportunity is in tailored feedback, scalable practice, and real-time support to learners at all levels. Leaders should look beyond AI "add-ons" and ask whether the underlying technology actually improves learning outcomes.

The definition of success is evolving.

Formal testing remains important as a progress metric and is becoming less resource-intensive with AI-powered testing. However, organizations are also complementing numerical data with real-world outcomes: cross-border collaboration, participation in strategic initiatives, employee confidence, and leadership progression. In some cases, engagement scores or customer satisfaction metrics are directly linked to improved communication. This requires a shift to aligning metrics to the program's original purpose.

Recommendations

Drawing on the experiences of leading organizations, the following actions are essential for businesses seeking to elevate the impact of their language programs:

1
Define the business case early.

Clarify whether your language training program is designed to foster broad engagement, enable global mobility, develop leadership, or support specific business expansion goals. A clearly defined purpose allows for better alignment of investment, delivery models, and success metrics.

2
Match delivery to audience and impact.

Design tiered learning pathways that reflect varying employee needs. Use scalable digital platforms for foundational skills across the workforce, and reserve more immersive, role-specific or one-on-one coaching for those in high-impact or client-facing roles. This approach balances reach with relevance.

3
Choose providers that can deliver AI-powered learning at scale and with substance.

While many vendors now claim to offer "AI-enhanced" training, depth and personalization are essential. Look for solutions that deliver adaptive learning paths, meaningful practice, and real-time feedback, especially for confidence-building and large-scale testing.
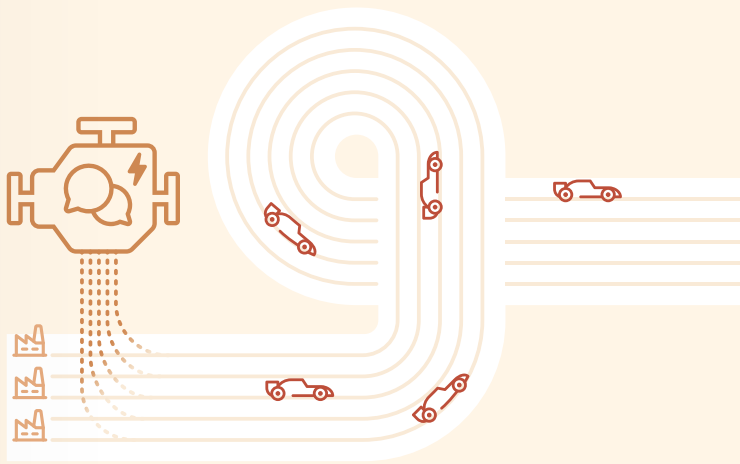
4
Let success be defined by outcomes.

Leading companies are measuring value in multiple ways: from employee retention and engagement scores to cross-border collaboration and career progression. Choose metrics that reflect your program's purpose and consider blending quantitative assessments with qualitative feedback from learners and managers.

5
Learn from how other industries are adapting.

Different sectors are using language training to solve very different challenges, but the common thread is responsiveness. Look outside your sector for new ideas: how digital immersion is replacing costly travel, how AI is being used in hiring or learning design, or how companies are tracking inclusion through operational participation.

About this report

In June 2025, EF Corporate Learning commissioned Sapio Research Ltd. to conduct in-depth interviews with HR and learning decision-makers at multinational organizations operating high-maturity language programs. All respondents held senior roles, and 89% of the companies represented reported annual revenues exceeding $1 billion.

To complement this independent research, EF Corporate Learning conducted interviews with industry thought leaders, selected for their roles in global workforce and language development at leading businesses worldwide.

Together, the interviews reflect a broad cross-industry sample spanning sectors such as professional services, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and pharmaceuticals. Participating leaders were based in Argentina, Brazil, England, France, India, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Further reading

The EF Corporate Learning Maturity Report

The EF Corporate Learning Edtech Review

EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI)

Read more and download: corporatelearning.ef.com/resources

EF Corporate Learning is the world's first and largest corporate language training provider. Delivering language training for organizations since 1965 and with 20+ million learners trained online since 1996, our legacy and global scale are unmatched. Many of the 3,000+ multinational organizations we serve have partnered with us for over 15 years, reporting 3x higher engagement and learning progress than other providers.