

ENGLISH LANGUAGE, POWER, AND EMPLOYMENT FOR CHANGING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

English language has always been an important element to consider when doing business, both domestically and with the outside world. A person can be self-reliant, self-employed and independent because the knowledge acquired will be of great benefit for him to set up business to prevent poverty, eradicate unemployment and bring about peace and stability. The paper discusses the importance role of English in employment. Recommendations were offered at the end of the paper.

English as a language has always played an important role in Nigeria. It has become even more prominent as a required language of business and international trade. Globalization has also played a vital role in Nigeria's economy as it allows the country to have increased international exposure. In the last decade, Nigeria has built relationships with other countries such as Egypt, South Africa, Canada, China and India where English has played and is still playing, an important role as a key language of communication. For the individual, demonstrating a good command of the English language can bring new opportunities in the working environment and therefore, a better job and a higher salary. Growing levels of foreign investment, increasing presence of multinational companies and 'NGOs' are all strong incentives for Nigerians to improve their knowledge of English. English has always been an important element to consider when doing business, both domestically and with the outside World.

The English Language Education

English language education allows the individual to benefit greatly as a functional member of the society. Economically, English language connects Nigeria to the outside world. It is used in international trade and commerce. As the official lingua franca in Nigeria makes it imperative for a great majority to read, write and speak English. Even the uneducated have learnt and still learning to communicate in Pidgin English in the offices and market. Pidgin English is widely spoken all over the country. An individual who acquires language education has some advantages over persons who do not understand the language in official matters is a boost to careers. Knowing English can facilitate self-reliant, self-employment and may independence because the knowledge acquired will be of great benefit for him to set up business prevent poverty, eradicate unemployment and engender peace and stability.

Politically, English language education enables our leaders to communicate all policies to the people using it as the official language. It is used in National newspapers, Radio, Television, social media and many other medium of mass communication. It has imaginative and innovative roles in promoting peace and unity in our country. It is used for literary works, novels, poems, play etc. It is unrealistic for anybody in Nigeria today to think of National unity in the country without recourse to the utilization of the English language. Severally, as a vehicle for togetherness, English language occupies a very

significant position in the social life of most Nigerians. It is the language spoken at social gatherings and at formal occasions. It is the language of the president, governors, the legislative as well as judiciary and law courts of record.

Bangbose (2009) states that “all the heritage left behind for Nigerians by British at the end of colonial rule or administration probably none is more important than English”.

Importance of English in Employment.

As we know, English is the language which connects people from different regions, culture and nations. By default, due to the fact that the British ruled most parts of the world, they have conveniently sowed the seeds of English language and culture in most countries. Though not intended, the British gave a common language to the world. It has helped the world in sharing any kind of information fast and clear without any translation. Though the British left their colonies a long time ago their reforms in the field of education are yielding results.

Globalization has encouraged the domestic companies to think beyond their nations. People don't mind taking challenging and fruitful overseas assignments these days. As English is spoken in most of the countries, language is no more a barrier for people who intend to settle down in other countries. Though English originated in Great Britain, it is used in different versions across nations in which it is spoken. American English varies a little in spelling and pronunciation from British English.

Tool for Employability.

As the private sector companies are gaining ground and becoming more competitive due to changed world economy, the employees are always kept on their toes. It is like either you work hard to survive or slow your performance and perish. The ability to master a language

efficiently is very much required to remain employable.

What is employability? It is the ability to remain employable as a result of the relevant skills one possesses. Communication skills are very much essential for one's professional growth. The ability to express oneself fluently in both written and oral form of language is very much essential for career growth.

English being the most commonly used language in the corporate world; knowledge of the language is one of the most important employability skills. Knowledge of English is much sought after in the corporate world. Proper English does not mean only the ability to make grammatically correct sentences. It means other related skills for effective communication like presentation skills, convincing and negotiation skills and interpersonal skills using the language.

Employability Skills.

Communication means the exchange of information, ideas, feelings and thoughts. The type of communication which is used in the corporate world is business communication. It is not mere exchange of ideas. In the world of business the communication system is considered effective, only if there is some positive transaction. If the sender of the information is just able to convey the message without any fruitful deal, then the communication is not effective.

A person is considered employable only when he gets the necessary qualification, experience, interest, learning attitude and expertise in the field where he wants to seek employment.

The content knowledge in the area of his choice is the primary requirement. The necessary experience, if not, the interest and the attitude to learn the job assignments are much sought after by the employers. A person has to remain employable throughout one's career.

Unless one is ready to update his knowledge in the field of work according to the ongoing changes and advancements, he loses his job ultimately.

Effective communication includes the ability to communicate effectively in any language. Academicians and researchers are divided in their opinion on the question: Is English required for successful business communication? Is it not possible to communicate effectively in regional languages and get the work done? Those who are in favour of English for effective communication would say that English is the official language in most of the companies in cities these days. English is much required to “learn and work for better success” is the mantra followed by most companies. So there is no space for individual glory. Employees are expected to be interactive and communicative with others in the team and outside.

English is the language which connects people by default. It is the language used for official communication whether it is meeting within or outside, presentations, training, conferences, letters, documents, reports etc. the purpose being people are expected to read, write, speak and understand English.

Communication in English

Communication takes place in two ways, verbal and non verbal. Verbal communication takes place with the usage of words.

Non verbal communication means expression of ideas through gestures, eye contact, postures and body movements.

It is not confined to any language. Verbal communication constitutes oral and written form of communication. Oral communication skills include the ability to speak effectively. Listen actively and respond efficiently according to the situation. It helps in oral presentation, video conferencing, telephonic conversation, meeting, interviews etc.

Written communication skills means the ability to write effectively and it also includes the ability to read and understand the language used for communication. If a person is labeled as good communicator in English, he is supposed to be a master in oral as well as written form of English.

The ability to express formal communication in oral as well as in written form is equally considered important by the prospective employers. As one moves higher in the vertical direction in the organizational hierarchy, it becomes naturally necessary for an employee to be good presenter, negotiator, and convener of meetings. The mastery over English will help a person to conduct his duties efficiently.

One of the important deficiencies found by the employers and recruiters in candidates for different jobs is the lack of oral as well as written communication skills.

In order to cater to the demands of regional language medium students in their efforts to get good jobs in the corporate world, governments should bring changes in the English language syllabus at least in graduation level.

The emphasis should be on functional English usage exercises. The syllabus should focus on practical oriented exercises and real life situations than mere study of literature. The need of the hour is strengthening the English speaking ability of the present generation to have an edge over other developing countries.

Conclusion

English language eases communication in the workplace, helps cement working relationships and increases efficiency. Though analyzing a cross section of job advertisements (both printed and online), there is a common requirement for individuals to know a high level of English. This is reflected in the salary

gap between English speakers and non-speakers, estimated at 25-30%, depending on position. This indicates that having good knowledge of spoken and written English is seen as a major advantage in the job market.

Recommendations

- Government at all levels should partner with the private sector to reward individuals that demonstrate evidence of commitments to the English language.
- The government and non-governmental organization (NGOs) should embark on attitudinal change campaign using various media, in favour of good reading culture and highlight the negative effects of poor reading culture.
- The establishment and provisioning of functional libraries in strategic parts of the country, both in schools, public areas etc through education budget increment and allocating huge sums for library formation, improve available library resources, in order to attain the desired learning objectives.
- Schools should ensure that their evaluation method be focused on utilizing the libraries and information acquired for students assignments, debates, and projects.

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