



THE ECONOMICS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

English is the official language of more than 60 countries in the world. English that grew out of the West Germanic language family spread around the world with the expansion of the British Empire. Slowly, English became the leading language of international, trade, education, and official communication. It has widely dispersed across the globe due to globalization. Its dissemination and importance accelerated with growing interconnectedness for trade and commerce. English has become the reason for economic growth of countries around the world. This paper discusses the integral role played by English language in escalating the country's economy.

Key Words: *English Language, Communication, Economic Development, Employment*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid spread of English and its acceptance as a potential medium to bring progress and development of a country, advancement of a society and tool for self-sufficiency is undeniable. The flexibility and openness of English, unlike the rigidity of Greek and Latin, has made the language popular and is growing and thriving. No other language in history has ever reported to have the number of speakers that English has reached. English Language has adopted and adapted to keep growing. This study deliberates on the role of English language and its implication. It discusses the impact of English on the development of human capital in the growing economies of the world. English is the language of trade and commerce, the language of communication across the world, the language of the internet. We must learn it to be successful economically. As John Short *et al* (2001) explain, “being competitive in global markets requires that one speak English”.

Economies prosper as people adapt to changes, with changing times. The English language plays a vital role in the application of imagination, creativity and information which in turn influences economic progress. The significance of English language is a proven fact as it offers the most important communication tool. The human society could use this powerful tool to help build life skill, generate



creative ideas, create business opportunities, establish industries and seek employment thereby stimulating economic activities.

David Graddol (2012) rightly stated that English is the future of economic development. He opined that English will help make its speakers and those countries which invest in it richer. English language has the potential to bring economic changes in the family and the country. Graddol rightly points out that English has now become a basic skill across the world – a life skill. Lot of money is invested by the government in providing English education. English is introduced at a very early stage in education which shows the economic necessity of the country being fulfilled by English. This validates the rationale behind the attainment of economic growth through English language that was given by David Graddol.

The economic advancement of developing countries depends on the usage of human resource along with other factors of production in carrying out work processes including promotional skills in English. The extent to which they exhibit these skills often displays their competencies in their areas of concern. Thus, the ability to grasp the attention of heterogenous groups of people through the use of English has become a prime factor in the progress of any Nation.

COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYMENT

English is the language of jobs. A sound knowledge of English is essential to step into a lucrative job. The knowledge of English and its good proficiency brings with it a good pay package and better social status. Indians have a love for the English language – it helps them acquire not only a good job but also raises their position in the society. Any employment opportunity is open to candidates with proficiency in English. The job market closes its doors to the less proficient. Sometimes it hires them for their other skills but slowly makes them learn the language. Interviews are conducted in English in most of the companies. Candidates are expected to learn the language as a part of the training.

English is the language of international trade and commerce. International business transactions require good communication skills. Any miscommunication can lead to heavy loss in the deals. The internet provides most of the job's lists in English. To apply for them and to get selected through the interview process one has to acquire basic English language skills.

Globalisation has opened the gates of business and trade encouraging even the smallest business venture to have ties with any nation in the world. This makes learning the international language mandatory. Overseas transactions happen in English. Traders are not bound to master the British variety or the Indian variety. A smattering of English would help them accomplish their trade goals. An Indian variety of English is now becoming popular and acceptable.



To be employable one has to have good English communication skills. Desk jobs, technical writing, content writing, call centres, transcriptions and many other expect the job seekers to have bare minimum English training. Pay and performance are closely linked. The employee might lose his job if he is not able to communicate effectively. The corporate companies hone the communication skills of their employees.

ENGLISH EDUCATION FOR INCOME

In India English has made inroads into all the domains. Though it is a major language with a long presence in India, students struggle to learn English and communicate fluently in this language. They dread the English language, though they are exposed to this from their early childhood. The students are aware of the inevitability of English in their career. If English was not the language of employment, many students would not have learnt this language with great difficulty. Parents wouldn't have spent lakhs of money to educate their children in English medium schools.

In India, students learn English from pre-primary and their language proficiency doesn't develop up to the mark. Other than learning in schools and colleges they undertake special coaching to improve their language skills. All these efforts are taken knowing the fact that with poor language skills they will not be able to enter the job market. Language skills affect their income. People are desperately running to Spoken English classes to improve their language skills. It is now an economic necessity.

The fruits of economic progress will be reaped by countries that have invested in education to raise the level of competence in English among the population. Therefore, competence in English is mandatory for economic growth. English education is prevalent in many countries and is taught from primary school up to tertiary level. However, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and not up to the mark. Yet if taught properly the students will acquire good communication skills in English that will enable them to effectively acquire jobs and mould their careers focussing their objective of raising their standard of living.

LINKAGE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND ECONOMICS

In a multilingual country like India where English is the link language, knowledge of English is essential for trade within the country. New and better job opportunities even within the country demand good language skills. Studies show a strong correlation between financial growth and English.

Effective communication takes place when information is transferred from one person to another in an attempt "to establish a commonness of thoughts or feelings with other people" (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008). Communication can happen in different forms - spoken, written or paralinguistic. However, the



objective of communication is to bring a change in the perception of the person and the reaction of those involved in the process. Effective communication is thus significant to understand and establish cooperation between individuals or groups. As such, the job seekers cannot be successful without communicating with people.

With the growing numbers of internet users worldwide and interaction between people of different backgrounds and countries, the presence of English as a link language is indispensable. The English language is not viewed in the limited sense of “English” that is, but is rather seen as a useful tool of communication between people of varying backgrounds in a variety of communicative contexts (Mckay, 2000:5). But the most convincing argument for the importance of English where seeking employment is concerned, are the indications that good English language skills provide an edge which emphasize the growth of individual and national wealth.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Language skills influence one's social status. English provides better quality of life. To move up the ladder in society, one has to step onto the English rung. A countries' economic growth strongly depends on the language factor. American companies set up their Business processing units in India as they were aware of the importance given to English in India. The awareness of the language was already there in the Indian students. The accent training takes place in the Business training classes. The MNCs, ITES and BPO sector got a good foothold in India as we have a fairly large population that can speak English. They were the highest job providers in India. The metropolitans and the major cities got a fresh make over after the MNCs came an established their offices here. Other than the good professional skills that Indians have good speaking skills was an advantage to get into the outsourcing companies.

The BPOs paid a good salary and that gave a comfortable life and better living conditions for the middle-class population. The glamour of working in a BPO brought with its socialising skills and upward movement in the society. The magnitude of growth in teaching and learning English is growing across the world. The need for possessing good English language skills is becoming mandatory due to its relevance in business and organizations. Does this economic rationale bring a new kind of concealed linguistic imperialism? Does this bring economic prosperity to those investing in English? Thus, it is essential to critically examine the role played by English as a medium in the growing service sector and its implications on the Education Policy of the concerned country.

CONCLUSION



Economic liberalisation and its imperativeness have led to achieving proficiency in English language as is the need of the hour world-wide. Every economy has different job market demands. The language level requirements of these economies have to be fully understood and well-articulated with conviction as a policy decision. Instead of adopting a broad strategic approach of 'one size fits all', developing language skills for business, there is a need for the organisations to start taking into account the nature of the objective to be achieved. Above all, specific measures have to be undertaken to train the trainers to impart quality teaching of English as a medium of communication in the Educational system of any country seeking economic upliftment and progress for its betterment and prominence globally. Though there is lot of importance given to English in academics and employment, whether this is a healthy growth is to be pondered upon. Will financial progress be detrimental to other languages of the world? Does it do psychological harm to children who are not comfortable learning this language and take pride in their native languages. The downsides of economic progress shouldn't affect the social and cultural identity of the country. It's up to the policy makers to decide and provide a healthy growth of economy and languages.

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