

Linguistic Hurdles Shaping Opportunities in the Immigrant Integration Experience

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Abstract

There is a multitude of languages spoken worldwide, yet English has emerged as the predominant one, widely accepted as the international standard. However, not everyone can communicate through this “standard”. Even if they can, they may not communicate at the level of proficiency comparable to someone from America or England. Most of the people who are classified as having the ability to speak English are not from either of these regions, thus not indulging in the “standard” that the world keeps as a form of universal communication. The social norm is to speak English with some level of an American accent, resulting in that being the national language spoken without it being declared as the official one by the government. The principle is when speaking with anyone unknown everyone is “assumed” to know at least English. Individuals speak with their variation and accent, which come from the country/region of which they are from. Thus, they will naturally have speech that is distinctly different not only from the “Standard American English”, but also from other countries/communities’ versions of English. Due to this predicament, there is a challenge for those speaking with different accents and variations to speak with one another, even if everyone is doing so in what they have learned in English.

Keywords

Language, English, Immigrant, Employment

1 Introduction

Lack of coherent communication is an obstacle to the progression of a society. A society requires constant disclosure and connection not only for going about the day but also to produce significant innovation. America would never be the height of economic power it is today with no communication between immigrants. America fundamentally is a world experiment that is made up of immigrants, not legacies of people going back thousands of years like India or China. However, the prospect of everyone speaking a different language within the borders of America could potentially undermine the social cohesion prevalent today. To mitigate such challenges, similar to how English became the default language for international travel, America has adopted English as the default language due to its diverse, international population. One specific challenge faced by immigrants working for companies in foreign countries, or even working remotely for American businesses, is the issue of convertibility upon entering the American workforce. The difficulty in conveying thoughts and ideas is a tangible hurdle that immigrants encounter. Addressing this challenge requires comprehensive language programs and establishing connections with other immigrants who have navigated similar linguistic barriers. In conclusion, the global adoption of English as a connecting language has undoubtedly facilitated communication on an unprecedented scale. However, the nuances, variations, and challenges associated with this linguistic shift highlight the need for a nuanced approach to foster effective communication, social cohesion, and the continued success of societies built on the diversity of languages and cultures.

2 The American Atmosphere Surrounding Meritocracy

Immigrants coming to America thus have to deal with the companies/businesses that are foreign to them in terms of culture and structure. For the foreseeable future, this will always be a circumstance

with “nearly three-fourths (72%) of Americans believe immigrants come to the United States to “find jobs and improve their lives” (Ekins & Kemp, 2021). The main objective of a business is to make a profit. Amongst a free market, capitalism leads to lower prices, higher quality, and increased economic prosperity through the competition of businesses meddling in products and services. The best way to succeed in a business is to cater to the needs of your customers. Thus, making a business oriented for ease by customers is crucial, where the reputation and overall growth are on the line. However, that does lead to those coming from or working from overseas to find employment, especially for those speaking accents foreign to America in this case. For example, immigrants who travel to America will have to speak with people here. There is a high enough probability that those here will have a “standard American” accent compared to the immigrants coming over here. The immigrant will then more likely be facing difficulty in their daily life due to not of the native culture and language, even if they speak some variation of English already. For example, language barriers “lead to a lack of confidence, inhibiting many from speaking up and participating in class, and ultimately missed job and educational opportunities” (Roshi, 2018). As such, there will be an inevitable push for immigrants to make themselves of the place they have moved in the culture and ways of life. Due to less feasible communication between natives and immigrants, a business will then be incentivized not to put them in the position of customer service due to the difficulty they might have conversing with the customer. Thus, causing the business to have less ease for the customer to obtain a product/service or assistance. A business will optimize the resources to grow to its highest capacity, which means it does not handle inconsistencies well. The immigrant will more than likely be put to work in other roles such as IT or accounting, where they are more of an expert and can contribute the most. By this, businesses can be termed “linguistically” harmful. Another way is by the professional degrees of different educational institutions not deemed as capable as those of in the West compared to poorer countries. Even if the technical knowledge is the same, there is no standard test or transition provided to test their capacity to work in the American marketplace. A doctor, for example, may know the knowledge and have the capacity to the highest ability, but due to the language barrier, the immigrant doctor has a harder time fighting for their case. Thus most of the time, if they wish to work in America, they are forced to go back to medical school again. However, regardless of any part of the life of an immigrant in a new country, they will have trouble going about life due to such changes, forcing them to adapt.

3 Proposition

3.1 Problem with Linguistic Divide

Speech is not something that can remotely be made “equitable” as liberals like to term it. If you have fewer skills (such as the capacity to speak in a certain manner), then you will fall short naturally to some degree and become restricted. However, regulating businesses based on “speech discrimination” by implementing policies such as quotas to accommodate migrants is a very dangerous precedent. Attempting to make a skill or ability of an individual equalized on the playing field not only leads to less incentive for individuals to progress through merit but can also push other “equalizing regulations” that can lead to speech restrictions. Regulations on a very unenforceable offense are not practical and can easily become abusive. This is different than prosecuting a business for discriminating based on race/ethnicity, where just by the look of the individual is then given a certain task or designated a role instead of based on skill and merit. In this way, “linguistic discrimination” as termed by liberals, is not very practical to push against from the position of a government role.

3.2 Solution

One way to solve the issue of an individual, such as an immigrant, not having the capacity to speak in a certain manner based on accent and linguistic ability is through enforcing programs within businesses for said individual. The individual naturally would be inclined to do such a course because not only would it help develop their skills for progressing in a business environment, but also within all aspects of daily life in a new country (such as America). Lack of linguistic ability makes all portions of life difficult, both personally and professionally. The eventual goal would be for the individual to learn English to the point that not only can said individual converse with others for mutual understanding but also to have them grow in their position of the institution or business they attend or work for,

respectively. Thus, learning English through such programs would be very beneficial and would assist the country overall with more capable productive members of society. Another solution is having them connect with others from similar backgrounds such as through ethnicity or country of origin. As such, “Maintaining a support structure with others, particularly those going through the same experience” can help with the transition to a new place (US Department of State). Individuals of similar backgrounds are much more likely to make connections with each other easier because not only do each other understand the experiences of the other, but they also are much more comfortable psychologically with another person who resembles them. In this, individuals can help each other navigate the place that they have now called home not only within businesses but also in daily life. They can act as the bridge for each other about the place they just left behind while also adapting to the new way of life.

4 Conclusion

Overall, this issue does have validity due to such a transition from one place to another is difficult, and having to figure out the customs and language of a new place while making an earning on top. However, such situations do pan out, especially when immigrants come with the mindset of working hard in all portions of life. For this reason, immigrants on average are richer and pay higher taxes than native-born Americans. The average annual salary nationwide for Americans is \$59,428 (Wong, 2023). In comparison, the average annual salary nationwide of an immigrant in America is \$90,223 (ZipRecruiter, 2023). Nonetheless, there is always room for improvements to assist in the progression of individuals overall, especially those attempting to grow and expand their roots in a completely new country. Two of the proposed solutions for helping linguistically through such a transition within the business of another country are English language courses and connections to others. These both will help to build the bridge for immigrants to not only improve on skills (which will help in a business) but also throughout their lives going forward overall. Regulations of linguistics on a large scale are not practical, but what is practical are social practices that can be done within communities and groups to hold up individuals (in this case immigrants). Immigrants are what make up America, and each individual (whether classified into a group or not) will have to adapt and change to succeed in a new society just as they would moving to another country. However, the reason immigrants are driven is due to the lack of opportunity and high poverty that they experienced in their home countries. Therefore, when given the chance to go to a new place that gives the chance for social mobility, they accept the principle and work towards pushing themselves.

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