

## Languages Proficiency and Multinational Settings: Implications and Prospects

### إجادة اللغات والمحيط المتعدد الجنسيات: آثار وآفاق

BDDIAF Abderrazak <sup>1\*</sup>, Ouahmiche Ghania <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> faculty of foreign languages; Oran <sup>2</sup> University; Algeria

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**Abstract:** This paper reflects on a number of implications regarding the correlation between linguistic and economic variables. It considers economic production as a dynamism necessarily entailing linguistic competencies for employability and entrepreneurial activity. Based on self-reported questionnaire data, the study primarily hinges on a quantitatively-oriented approach. The results obtained demonstrate that proficiency in more than a language proves to be most advantageous, especially socio-economically, leading to valuable returns to both workforce and multinational. Individuals with more multiple linguistic skills seem to occupy better work positions. For the firm, hiring employees with a variety of language profiles renders profits with a high cost-effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Employability, Languages proficiency, Linguistic-economic variables, Multinational, Productivity

**ملخص:** يتناول هذا المقال دراسة لعدد من التبعات الناتجة عن علاقة الترابط بين المتغيرات اللغوية والإقتصادية، وذلك باعتبار الإنتاج الاقتصادي كدينامية تستلزم كفاءات لغوية للتوظيف وللنشاط المؤسسي. تركز الدراسة أساساً على المنهج الكمي، حيث تم تجميع البيانات عن طريق الإستبيان. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن الكفاءة في أكثر من لغة تعد أكثر فائدة، لا سيما من الجانب الإجتماعي والإقتصادي، مما يؤدي إلى عوائد معتبرة لكل من اليد العاملة والشركة متعددة الجنسيات. يبدو من خلال نتائج الدراسة أن الأفراد ذوي المهارات اللغوية المتعددة يشغلون مناصب عمل أفضل؛ وأما بالنسبة للشركة فإن توظيف أفراد متعددي اللغات يجعل الأرباح عالية الفعالية من حيث التكلفة. كلمات مفتاحية: فرص العمل؛ الكفاءة اللغوية؛ متغيرات لغوية واقتصادية؛ محيط متعدد الجنسيات؛ الإنتاجية.

#### 1. Introduction:

Research recently occurred of interest in investigating communicative linguistic practices from economic perspectives, believing that corporate business should exert focused attention on communication proceedings among individuals at workplace. Communication has been at the forefront a subject of apparent worth in the process of business conduct, especially in the context of today's globalized economy.

\* - Corresponding author: [razak.beddiaf@gmail.com](mailto:razak.beddiaf@gmail.com)

Organizational management and internal communication systems have evolved greatly over time. Methods of management and communication amid organizations have been continuously developing. Besides, the work is framed by an internal communication system. Seemingly, proficiency in languages is not only vital to the well-functioning of organizations, but it adds significantly to communication. This consideration depicts that workplace communication is multifaceted. Internal communication has therefore flaws that could lead to communication problems. Likewise, the communication system of organizations is a rich network of messages construction. Workers build up more interconnections which appear to serve for the better of their work life.

Adopting the same perspective as Cabin (1998), we consider the organizational communication as an eclectic area of research that is mainly approached from a range of different perspectives; namely, interpersonal communication, group dynamics, organizational sociology, management, semiotics, and sociolinguistics. Accordingly, our conceptual framework is borrowed from several interrelated fields.

In light of the aforementioned, two questions are set forth for investigation in the framework of the study in hand:

- Does multilingual competency enhance the socio-professional assets of both staff and corporation?
- To what extent is proficiency in more than one language profitable and beneficial in the context of the study?

While the above raised questions await for insightful and deep reflections towards settling on objectively observant answers to them, the hypothesis goes as follows:

- ✓ The proficient manipulation of the multilingual skill yields a wide set of advantages for both the workforce and the corporation.

## **2. Economic Status of Language Skills**

The study of the language skills and remuneration differentials interface took effect initially along the undecided language atmospherics that characterized Canada as a representative federation of quite two rivalry languages, English and French. Several empirical studies undertaken in Canada during the seventies and eighties were mainly absorbed with the degree of difference in rates of pay between employees of an English background and workers of a

French background executing different work functions in the same workplace, additionally to the socio-economic status of these individuals.

Whether or not in mutual reciprocity, language and income gained a subsequent vast intellectual interest in several parts of the globe. A body of contemporary research emerged of extreme inclination towards, among others, investigating the complementary nature of skill in language with different forms of human capital and studying minority language skills in view of instrumental variables.

### **2.1. Languages Proficiency as a Human Capital**

The sixties optimized the use of *human capital* notion; the concept witnessed excessive significance and copious attention during these years. Researchers in the field maintain that the gist of the human capital concept is investment in what has transformational effect on the individuals and their location, and other skills and expertise forms. Chiswick (1978) argues that the inquisitiveness in analyzing immigrant language skills as a human capital was fueled by the hectic non-Anglophone human movement towards the United States, by curiosity on the part of economy analysts in establishing the social integration dynamics of expatriates in the target setting, and by the attention given to human capital theory. As a matter of fact, it has been merely around the eighties onwards that a number of scholars and economists have portrayed (foreign) language learning and economic migrant language skills as components of investment in human capital.

The adoption of such or such language for learning, or use, is usually driven by economy incentives (Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Grin et al., 2010; Jane & Heiko, 2012). As a deep-seated element of an individual's attained assets, language ownership, in the perception of Chiswick and Miller (2007), exceeds all other human properties. The authors further sustain that for language skills to be recognized as human capital, three requirements should be called upon simultaneously; which are productivity means, cost entailment for acquisition, and a person's linguistic skills.

Shedding light more on the communicative dimension of language and its human capital aspects, a large body of relevant empirical studies conducted in different parts of the world conclusively substantiated the economic advantage of language skills and their effect on individual's socio-economic status including payment (Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Grin, et al., 2010).

## **2.2. Lucrativity of Language Skills**

Over the last two decades of the previous century up to the present day, a large body of research has remarkably and demonstratively advocated an interesting fact embodied in the dynamicity and paramount relatedness of salary to different linguistic skills as a critical force, even more so for non-natives (Grin et al., 2010). In this way, and if other conditions are the same, then, more linguistic proficiency and fluency lead to higher incomes. As an illustration along these lines, Gonzalez (2005) addressed in terms of estimated statistical figures the case of the United States where inefficiency in English led to decrease in revenues. In their *Reflections on the Linguistic Landscape and the Prospects of English Language Teaching in Algeria*, Ouahmiche, Beddiaf and Beddiaf (2017: 18-19) state that

Foreign languages are irrevocably defined as a necessity if we want to evolve in a world in perpetual metamorphosis. It is undeniable that the English language, the most commonly used tongue in all sectors of life on an international scale, is in vogue (...) there lie behind students' inclinations of opting for some university training in a certain field more than a few decisively effectual influences and factors, the sum of which in the main owes much of a deal to economically-grounded drives.

Accordingly, the driving forces of enhancing one's linguistic competencies or acquiring new skills in some (new) language are of economic affiliations. In consideration of this fact, Grin et al. (2010) have concluded that language skills contribute into the incomes rate of individuals (employees), while skills in foreign languages add even more to the economic advantages of these individuals by maximizing their premiums. On the traces of a survey conducted in Switzerland, Grin, Sfreddo and Vaillancourt (2010) applied a general equilibrium model in an attempt to work out the consequential influence languages have on value creation.

As business and economies keep expanding, many laws have been enforced in favor of positive discrimination; yet very little, or no, labor markets make adherence to any such rules. Due to discriminatory practices against minority languages, speakers of these languages are more prone to be assigned marginal work functions leading, as a result, to poor earnings. In a study conducted in South Africa, aimed at exploring the yield of speaking English, Levinsohn (2007) observed a general takings augmentation; yet almost only white individuals speaking English as opposed to black people, benefited from significantly higher returns. Following this, discrimination appears thus to vehemently impact proceeds to language skills. Differences in

premiums amid speakers of different language groups could be expounded by language discrimination and the expenditure of learning some language. The aforementioned leads us to the forgone conclusion that marginalization of minority groups in labor markets as a consequence of discrimination is held responsible for meager revenues of minority language groups.

### **3. Language Dynamics as an Economic Concern**

Language is usually tightly associated to culture, identity, and ethnicity. Because the globalized economy today imposes English as the lingua franca, the issue of languages abandonment, whether having to do with economic transformations, is getting more and more noticeable. As ethnicity marker and cultural heritage, language is viewed as the shaping mold of personality. Earlier on, sociolinguists viewed language merely as a racial and cultural reference elucidating the economic position of the various linguistic system clusters. Sociolinguists usually speak of the danger of language death and appeal to efforts commitment towards preserving languages from extinction while the economic analysis has been concerned with both endurance of minority language groups and confluence of languages. The economic approach enriches the comprehension of language dynamics and enhances the understanding of the rationales behind letting languages lead a comfortable improvement and progress or decline and deteriorate.

Among the central subject matters in which evolutionary dynamics of language involves itself are language confluence and marginalized languages endurance. Language dynamics can be said to be of interest in the endurance of marginalized language groups. Lingua franca constitutes a major hazard against minority languages and that is why the dynamics of language development and language confluence are intimately interconnected. Touching on the practice of making or devising standard economic patterns on this subject, Grin (2006) makes the point that several models relating to language attitude, with Hocevar (1983) taking the lead, have been established, bringing in implications for the dynamics of language. For instance, Grin (1993) used *the allocation of time* model to review the exploitation of indigenous languages; perceiving of linguistic exercises endogenous variables. In the light of Grin's model (1993) which adeptly investigated the level at which minority languages start to have or keep up of an effect, it is not practicable to gauge the survival thresholds of indigenous tongues from a single-sided aspect despite the possibility of identifying them officially.

In this way, with language taken as a cultural marker, an ethnic attribute, and a reflection of identity, a lingua franca will not usually have an easy time to penetrate through and replace the native tongue(s) whose speakers securely adhere to. Through economic approaches and methodologies, it is generally possible to dwell on the rationales and enticements driving individuals to go for one language or the other.

#### **4. Interpersonal Communication at Workplace**

It has become commonplace to affiliate any organizational malfunction to a "*communication challenge*" (Cabin, 1998). Communication affects all areas of life, from broad to narrow, whether interpersonal dealings, trade or, even, work circumstances. Since the very beginning of the interest in conversation analysis and ethnography of SPEAKING, the phenomenon of communication has been dominated by the traditional model of communication. In the sphere of work, communication has become an important issue. Indeed, it concerns more and more leaders of organizations for whom it occurs as a way to consolidate the entrepreneurial spirit needed for productivity. The workplace circumstances affect enormously the way and the type of communication among individuals; and the concrete modalities of work determine the interaction regulations and the nature of the language be used. Smith and Preston (1996:33) state that:

The study conducted by McKay et al. examined both inter and intra-professional communications and concludes that there are fewer difficulties experienced in communicating with members of the same group, presumably because of similar training, similar language and a sense of belonging to the same club.

As Grin (1993) highlights, there is an increasing use of communal management which commits gradually all the hierarchical levels in discourse. Actually, the lack of communication may affect negatively the distribution of information across hierarchical levels and restrict the ability of managers to coordinate the work of their subordinates. While organizational structure complexity affects heavily internal communication scenarios (Grin, 2006; Grin et al., 2010), it is far much easier and way immediately supportive to disseminate information, improve workers resourcefully inventive skillfulness, and meet the expectations of the clientele within corporations characterized by uncomplicated hierarchical levels.

Moreover, in a communication audit performed in a hospital, the researchers have observed the interaction between different professional groups: "*The study highlighted*

*principally an acknowledged lack of understanding of capabilities, skills and roles among the respondent groups*" (Smith & Preston, 1996: 38). These findings show that the interaction between different professional groups tends to be demanding and challenging. The risks of professional work life are at variance from one organization to another, creating diverse problems for employees.

### **5. Methodological Account**

As a quantitative study, the current investigation uses questionnaire as the research means to gather data. Data from the questionnaire were collected from a representative sample of workforce staff conducive to various linguistic practices and behaviors at the workplace. The questionnaire was given to the sample, in English, taking into account the socio-professional and communicational skills and competencies of the respondents.

Our surveyed participants are members of a staff from a hydrocarbon multinational corporation in the south of Algeria. The participants share the profile of being all multilingual and they have been assigned, in their respective functions, to the different services. They have generally held multiple positions within the corporation. Despite these common criteria, the situational factors that contribute to language enhancement (or linguistic valuation) within the corporation in question, vary considerably according to the following reasons: 29,41% of the respondents are of foreign origin, the remaining rate is local. Respondents also vary in terms of mother tongues. All the corporation employees but 17,65% (i.e. 82,35% of our sample) benefited, during their careers, from one or more promotions.

### **6. Results and Discussion**

In polyglot circumstances where some language need be opted for to execute nominated tasks, the allotted time and utility maximization aspects are the determinant factors of selecting this or that language among the ones being used in the milieu. For collaborator connections within the corporation investigated, the data obtained show that Arabic is at the lead (90%), English comes next (70%), followed by employment of some other tongue(s) (20%), while the chance of using one language or another as the case may be occupies the last place (10%). Yet, for communication that takes effect on the phone, Arabic and English pioneer by seizing the same position (80%), and the use of some extra language(s) resides in the last seat (30%) before the circumstantial settings dependency which witnessed no selection (0%).

The languages used for external relations provide some insights into the issue as well. Reasonably, 71,4% of the respondents assert that connections with outsiders are realized by virtue of a range of languages coming into operation. Next to this, only Arabic and English serve as tools for external communication; these are at the percentage of 14,3% each. When asked to indicate their linguistic profile, the respondents occurred to be multilingual: while over than two thirds of them are plurilinguals (71,4%), the complementary rate of 28,6% stands for *bilingual* individuals; from the previously discussed results we can safely conclude that these bilinguals speak besides their mother tongue English as a second or foreign language.

To draw on the degree of linguistic factors pertinence to employment, the respondents were addressed a multiple choice question containing the likely measures determining hiring of individuals by their company. The results display an evident sway towards linguistic-related aspects. While 14,3% of the participants believe that the corporation hires workers on *linguistic efficiency* only, 57,1% consider *linguistic efficiency along with skills in other fields* as the measure on which employees are recruited in the corporation. The probability of hiring work proficient and experienced persons is chosen by 28,6% of the sample; whereas, no votes whatsoever are recorded for the remaining choice (0%): *skill in some specialty other than language(s) mastery*.

Despite its nature a complicated process of partial success, communicating for work conduct appears to be the most required and prevalent practice. The statistics portray that while at work, merely a seventh (14,3%) of individuals feel unable to capture all that is coming about owing to trouble comprehending some language. Two sevenths of participants (28,6%) usually experience a mood of inability to monitor the scene due to problems in making sense of what is expressed by the tongue(s) used. Yet, a portion of 42,9% get the feeling once in a while; for them the chances for this possibility to take place are equally distributed between the likelihood of emergence and otherwise. The remaining percentage of 14,3% of the sample uncover that they are entirely confident of the improbability of such a possibility to arise.

In the same line of inquiry, the results obtained in response to the question of language comprehension difficulty effect on the conduct of work vary among the participants. 42,9% of respondents state that the perceived effects represent an entire influence on the work. Yet others, at the exact same rate (42,9%), consider those effects as influential as the case maybe. Again, only 14,3% maintain that they find no effect.



Further consolidating these opinions are the consistent answers provided by the respondents regarding the consequences to that. When asked about the outcomes to inability to capture everything that happens at work because of difficulty understanding the language(s) used, the entire sample but a seventh (85,7%) believe that the consequences are *negative*. The remaining 14,3% deem this otherwise, i.e. the impacts in their logic are *positive*. Captivatingly, 14,3% corresponds to the following picks, respectively: *Never*, *No*, and *Positive*; and this comprises only a seventh of the sample. Hence, if this means something, it is perhaps that the three of these choices are opted for by the same applicants who apparently are proficient in the languages mentioned and, thus, who meet no difficulty understanding either.

Indeed, we presume that allowance for more than a single communication tool to be put into practical use gives voice to workers and raises awareness of workplace proceedings. Presence of several languages, thus, promotes the giving out of information between all members of a multinational; enhancing productivity. It is through employees getting in touch, on a daily basis, that not only information gets communicated through, but also business dealings essential for the proper functioning of the company take effect. According to the majority of the informants (57,1%), the uses of languages in the workplace are suitable in the context of globalization. The remaining complementary percentage of 42% stands for the proportion of those who trust that employments of languages in the place of work is at the advantage of the performance of the corporation. No votes whatsoever are recorded for the two other, intermediate, options indicating uselessness and harmfulness of the uses of languages within business milieux.

The previous readings demonstrate that proficiency in languages is resourceful for both the individuals, in terms recruitment, key positions occupation and else, as well as business in terms of efficiency and output. As depicted by the previous interpretations of the results obtained, the coming-together of a set of communication tools impacts the relational and informational dimensions of communication, as well as communication effectiveness; and hence workforce orientations, business success, and corporation productivity.

Drawn from the accumulated set of data, on the traces of the study carried out, are the subsequent core conclusions. Initially, in accordance with the responses mounted up, it is naturally conceived an actuality within the corporation that proficiency in more than a language proves to be the most advantageous factor as regards hiring measures, better promotion

scenarios, and remuneration prospects. Polyglots, actually, are very likely to make the most of their skills benefitting from superior ranks and higher incomes. Language plurality does not yield individual benefits only; it is also of yield to the collective and the corporation alike. Additionally to reducing expenditure, language diversity helps boost up business output, efficiency, and dividends. Also, it is of return to the group of employees as it facilitates interaction and interpersonal relations.

## 7. Conclusion

Corporate communication signifies interpersonal relationships among employees, communication channels, work instructions delivery, etc. The considerations hitherto allowed for have been crystalized by virtue of taking the initiative to ponderingly deal out the apparent and underscoring divergent and convergent attitudes generally held of inadequate communication amid corporations. The general objective of the present paper was to draw implications and account for a number of reflections on institutional communication and varied linguistic proficiencies from an employability and entrepreneurial perspective. For this purpose, the attempt was to expound the makeup of the linguistic and communication components at work and the likely suitable mechanisms to best suit the target indicated. A linguistically diversified strategy seems to adequately operate for such an end. Accordingly, we adopted an analytically interdisciplinary conceptual framework towards so doing.

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