

Language Barriers

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Language barriers can be difficult to avoid, especially if you are living in a country where the language you speak is not the first language. Language barriers usually occur when two people who speak different languages cannot understand one another, and there is a breakdown in language and communication. They can also come from physical language disabilities which include stuttering, articulation disorder and hearing loss. People who travel a lot or live in an area which has a lot of foreigners might experience language barriers. They can cause unnecessary misunderstandings, and many people get frustrated or irritated easily which can even lead to conflict. Language Barriers limit the knowledge of individuals too. Indeed, they cause a big impact on our lives, and getting rid of them completely might be impossible. However, language barrier one of the major problems that most people are facing, now that the world is getting more globalized.

There are roughly 7100 languages which are spoken in just 196 countries across the world. In addition, a language like Chinese can be made up of 200 different dialects. It also has four basic tones that affect the meaning of each word. For instance, *tāng* means soup, *táng* means candy, *tǎng* means to lie down and *tàng* means to be boiling hot. Certainly, it can lead to many misunderstandings. English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, and it easily borrows words from other languages.

The word “gift” for example, exists in both English and German. However, both vary in meanings. In English, it means something that you give to somebody, like a present. However, in German it means poison. It is likely that a German speaker would be offended to hear such things from an English speaker, even if that wasn’t his motive. Such simple misunderstandings can easily cause a conflict.

Frustration is another effect of language barriers. Ordering a meal in a foreign language might cause you to leave the place and go to the convenience store instead to grab what you want and just pay for it. To make things sound more complicated, waiters in America might ask you, “How would you like your eggs? Sunnyside up, Over easy, or Poached?” Imagine that restaurant has a lot of tourists who probably don’t know the different ways eggs can be cooked. The native waiter probably would have to explain it more than ten times a day. Sometimes not understanding the backgrounds of a language can have a great impact on people too. For example, it is a must to use honorific expressions for Japanese when speaking to a customer, but it is not the same for English. This way, non-native speakers will feel irritated or annoyed that they are treated with a negative attitude.

Language Barriers also limit the knowledge of individuals as they lack comprehension and ability to communicate. It prevents the free flow of information. Breaking down language barriers can increase productivity, especially in work. Clearly, language barriers affect many companies. Based on a news article, Forbes(<http://resources.rosettastone.com/CDN/us/pdfs/Biz-Public-Sec/Forbes-Insights-Reducing-the-Impact-of-Language-Barriers.pdf>)

in 2011, 65% of workers said that in managing diverse workforces, language barriers existed between their companies' managers and other workers, and 67% of them also said that miscommunications were leading to inefficiency. If we do not find a solution for that in this globalized earth, discrimination will continue to escalate. It does not only affect employees, but it also stunts the academic growth of students who study abroad or have lessons which are not taught in their native language. However, there is a British television program called "Mind Your Language" which was broadcasted in 1977. The show is set in an adult education college in London where students from around the world and a native British English teacher can communicate with one another despite their language backgrounds by speaking English. In the world, 95% of the population speak English, Russian, Mandarin, Hindi and Spanish together with the next hundred most popular languages, whereas a mere 5% of the global population speak the rest which are in danger of extinction. Languages are disappearing faster than species, with a different tongue dying approximately every 2 weeks. However, linguists are making dictionaries, recording histories and traditions, and translating oral stories to save these languages. It may be good to have a language like English which people from all over the world can understand, but be sure not to forget our own native languages too.

Language barriers are obviously a burden which affects many people. It not only causes misunderstandings or frustration, but also hinders relationships. It has a great impact on people's lives, especially workers in Japan, as they tend to escape when they see a foreigner approaching them. However, avoiding such a situation forever isn't possible. Fortunately, there

are some ways in which language barriers can be reduced. Speak slowly and clearly, while frequently checking for understanding and don't assume that they have understood. Try to avoid using idioms and be careful of jargons. Be patient, and use gestures. However, keep in mind that some gestures like the "come forward" sign is used in the United States to ask a person to step forward, but in Asia this gesture isn't welcome as they believe that it should only be used to beckon dogs. If you do it in the Philippines, you could be arrested. So be careful because different cultures have different meanings to gestures. By doing so, talking to a foreigner wouldn't be so difficult and embarrassing situations would hardly happen as well. Talking to someone in the language they understand goes to their head, while talking to them in their own language goes to their heart. Although it might take a lot of time and efforts, it is necessary to break down language barriers, so that we can lead an easier life.

Reference

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