

English edge: Those who speak the language fluently 'earn 34% more than others'

Rema Nagarajan, TNN | Jan 5, 2014, 04:08AM IST

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NEW DELHI: Those who speak English fluently earn up to 34% more than those who don't speak the language, a recent report has found, confirming the link between an education in English and the scope of employment opportunities.

But given the constraints of cost and access, the number of those studying in English medium is yet to pick up. Less than 25% of students of higher education are studying in English medium in the north central region of India, including Bihar and UP, compared to around 75% in south India.

Higher education in Indian languages costs between Rs 1,200 and Rs 3,000 a year, while English medium costs 6-8 times more, between Rs 8,000 and 15,000 a year. But the investment is seen as worthwhile since education in English is likely to yield higher wages, says the report authored by Dr Abusaleh Shariff of the Centre for Research and Debates in Development Policy, New Delhi and Amit Sharma, research analyst with the National Council for Applied Economic Research.

"Men who speak English fluently earn wages about 34% higher and men who speak a little English earn wages about 13% higher than those who don't speak any English," the report said.

According to the report, only 20% of the Indian population can speak in English, and only 4% would be considered fluent. Where one lives is a key determinant in accessing English medium education, it found.

"Politicians who don't like English are captains of a sinking ship. Higher education in English helps us get better integrated into the globalized organized sector and labour market. Those without access to higher education in English are being left out," Dr Shariff told TOI.



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