

Slang makes youths 'unemployable'

Young people face being overlooked for jobs because of their inability to speak English properly, education and business leaders have warned.

Street slang made popular by rap music artists and wider TV culture is making thousands of youngsters unemployable.

The Campaign for Real Education called for teachers to focus on improving pupils' use of spoken English.

The CBI said companies were having to pay to bring the language skills of some workers up to scratch.

Basic grasp

Phrases such as "what g'wan", which means "how are you doing?", and "allow me a brown", which means "may I have a cigarette?", are failing to impress potential bosses.

Nick Seaton, the chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, said: "The key purpose of state education is to provide children of all backgrounds with a basic grasp of written and spoken English.

"If that is not happening then the system is failing them."

CBI spokesman Chris Clifford said employers were having to carry out "remedial training" of some staff because of their poor language skills.

Speaking matters

"They are having to spend time and effort bringing people up to the level they would expect them to be at when they come out of the education system."

Company directors have also raised concerns that the increased use of email and mobile phone text messaging is affecting their employees' ability to communicate properly with customers and colleagues.

Communications consultants the Aziz Corporation said 60% of bosses surveyed believed workers were becoming fluent at email and phone text messaging at the expense of their spoken English skills.

Chairman Khalid Aziz said earlier this week: "We are witnessing a decline in the overall level of communications skills within business, and the blame for much of this lies in the way technology is being used in the workplace."

Quiz: Can you speak teen?

As businesses warn that teenagers use so much street and mobile phone slang that they are becoming unemployable, test yourself on modern English.

Schools must do more to help the young speak the language of the workplace, says the Confederation of British Industry.

Are you in touch with the kids? And, on the flipside, do you know what employers are talking about?

Question 1 "Gettin' this job would be gettin' me the hook up." What is the young rascal talking about?

- A: "If I got this job, I would really get my foot in the door."
- B: "This job would get me out of a financial fix."
- C: "Getting this job would be more than I could have hoped for."

Question 2 Your boss tells you: "It's time to stretch the envelope, we're on a short runway." What do they mean?

- A: "Go back to the people controlling budgets. This is going to cost more than we thought."
- B: "Make an extra effort, there's not much time left before the deadline."
- C: "Pass the sick bag, we might be in business class but flying scares me."

Question 3 What could be the answer to: *"Do you have a criminal record?"*

A: *"Nah, but I was kleptin' as a kid."*

B: *"Mister, you are off the heezy for sheezy."*

C: *"Yeah, I'm about to pearl."*

Question 4 Your boss asks if you've *"got all your ducks in a row."* What do they mean?

A: *"Are you keeping your desk looking nice and tidy?"*

B: *"Do you have everything ready for that big meeting?"*

C: *"Are the cheques in for those unpaid accounts?"*

Question 5 A teenager asks you: *"What gwan?"* What could you say?

A: *"Very well, thank you for asking."*

B: *"We're going out disco dancing."*

C: *"Two pints and a packet of crisps."*

Question 6 Your boss says you have *"negative start-up synergy"*. Just what is your problem?

A: You are screwing things up badly.

B: You can't match the figures.

C: You look tired and should grab a coffee.

Question 7 *"Dude was gunnin' on your ride."* What are you being told?

A: *"That man was looking at your girlfriend."*

B: *"He was driving too close behind you."*

C: *"That guy was laughing at your car."*

Question 8 *"You've been e-tailing all morning. I'm going to have to caution you."* What's the problem?

A: Too much time shopping on the internet.

B: Reading confidential e-mails over a colleague's shoulder.

C: Being slow to respond to important e-mails.

Question 9 What might be the response to this question: *"Do you think my husband Jimmy has been unfaithful?"*

A: *"Your boo's such a dawg! Look at him over there with those hoochies."*

B: *"Jimmy's got some dead presidents all up in the hizouse."*

C: *"Your boo Jimmy, he's M & M."*

Question 10 *"There's a dog and pony show and then it's time to grab the easy meat."* What does your boss have in mind?

A: Attending a corporate presentation on targeting easy to get business.

B: Making the most of free hospitality at the end of a boring convention.

C: A team building and barbecue weekend for the staff.