# Brexit and the Impact English Language Learning in Ireland

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#### **Outline**

- Introduction to Brexit and English Language Learning
- Boom! How ELL in Ireland will benefit from Brexit
- Bust! The threats to ELL in Ireland
- Status Quo! Will ELL actually change in Ireland after Brexit
- Questions?

#### **Brexit Day**

- March 29, 2019
- From 60 million first language users to 5 million
- Similar quantity to Danish, Slovakian, Lithuanian...
- What will happen to the English language in the E.U.?
- 74% of over 120,000 students from the E.U. (MEI, 2018)

#### Ireland, Brexit, and the rest of the world...

"more than 300 million people in the world speak English and the rest, it sometimes seems, try to" (Bryson, 1990, p.1)

- Where is Ireland in the global English language ecosystem?
- Over 1 billion 'learners' of the language
- Global language, lingua franca, universal tool of communication...
- Multi-billion Euro/Dollar/Pound industry that is highly competitive
- Korea English langauge learning is worth over \$18 billion (Piller & Cho, 2013)

# The big question is **not** 'will Brexit' change ELL in Ireland'...

...but **how** will Brexit change ELL in Ireland?

#### **Three Possible Outcomes**

#### Boom

- More students, schools, jobs...
- A recognisably vibrant sector in post-Brexit Irish economy

#### Bust

- Widespread recession caused by lack of students
- More competitive: cheaper courses, lower wages, different quality of student

#### Status Quo

- Steady but regular growth with new and encouraging opportunities
- Increased professionalisation and fostering of unique Irish ELT identity

# **BOOM**

#### Likelihoods in an ELL Boom

- UK becomes inaccessible (or with much reduced accessibility)
- Massive and rapid growth in the sector
- EU recognises Ireland as an English speaking country
- ★ ELL will have increased value to post Brexit Irish economy (tourism)
- \* ELL teachers and staff would benefit as better jobs would emerge

# 3 big 'buts'

Standards of practice may drop

- 'Money to be made'
- New and established schools looking to profit
- Smaller schools being bought out
- ELT could be seen as rescue job

# 3 big 'buts'

We need a strong regulatory response

- QQI must actively protect established academic standards
- Protect and support teachers through training, development, and rewards
- Actively protect and support ELL through Internationalisation strategy

# 3 big 'buts'

The external threat

- Does Ireland have the capacity for a massive influx?
- Even 10% of the UK's 630,000 students would increase Ireland's student numbers by 50%
- Where is the space & where are the teachers?
- The EU will decide what to do with English

# **BUST**

#### Brexit will change English

• The EU's relationship with English is distinct

Brexit will reduce access to learning

English's new status as a 'minor' language

How English is learned could change

 UK controls much of ELL - IELTS, British Council, publishing sector,

### The EU and English

"Most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world" (Lisbon, 2000)

- Nurturing pioneering and high value research key to survival and prosperity
- Boundary free research requires boundary free communication
- Linguistic diversity in EU is not highly valued (Ammon 2006)
- Equality, diversity, and efficiency benefit from a common European language

### The EU and English

"Most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world" (Lisbon, 2000)

- English is Europe's language
- Language is defined by its owners
- Do Europeans need the UK to know how to speak English?
- Higher education: necessity for advanced research, publishing, and higher degrees
- Europe wide degrees are taught in English e.g. unicas
- Are IELTS & Cambridge exams suitable?

## Europe's Language

English is the language of choice for secondary school students

- First choice for a second language in schools
- Staple of this experience is to study in the UK or Ireland
- English as the centre of 'new linguistic world order' (Graddol, 2004)
- English is the dominant
  European language and this
  will not change

## **Europe's English**

Brexit changes the relationship English has with Europe

- The Microsoft effect (Coleman, 2006)
- Can Europe control its lingua franca - study, research, growth?
- "Language is an element in the exercise of power and a metaphor for how power operates" (Ives 2004, p.101)
- Can Ireland express its own brand of English?

## **Status Quo**

#### The Status Quo in Ireland

Existing state of affairs → a vibrant and growing industry

Brexit will influence changes → student numbers and student quality

Size will limit extent → not enough spaces or teachers

Drop in non-EU → Increase EU students

Ireland will remain a 'niche' market for English language learners

### **Protecting the Industry**

QQI, unionisation, and Internationalisation

- Industry expects high standards - EAQUALS etc.
- QQI draft aims to increase standards in school
- Teachers have organised and in a strong position
- Industry is recognised as economically viable and important

# The Value of 'English'

English language is more than just a means of communication

- Market in UK valued at over
  €1.5 Billion
- Can the cultural value of language be measured?
- Relationship between English and UK higher education
- British Council serves wider purpose than language learning

'English is not merely an instrument for communication, it is a value one identifies with for the social functions the language is seen as serving, its utility in the linguistic market' (Phillipson, 2013)

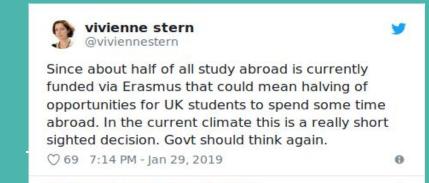
# How has the UK responded?

Mixed responses do not provide much comfort

- International Education:
  Global Growth and
  Prosperity (2019)
- Government White Paper on Immigration
- UK and ERASMUS

O 45 people are talking about this

 Widespread condemnation (Atack, 2019)



#### What next?

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