Term Watch

The influence of translation on terminology and language

Work carried out by Irish Terminology Committee, Foras na Gaeilge

- Provision of standardized authoritative terminology in the Irish language to the educational sector and the wider public;
- Administration of expert committees to discuss terminological principles, miscellaneous terminology, and domain-specific terminology collections;
- Editing, publication and dissemination of terminology dictionaries and lists in paper format;
- Maintenance of online national terminology database;
- Planning and commissioning of projects based on content of database;
- Provision of terminology workshops for university courses in translation, language planning, and for EU translators;
- Development of Terminology Handbook;
- Quality control for external terminology projects: IATE, Microsoft, Sony
- Provision of free advice service to the public, including the translation sector;
- Provision of free expert advice to outside agencies in developing domain-specific resources;
- Training of students on work experience in aspects of terminology work.

Ad hoc terminology work, Just-in-time terminology, Occasional terminology

- Indeterminate numbers of enquiries;
- Indeterminate number of subject fields;
- Almost all queries come via English;
- Customer often does not know meaning of concept;
- Sometimes does not know context of required term;
- Expects 'translation' instantly.

Through the looking glass

- Kinds of terms and concepts enquired about mirror contemporary society;
- Term formation shows what new concepts people are writing about;
- Everyone has a deadline
  - Legislation, newspapers, textbooks, signage

Tools of the trade

- Current terminology stock
- Terminology management resources
- Expertise and experience
- Research resources
- Time

Our relationship with English

- Longest experience of dealing with dominance of English
- Penetration by English exclusively since at least early 15th century
- Earlier penetrations from Latin, Norse and French did not disturb fabric of language

Don't trust what the English says!

- Incorrect, invalid or misleading terms
- Little or no awareness in English-speaking communities
- Many different such communities
- Hiberno-English, British, American, Canadian, Indian, South African, Australian, New Zealand, anglophone Carribean …
- Euro-English …
- But don't we all learn standard English?

Some facts about English

- 375 million native speakers
- Up to 1400 million as second language
- Total = 1.8 billion, not including 3rd or 4th or 5th language speakers
- Official language in 53 sovereign states + 25 non-sovereign entities
- No official status in UK, USA or Australia

English as world language

- 3rd largest language (native speakers) after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish
- Combined native and non-native speakers -> *probably* most commonly spoken language on earth
- *Lingua franca* of the modern era
- Dominant international language in communication, science, business, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy
- Replaced French as language of diplomacy since WW2
- Most frequently taught as 2nd language throughout the world

How *The Economist* put it …

The triumph of English

IT IS everywhere. Some 380m people speak it as their first language and perhaps two-thirds as many again as their second. A billion are learning it, about a third of the world's population are in some sense exposed to it and by 2050, it is predicted, half the world will be more or less proficient in it. It is the language of globalisation—of international business, politics and diplomacy. It is the language of computers and the Internet. You'll see it on posters in Côte d'Ivoire, you'll hear it in pop songs in Tokyo, you'll read it in official documents in Phnom Penh. Deutsche Welle broadcasts in it. Bjork, an Icelander, sings in it. French business schools teach in it. It is the medium of expression in cabinet meetings in Bolivia….

Dec 20th 2001   From *The Economist* print edition

Elsewhere

- **India**: 1.13 billion inhabitants – English is 'subsidiary official language' and used extensively in business and administration
- **South Africa**: 11 official languages but English is most commonly spoken language in official and commercial public life
- **Pakistan**: 172.8 million inhabitants – English is 5th recognized regional language
  - Becoming the language of aspiring writers
  - English-medium education to be extended to all schools
- **Malta**: language of administration, main medium of instruction at university
- **Israel**: maintains *de facto* official language role – mandatory in all schools and universities

Default language in multilingual groups

- Official language for aerial and maritime communications
- One of 6 official languages and one of 2 working languages of the UN
- One of 6 official languages of the WHO
  - constitution available in English only
- One of 2 official languages and main working language of ISO
- One of 2 official languages and main working language of International Olympic Committee

International Olympic Committee

- **Beijing Games help lift the international language barrier**
- One side effect of hosting the Games has been the take-up of foreign languages by Beijing residents – a boon for their future career prospects as China integrates even more closely with the rest of the world. A city-wide campaign over the past five years has encouraged inhabitants to learn and speak English and other languages. More than one million people have taken lessons and training courses, while the city has also encouraged taxi and bus drivers, shop assistants and post office workers to improve their language skills. Officials say nearly five million Beijing residents can now speak English to some degree, representing about 35 per cent of the population. With an estimated 30 million people overseas learning Chinese, the Beijing Games have served to break down international barriers.

English as medium of instruction

- Increasingly becoming the main medium of instruction at 3rd level and of academic publications in many countries
- The Swedish National Language Council was established in 2006
  - To monitor the development of spoken and written Swedish, and to monitor the use and status of all other languages spoken in Sweden
  - Under the title 'The future of Swedish' the Language Council states:
    - During the last decades, English has started to compete with Swedish in a growing number of fields in Swedish society – in large, international companies, in the educational system and in the media industry. This poses a threat to democratic values as many Swedes have insufficient knowledge of English.

Historic overview of English

- Insular Celtic language of Britain (Brythonic) displaced by early invasions:
  - Roman occupation 1st – 5th centuries
  - Irish invasions of west and north-west 3rd – 5th centuries
  - Anglo-Saxon invasions from south-east 5th -11th centuries
  - Viking (Norse) invasions 8th-9th centuries
  - Norman (French) conquest 11th – 14th centuries
- Latin the scholarly and diplomatic *lingua franca* 7th - 17th centuries
- French the language of the aristocracy 11th -14th
- Old English formed from Germanic dialects of Anglo-Saxons spoken by common people 5th -11th centuries
- Middle English 11th – 15th centuries
- Influence of printing 15th century

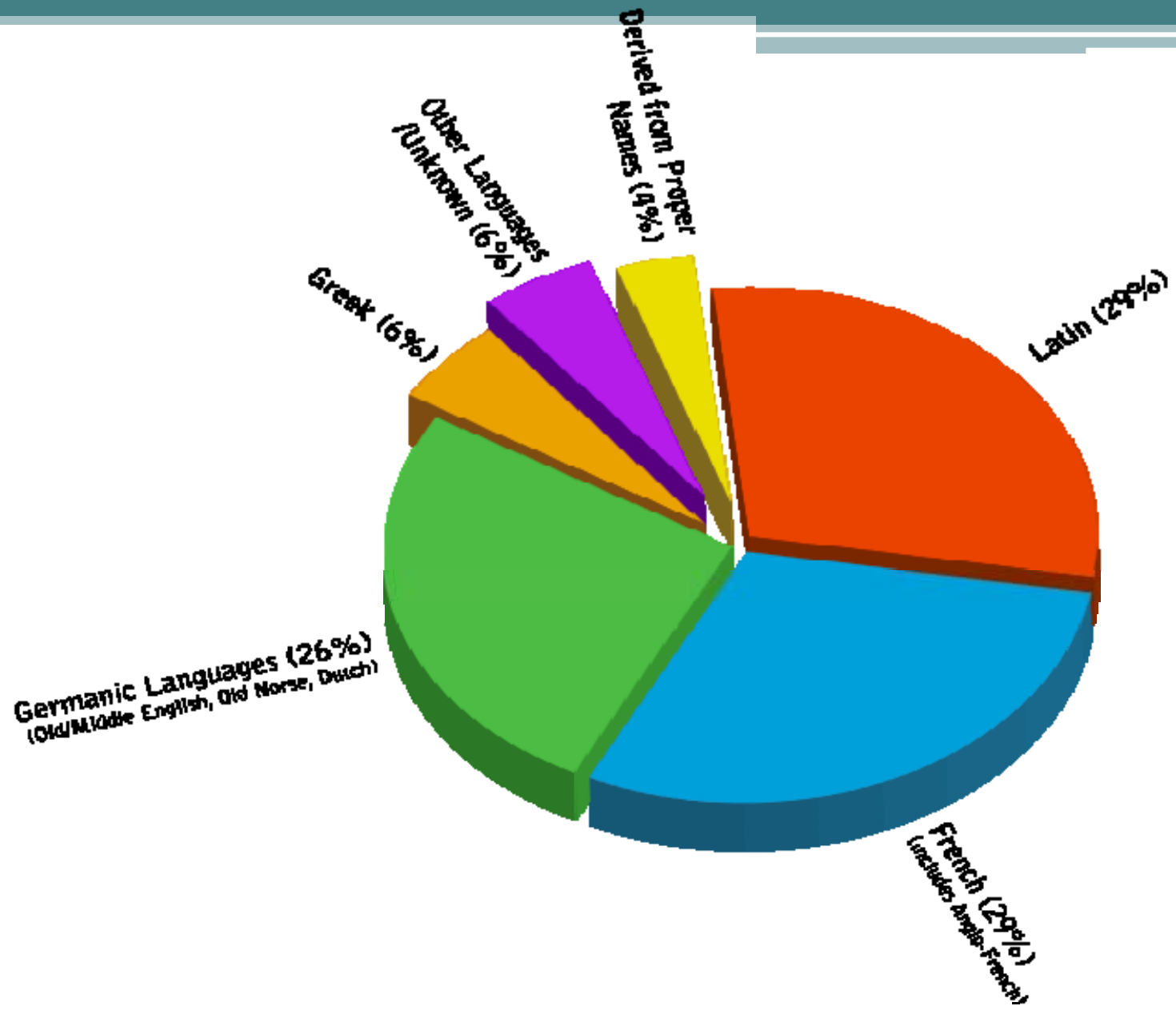# Motivations for the spread of English

- The British Commonwealth
  - Began with colonization of Ireland in 16th century and continued to expand until after WW2; covered 25% of the earth's total area and held sway over 25% of the world's population in 1921
- The invention of printing - first printing press in England 1476
- Industrial revolution – 18th and 19th centuries
- Religious zeal - motivation for OED project (1857)
- Breakup of British Empire and move to independence of former colonies many of which retained English as an official language;
- Influence of the USA as world superpower
- Prominent role played by English-speaking nations in the aftermath of WW2
- The information revolution
- New academic *lingua franca*
- Multimedia - popular music and culture, as well as information, on the Internet
- More world travel, cheaper flights -> commercial and tourism interests served by global language

Attitudes to dominance of English

- **David Crystal**, linguist, writer and broadcaster
  - Considers that English was repeatedly in the right place at the right time, and that the biggest setback to English would be if Bill Gates had grown up speaking Chinese;
  - Suggests a World Standard Spoken English may emege due to the proliferation of types of English being spoken;
  - notes that one impact is to reduce native linguistic diversity.
    - (*English as a Global Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- **David Graddol**, researcher for the British Council
  - status of English as global language may soon begin to give way to Spanish and Chinese
  - native speakers of English are or will soon be outnumbered by those who speak English as a second or foreign language (*The Future of English?* The British Council 1997, 2000)
- **Robert Phillipson**, research professor
  - Argues that western countries have used English as a tool of imperialism to dominate colonies and former colonies.
    - *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992

Shaping influences of English

- Celtic undertow
- Germanic dialects of Anglo-Saxons
  - Germanic words account for 26% of Modern English vocabulary
- Loanwords from Latin
  - 30% of vocabulary is of Latin origin
- Simplification of structures + loanwords from Old Norse
- Significant French influence from high-status Anglo-Norman
  - 30% of vocabulary is of French origin
- Vocabulary is the largest of any language on earth
- Borrowed from up to150 languages including
  - Latin, Greek, French, Norse, German, Dutch, Irish, Arabic, Hindi, Italian, Malay, Farsi, Nahuatl, Sanskrit, Portuguese, Spanish, Tupi and Ewe

The influence of English

- English has no worldwide regulatory body with the power to change matters such as spelling
- Various campaigns, movements and suggested solutions
- Many constructed versions of English:
    - **Basic English**, simplified for easy international use, is used by manufacturers and other businesses to write manuals and communicate;
    - **Special English**, a simplified version of English used by the Voice of America, uses a vocabulary of only 1500 words;
    - **English reform** is an attempt to improve collectively upon the English language;
    - **Seaspeak** and the related **Airspeak** and **Policespeak**, all based on restricted vocabularies, were designed in the 1980s to aid international cooperation and communication in specific areas; also **tunnelspeak** for use in the Channel Tunnel;
    - **Euro-English** is a concept of standardising English for use as a second language in continental Europe;
    - **E-Prime** excludes forms of the verb *to be* forcing simplicity of style.
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Languages of the EU

- 23 official and working languages
- 150 regional and minority languages – only those of Spain and the UK may be used in communication with the main European institutions
- Plurality of EU citizens speak German
- Absolute majority can understand English and speak as mother-tongue German, English, French or Italian
- French is an official language common to the 3 cities that are political centres of the EU (Brussels, Luxembourg, Stasbourg)
- Legislation and documents of major public importance are translated into all 23 official languages
- Other documents are translated only into the languages needed
- EU institutions may make their own language arrangements for internal purposes
  - In 1995, on the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden, English joined French and German as working languages of the European Commission

Language	Mother tongue	Other than mother tongue	Total (% of EU pop.)
English	13%	**38%**	**51%**
German	**18%**	14%	32%
French	13%	14%	26%
Italian	13%	3%	16%
Spanish	9%	6%	15%
Polish	9%	1%	10%
Romanian	7%		
Dutch	5%	1%	6%
Greek	3%	0%	3%
Hungarian	3%		
Swedish	2%	1%	3%
Czech	2%	1%	3%
Portuguese	2%	0%	2%
Bulgarian	2%		
Slovak	1%	1%	2%
Other EU Languages			~6%
Minority Languages			~16%

Challenges in occasional terminology work via English

- Lack of transparency in multiword terms due to lack of case and gender
- Confusion due to partial equivalence of concepts in various English-speaking regions, e.g. harbour, port, ferry
- Multiple spellings
  - British English vs American English
  - Lack of clear coordinated hyphenation rules
- Influence of EU English and EU translation work
  - Direct translations from French or other languages
  - False friends
  - False cognates
- Influence of American English in localization work
- Influence of American English in language-learning

Terminology in EU translation work

- Direct queries from translators at the EU institutions and from translation agencies in Ireland
  - Legislating for all known aspects of a given activity -> terms highly technical
  - High proportion of these terms are rare or exotic, unfamiliar in Ireland (e.g. 1200 tropical fish, 750 exotic animals)
  - Many are not available in online dictionaries
  - May not be well-formed terms in English
  - Can glean some idea of context from the type and subject of document being translated, and from neighbouring terms
  - Translators often supply us with the equivalent terms in French, German, Spanish or Italian

Project to populate IATE database with Irish terms

▫ Monthly lists consisting of hundreds of miscellaneous terms
▫ No useful subject-field indicators
▫ Several English and French terms may be grouped together which do not seem to designate the same concepts
▫ Sometimes the English terms seem to designate one concept and the French terms another
▫ Many terms are poorly formed in English
▫ Spelling confusion slows up the process, e.g. sherling <shearling;
▫ Some are accompanied by definitions
▫ Many are not available in online dictionaries, e.g. furskin
▫ Some not even in Google searches, e.g. endodromy
▫ Often more productive to search for definitions of the French term (endromy < endromie), (activity planification < planification d'activités), zootechnics (<zootechnie)
▫ All are accompanied by deadlines!

Some examples from IATE

- farmer's wife, farm woman, woman farmer (= fermière, agricultrice, cultivatatrice) *(national accounts)*
- unsweetened condensed milk, concentrated milk, evaporated milk (= lait concentré, lait concentré non sucré, lait entier concentré) *(national accounts)*
- black-and-white mannikin, black-breasted mannikin, rufous-backed mannikin
- site year (année-site) *(interinstitutional relations)*
- glanders, farcy, *Pseudomonas mallei* infection (= morve, farcin, infection à *Pseudomonas mallei*) *(countryside conservation)*
- interlocked points (= aiguillage commandé par l'itinéraire) *(educational administration)*
- shunting, switching (tirer, manoeuverer) *(educational admin.)*
- demerge, diverge (bifurcation, embranchement, décongestionnement)

Variant spellings

- Carcase, carcass
- Harbormaster, harbour master, harbor master
- Moulding, molding
- Metred, metered
- Drabbler, drabler

Confusing terms

- hominy chops (= hominy chops)
  - chop: crushed or ground grain used as animal feed;
  - Finally found description of 'hominy chops' in *The Kansas Feeding Stuffs Law Revision of 1913.*
- separated product (produit séparé) = egg yolk ; whole product (produit entier) = egg without its shell
- normal ride attitude
- comitology
- zootechnics

Challenges in localization work

- Early software glossaries contained few definitions
- Grouped several concepts together under homographs
- Did not distinguish between nouns, verbs and adjectives
- English terms were presented in the form of lists of strings with no reference to the context in which they would be used
- Some English terms were misleading because of software-speak usage, e.g. media
- Many terms misleading because of unfamiliar American syntax or usage, e.g. Install Wizard, Export Favorites
- Many terms unavailable in online or paper dictionaries at the time
- Some terms not stable e.g. flash drive
- Even when the context was clear, translators did not always take it on board, e.g. direction, league

Efforts to harmonize Irish terms

- Style-guide for localization has gone a long way towards harmonizing competing terms;
- Style-guide for IATE project aims to coordinate various practices used in-house in relevant institutions;
- Workshops in Irish term-formation for EU translators were provided;
- Terminology handbook (for Irish term-formation) developed as aid to translators;
- Similar resources for other official EU languages could be helpful.

Conclusions

- Sheer volume of technical terminology arising in EU legislation impossible to handle systematically;
- Much term formation needed in this kind of work as many terms do not already exist, and even if they do, are not documented in authoritative sources;
- Guidelines and training in term formation necessary in all the official EU languages;
- Workshops in term formation could be tailor-made for each individual language;
- Guidelines on the pitfalls of the irregularities of English would be instructive;
- A coordinated campaign to regularize and clarify English usage worldwide would be most helpful;
- Who will lead such a campaign?