

The Future of English after Brexit in European Union

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Abstract—Britain decided to leave the European Union based on the results of a referendum on June 23, 2016, which is better known as Brexit (Britain Exit). The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union raises the issue of the English status in the European Union. The issue is to discontinue the use of the English language within the European Union. This may be problematic for several European countries in which English is a more broadly spoken language than French and German and also is the working language in its institutions. This paper discusses the consequences of Britain's exit from the European Union, and whether it will change the position of English as the dominant language of the European Union. To address this issue, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. A number of relevant articles were collected and sorted into some categories: language policy in the European Union, English as a lingua franca, and English before and after Brexit in the European Union. The results show that English will continue to be the European lingua franca, people in Europe will likely choose English as their preferred L2 in purpose to have communication in many aspects, and English will increasingly be promoted as the first foreign language in European schools. It is interesting to note that Brexit will not completely destroy the status of English the EU.

Keywords—Brexit; English as a lingua franca; European Union; Euro-English; future English in EU; language policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Britain's desire to leave European Union membership has become one of the central issues in the European Union. This issue is called Brexit (Britain-Exit). The referendum was conducted to decide whether Britain should leave or remain in the European. There were more than 30 million voters participating. And the results were quite surprising, most voters chose to leave the European Union. This result surprised many people like political and economic actors and observers. Deneire is very confident to argue that Brexit will clearly affect the European Union, and the development of English in that context [1].

Historically, the relationship between the British and EU was started since England joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. ECC was the forerunner to the formation of the European Union. British decided to join the European Economic Community because England was hit by the post-World War II economic crisis at the time. As time went on, Britain felt that some of the EU policies had hampered the growth of the country, starting from the most

vital economic aspect, to the problem of the increasing number of migrants, as well as the sovereignty of Britain which was felt to have been further intervened [2]. EU policies seem that do not provide benefit for British and event present the conflicts.

Consequently, in 2015 the elected English Prime Minister David Cameron committed to considering the status of British membership in the European Union and stated that the matter was decided through a referendum which was held on 23 June 2016. The result of the referendum was that 51.9% of the people voted for Britain to leave the EU and 48.1% for Britain to remain in the EU [3]. This result is final and cannot be contested.

The recent Brexit referendum has given rise to discussion and debate regarding the status of English. Not long after the referendum, voices were raised from a number of European politicians English could no longer be a working language within the EU. It can be seen that, on May 5, 2017, the European Commission president, Jean- Claude Juncker declared in his speech that "Slowly but sure English is losing importance in Europe....." [4]. As a result, this speech has received special attention from the journalist throughout Europe. It also caused major headlines around the world ignited a curiosity for the subject of English future role in the European Union.

In addition, the emergence of the assumption that each EU member state can only choose one official EU language becomes a strong argument that English should lose its official status in the EU after Brexit. For example, Ireland and Malta are the only two countries where English is the official language. In this case, Ireland chose Irish and Malta chose Maltese, then no country would choose to maintain English as an official language after Brexit [5]. Moreover, the politician and public figures in Europe also argue that the withdrawal United Kingdom from the European Union negatively affects the status of English as a lingua franca in Europe [6,7].

To date, there are few papers discussing the Brexit's issue, especially about the position of English after the British referendum. There were two phenomenal publications on English after Brexit in European Union. The initial article is by Modiano and was published in World Englishes Journal in September 2017. Modiano, tries to analyse the attitudes on the use of English in the European Union after Brexit [5]. The second article is written by Bolton and Davis and was published in the same journal in October 2017 [2]. The second

article is a forum in response to the argumentations of Modiano by several linguists that agree or disagree with Modiano's views. Therefore, this current study tries to discuss the consequences of the exit of the UK from the European Union and whether that would change the status of English as the dominant language of the EU. It is also hoped that this paper will enrich the information about Brexit.

II. METHOD

This paper aimed to overview the status and function of English after Brexit in European Union. To address this issue, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. A number of relevant articles are collected and sorted into three categories: language policy in the European Union, English as a lingua franca, and English before and after Brexit in European Union. The writer found articles by using the keyword "language planning and policy in EU, European language policy and practice, English as lingua franca, Brexit, and etc." 53 articles related to the topic were sorted into 25 relevant articles. All articles were collected, read and classified. For more specific, the data collection procedure is conducted by using a systematic review [8,9]. The researcher searched the relevant international journal using a search engine such as Willey, tandfonline, world Englishes, ResearchGate, and another scholarly literature review. Next, the researcher typed related keywords to the search engine database. Then, the researcher did identification or sorted the issue. And the last, the researcher presented the underlined issues that has found. Articles presented in this review are either published in scientific journal or conference proceeding in the forms of literature review and research based article. Some information is taken from related government web pages, reports, books, online newspaper, and online articles in order to support the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Language Policy in the European Union

There are two fundamental differences in language policy of the European Union. Van Els differentiates between institutional and non-institutional language policies [10]. The first refers to language policies that determine language use within and between EU institutions, the use of language outside the EU, and the language used in communication between the EU and member countries (and their citizens). Meanwhile, non-institutional language policy refers to the language used in each member country among citizens.

Multilingualism is a basic principle of the EU's institutional language policy. From 27 member states, there are 23 official languages. Several languages are spoken in more than one member state. They are; Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish. In accordance with Regulation Number 1, each member states has the right to request that any of its national official languages be given the status of official EU language. In other words, there is one important rule in the EU that must be obeyed. If a state joins the EU, its national government must determine what

language or languages it wants to declare as the official language of the EU. Actually, all languages in the EU are equally important. The documents of parliamentary must be translated into all the official languages. Every citizen has the right to speak and receive a reply in the same language. This is outlined in Regulation 1 of April 15th, 1958.

The official languages are working languages, but not all of them are used in everyday life communication. All 23 languages are used in the main institutions of the EU as working language such as; Council of the European Union, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee. While, English, French, and German are used by European Commission and Court of Auditors. European Investment Bank used English and French as working language. French is used in the European Court of Justice, and English is used in the European Central Bank. French formerly is used as the original working language in the institutions of the European Economic, but since 1973 English has become the dominant working language [11].

According to Regulation 1/58 there is no prominence distinction between official and working languages. But in the literature, there is an operational difference between them. Official languages of the EU are normally defined as those used in communication between institutions and the outside world. Working languages of the EU are defined as languages used between institutions, within institutions and during internal meetings held by the institutions [12,13].

The EU's non-institutional language policy refers to the use of language with and between member countries and their citizens. This essentially refers to the EU language and education program that promotes foreign language education throughout the Union. Languages have played an important role in the historical construction of the European nation-state and in determining national identity.

Language policy in the EU is based on the awareness that language represents national identity, supports a supranational European identity and promotes language diversity and multiculturalism [14,15]. The main objective of the EU's multilingual language policy is the promotion of language learning and language diversity in Europe. Multilingualism in the context of European refers to the specific situation in the EU that many languages exist at the same time, and individuals' foreign language knowledge.

In 2007 the European Commission presented a new portfolio focusing on multilingualism. The portfolio focuses primarily on the promotion of foreign language learning as the most effective tools of individual mobility and competitiveness and the key to the European values of democracy and intercultural tolerance. One of the objectives is that EU encourages all citizens to become multilingual or should speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

Based on the Euro barometer report, Europeans have a very positive attitude towards multilingualism. They agree that mastering foreign languages is very useful for them. They also agree with the EU objective that everybody should learn at least two foreign languages, and they see English as one of the two most useful languages for themselves.

When the European Union preserves the diversity of languages but the dominance of the English is very clear. The emergence of the dominant position of English is due to a consequence of the increasing number of official languages in the European Union [11].

B. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in European Union

It is true to say that, nowadays the English language is the leading lingua franca, not only in Europe but also globally. The term lingua franca refers to the language used by two people who do not share the same first language, used to communicate with each other [4]. In a similar vein, Zonjic and Cilic point out that the term English as lingua franca has appeared as a way of representing communication among speakers of English with different first language [3].

Meanwhile, English as lingua franca (ELF) based on dictionary meaning is any language that is used by speakers of the different language as a common medium of communication. According to Jenkins, ELF is defined as a contact language that is only used among non-mother tongue speakers [16].

In the meantime, according to Berns in World Englishes Journal, ELF is used to refer to both its functions as general language and grammatical uniqueness and differences in vocabulary [17]. English used exclusively among non-native English speaker with its own grammar. In the European context it is called "Euro English" or European English, which was introduced by Marko Modiano, a linguist at Gavle University.

Actually, there were some issues related to why English has become topmost of lingua franca within the European Union. First, the spread of English from the global perspective. It cannot be denied that English is the fastest spreading language. It is spoken at a beneficial level by one in four people around the world.

Second, after World War II the European countries' economics became progressively internationalized. Consequently, the needs of English is increasing to as vehicle communication for international business. It is clear enough that the demand for English goes far beyond the UK. English is the language of the USA, of international business and trade, and the language that emerging large economies are using to engage with the world [18].

Third, because all official documents must be translated into all 23 official languages, it presents the debate on its costs. The EU language regime is criticized for it. To the effectiveness of the communication of the EU, therefore it is suggested to use only one language, and usually the candidate is English [12].

The globalization process allows English to become a global language. English has gained a global status. In the early 19th century, Britain had become the world's leading industrial and trading force. It is related to the Crystal's opinion in Zonjic and Cilic papers [3,19]. He stresses the strong connection between language dominance and economic, technological, and cultural power of its speaker. Similar to the Modiano's opinion, the rises of English in the EU is based on the consequences of the broader globalization process where EU integration has

developed [5]. Crystal also has a similar opinion about the correlation between language dominance and economic [19]. He underlined Modiano's notion of the importance of the global economy. He said that the EU will have a broad view of the reality of the world if the EU trades with the whole world and becomes more visible outside. English, according to him, is an integral component of globalization.

C. English before and after Brexit in European Union

In this part, the position of English language in European Union before and after the British withdrawal from EU is discussed briefly. The aim is either to give an overview of the influence of English in the European Union or explicitly describe the future of English after Brexit.

Labrie and Quell give clear information concerning the status of the English language before exit from the European Union [20]. Based on the finding of their survey the three most studied and spoken foreign language (English, French, and German) are all increasing. Interestingly, English has the fastest progress [20]. It can be said that English is learned and spoken by many people in Europe because this language promises them to be more effective in communication among citizens.

In addition, they explain the comparison regarding language ability between the two age groups. The significant difference between the two groups is that the older generation has rather limited choices. While the younger generation has greater communication opportunities. Since knowledge of English dominated everywhere, the increase of knowledge of French and German became limited to communication between the citizens of the corresponding countries. And in general, English is the first choice by all citizens.

Another explanation is among the younger generation, the British and Danes have managed to find the same language to communicate. The young Britons can communicate with most other Europeans. Almost half of them do not speak foreign languages because the spread of English serves their interests. Meanwhile, Danish also achieves the same communication potential by making deliberate efforts to learn a second language. And this effort also applies to many other young Europeans.

Still, in Labrie and Quell article, they also explained a survey result on foreign language learning in 11 member states of the European community conducted by Storti in 1989 [20]. The survey reported that in more than half of EC countries, one foreign language was obligatory. English is in number one as the first foreign language. Then he commented that English is the first foreign language learned in Denmark, in Spain, in Greece, in Italy, in the Netherlands, and in Portugal. Therefore, it can be concluded that English is a powerful language before the British left the EU.

In a similar vein, Gazzolaa argues that the younger generation in EU tends to speak mostly English and sometimes France as foreign language more often than the older ones [12]. It indicates that younger generations study a foreign language more often than in the past. By mastering the foreign language will help them in achieving higher education and the ease of

getting a job. It is supported by Phillipson, he states that competence in English is important because it is becoming a prerequisite for access to higher education and employment, together with the preferred form of communication in national languages [21]. Interestingly, in the European school English has been promoted as a first foreign language. It is quite obvious that English as a foreign language has become the dominant language in Europe. And it showed that English is emerging as a common language for communication. In fact, English is widely used as the lingua franca in the EU.

The English language has become dominant in the EU. It is chosen not only as the lingua franca but also as the working language. And that is also the strongest official language of the EU. It can be said that English has the legal right to function as EU official and working language and has succeeded in dominating nationally in member states [21]. For instance, much information about the EU is published on its website but whereas all texts are available in English, and almost all in French, there are very few in other languages [21].

As we know, a number of official languages and working languages have been used equally in the EU. However, using all official languages and working languages for written and oral communication with member states in formal and informal meetings can be difficult [22]. A reduction in the number of EU working languages is required a reduction is actually politically desirable and of course, the functions of EU institutions can be increased [10]. Thus, Van Els argues that there is no doubt English will be the working language. This argument is based on the fact that in recent years even in the European Union, English has overtaken France. As we have already shown, since World War II English has a superior position throughout the world. English, as an international language, is a language that is being taken by non-natives.

After the Brexit referendum, the prediction appears that the era of English being the dominant language within Europe is coming to an end. Will English continue to play a major part in the lives of regular Europeans in the future? Jenkins believes English will continue to function as the EU's main working language after the British left [23]. Melckersson has also similar views that English will continue to play a major part in the lives of regular Europeans [7]. She examined in what ways the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union negatively affects the status of English as a lingua franca in Europe. The study revealed that the role of English as their topmost European lingua franca is unthreatened after the UK exit from the EU. It can be said that the position of English within the European Union is perceived as secure. In addition, she also reports that a possible interpretation of the results observed in this study is that while English will continue to be the European lingua franca, it has been and will be prominently used as a negotiating tool by European politicians and public figures, bringing with it politicization of language as one of the main features from post Brexit discourse. It is interesting to note that Brexit will not completely destroy the status of English in European contexts.

Saraceni argues that the existence of English in Europe has nothing to do with English membership in the European Union however it all relates to the role that language has as an

international lingua franca [14]. Many people such as business people, tourist, and students from different EU countries are far more likely to use English than other languages to talk to each other. It can be said that the English language has become so embedded in any interactions such as business, social, and diplomatic that its continued use to survive. Accordingly, English fate is unlikely to change significantly in post-Brexit settings.

One of the key findings of the British Council research is that English will continue to be the lingua franca in Europe in post Brexit [18]. This is based on the importance of English for cross-border trade and international competition has been recognized by the European government. According to British Council research, by 2025 the total number of potential English language students in parts of the EU is set to fall by 15.3 million [18]. This is because of demographic changes or people who move to an adult population with a higher level of English. Furthermore, older learners is going to be a source of demand for learning English.

Another argument comes from Modiano [5]. He stated that English is used by most EU agents as a medium for daily communication both in spoken and written. In addition, he also argues that people in Europe choose English as their preferred L2. They believe that through English, they will have such a great opportunity in communicating with others around the world. Moreover, there is a growing desire for *English* among young people on the European continent. For instance, the requirements of education, participation in online activities, and access to media. It is interesting to say that students from Europe dominated the market for students studying English in the UK. Still, Modiano argues that the future of English language used in the European Union will be a common English, a Euro-English or European English [5]. Formerly, Euro-English is defined as a kind of contact language, which was simplified and limited in function, others wanted to define it as Eurospeak, for which English is categorized by a clear tendency to use EU jargon. It presents the debate among the linguist. But it will not discuss in this paper.

Meanwhile, Williams and Williams state that the de facto process that emerged in Europe involved the acceptance of English as a universal lingua franca [24]. It can be concluded that in general English as the most prominent international language in Europe. Furthermore, this seems to be difficult to remove English from the official EU language list politically. Because English is de facto the most widely used language in the EU. Based on the fact it is implausible English will lose its official and working status after the Brexit referendum [6]. This matter was also confirmed by the European Commission. They clarified media reports about English no longer being the official language after the events of the British withdrawal from the EU.

IV. CONCLUSION

English is a more widely spoken second language than German and French in the European Union. The reaction of many politicians and public figures toward English status as one of the European Union's official or working languages after Brexit raises the debates. They believe that English can no

longer retain its status. However, any evidence suggests that English will continue to be the lingua franca in the EU after Brexit. A number of researchers revealed that English will continue to be the European lingua franca, people in Europe will likely choose English as their preferred L2 in purpose to have communication in many aspects, and English will be increasingly promoted as the first foreign language in European schools. It is interesting to note that Brexit will not completely eliminate the status of English in a European context.

One important thing that can be noted is we cannot reject the current role of English as the preferred international lingua franca. It seems that many people in the EU prefer to use English than any other languages to communicate with each other. People in ASEAN countries do similar things. They preferred to use English to talk for any purpose. Particularly in business and trade sector. The striking of difference with the European Union, ASEAN only has one official language and working language. English was adopted as the only de facto working and official language.

Today, English users are dominated by non-native speakers. The current conditions are the number of people who speak English as a foreign language or a second language has surpassed the number of native speakers. This certainly makes English used as a lingua franca. It cannot be denied that as a consequence of its international use, English has been formed by foreign speakers as well as native speakers. We can see that in the setting of English as a foreign language, native speakers do not involve in a great amount of verbal exchange. That's a way the idea English as a lingua franca might be required by the entire world, including Indonesia in there. It is timing for Indonesia and another country to use English as a lingua franca.

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