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TESTING TIMES

Special BREXIT Edition

Breaking News on the BREXIT Referendum!
Tomorrow's the Big Day!

The declared aim of "TESTING TIMES" is to show the wide variety of testing systems that can be found across the globe and at the same time to demonstrate how time-honoured principles of language assessment are being applied in a variety of ways. Today's edition of "TESTING TIMES" takes us across the (English?) Channel to the United Kingdom.

We hope that the following article, which highlights some perhaps lesser-known aspects of the BREXIT test of Britishness for native speakers, will help all those who are unable to participate, including incidentally the Chief Editor of this jocular journal, to appreciate the finer points of this most unusual (con)test.

12 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT BREXIT THE ULTIMATE HIGH-STAKES BRITISH ENGLISH TEST!

1. BREXIT is based on the CEFR (Common European Framework for Referenda) and is targeted at B1/B2 Level to assess whether the British have the skills, knowledge and competences, not to mention the foolhardiness, to be Independent Users.
2. The original prime (ministerial) intention was to have a European achievement test based on summative assessment procedures. However, pre-testing seems to indicate that the procedure could turn out to be a normative Cloze test.
3. For the European Union, the hope was that the BREXIT test might develop as a European Placement Test to see how far the British people have progressed up the A1 - C2 scale in terms of their European credentials (including cohesion and coherence cf. also No. 9. below). Pre-testing seems to indicate that this exercise could easily become a Dis-placement Test.
4. The BREXIT test consists of a simple one-item True/False (= IN/OUT) question which statistically speaking is not a scientific basis within the demands of validity and reliability, as the two reading comprehension items "YES" and "NO" do not even cover A1 proficiency. The original BREXIT test project provided for a multiple-choice approach to BREXIT, but the Leave fraction did not have faith in the ability of British people to deal with the

intricacies of a three-part m/c item due to their traditional belief in empire-ical methods of evaluation.

5. In view of the potential inadequacies in validity and reliability, international agencies may decide to exclude the testing of British English from their accreditation systems, so that the BREXIT test could well be ex-ALTE-d. Other test providers might be subject to splendid ESOL-ation and even become ex-IELTS or ex-PETs. In view of the overall BREXIT approach, ex-commiúnication threatens.
6. Should the BREXIT supporters achieve a majority in the referendum, new test regulations will require all intending British English test-takers to apply for British passports, i.e. Passport Control will include Lexical Control and Orthographic Control, probably in line with the Australian 'points' system where the CEFR principle of Turn-Taking will apply.
7. BREXIT was last pre-tested around forty years ago, but the results this time could well be different, as the 2016 BREXIT test designers offer fifty shades of blue. (Allegedly, a number of MPs do actually prefer grey - according to the Chief Whip).
8. Testing experts believe it was a rash decision on the part of the Prime Minister to permit a one-item test. To establish the validity of this argument, a Rasch analysis of the result will take place immediately after the evaluation procedures have been completed. And in view of the hypocrisy of many of the protagonists, the Government has decided on a many-faced Rasch analysis.
9. In view of the highly subjective, emotionally charged and non-factual nature of comments made by many of the campaign organizers, the "can" approach of the CEFR is rumoured to have been re-named the "cant" approach for the duration of the BREXIT campaign. This has become particularly obvious with the dominance of "Spoken Monologue" and "Public Announcements" over "Spoken Interaction" and "Goal-Oriented Co-operation"
10. A substantial number of left-wing French politicians are rumoured to be supporting the Leave campaign, offering Le Pen and Le Pencil to ensure the right (!) crosses are made on the voting slips.
11. In a similar vein, the authorities in Calais have introduced a number of validity and reliability-based assessment procedures to stop unauthorised voters from crossing the Channel on specially hired small vessels in the hope of reaching Britain in order to falsify the result of the BREXIT test by circumnavigating official pass control procedures. To prevent this, a number of so-called 'anchor items' have been included to ensure the correct weighting.
12. In view of the posters produced by UKIP as part of the Leave campaign, it has been suggested that the party be re-named IPUK.