

Irish TV station 'forced' to use Queen's English

1st September, 2017



Radio newsreaders and television presenters at Ireland's national broadcaster RTE are up in arms at being told to pronounce words according to the Queen's English. A report in The Irish Sun newspaper claims that RTE's broadcasters have been issued an A-Z style guide of words which instructs them on how to pronounce certain words in an effort to ensure they are clearly understood. The A-Z comes with audio clips containing elocution lessons of how to "properly" pronounce the "problem" words. An official at RTE told the Irish Sun that producers issued the guide to keep up standards. It said RTE had received complaints from the public over how certain words were supposedly mispronounced.

Irish linguistics expert Professor Raymond Hickey called the RTE's actions "internalized colonialism". He expressed his disbelief that Irish speakers were being asked to use words with an English accent. He said: "The basic issue is RTE expects its staff to speak as if they were English. Why? We have our own form of English, which is different but fully legitimate and accepted worldwide." Professor Hickey highlighted some examples of the words Irish presenters are being asked to pronounce with a British English accent. He said: "The Irish don't pronounce the TH [in 'birthday'] as a fricative, but as a stop with no breath....The same is true of 'news' - the Irish pronunciation is and always has been 'nooze'."

Sources: irishmirror.ie / thesun.ie / buzz.ie

Writing

There is no such thing as the "best" pronunciation. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

newsreaders / national broadcaster / pronunciation / A-Z / elocution / complaints / linguistics / colonialism / disbelief / legitimate / worldwide / breath / highlighted

True / False

- Irish broadcasters are angry at being told to use the Queen's English. T / F
- Ireland's national broadcaster gave staff an A-Z of pronunciation. T / F
- Ireland's national broadcaster gave staff audio clips on pronunciation. T / F
- Ireland's broadcaster hasn't received any complaints about pronunciation. T / F
- A linguistics expert said the RTE guide was a form of colonialism. T / F
- The expert was not surprised staff were asked to use British English. T / F
- The professor said the Irish pronounce the TH in 'birthday'. T / F
- The expert said the Irish and GB pronunciation of 'news' are the same. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. up in arms | a. pronunciation |
| 2. issued | b. fundamental |
| 3. claims | c. particular |
| 4. elocution | d. kind |
| 5. certain | e. astonishment |
| 6. expert | f. angry |
| 7. disbelief | g. continually |
| 8. basic | h. asserts |
| 9. form | i. given |
| 10. always | j. specialist |

Discussion – Student A

- What kind of English accent would you like?
- What is your accent like in your own language?
- How important are accents?
- Which accent is better – British or American?
- Should non-British newsreaders have to use the Queen's English?
- What pronunciation problems do you have in English?
- What did your English teacher do to teach pronunciation?
- Have you had a funny experience with pronunciation?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ireland's national | a. clips |
| 2. are up in | b. mispronounced |
| 3. audio | c. worldwide |
| 4. keep | d. colonialism |
| 5. certain words were supposedly | e. arms at being told |
| 6. internalized | f. issue |
| 7. He expressed | g. up standards |
| 8. basic | h. broadcaster |
| 9. accepted | i. has been |
| 10. is and always | j. his disbelief |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you think of the Queen's English?
- How important is pronunciation when learning English?
- Are there accents you dislike in your country?
- Is Professor Hickey right with his "internalized colonialism" claim?
- What accents do you have problems understanding?
- How important is pronunciation compared with other skills?
- What questions would you like to ask the head of RTE?

Spelling

- Ireland's national aeroadctbrs RTE
- words which irtsncust them on how
- an effort to euesrn they are
- containing neoluoiect lessons
- received maptscloni from the public
- words were esplusoypd mispronounced
- Irish scgnulstiii expert
- internalized aolsmonliic
- He expressed his sdlifbee
- fully ilgetmeati and accepted
- a British English anecct
- pronounce the TH in 'birthday' as a ectfivria

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. h	4. a	5. c
6. j	7. e	8. b	9. d	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Pronunciation

You think pronunciation is the most important part of learning English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): grammar, vocabulary or spelling.

Role B – Grammar

You think grammar is the most important part of learning English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pronunciation, vocabulary or spelling.

Role C – Vocabulary

You think vocabulary is the most important part of learning English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): grammar, pronunciation or spelling.

Role D – Spelling

You think spelling is the most important part of learning English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation.

Speaking – English

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important things about English at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| • idioms | • accent |
| • slang | • vocabulary |
| • intonation | • grammar |
| • spelling | • intelligibility |

Answers – True False

a T	b T	c T	d F	e T	f F	g F	h F
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.