ON THE NOTIONS 'NATIVE'/'NONNATIVE':
A DANGEROUS DICHOTOMY FOR
WORLD ENGLISHES?
by
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The terms 'native' and 'nonnative speaker' raise a number of linguistic, ethnic, cultural, political, and educational problems in the field of theoretical and applied linguistics. The notion 'native speaker' has been employed as a mark of power and prestige for the benefit of some individuals, while 'nonnative' has also been used as an instrument to exclude others on the base of race and culture. One of the difficulties in the study of the term 'native' is the ambiguity of the term. In some cases, specialists tend to conflate different types of native speakers – which accounts for problems in interpreting the notions of nativeness and nonnativeness presented in the literature.

A thorny question, extremely difficult to answer, is whether or not there exists a qualitative distinction between a native speaker and a proficient nonnative. In spite of the political and linguistic issues linked to these terms, I argue that the notions 'native'/'nonnative' are operational when one compares learners of a specific language with those who acquired that language at an early age. The criticism of the terms on the part of Singh et al. (1995), Singh (1995), and Rajagopalan (1997) has served as an important corrective in the area of language and linguistics, but theoretical disputes or squabbles over nativeness (nativity) must not distract attention from the study of (i) the power relationships that occur among the different varieties of English in the world, and (ii) the role of interaction between nonnatives and natives in the context of World English(es) (henceforth, WE(s)).

0. Introduction

This article will be presented in four sections. In the first, I look at the complex situation of World Englishes at the present time. In the second, I set out the main objections to the notion 'native speaker'. In this part, I present different uses of the term native speaker. In the third section, I put forth arguments in favor of maintaining this notion in spite of the criticisms leveled at it. In the fourth part of this paper, I conclude that, on one hand, the discussions in the literature with regard to nativeness (nativity) have obscured many of the problems

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related to 'native' and 'nonnative' and, on the other, have contributed, in the discipline of applied linguistics, to a better understanding of the complex interaction of language users in different contexts in WEs.

1. *English as a world language*

According to Brutt-Griffler (1998:381), English '… has spread and changed to become an international language'. The pluricentricity of English, depicted by Kachru (1990, 1996, 1997) in the form of three concentric rings: the 'inner circle' (where English originated), the 'outer circle' (where this language has been transplanted), and the 'expanding circle' (where it may function as a second or foreign language), has led to the existence and (in some cases, the institutionalization) of competing varieties and has raised the question of whose standards should prevail, given the diversity of varieties, number of speakers, and geographical distribution of WEs at the present time. Kachru has referred to the problem of WEs as 'the agony and the ecstasy'; the agony points to the debate over an exonormative or endonormative standard, or, as Bamgbose (1998) puts it, to a condition of being 'torn between the norms'; the ecstasy refers to the large numbers of speakers who use English in their daily lives, to the geographical spread throughout the world, and to the importance of this language in world affairs.

Alongside the so-called 'native' varieties such as British English, American English, and Canadian English (henceforth, BE, AE and CE), there are numerous supposedly 'non-native' varieties such as Indian English, Brunei English and Singaporean English (henceforth IE, BNE and SE, respectively). Nelson (1985:249-50) stated very emphatically that for one group 'to claim "ownership" of English on some basis of historical antecedence is pragmatically unsound thinking'. No one holds a patent of or copyright to a specific language or variety of a language. In Widdowson's words (1994:385), '… no nation can have custody', for English is not the private property of any one nation or community.[1]

Specialists in Second Language Acquisition (henceforth, SLA) have attempted to attribute the difficulty in acquiring a foreign

language on the part of learners in the inner circle (Americans learning French or Australians learning Spanish), and also on the part of those in the expanding circle, to the phenomenon of interference, resulting in an 'interlanguage'. The problem here is that many language users in the outer circle have been viewed as learners (rather than speakers) of a language that is actually their own acquired tongue. Their linguistic production has been viewed as something negative (instead of an enrichment); the basis of measurement has been the linguistic production of the speakers in the inner circle, who have been viewed as the holders of the norm, and whose English has served as the yardstick for the other varieties to be measured by. This bias in the SLA literature suggests (Singh 1995; Silva 2000) that second/foreign language users do not possess (and never will have) 'native speaker competence'. Highly suspect and subjective terms such as 'distorted', 'defective', and 'deficient' have been part of this view of 'nonnative' and 'New Englishes'. The notion 'nonnative variety' is also problematic, for nativeness is not a quality of varieties but of people. English has taken on new identities and has developed competing national norms in the places where it is used. The increase in numbers of English-speaking communities in different parts of the world with their own institutionalized or nativized varieties has led to the questioning of the notions of interlanguage and interference.

A need for the revision of terms and a change in attitude can be observed in the study of structures of coordination in writing and in conversation on the part of university students in Ghana that do not obey the rules of standard English (Owusu-Anash 1991:53). According to this researcher, sentence (1) (below) does not follow the standard rule for coordination where only similar grammatical items (noun+ noun) or structures of equal grammatical rank (group+group) are conjoined.

(1)   The daily attendance at the hospital and the severity of the pain in the eye have prevented me from attending lectures.

Owusu-Anash (1991:60) observes that labels such as 'error, mistake, and interlanguage' applied to sentences like (1) are questionable for they are motivated by 'stylistic and social needs'. The author's words

are important for an understanding of the changes occurring in WEs: 'This state of affairs suggests that it is pointless to label some aspects of NNE [nonnative English] as an "error" when they are characteristic of everyone's speech'. What is important here is that interlanguage and interference are not relevant to the problem of standardizing outer-circle varieties of English; it is the case that the development of different outer-circle varieties has served as a challenge to those concepts. Interlanguage and interference play a role in discussions in the field of SLA, but they are not pertinent in the case of proficient users as cited by Owusu-Anash.

The use and role of English in the outer circle is indeed quite complex, for in nations like India, Nigeria, and the Philippines there are many language users whose proficiency has led to the production of novels, poems, and plays as well as of scholarly books and articles in English. Two examples of skilled writers in the field of literature are Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy.

Often overlooked until recently, the expanding circle needs to be reexamined in any discussion of WEs. Graddol (1999:67) has something very important to say about English in the expanding circle. According to him,

> Europe is a case in point, containing an increasing number of fluent speakers of English who do not conform to the traditional definition of L2 speakers and who are excluded from most estimates of L2 usage.

One can easily point to a large number of so-called nonnative speakers who have written seminal books and papers on English. A dozen names (Jespersen, Poutsma, Svartvik, Wierzbicka, Granger, Stein, Dušková, Kuno, Mey, Kruisinga, Zandvoort) lead me to claim that there many, many people in the world who indeed excel in English studies and outperform many of the native speakers in Portland, Perth, and Plymouth. The success of the scholars mentioned points to their talent in language learning and may also point to instances of successful language learning in school and in natural contexts as well.

In the next section, I examine the arguments marshaled against the notions 'native speaker' and 'nonnative speaker'.

2. Arguments against the notion 'native speaker'

The terms 'native'[2] and 'native speaker' are used in different senses by different scholars in the literature of the subject. This is apparent in the flurry of articles on the subject (cf. Singh et al. 1995; Afendras et al. 1995; Singh 1995; and Rajagopalan 1997). In order to clarify the different senses in which the term is employed, I present a tentative working typology of the 'native speaker'.[3]

(i)   The first meaning is the 'age-of-acquisition-native', who learned a specific language in her infancy either prior to or at the same time that another language is being acquired. Some users use the language acquired in infancy until puberty while others continue to use it after that period.

(ii)   The second sense of the notion 'native speaker' is the 'loyalty-native' who bears allegiance to specific language, be it Irish or Roma. Some of these users may be an age of acquisition-natives, sense (i), while others might have lost their respective languages, but still claim loyalty to them.

(iii) The third use of the term is the 'objective proficiency native', who speaks the language with 'confidence, consistency, and automaticity' in a variety of situations. This user has complete control of the specific language system and 'stable well-formedness judgments' (Preisler, in Afendras et al. 1995). The counterpart of this user would be the 'subjective proficiency native', who *believes* she speaks a specific language with 'full replication and stable well-formedness judgments'. (Preisler, ibid.)

(iv)   The fourth use of the term is the 'ideal native speaker' proposed by Chomsky and his followers. This idealized technical term is used to examine grammaticality judgments of a user with regard to isolated sentences, devoid of context and information about that speaker and the situation in which she interacts with other language users.

(v)   The fifth use of the term is the 'blood native', who bases his or her native speaker status on race, nationality, or ethnicity. This is a dangerous and spurious use of the term, for

nativeness has nothing to do with race or ethnicity. In this scenario, nativeness and citizenship are based on ethnicity. A sad consequence of the 'blood' native stance in practice is that children ('age-of-acquisition natives') born in a European country of, for example, Turkish parents (or other nationalities), in some cases cannot obtain citizenship in the country where they were born.

(vi)   The sixth use of the term involves speakers who come from a country where the majority of the people are 'age-of-acquisition-natives' of high-status varieties of the language. This 'historical-antecedence-native' would exclude those speakers who happen to speak a low-status variety of the language.

Recent critics of the 'native'/'nonnative' distinction (Singh et al. 1995; Afendras et al. 1995; and Singh 1995), argue that the term 'nonnative' is not an appropriate label to describe speakers of English in outer circle countries in South-East Asia (India and Pakistan, Malaysia, and Singapore). For Millar (in Afendras et al. 1995:298) the 'ubiquitous native/non-native distinction' used in the area of World English is a 'problem child'.

According to Mac Aogáin (in Afendras et al. 1995:301), the label 'nonnative' implies something 'second- rate', indeed an embarrassment for WE. Singh et al. (1995:293) observe that speakers of IE and SE operate their respective varieties in the same way as speakers of AE or BE do, and based on this fact, he concludes that both groups are native speakers. Both groups are sense (i) users – 'age-of-acquisition-natives'. In the conclusion to his paper, Singh (1995:294) contends that there exists '... no structural feature α such that all 'non-native' varieties of English have α and no 'native' variety does'. If this point is accepted, it would mean that there are no linguistic or acquisitional arguments that support the view of IE and SE as nonnative varieties.

Rajagopalan (1997) refers to the English-using speakers in outer circle countries in South-East Asia who have been categorically identified in the literature as nonnative speakers of English. The term 'native speaker', to cite his words, '… harbors potentially dangerous agendas'. The author makes a very valid point, for the native speaker

has often been perceived as white, whereas nonnatives have been associated with non-white communities and (automatically) nonnative speakers. Indeed, the term has functioned as a label to exclude individuals on the grounds of race and as a way to bestow privileges on those who receive the title of 'native speaker'. Rajagopalan rejects the dichotomy 'native/non-native speaker'; in the course of his paper, he criticizes theoretical linguists for the 'phantasmagoria and dream world' they have constructed with regard to the notion 'native speaker', as well as linguistic theory for being 'wedded to the concept' and for having contributed in large part to the privileged position of this language user. The problem here is that three different senses of the notion 'native speaker' are being conflated, that is, senses (i) the 'age-acquisition-native', (iv) the suspicious 'blood native', and (v) the Chomskyan 'ideal native speaker'.

Rajagopalan (1997) resumes the main points that linguists and linguistic theory make with respect to the subject as follows: (i) 'the native speaker never errs'; (ii) nativity is a 'scientifically respectable myth' and the search for native speakers and nonnative ones is a 'wild-goose chase'; (iii) theoretical linguists, revering the native speaker, hold him or her in 'awe'. With respect to his 'wild goose search' Rajagopalan, it appears, has indeed been able to find nonnative speakers, for they are the subject matter of a subsequent paper (2002), where they are vested with their own acronym (NNSTs). For Davies (1991:167), the debate about the native speaker will continue; it will be essential, in his words,

> … to distinguish between the two senses of native speaker, the flesh and blood native speaker and the ideal; and if others choose to dismiss, as I have, the flesh and blood native speaker as having no cloths, I believe that they will have a use for the ideal. That indeed is a myth but a useful myth.

Rajagopalan (1997) takes generative linguistics to task for claiming that *the native speaker never errs* (his emphasis). If one looks at Chomsky's (1965:4) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, it is not the case that the 'ideal speaker' never errs, for Chomsky admits that for the same speaker, when he/she is performing, there occur 'numerous false starts,

deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on'. Native speakers do err, both those who acquired the language 'natively' and those 'nonnatives' who learned the language (later on, in school or on the street!). This state of affairs is related to performance, which Chomsky chooses not to study; he makes it quite clear that he is not interested in studying problems of '… memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and *errors (random or characteristic)* on the part of language users' (Chomsky 1965:3; my emphasis). In general, I find it hard to accept the view that generative linguists looked upon native speakers as demigods. Generative linguists were in fact their own informants and many disagreements occurred (the subject of many a paper!) with respect to grammaticality, acceptability, and ambiguity of sentences. For generative linguists, there was no one native speaker out there to be interviewed or tape-recorded: each generativist was her own native speaker informant, and it is a fact that many of these native speaker linguists frequently failed to agree with another. The debate about one asterisk or two, as well as about one or more question marks, is evidence of the heated discussions with regard to grammaticality and ungrammaticality among these arm-chair linguists and self-appointed informants.

In the history of linguistics, there are other scholars who have been concerned with performance and the linguistic errors of language users. Hockett's (1967) pioneer study *Where the tongue slips, there slip I?* and also the work of Fromkin (1973, 1980) are representative of a very active tradition in theoretical linguistics dealing with the study of speech errors. For Fromkin (1980), (native) speakers do indeed err. She concludes that there is indeed an order of constraint on the production of errors and that errors are not totally random or unexplainable (p. 239).

Rajagopalan (1997) claims that nativity or nativeness is a 'scientifically respectable myth'. No doubt Ferguson (1982:vii) has performed a great service in calling our attention to the importance given to and the reverence for the term 'native speaker', particularly on the part of structuralist (pre-generative) linguistics. In discussing 'native speakers', it is important to emphasize that Ferguson used the word *mystique*, not *myth* to refer to them.

The fact is that while Ferguson (1982, vii) suggested that the 'mystique of the native speaker and mother tongue' be removed from linguists' thinking, in an earlier paper (1975), he saw nothing amiss with the term *foreigner*, which he employed on many instances in his seminal paper dealing with what he calls 'foreigner talk', that is, a simplified speech used by (native) speakers when dealing with those who are in the process of learning a particular language (nonnatives or foreigners). Ferguson's purpose was not at all to remove the terms 'native speaker' and 'mother tongue' from the vocabulary of linguistics, but rather to problematize the importance attributed to these terms. If we admit the term 'foreigners', then the term 'non-foreigners' would follow; it could be used to describe a situation where learners (=foreigners) are receiving, as input, slow speech delivery, simplified grammar use, and reduced vocabulary for the purpose of facilitating comprehension in dealing with either 'age-of-acquisition-natives' (sense i) or 'objective proficiency natives' (sense iii). Based on this remark, I contend that it is not, in all instances, a 'wild goose chase' to look for native or nonnative speakers – provided one understands the different senses of the term. Presumably, most proficiency-natives (sense iii) of, say, Hungarian are age-of-acquisition-natives (sense i). Similarly, there are probably many 'objective proficiency-natives' of Putonghua/Mandarin who are 'age-of-acquisition-natives' of other varieties or dialects in China.

The term 'native' is not the only term that offends. 'Nonnative' as well serves as a label of exclusion and it annoys many who consider themselves to be native speakers with 'native tuition', as Yano (2001) claims. In order to avoid the notion 'nonnative', Yano suggests the term 'genetic native' to refer to speakers in the inner circle, and 'functional natives' to describe those in the outer circle. I feel that Yano's distinction between 'genetic' and 'functional' natives fails to take into consideration that there are thousands of speakers in the expanding circle who could very well be classified as 'functional natives' as well. (More on this point later). Underlying the term 'genetic nativeness' there might very well lurk racist notions (I do not wish to suggest that Yano's is supporting a racist agenda), for what is meant by 'the genetic mapping' of a particular region and also: whose genes are involved in this distinction? The assignment of the terms 'native/

nonnative speaker' has nothing to do with biological concerns such as blood and genes or political issues such as citizenship in a particular nation-state. There are, for example, throughout Europe native speakers of Roma, a people without a nation of their own. Another case is that of the Kurdish people, who live in a number of different nations. There are native speakers of Esperanto, viz., children[4] who have acquired the language from infancy from their, supposedly, 'nonnative' parents who had to sit down and learn the language themselves.

There are two basic objections to the term 'native speaker'. First, there is Singh's argument (Singh et al. 1995; Singh 1995) that there is no linguistic or structural difference between IE and AE, on one hand, and between SE and BE, on the other. In Singh's view, native speaker status is attributed to all speakers of IE or SE, no matter what the users' level of proficiency is. Second, there is Rajagopalan's (1997) pointed and pertinent criticism of racism and exclusion underlying the notion of 'native speaker'. There is no doubt that the 'native speaker' has been used in the field of language study to exclude people on the basis of race and place of birth. In the minds of many, the concept pertains only to the users in the inner circle.

Is it always possible or feasible to delete the terms 'native speaker' and 'nonnative speaker' from the general linguistic discussion? In the next section, for the purpose of continuing the debate on the issue, I reexamine the arguments put forward by Singh et al. (1995), Singh (1995), and Rajagopalan (1997) in the light of possible counter-arguments that might contribute to a modification of the view that the 'native speaker/nonnative speaker' distinction is completely untenable in all situations.

3. Must the notion 'native speaker' be banned from linguistic discussions?: Some arguments in favor of maintaining the distinction

The motivation for continuing the debate on the notions 'native/nonnative speaker' is based on the admission by Singh (1995:324) that the many specialists who participated in the exchange, disagree with him and/or with one another. Those writers who argue

in favor of maintaining the contrast are Bamgbose, Kachru, Saleemi, Preisler, and Trudgill (Afendras et al. 1995). Millar and MacAogáin are ambivalent about the issue while Afendras, Coulmas, and Dasgupta endorse the elimination of the dichotomy. Due to the fact that there is no consensus among the various authors and considering, as well, the heatedness of the exchange, it would be important to take a closer look at the issues in the debate.

To repeat what I stated above, Singh's major argument in favor of abandoning the contrast 'native speaker/nonnative speaker' is that there exists no structural or formal difference between native speaker English (in the inner circle nations) and the English spoken by nonnative speakers (presumably, in the outer circle countries). While both native and nonnative varieties do show nativization, the changes that occur in both are different in nature, according to Y. Kachru (in Afendras et al. 1995). In the outer circle varieties, changes are brought about by contact with indigenous languages while in the inner circle varieties, whatever changes occur, come about internally. The rather monolithic view of IE that Singh presents would appear to concern a homogenous variety. Singh's purpose is seen as getting the 'native speaker blown away in the wind', in India and in other countries (1995:328).

One of the problems with Singh et al. (1995) and the other papers related to it (Singh 1995; Rajagopalan 1997) is that the authors do not examine in detail a specific country or community of speakers. A good example of an in-depth study of one nation is Banjo's study (1993:261), in which the author asks what the term 'Nigerian English' (henceforth NE) means. In the course of his article, the author, basing his presentation on an earlier study by Brosnahan (1958), presents a four-way classification of NE varieties. Variety 1 is the '... variety most heavily influenced by the transfer of mother-tongue features'. Variety 2 is that variety described in textbooks used in the country; it is based on BE. Variety 3, according to the author, '... represents a further movement away from mother tongue transfer'. The mother tongue transfer is lacking, as this variety is not employed by its users in Nigeria. Variety 4 is the mother tongue of those Nigerians who have a parent whose mother tongue is English (Mazrui's 'Afro-Saxons'; 1975) or who have been raised in a country 'where English is the first

language'. With regard to Y. Kachru's remarks (in Afendras et al. 1995) as to whether changes in English are contact-induced or internally induced, I conjecture that Banjo's varieties 1 and 2 are contact-induced while varieties 3 and 4 are exonormative.

Banjo's classification raises some interesting questions. Are all the speakers of these respective varieties native speakers of English or are some of them nonnative speakers? Do speakers of the four varieties consider themselves to be native speakers English? Some individuals may be flattered by being viewed as native speakers while others may resent this. Banjo states that the point to emphasize in any discussion of the native/nonnative dichotomy is that those Nigerians who come to acquire English 'later on' in life in primary or secondary school may in fact be L2 speakers of English, since their regional or national language may have the upper hand. What is interesting is that variety 3, according to Banjo, '... conforms to the "world standard"', any deviations being regarded as errors which generally the speakers of the variety themselves are capable of correcting. My reading of Banjo's paper leads me to argue that 'native speakers' of English and its varieties abound in Nigeria and that they are far from being 'blown away in the wind'; Banjo's article is important, as it shows that there is indeed a wide variety of proficiency levels in Nigeria.

An insistence on banning the notion of 'native speaker' from linguistic discussion is problematic when one bears in mind that everyone is first a 'native speaker' of a specific dialect or variety of a language. With respect to this point, Mohanan (in Singh et al. 1995) points out that IE functions as a covering term: there exist in his country, India, 'sub-communities of speakers' of Gujerati English and Malayalee English, some of whom may very well be native speakers, whereas others may use those respective varieties as an additional language. Related to this view is Paradis' who writes:

> Properly speaking, one is not a native speaker of a language, but of a given sociolect of a particular dialect. For example one is not really a native speaker of English, but a native speaker of upper-middle or lower-class Irish English, Scottish English, Tennessee English or Bangalore English (the lects can be even more narrowly differentiated.) (R. Singh 1998)

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Cheshire (1991:1) observes that the distinction between 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' is 'extremely difficult to operationalize', and argues that this notion is indeed 'becoming more and more blurred'. I hasten to ask if the term would really be so difficult to operationalize if we are clear about the groups we are comparing. For example, Chen (1993), in a study of politeness strategies in the use of compliments by Chinese students learning American English, shows that the Chinese students in the experiment bring to English patterns of politeness from Chinese quite different from those used by speakers of AE. I am sure that it is quite clear to Chen (and to his readers as well) that the Chinese learners who participated in his study were 'native speakers' or 'mother tongue' speakers of Chinese (sense (i)) and that the Americans, respectively, were 'native' speakers of AE (likewise sense (i)). There is no need to remove these notions when one is examining the results of Chen's research, as in this case, it is not a question of exclusion. Another clear case of contact between 'nonnatives' (learners) and 'natives' occurred during the violent conquest of Mexico in the 16th Century by the Spanish conquistadores. An Indian woman, named La Malinche (in Spanish Doña Marina), learned Spanish, and as slave and mistress of Hernán Cortes acted as translator, interpreter, spy, and native informant (and informer) collaborating in the conquest of the country (Kummer 1981).

One difficulty with removing the term 'native speaker' from the professional vocabulary of language studies is that such a removal would result in a serious limitation of the power of expression. To be sure, the term 'native speaker' is often theoretically confusing, as Singh et al. (1995), Afendras et al. (1995), and Singh (1995) have pointed out; however, in practice, specialists understand what is meant by the concept. There is nothing problematic with the term 'native speaker' which I have italicized in the following quotes:

(i)   Many times that number of citizens, born in the U.S., speak with a regional accent that is not fashionable, or are *native speakers* of a variety of English which is directly related to race, ethnicity, or income. (Lippi-Green 1994:190)

(ii)   We have also recommended, more recently, that African American rhetorical and expressive styles should be more fully accepted and exploited in the classroom [...]; and that the linguistic needs of students who are *native speakers* of non-standard English should be considered by policy-makers in allocating federal and local funding for education. (Baugh 1988, quoted in Rickford 1997:178)

(iii)   They report [Singh and Stanton 1982] that lower and lower middle class *native speakers* of Quebec French use lexical repetition very frequently and at the expense of other means of cohesion. (Singh, Lele and Martohardjono 1988:47)

(iv)   Given these two senses [=historical and acquisitional], nonnative Englishes may have *native speakers*, especially in places like Singapore, where children grow up with English as one of their mother tongues. (Bao 2003:41, note 1)

In the quotes cited above, the notion 'native speaker' is not used to exclude, nor is there a racist agenda present in the use of the term. The contrast 'native/nonnative' speaker would appear, then, to be an essential term in the disciplines of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, particularly the sub-field of SLA.

Further, if the notions 'native speaker', 'nonnative speaker', and 'foreigner' were lock, stock, and barrel removed from the professional vocabulary of linguists, how would these specialists be able to address lay audiences? Wouldn't the avoidance of such terms on the part of linguists and researchers in other fields conflict with local knowledge on the part of the general public?

Returning to Yano's remarks (2001:22) with respect to Singaporeans, many individuals in that country and elsewhere feel that they are native speakers of English and have what he calls 'native speaker tuition'. What is important, in Yano's view, is the feeling or belief that some Singaporeans have with respect to English; the affirmation of 'nativeness' is based on a personal evaluation of their own proficiency. One would have to know more about an individual's

biography to ascertain if she or he is an 'age-of-acquisition-native' (sense (i)) or a sense (iii) 'objective-proficiency native'.

Preisler (in Afendras et al. 1995:312) states that he learned English as a foreign language in the school system of Denmark. Preisler claims that he shares '… relatively stable well-formedness judgments with the general community of educated speakers of American English who acquired English as their first language', and as a professor of English in his country, he has succeeded in achieving '… full replication of the English system', which would classify him as an 'objective proficiency native'. Nevertheless, in spite of his proficiency, he considers himself to be a native speaker of Danish and not of English. For Preisler, the point that makes him a nonnative speaker of English is that fact that English and Danish are 'functionally distributed': no matter what their proficiency level in English, Danes will speak to one another in Danish, unless there are 'functional reasons' for not doing so – in the presence of foreigners or at professional meetings 'with other participants, e.g. students'. In Preisler's case, his loyalty to Danish and his fellow Danes is one thing and his proficiency or competence in English ('well-formedness judgments' and 'full replication') is another; here, he is quite different from Yano, who refers to his 'native tuition'. Preisler's acceptance of nonnativeness (in English) in his situation does not imply non-proficiency.

Another difficulty with Singh's analysis is that it is too sweeping, since he attributes to all speakers of IE or SE a legitimacy as native speakers, notwithstanding their level of proficiency. Is it the case that the same level of proficiency is present in all varieties? If this view were to be taken seriously, users of 'grassroots English' would be also considered native speakers of the language. Khubchandani and Hosali (1999:251) use 'grassroots English' to refer to those speakers who have a 'near zero level grasp of English in everyday-life communication' or can, at most, 'claim a rudimentary grasp' of the language.

Singh (1995) is quite right to take umbrage at the label 'nonnative speaker' in the case of English-speaking communities in the outer circle, particularly in Africa and South-East Asia. Large numbers of speakers of NE, IE, and SE show indeed stable 'well-formedness judgments' and 'full replication' of the language; for this reason, in his own words, he is '… interested not in redrawing boundaries but in

eliminating those that just can't be there'. For Singh (1995:328), the notion 'native speaker' would hopefully get 'blown away in the wind' and language specialists would refrain from playing either the 'native speaker game' or the 'nonnative game'. This desire on Singh's part is perplexing in the light of remarks made in the specialized literature on the language situation in India. But this is not really relevant to the discussion at hand, as the problem of exclusion is indeed a sensitive issue in the field of WEs, and it is easily observed that there are native speakers of English in large numbers in India and other countries. In this regard, Khubchandani and Hosali (1999:257) report that while 'the bulk of speakers acquire English as a second language in India (from near-zero-level upwards to a somewhat refined grasp of the language)', there is a significant minority of speakers who claim English as their mother tongue. These writers also state that there is, at the present time, an increase in the number of families in Indian cities where both parents speak Indian languages but opt to teach English to their children 'as a mother tongue' and as a 'badge of modernity'. What is interesting here is that the children become native speakers based on the nonnative model of their parents and are 'developing only a passive competence in their ancestral language' (ibid.).

4. To conclude: Contributions of the 'native/nonnative' debate to the study of WEs

(i) A necessary corrective

The debate with respect to the notions 'native' and 'nonnative' serves as a necessary corrective to the tendency to confuse the different uses of the term 'native', whereby 'age-of-acquisition-natives', supposedly limited to the outer circle countries, are lumped together with learners in the same circle who learned English later on in life, without 'full replication' or 'stable well-formedness judgments'. The fiction of the 'ideal native speaker', employed by a specific linguistic theory, is a specialized use of the term, and has little to do with real people who acquired a specific language at an early age and use it through puberty and past that stage. Whether the ideal native speaker notion is useful or

not in linguistics is another issue. The real concern in the field of WEs is people and how they relate to one another; and here, the use of the term 'native speakers' has served to mark off a sphere of privilege based on race (for whites) and on gender (for males).

The revision of this concept has contributed to rethinking the notion in language teaching. Paikeday (1985:88), quite some time ago, argued that the notion 'should not be used as a criterion for excluding certain categories of people from language-teaching, dictionary-editing, and similar functions'. Proficiency and expertise in a specific language and in teaching, translating, or preparing pedagogical materials are the criteria for hiring practices that should prevail in all three circles (Davies 1995). Schneider (2003:238) contributes a very important point to the field of language studies with regard to what really is the issue. According to him:

> Descriptive and theoretical linguistics fundamentally believe that all language uses and varieties are functionally adequate in their respective contexts and internally well-structured. On the other hand, applied linguistics and language teachers require decisions and advice as to which norm to regard as acceptable or as a target in any given situation.

Discourses and language practices that disempower and discriminate certain speakers and users of English in the world will contribute to hostility and resistance to English. Citing cases of miscommunication among natives and nonnatives in different parts of the world, Singh, Lele, and Martohardjono (1988) criticize the work of interethnic interactional sociolinguistics in these terms:

> It [= interethnic interactional sociolinguistics] must, we submit, learn to locate the sources of misunderstanding not only in the occasional lapses of the foreigner but also in the systematic distortions introduced by the institutionally encouraged, if not constrained, interpretive scheme of the native.

Hegemony and dominance underlie the 'native/nonnative' dichotomy. The questioning and critical examination of this dichotomy obscure

issues of power and dominance that have led to misunderstanding and strife in different parts of the world where English is present.

Disputes about who is native or not, distract from the need to study English in the world, in particular in-depth investigation of (i), the power relationships that obtain among the different varieties of English in the world, and of (ii), the role of interaction between nonnatives and natives in the context of World Englishes.

(ii) The inner, outer, expanding circles: a distinction more and more blurred?

As we saw above, Cheshire (1991:1) argues that the distinction between 'native' and 'nonnative' is becoming more and more 'blurred'. This would certainly appear to be true in the case of the notions 'inner', 'outer', and 'expanding' circles, as the three of them are more similar than different. For example, inner circle nations are fast becoming more and more multilingual and multicultural. Britain, Canada, Australia and the US have large numbers of different speakers of a variety of languages. The US ranks as the fifth country in the world with a significant number of Spanish speakers, after Spain, Mexico, Columbia, and Argentina. The right to maintain a language other than English, and to use that language in public, are shared concerns in both the inner and outer circles. One problem in inner circle nations, particularly the US, is that many individuals feel social and cultural pressures to abandon their heritage tongues.

García (1994:87-88) refers to her arrival in the USA at the age of 11 'with only a Spanish voice'. She went on to become 'an academic person in English [and] a social person in Spanish'; later on in her life, in New York City, she was able to regain her lost literary skills in Spanish and the related academic voice. Similar struggles occur in both the outer and expanding circles, not only where English is concerned, but with other languages as well.

Tse (2001) suggests ways to 'resist and reverse language shift' (to English). Many of the outer circle countries are similar to the inner circle ones in that both have numbers of 'age-of-acquisition' natives or learners who have developed a high degree of expertise in English.

The blurring of the differences in the circles is equally observed in the expanding circle nations, where numbers of L2 learners have reached a level of proficiency with 'full replication and stable well-formedness judgments', to borrow Preisler's expression (in Afendras et al. 1995). It is moreover the case that the expanding circle nations also have within their borders large numbers of temporary and permanent resident immigrants from different parts of the world. The three circles are characterized by constant movement of peoples, intercultural contact, and miscegenation. Rushdie's words (1989:4, cited in Rajagopalan 1997:230) are indeed appropriate in this regard: 'Perhaps we are all, black, browns, and white, leaking into another, as a character of mine once said, like flavours when you cook'.

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Notes

1. Widdowson (1994:385) states that the status of English as an international language means that no country can, in his words, 'have custody of it'. But this view does not stop Widdowson from questioning the use of the word *propone* 'to bring [something] forward in time', used in Indian English, on the basis that is 'coined by non-native speaking community, so it is not a proper English word'.

2. Williams (1976:215) points to the positive use of the term 'native' as well as the negative sense. In the former, one encounters 'native land' and 'native country'; in the latter, 'non-European', 'bondsman' and 'villain'. Williams also observes that the term 'native' converts all others to inferiors, while 'indigenous' serves as a general term and a euphemism. This autor also notes that 'to go indigenous' is less plausible than 'to go native'.

3. I want to thank an anonymous reviewer of a previous version of this paper for suggesting the use of the typology in this study. I assume sole responsibility for the statements made here.

4. A pertinent paper dealing with the development of Esperanto 'age-of-acquisition natives' is Corsetti et al. (2004).

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