The Growth of English and its Pedagogical Implications: from 'Native- Speakerism' to 'Interculturalism'

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Résumé

> Le présent article met en exergue l'hégémonie de la langue anglaise; son développement en tant que langue internationale et les implications pédagogiques que ce nouveau statut a engendré. Ainsi, la notion du locuteur natif qui servait de model linguistique pour l'apprenant a graduellement céder la place à une autre : la compétence communicative interculturelle. Ce changement d'intérêt pédagogique est dicté par les exigences urgentes qu'une communication entre non natifs de la langue anglaise requiert : la primatie du contenu propositionnel sur les conventions formelles et pragmatiques gouvernant son usage. De ce fait, l'apprenant doit avoir accès à un répertoire culturel divers pour pouvoir communiquer en anglais avec des gens parlant d'autres langues et possédant d'autres cultures.

Introduction

The widespread of English and its success as the primary medium of global communication has considerably complicated a lot of concepts related to language and language pedagogy such as those of native speaker, authenticity, pragmatics system, and so on. With its massive expansion across the globe, English has somehow been de-nationalised, cut from its cultural roots, and adapted to suit new surroundings so that " *it becomes ever more difficult to characterize in ways that support the fiction of a simple, single language*" (Strevens 1980, p.79). It has, indeed, afforded "*a 'pluricentric' view of English, which represents diverse sociolinguistic histories, multicultural identities, multiple norms of use and acquisition, and distinct contexts of function*" (Bhatt 2001, p.527). An estimated one billion people are learning English as a foreign language and by 2025 it is predicted that native speakers will be largely outnumbered by speakers of English as a foreign language as globalisation is paving the way to more

interactions outside inner circle communities. Currently, it is believed that approximately 80% of English used worldwide does not involve native speakers at all (Crystal, 1997). Around two billion of the world's population is routinely exposed to some version of English (Pope 2002, p.18). And so, it seems that "*the sheer numbers of non-L1 English speakers suggest that some kind of effect on the* English *language is possible if not inevitable*" as Burt (2005, pp.1-2) suggests.

If you ever hear a native speaker, please let us know!'

All of this has incurred "*doubts and anxieties among professionals and the general public alike*" (Strevens 1980, p.79) since the concept of 'native speaker' becomes even more difficult to pin down. To begin with, Widdowson (1994, p. 385) claims that native speakers have "*no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it*". In fact, '*Native-speakerism*', to use Modiano's term, is now constantly under challenge since English is not only emerging as a universal language, but also as "*a generating norm-variety*" (Modiano 2009, p.60). This challenge is clearly illustrated in the somehow funny title of Carter and Mc Carthy's plenary paper 2003 "*If you ever hear a native speaker, please let us know!*" presented at IATEFL conference in Brighton (U.K.).

Traditionally the notion of nativeness in English is so closely and automatically tied up with Britain or America that it is very difficult to think of a native English speaker other than someone originally from these countries, but this unchallenged Anglocentric interpretation of standard, norm, and model that prevailed for decades among inner circle linguists and language specialists is no longer tenable. The rapid development of 'non-native' varieties and the increasing use of English as an International Language on a global scale has not only called into question the inner circle ownership of the tongue: who possesses the language and who has the right to define it but also opened a new perspective that took into considerations the pluricentric realities of world Englishes (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984; Strevens, 1987; Bowers, 1992; Widdowson, 1994; Nelson, 1995; Graddol, 1997; Seidlhofer,1999; Jenkins, 2000; Modiano, 2001; House, 2004). One thing at any rate is clear. English is no longer the exclusive property of the British and the Americans. Other

independent varieties have sprung up and are recognised as such. They are gradually competing and may displace British/ American English.

Likewise, Brutt-Griffler (1998, p.387) questions the notion of ownership claiming that as soon as a language reaches an international status, it ceases to be identified solely with its initial native speakers. "*Its ownership in use*", she says, "*extends to the world that uses it*" (ibid). An increasing number of language researchers and educators are embracing the fact that non- native speakers should also be invested with authority alongside native speakers since in the context of EIL the former are the dominant group and can by no means referred to as norm- dependent, a reference which is both obsolete and at odd. The birthright legitimacy, it is asserted, is no longer the only valid criteria in the identification of a native speaker. A redefinition of this concept needs to be considered as to include any person who has reached a high level of proficiency in terms of formal and socio-pragmatic norms.

Graddol (1997, p.10) criticises Kachru's 1985 "*inner, outer and expanding circles*" model because it "*locates the "native speakers" and native speaking countries at the centre of the global use of English, and by implication, the sources of models of correctness*". This view is increasingly challenged by:

> "[…] *the growing assertiveness of countries adopting English as a second language that English is now their language, through which they can express their own values and identities, create their own intellectual property and export goods and services to other countries*." (Author's emphasis) (ibid, p.3)

Modiano (1999, p.24) too challenges Kachru's Inner Circle claiming that this conception invests the native speaker, who possesses the language, with an authority that makes him the only valid referee when it comes to norms of use and usage. He points out that it "*re-establishes the notion that the language is the property of specific groups, and that correct usage is determined by experts who speak a prestige variety*" (ibid). However, despite these ongoing efforts to assert the rights of non-native speakers in serving as a target model along with native speakers, there is still somehow a growing ambivalence about the former capacity to be norm providing.

Researchers on second language acquisition and corpus linguistics still take the primacy of standard native speaker norms as self-evident.

Whenever one makes a reference to the notion of native speaker, he finds himself on thin ice, and I am no exception. A great deal of caution needs to be taken when dealing with this issue. If this term implies a high degree of proficiency in a particular language, and with regard to the context of EIL, I would suggest that we should distinguish between competence acquired by birth (that of Kachru's inner circle) and proficiency acquired by instruction (that related to the expanding and outer circles). For the former I will give the term 'genetic acquired' competence, for the latter I will use the term 'instructed acquired' proficiency. Both denote a high expertise in the use of language in terms of formal, lexical, socio-cultural and pragmatic dimension. However, if at the level of form and lexis the former is neither dependent nor subservient to the latter, it must be so at the level of appropriateness of use. The genetic acquired competence must serve as a bearing from which the instructed acquired proficiency must take its pragmatic fix. If the native English speaker- in the established definition- cannot be the custodian of English, he surely is the reference in terms of appropriateness of use, though it is argued elsewhere (McKay 2009, p.231) that native speakers do not necessarily share the same sense of appropriateness. This may seem a somewhat controversial claim, but no less a person than House (2008, p.352) has admitted, though implicitly, this point of view when stating:

> "*I will look at this work with the research question in mind of whether one can say with reasonable certainty that ELF speakers are – <u>judged by a native English speaker norm</u> – impolite speakers, i.e. whether and if so how ELF speakers construct (im)polite behaviour in interactions, i.e. behaviour that is not deemed to be appropriate in a given situation.*" (My emphasis) (ibid)

This is also made clear by kachru (1986, p.29) when he asserts that it is the inner circle speakers of English who determine its appropriateness. However, this reference to the native speaker's norms does not, as one might infer, relegate the IAP (instructed acquired proficiency) to an inferior position vis a vis GAC (genetic acquired

competence) nor gives the latter primacy over the former but puts every type of competence in its proper context, or in Kachruvian terms, in its proper circle. If we go further with this line of reasoning, we ought to say that the definition of native speaker must be expanded, and it is really doing so, to include all proficient/ expert speakers of whatever circle. Hence, a new model of communicative competence is required. This should take into consideration English as an international language with all its multi-faceted perspectives and its various contextual settings. This model, as to Alptekin (2002), should focus on successful bilingual learners with intercultural backgrounds able to shuttle between different language communities. Communicative competence as defined by Hymes, it is argued, is monolithic in its essence as it portrays/ idealise the native speaker's language and culture. Alptekin (ibid, p. 60) summarises quite effectively this point of view:

> "*Only by producing instructional materials that emphasize diversity both within and across cultures can one perhaps avoid presenting English meanings fragmented and trivialized ways, where communicative functions are conceived as simple speech acts realized through specific structures, and where situational content generally portrays an idealized image of the English-speaking culture. It is perhaps time to rid the ELT field of its educational vision and practices based on a utopian notion of communicative competence involving idealized native speaker norms in both language and culture.*"

Sticking to this model, in EIL contexts, may end up with providing learners with "dumbed down" models that fail, to quote Gilmore (2007b, p.81), "*to illustrate the true expressive potential of language*". What is needed is a model that promotes cultural diversity and sees it as normative. Henceforth emphasis should be made on language that is cross- culturally imbued. This concurs with Seidlhofer's (2003, p.23) lines of thought who suggests that the educational target of native speaker competence, which she considers elusive in character, should be relinquished. Instead, she argues, we should embrace "*the emergent realistic role of intercultural competence achieved through a pluringualism that integrates rather*

than ostracizes EIL". There is now a growing consensus that striving for the target competence of an idealised native speaker will inevitably lead us to mimic his/ her behaviour as it is an unrealistic objective. This philosophy of language learning denies the second language learner his own socio-cultural values. On the contrary, it tries 'to paste' unsuccessfully a culture that may have nothing in common with that of the mother tongue and prevent him from drawing on his own experience and background knowledge that are made, thus, redundant in these particular circumstances.

Moving beyond the native speaker as a pedagogic model in language teaching is a fact that imposes itself on us. It would be odd to ignore that English of the ELT industry which has reached its zenith is now being challenged by the success of its own multi-billion dollar industry. In fact, the development of English into an international language is largely due to the boom that ELT witnessed. It is as Brutt-Griffler (2002, p.182) states "*at one and the same time the result of ELT and yet also its context*" (author's emphasis). The outcome of this success is such that doubt has been cast on long established theories in the field of language acquisition with all the pedagogical implications that may be engendered.

The importance of interlanguage pragmatics in intercultural communication settings

One way of addressing this issue is to look at two questions that come immediately to mind. Firstly, what is intercultural communication? How, in general terms, can it be characterised? Secondly, what is interlanguage pragmatics? What is it that makes it so important to cross-cultural communication?

Clearly the two questions cannot be kept completely separate. Whenever we deal with communication across cultures, we have to look at the norms that govern the choice of conversational strategies in the negotiation of meaning and the choice of what is likely to be said or done in certain contextual settings.

Intercultural communication (ICC), tough interdisciplinary in its orientation, has recently   become to be known as the study of how people of very diverse cultural backgrounds communicate between them. It is mostly concerned with communication strategies that people from different languages and cultures use when conversing. Besides sharpening our understanding of various cultures, it enables us

to develop a critical conscious awareness and reflection on people intercultural behaviour. In the light of this, we will be better equipped either to avoid or respond effectively to miscommunication problems that may lead or aggravate already existing conflicts.

The early literature dealing with the definition of the term 'inter' witnessed a paradigm shift after Selinker's (1969, 1972, 1992) use of the word 'interlanguage' for 'learner language' (House 2007, p.13). Before Selinker's work the term 'inter' denoted a negative attitude in second/ foreign language learning as House (ibid) states:

> "*[...] error committers who disqualified themselves from belonging to the native speakers of a language through deviating from their norms of usage to looking upon those learners as interim persons moving from their respective L1s towards the L2.*"

Selinker (1969, p. 5) argues that the word 'interlanguage' which refers to learner's output, both with its errors and non-errors, is a highly structured behaviour which should not be regarded as "*an isolated case of errors*" but rather as "*a system*".

The negative attitude towards the concept 'interlanguage' with all its deficit and incompleteness has somehow also been linked with the concept 'intercultural' because of the association of the former with the latter. Suggestions have been made (House, 2007) to view the 'intercultural' speaker as someone who is both independent from his own culture and the second one and who mediates between the two. He is, as to House (ibid) a hybrid, in-between who must be conceived not as a deficient learner unable to produce the ideal native speaker's performance, but as someone able to draw from two cultures or more so that to organise and manage his discourse. His intercultural competence and knowledge must be judged not according to the native speaker's norms (unfortunately it often is), but to those governing his context of situation, that of a bicultural/multicultural speaker The intercultural speaker should not obliterate all traces of his cultural background, but rather reaffirm his cultural heritage by drawing from it when necessary and using it as an alternative reference with the target language (TL). This shift of attitude will certainly have its effect

upon our judgements of negative transfer as pragmatic failure when dealing with the field of interlanguage pragmatics.

The recommendations of the Council of Europe (1977, 2001) have respectively not only given the primacy to the basic notion of communicative competence as a key element for discourse, but also added another issue in its linguistic agenda, that of intercultural dimension of language use. Pedagogically this has been reflected in what is termed intercultural and interlanguage pragmatics.

Kasper (1998, p.184) defines interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) as "*The study of nonnative speakers' comprehension, production and acquisition of linguistic action in L2, or put it briefly how to do things with words in a second language.*" Boxer (2002) distinguishes between intercultural and interlanguage pragmatics, saying that the latter focuses on the language learner's appropriation or acquisition of pragmatic norms represented in the host language community. Intercultural pragmatics, on the other hand,

"[…] *takes the view that individuals from two societies or communities carry out their interactions (whether spoken or written) according to their own rules or norms, often resulting in a clash in expectations and, ultimately, misperceptions about the other group.*" (ibid, p151)

Overall, intercultural pragmatics compares the similarities and differences between learners' L1 and L2. ILP, on the other hand, studies L2 learners' realisation of speech acts in relation to those of native speakers. It remains in this sense comparative in nature too as it has been modelled on intercultural pragmatic analysis. However, this shortcoming is gradually being remedied. Attempts have been made to extent its scope as to consider the speakers' linguistic and cultural norms of both L1 and L2 (Davies, C.L. and Tyler 2005, p.133). The study led by these researchers revealed interesting insights about discourse strategies used in successful communications. It should be noted, however, that all the studies carried on ILP focused on the use of language as a product, i.e., on appropriateness rather than on how pragmatic practices develop and facilitate negotiation, i.e. discourse as a process. Another defective point in ILP is that it is deficit in nature

as "*it analyzes NNS discourse in terms of failure to conform to NS conventional norms*" (Aston 1993, p.245) as if the native speaker model in pragmatics enables (if indeed it ever does) learners to be effective speakers in EIL contexts.

In EIL settings where cross-cultural understanding is becoming crucial, sociopragmatic competence is of paramount importance for the language learner who may be hampered by his limited knowledge of the L2 when interacting with a native speaker. Understanding and adapting to the inner circle pragmatics system may, as Gilmore (2007, p.36) states, help him gain control of the situation he finds himself in. I will include in this pragmatics system not only the norms of language use, but also styles of interaction such as turn-taking, back-channelling, pausing, gaze and gesturing behaviour in casual and formal conversations. Indeed, their ignorance might have detrimental effects for language learners attempting to converse with English native speakers.

The Intercultural Communication Competence: one consequence of Global English

 Pragmatic competence, as it has been defined, may be criticised by a number of writers as it models itself on educated native speakers and take their pragmatic competence with all its components as the ultimate goal of foreign language learning. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is the difficulty of defining native speaker's norms because of the paste of migrations movements, cross-cultural international encounters, and different linguistic and pragmatic norms governing the usage of speakers of the same language (Kramsh 1988, p.16).

Even if we are able to agree on what constitutes native speaker competence (the issue actually need not concern us), many question how appropriate this model is to learners in an age where all kinds of development seem to increase the hegemony of English as a world language. This is both because it sets the impossible target of becoming like a native speaker, something which could potentially de-motivate learners and which devalues the social identity and competencies they have developed within their own culture (Byram 1997), and because the communicative needs of NNSs are very different from NSs existing in a particular speech community and vary according to the social context in which they wish to operate (Saville-

Troike 1989). Furthermore, it has been confirmed that most interactions that occur in EIL contexts are between NNSs- NNSs where the focus of attention is on the propositional content of the utterance rather than on conformity to the formal and sociopragmatic norms governing the English language. In place of this native speaker communicative competence, Byram and Fleming (1988, p.12) propose a model based around intercultural communicative competence (ICC):

> *"Instead of the assumption that learners should model themselves on 'the native speaker', it is becoming apparent to teachers and their learners that successful cross-cultural communication depends on the acquisition of abilities to understand different moves of thinking and living, as they are embodied in the language to be learnt, and to reconcile or mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction. This is not the 'communicative competence' on which people using the same language in the same, or closely related, cultures rely; it is an 'intercultural communicative competence' which has some common ground with communicative competence, but which also has unique characteristics."*

Conclusion

In an age where English functions as a means of international communication in a globalised world, there is a need to pay careful particular attention to indications that may go along with the general trend so far as ELT is concerned. The new pedagogical contexts that surround the act of learning English as an international language are gradually making an end to the prevailing pedagogical orthodoxies of recent decades, with their focus on communicative language teaching that sets the native speaker as a model. The need for a language to use at international encounters/meeting (and which English seem to do quite well) shifted language learners' interest. The aim now is no longer to speak English native-like, but to be able to use this language as a tool for communication with people from different languages and cultures. This interest had (at least) one major pedagogical impact.

Thus, rather than expecting learners to abandon their own social identities and communicative competencies in an attempt to

replicate some native speaker ideal which in such contexts is obsolete, the tendency now is to develop- within our learners- their intercultural communicative competence. This, indeed, gives us the possibility to emphasise on knowledge and skills needed to understand people from other, unfamiliar cultures and to mediate between the foreign culture and the learner's own culture in a way that leads to successful communication. This is a variety of pragmatic competence that many NSs, particularly those with limited experience of 'otherness', tend to lack. As Byram and Fleming (1988, p.12) suggest, learners may still want to acquire many of the aspects of native speaker competencies but with the goal of mediating between disparate cultures rather than complete integration into a particular community. As such, we move from native-speakerism to interculturism, a notion that fits in so well with the idea of globalism.

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