LINGUISTICS DESCRIPTION

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this course, students will have understood the concept of linguistic description, and have a clear concept of linguistic description models that will allow them to do research in this area.

CONTENTS

This course will be focused on varieties of the English language from different perspectives and possibilities of analysis. The first module will deal with a historical perspective of said differences (including a short review of the history of the language). Then, students will explore concepts of nativeness and British and American standards. Soon after that, they will have the chance to elaborate on the concept of proficiency.

The second module will deal with the analysis of discurse from a political and social perspectives. Concepts such as political correctness and doublespeak will be addressed together with other sociological considerations of the language.

The third module will introduce more on English and social values and groups. Here, students will have the opportunity to analyze gender and language, "ebonics" or the language of black people, and slang and its implications.

The last module will propose a wrap up where phonological and linguistic analysis will provide a basis for research. in the field, with specific case studies brough by both teacher and students.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of this course will include the following:
A critical summary (one page double space) for each one of the assigned readings.
A research paper that will be developed as the class progresses, with specific deadlines for each step.
An oral presentation of the findings of the research paper.
Assigned readings for first module:
For the first module, please be familiar with the basic definitions of communicative competence such as the ones proposed by D.H. Hymes, Widdowson, and Canale & Swain. Additionally, the following readings will be analyzed in class:

"Whose English is this?"
"Differences between British and American English"
"Communication Strategies"

THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT KNOWING
By Ricardo Romero Medina

This paper elaborates on the concept of "not knowing" as the principle for scientific minds and inquiry. Based on the educational principle that having the right answer is less important than having the possibility to discover reality, the author proposes some points to be considered when talking about teachers' professional development and personal growth".

A JUSTIFICATION

When one talks about not knowing and the acquisition of knowledge, the topic generally takes us back to our childhood, and our school years. Many of us still remember our curiosity as children. When we got to school, we didn't know anything about life and we used to take every single opportunity to learn and to try to discover the world around us. Sometimes this curiosity got us into trouble. Very often I understood why the elder used to say that "curiosity killed the cat".

In my particular case, I can claim that I was too curious for my age. That, until I entered school where I was supposed to really "learn". At that time (and I suspect that is still the case in some places) teachers saw us as empty cans that had to be filled with "knowledge". They were so busy providing the right answers and giving us the right information, that they neglected the importance of inquiry, and curiosity, in short, the real discovery of the world and learning. Many teachers thought that students had a special device that was turned on when we entered into the classroom and turned off when we left this place. From what we know now, this could be exactly the other way around. As Ivan Illich (1972:00) proposed, "most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting."[1]

I decided to choose "the importance of not-knowing" as the title for this paper, borrowing it from an article written by Karen Benz Scarvie entitled "Developing Intelligence, the importance of not-knowing" [2] in which the author highlights the very principles of curiosity and inquiry in order to develop a scientific mind among children. She proposes that "before children can begin to understand or make sense of the world they live in, they go through a process which begins with a question. What? How? Why? The entry point on the path of discovery and understanding is always a question. And the surest sign of intelligence is the inquisitive mind; the mind that is aware, alert and wondering." Consequently, she proposed that "the greatest gifts we can give our children is to encourage this natural and precious attribute."

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[1] *Illich, Ivan. Deschooling society. Harper & Row. 1968.*
[2] *Benz Scarvie, Karen. The Wooden Horse Newsletter, Los Gatos, California*

With Benz's article in mind, I attempt to explore a parallel situation where "the importance of not knowing" can be seen as the basis for teachers' professional development and personal growth. The reason is somehow evident. As teachers, we sometimes feel we "dominate" or are "proficient" in a subject matter, know most of the things that teaching implies, and eventually leave little or no room for new learning. The importance of not knowing is better explained by Henry David Thoreau when he stated: "how can we remember our ignorance, which our growth requires, when we are using our knowledge all the time?"

For the purposes of this presentation, "not knowing" is defined not as a promotion of ignorance, but as a means to indicate that we never know enough, and that we always move from what we know into what we don't know through a natural attitude of inquiring. It also proposes that when our interest in learning something new is stopped, professional development and personal growth are seriously affected.

CHANGING TIMES

Education and teacher education programs are directly affected by a series of paradigms that have changed in recent times. Allow me to mention some of those paradigms:

- Knowledge and technology become obsolete too fast.

  Advances in communications, systems, the incredible growth of the internet, among others have affected the amount and the quality of the information produced, and the time that information can be "valid".

- The world became a place of uncertainty.

  Political stability, the creation of new states, conflicts and negotiations that change constantly affect our stability in many ways. These changes affect the individuals and their roles, families and their roles in society, and education.

- The main objective of education is now focused on what students will be able to DO with knowledge. Education is no longer associated with what you know but with what you can do with that knowledge, and how you can actually acquire more knowledge. In the future, *acquired knowledge will become less important than the capacity to construct knowledge.*
- New whole curricular views are forcing us to set up priorities and cross curricular references. English is not an isolated subject to be taught, but one more tool (together with Spanish and Computers) to integrate the curriculum.

How much do we know about all these paradigms and the new roles we have in society? What kind of relation can be established between these aforementioned changing paradigms and our role as teachers? Let us explore this area now.

RELATION WITH TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Before we consider the implications of these postulates, allow me first to mention two things that need to be highlighted at this point. The first one is the importance of knowing that most learning happens when there is a meaningful interaction. In our case as teachers, all the theories we learned at the university are tested against reality in the classroom, generating our own set of beliefs about our profession. This reality and our sets of beliefs become our frame of reference. It is through our daily practice, from what happens in the classrooms, that we realize what we know, what we don't, what is relevant, and what is not.

The second aspect to be considered is that of changing times and a time of changes. Change happens for certain given reasons and we have only three choices: To see changes happen, to participate in the changes, or to be promoters of change. If the question of not knowing is related to our daily life and teaching, and our changing times, there are at least three large areas that need to be re-evaluated constantly. These three areas are our subject matter, our reflective and inquisitive attitude, and our beliefs about the profession:

THE SUBJECT MATTER

We are teachers of English. We teach a language, and together with that, we teach a culture. From the profile provided by McNair (1980) and Bastidas, et al (1991) quoted by Whitehead (1996)[3] a good language teacher can be characterized as a professional who…

- uses English predominantly.
- is confident about methodology, and techniques:
- is vigilant about pronunciation, intonation, and stress.
- is positive about errors, praises correct responses, and uses pupil's errors to their advantage.
- relates the language to the target culture:
- explains tasks clearly in English whenever possible;
- shows flexibility with regard to materials and objectives:
- involves all learners through a variety of language teaching activities which involve teachers and learners playing different roles;
- promotes the use of English by his/her learners;
- conveys warmth and enthusiasm for the language and culture.

This same concept was later on elaborated by Bastidas (1992) in the same COFE Project, Discussion Document[4], when he talked about the teacher as a language user (s/he needs to

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[3] *Whitehead, John. The Challenge of change. In "How Magazine. Bogota. 1996. p.7*

speak the language); the teacher as a language analyst (s/he needs to know about the language), and s/he needs to know how to teach the language (theory of teaching and learning). All these components make up for the subject matter dimension.

THE REFLECTION COMPONENT

Another element introduced in the COFE Project Discussion Document[5] was that of reflection as an ongoing process that starts from the teacher interaction with students in a class. Wallace (1991)[6] proposed a cyclical model where the point of departure and arrival is always the language classroom. Aspects considered for reflection are the effectiveness of theories, methods, approaches, and techniques, patterns of interaction, quality and relevance of materials, and so on.

A reflective teacher is one that is constantly aware of the various things that happen in the classroom, his/her students' responses, attitudes, and progress. Reflective teachers identify problematic areas, and constantly experiment ways to improve. This is a very concrete example where the importance of not knowing becomes a relevant factor for teachers' development. We reflect based on what we know in order to find explanations to what we don't know.

THE BELIEFS COMPONENT

The last component is that of the beliefs. At first, the obvious question would be "why are teachers' beliefs important?" As Shor (2002) mentioned, "we are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us. The world addresses us to produce the different identities we carry forward in life"[7]. This is basically the power of language, and the power of language as taught and used by the teachers. And this is why teachers' beliefs are so important in our profession. Is it necessary to know about our own beliefs in order to teach?

The classic Tao Te Ching repeatedly poses the importance of "not knowing", of not exaggerating the value of our concepts: "The ancient Masters didn't try to educate the people, but kindly taught them to not-know. When they think that they know the answers,

[4] *Bastidas, et at. A proposal of a framework for the teaching of English in the Colombian B.A. Programmes. Polytenchic institute of West London. 1992.*
[5] *Ibid. fig. 4. p. 27.*
[6] *Wallace, M.J. 1991. Training foreign language teachers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
[7] *İra Shor, What is critical thinking. Journal of pedagogy, pluralism & practice*
http:// www. Lesley.edu/journals/jppp/4/shor/html

people are difficult to guide. When they know that they don't know, people can find their own way."[8]

From this standpoint, it could follow that teachers who see themselves as bearers of knowledge and truth will tend to provide all the answers to his/her students, leaving little or no space for them to discover or to inquire. If teachers share a degree of "not knowing" with the students, the whole setting of the classroom is going to change, turning the class into a journey into discovery. As Benz stated, "having the right answer is immeasurably less important than having a mind which delights in generating questions and seeks to know and understand. Being right is immeasurably less important than having the confidence to enter unknown territory equipped only with curiosity and the excited anticipation of discovery."[9]

When we understand the importance of not knowing and teachers beliefs, we can finally understand the fine line that divides teachers from educators. A teacher would only remain in the first level, that of the subject matter. An educator would include the second and the third (reflection and value clarification) to make his/her teaching meaningful and contextualized.

This awareness of our responsibility has been discussed by pedagogues in the world under the topic of critical literacy. "The position taken by critical literacy advocates is that no pedagogy is neutral, no learning process is value-free, no curriculum avoids ideology and power relations. To teach is to encourage human beings to develop in one direction or another. In fostering student development, every teacher chooses some subject matters, some ways of knowing, some ways of speaking and relating, instead of others. These choices orient students to define the world and their relation to it."[10] If this is the case, some of these issues that need to be clarified on the part of the teachers are:

> Our responsibility as teachers.
> Our responsibility as educators.
> Our responsibility as citizens of the world.

Following my own proposal of not knowing as the essence of growth and development, the best way to close this presentation would be to lead you all to consider our responsibility, not only as instructors of a language, but as generators of change, as builders of thought, as promoters of a better world, a better country.

Thanks.

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[8] *Tao Te Ching, Chapter 65., http://babel.massart.edu/~galebn/chp65.tao.html*

[9] *Ibid*
[10] *Ellis and Sinclair (1989) or Oxford (1990).*

Differences Between American and British English

While there are certainly many more varieties of English, American and British English are the two varieties that are taught in most ESL/EFL programs. Generally, it is agreed that no one version is "correct" however, there are certainly preferences in use. The most important rule of thumb is to try to be consistent in your usage. If you decide that you want to use American English spellings then be consistent in your spelling (i.e. The color of the orange is also its flavour – color is American spelling and flavour is British), this is of course not always easy – or possible. The following guide is meant to point out the principal differences between these two varieties of English.

Use of the Present Perfect

In British English the present perfect is used to express an action that has occurred in the recent past that has an effect on the present moment. For example:

I've lost my key. Can you help me look for it?
In American English the following is also possible:
I lost my key. Can you help me look for it?

In British English the above would be considered incorrect. However, both forms are generally accepted in standard American English. Other differences involving the use of the present perfect in British English and simple past in American English include **already, just and yet.**

British English:

I've just had lunch
I've already seen that film
Have you finished your homework yet?

American English:

I just had lunch OR I've just had lunch
I've already seen that film OR I already saw that film.
Have your finished your homework yet? OR Did you finish your homework yet?

Possession

There are two forms too express possession in English. Have or Have got

Do you have a car?
Have you got a car?
He hasn't got any friends.
He doesn't have any friends.
She has a beautiful new home.
She's got a beautiful new home.

While both forms are correct (and accepted in both British and American English), have got (have you got, he hasn't got, etc.) is generally the preferred form in British English while most speakers of American English employ the have (do you have, he doesn't have etc.)

The Verb Get

The past participle of the verb get is gotten in American English. Example He's gotten much better at playing tennis. British English – He's got much better at playing tennis.

Vocabulary

Probably the major differences between British and American English lies in the choice of vocabulary. Some words mean different things in the two varieties for example:

Mean: (American English – angry, bad humored, British English – not generous, tight fisted)

Rubber: (American English – condom, British English – tool used to erase pencil markings)

There are many more examples (too many for me to list here). If there is a difference in usage, your dictionary will note the different meanings in its definition of the term. Many vocabulary items are also used in one form and not in the other. One of the best examples of this is the terminology used for automobiles.

American English – hood	British English – bonnet
American English – trunk	British English – boot
American English – truck	British English – lorry

Once again, your dictionary should list whether the term is used in British English or American English.

For a more complete list of the vocabulary differences between British and American English use this British vs. American English vocabulary tool.

Prepositions

There are also a few differences in preposition use including the following:

American English – on the weekend	British English – at the weekend
American English – on a team	British English – in a team

American English – please write me soon	British English – please write **to** me soon

Past Simple/Past Participles

The following verbs have two acceptable forms of the past simple/past participle in both American and British English, however, the irregular form is generally more common in British English (the first form of the two) and the regular form is more common to American English.

Burn	Burnt OR burned
Dream	dreamt OR dreamed
Lean	leant OR leaned
Learn	learnt OR learned
Smell	smelt OR smelled
Spell	spelt OR spelled
Spill	spilt OR spilled
Spoil	spoilt OR spoiled

Spelling

Here are some general differences between British and American spellings:

Words ending in –or (American) –our (British) color, colour, humor, humour, flavor, flavour etc.
Words ending in –ize (American) –ise (British) recognize, recognise, patronize, patronise etc.

The best way to make sure that you are being consistent in your spelling is to use the spell check on your word processor (if you are using the computer of course) and choose which variety of English you would like. As you can see, there are really very few differences between standard British English and standard American English. However, the largest difference is probably that of the choice of vocabulary and pronunciation. For further information concerning these areas please refer to the following links below.

British vs. American English vocabulary tool
Check British to American English or American to British English with this interactive tool.

American-British/British-American Dictionary
An impressive resource for reference information concerning the differences in vocabulary use between American and British English.

<u>American   Vs.   British   English</u>
An exhaustive study by the University of Tampere on the differences between American and British English and the geo-political reasons behind these differences.

<u>English   Around   The   World</u>
An excllent link page to information, recordings, and vocabulary examples of English as it is used in many different countries around the world.

<u>United   Kingdom   English   for   the   American   Novice</u>
An amusing (some might find patronizing) instructive site dedicated to helping Americans understand United Kingdom English.

<u>Previous Features</u>

Whose English Is It?

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The phenomenon of languages having transnational or supranational profiles is not uncommon in the history of the world, and there shouldn't generally be any unusualness associated with it except when looked at from a predominantly European nation-state perspective, which unnecessarily identifies linguicism (see Phillipson 1992 p. 47) with nationalism. However, one cannot but feel that the current glossography of English in todays world is both qualitatively and quantitatively unprecedented. (By Glossography, I mean the historical-structural and functional aspects of the global spread, status, role and entrenchment of a language.) I want to believe it is the global ubiquitousness of English and not any kind of ethnocentric self-importance that makes one of the editors of the O.E.D. say that any literate educated person is in a very real sense deprived if he does not know English (Burchfield 1985, p. 160).

I chose this provocative and perhaps to some even somewhat controversial topic and title that will take me from Sociolinguistics through Applied Linguistics to Language Teaching for a special reason. I believe that the rapidly-changing sociolinguistic profile and glossography of English in todays world is influencing the political sociology of the language. New affiliations, affinities and loyalties involving the English language are developing in different parts of the world in such a manner as to create confusion in the ethno-cultural image and identity of the language. As the demography of the English speaking world changes, the ethnic dimension in the definition and identity of the speech community needs to be and is bound to be reevaluated. It also seems likely that a possible separation of language identity/loyalties from political-cultural ones by some speakers of English may disconcert or even threaten some others for whom the two loyalties are not necessarily separate or so markedly different, English being their primary mark of self-identity (see Simon 1980, for instance). A discussion of Whose English is it, I believe, is inextricably tied in with ones perception of how to represent and view the English speaking communities in the world at large.

Attempts to describe or represent the current glossography of English in the world can perhaps be subsumed under two main umbrella models or paradigms: the much-(ab)used Native-Nonnative Model and the Continuum Model. The two need not necessarily be mutually opposed or exclusive, but often, in practice, the differences in [-1-] the various presuppositions and entailments between the two can result in apparent ideological confrontation. (See Tickoo 1991 for a polarized instance of this in the Quirk-Kachru controversy over Liberation versus Deficit Linguistics.)

The continuum model, developed mainly by sociolinguists, but now recognized by many applied linguists, cedes historical and lectal primacy to the kinds of English spoken in certain regions of the world, but treats these as the core varieties of the language from which peripheral variants spiral out in a continuum (See Kachru 1988, Smith 1981,

Phillipson 1992). In this view some of the peripheral or outer variants have already achieved the status of independent varieties by successfully reconciling the separatist and participatory functions of their dialect variant(s) and hence need to be accorded the status that is due to any autonomous variety within a language. Any variant form is also believed to be potentially capable of achieving autonomy by meeting the necessary sociolinguistic criteria. Although the core varieties draw their status largely from ethno-political factors, these factors become irrelevant for the peripheral varieties. Each variety is seen as one that has often been indigenized or localized for the contrastive self-identity of the speakers. For this reason, this model often refers to World Englishes (in the plural) and uses terms like Old and New Varieties of English. The native-nonnative concept becomes irrelevant here as everyone is a native speaker of his particular variety of English and a non-native of all other varieties. And to the extent there is a core English that is an abstraction of all the varieties, everyone is considered a native speaker of that. The concept of ownership is also irrelevant since the answer to the question whose English is it, will be either Which one? or Why, everybodys, of course.

I grant there is some oversimplification here in the sense that many new varieties do still have a sense of insecurity in that they are still ambivalent and lack linguistic confidence even if they have consistency of norms. India, for instance, may still use the O.E.D. for some more time to come though it has long since stopped using the Oxford English Series! Thus Old varieties will generally retain some norm-providing role until the New varieties develop sufficiently strong armies and navies and technology behind them, if not dictionaries and grammars. (It is interesting to note that the U.S. thought of Britain as a de facto norm provider well into the twentieth century; Australia no longer thinks of Britain as the norm provider; and Singapore is slowly discovering its own English muscles.)

The Native-Nonnative Model was born and lives on the philosophical assumption that there is an animal that can be called native speaker for any and all of the living languages of the world, and that this animal can be identified through a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic defining features. This unicorn [-2-] theory concept (We may not be able to show you a real unicorn, but we all know what it is!) assumed canonical reality when it got the support of Chomskyan linguistics, which relied heavily on native-speaker intuition for separating the grammatical from the non-grammatical. But as the linguistic imprecision and the Eurocentric unsoundness of the term is now becoming more and more obvious (see Paikeday 1985), its Applied Linguistic usefulness is also being questioned, particularly in the contexts of languages with complex, far-flung speech communities. The defining features of a native speaker could be any or all of the following in any combination, with different components assuming prominence according to exigencies and demands of the particular context.

    a) Primacy in order of acquisition
    b) Manner and environment of acquisition
    c) Acculturation by growing up in the speech community
    d) Phonological, linguistic and communicative competence
    e) Dominance, frequency and comfort of use
    f) Ethnicity
    g) Nationality/domicile

h) Self-perception of linguistic identity
i) Other-perception of linguistic membership and eligibility
j) Monolinguality

Of all these, the last, being the monolingual speaker of a language, is the only single feature that guarantees unexceptional eligibility to native speakerdom on its own strength, as the person has no other language to be native of. But this is just another way of saying that in order to be a true native speaker of a language one has to be a monoglot and thus be linguistically deprived, compared to the majority of people in the world!

Although in theory it can be said that the more of these defining features one possesses, the more one becomes eligible for the native speaker status, in reality, in a lot of situations, ethno-political features have primacy over others. For instance, it is conceivable that one who fails criteria (a) to (e) above can still claim to be a native speaker and get acceptance if (s)he has Caucasian ethnicity and the right nationality.

Those who do not qualify (mostly by the ethno-political criteria) are dubbed non-native speakers regardless of their linguistic abilities. The traditional applied linguistic paradigm divides the non-natives into second and foreign language speakers/learners, with often little distinction between speakers and learners. This paradigm is still the basis on which decades of theory and practice of English language pedagogy and a multi-million dollar English language consumer industry, almost all developed in the two leading English-speaking nations on either side of the Atlantic, are built and made to thrive. In this native-nonnative paradigm, there is no doubt or dispute about who owns English. The native speakers own it, but are willing to transfer controlled possession and award guided right of use to the non-native [-3-] speakers, but may be forever unwilling to cede even a share of the ownership.

I do not wish a discussion of whose English is it to digress tangentially into a discussion of the legitimacy of the concept of the native speaker of English. But whose English is it in the sense of who has possession of it is different from whose is it in the sense of who it belongs to or owns it. I think it is the latter that is more contentious since ownership involves control and authority and hence power. The native-nonnative or ENL-ESL paradigms have created a power dynamic which forms the crux of the ownership issue. Whether native speakers own English or not, the dominant Received Wisdom of the Applied Linguistics industry certainly has not only gone about its business assuming that they do, but also has actively promoted and perpetuated the belief as a scientific fact (see Maley 1991).

They have apportioned to themselves the rights and responsibilities not only of controlling the forms and norms of English globally but also of dominating the theory and practice of its teaching and research. Generations of Applied Linguistic myth-making in the indubitable superiority and the impregnable infallibility of the native speaker has created stereotypes that die hard. Native speakers are not only ipso facto knowledgeable, correct and infallible in their competence but also ipso facto make the best and most desirable teachers, experts and trainers. (Applications are invited from native speakers of English...!) A non-native speaker is a cognitively deficient, socio-pragmatically ungraceful klutz at worst and a language-deprived error-prone wretch at best, who might, at times, reach near-native competence but whose intuitions are nevertheless suspect and whose competence is

unreliable. As Nelson (1985) correctly says, the power and persuasiveness of a text can be pre-determined by the readers perception of the nativeness of the author even before the reading has begun. If there are linguistic deviances in it, whether those are read as errors arising from incompetence or as mistakes of performance depends on whether we perceive the writer as native or non-native. A native speaker owns the language and so has the power to err without a blemish on his competence. In an experiment that I conducted some time ago I found that many instances of stylistic and idiomatic oddities that I had deliberately introduced in a piece of writing were noted and corrected by unknown referee readers, but exactly similar errors were untouched when I used an Anglo-Saxon-sounding pseudonym! I was recently sent a piece of writing to look at and in my report I suggested some possible minor stylistic and compositional improvements in what I thought was a well-written piece and I was surprised (or was I really?) to see that the editor who sent it to me unhesitatingly attributed the errors to the fact that the author was a non-native speaker! Obviously, the fault lay with the author, not with the writing! Sociolinguists [-4-] have long pointed out our tendencies to evaluate people through their language, but applied linguists havent yet woken up to our tendency to evaluate the language through the people.

Linguistic and communicative competence of all English speakers is evaluated, often incorrectly, in terms of the so-called native speaker norms (see Nayar 1989, Platt and Weber 1984), and even Second Language Acquisition theories (Krashen 1982, Schumann 1978) are based on observations of English learning in native speaking countries. Phillipson (1992) has shown how the institutionalized English teaching industry, dominated by native speaker countries, has created commodities called ESL and EFL for the disempowerment of other English speakers and how a reified myth of the native speaker has enabled some (native) English speakers to turn the English language and English teaching into a bigger weapon than Star Wars, and the English teaching industry into a cornerstone of the global capitalist system.

So then, whose English is it? The facts point in only one direction. Decades of tradition in the Received Wisdom of Applied Linguistics, the theory and practice of English language pedagogy, the entire philosophical underpinnings of the global ESL EFL industry, the political, economic and technological muscle of the largely monoglot traditional English-speaking countries, the existence and continued popularity of quasi-diplomatic organisations like the British Council and the USIA, all say that the English language, at least correct, good and authentic English language really belongs to the native speakers (in effect Britain and the U.S. and perhaps also those they deign to designate as co-owners). From the most fanatical of the Pratorian Guards (See Prator 1968) to the most liberal of Applied Linguists (see, for instance, Strevens 1982) few can escape taking the us-and them attitude when talking about English speakers and users in the world and I have seen the bogey of the native speaker invoked countless times on the TESL-L network in the last couple of years.

But then I think the question we should now ask is not whose English is it, but whose English should it be?. My own view is that in the context of the glossography of English in todays world, the native-nonnative paradigm and its implicational exclusivity of ownership is not only linguistically unsound and pedagogically irrelevant but also politically pernicious, as at best it is linguistic elitism and at worst it is an instrument of linguistic

imperialism. English is being learned and used by millions of people in many parts of the world with no intention or opportunity in their lives of ever directly communicating with a so-called native speaker, and this fact alone shouldnt make their code in any way inferior. As Smith (1983, p. 1) says: English belongs to any country which uses it, and may have as wide or as limited a use (either as an international or auxiliary language) as [-5-] is felt desirable. And Strevens (1982, pp. 427-8), despite his us-and-them attitude, strikes the right note when he says:

Whose language is it? is to suggest that the question itself embodies unreal values. It implies that some merit accrues to us because we possess in some unique sense, the English language. As we have seen this is not true. But it is undoubtedly true that we acquire great benefits from being as it were co-possessors, with seven hundred million others of the English language. Whose language is it? It is ours and everyones: the English language is truly a world possession.

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Response #1

:

P. B. Nayar brings up an important issue in his article Whose English Is It? Many of us in the TESL/TEFL field tend to think of ourselves as liberals regarding who owns Englishof course, everyone does. However, at the same time, it is embarrassing to admit that we do fall into the trap of making the type of native/ nonnative speaker distinction to which Nayar refers. This means that even those of us who think we are free from linguistic elitism, as defined by Nayar, can find ourselves unknowingly caught in its web. Nayars article addresses everyone.

However, I think that Nayar perhaps goes too far when he suggests that [a] nonnative speaker is [stereotypically thought to be] a cognitively-deficient, socio-pragmatically ungraceful klutz at worst and a language-deprived error-prone wretch at best.... This dichotomy as overgeneralized, if not erroneous. We know that people who are multi-lingual are more cognitively advanced than those who are monolingual. That is, they are better problem-solvers because they gain multiple perspectives on the problem. Even if we limit native-speakerdom to only monolinguals, who Nayar says are the only people who can definitely be categorized as native speakers, since they have no other native language, I doubt that all monolinguals can be divided into these two camps or fall along a continuum between these two camps in terms of how they view nonnative speakers, assuming that

native/nonnative is the distinction made. Nayar may feel that he needs to slap his readers in order to make them wake up and recognize the political situation, but it is my fear that he may turn some readers off. This is an issue that is too important not to reach everyone.

Nayar says that the Continuum Model and the Native/Nonnative Speaker Model do not need to be mutually exclusive, but that the differences in what they are based on may cause ideological confrontation. It is clear from his descriptions, however, that he sees the Continuum Model as more pleasing, as one might think we all would.

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[-8-]

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Response #2:

However painful it is for me as a (bilingual) native speaker of English who has taught in Europe for over 25 years and who, at least in the German university system, has practically no power *other* than that associated with being a native speaker, I have to admit that P.B. Nayar is right about a lot of things. He is right about the EFL teaching industry and about EFL textbook production, right about teaching methods, and right in pointing a finger at the shameful assumption that native speakers dont need the experience of learning a foreign language to be able to teach ESL/EFL well.

Nayar rightly recognizes and addresses the issue of power. Yes, there is an imperialistic aspect to the way in which English is disseminated, learned, accepted and standardized. In fact, the only relative power I have in this system is derived from the fact that I am a native speaker; it is the only area in which anybody bows to my wisdom. Yet ironically, even this power is less claimed or asserted by me than it is temporarily invested in me by institutional structures which determine hierarchies at German universities. That this is so is made clear by the firm belief (codified in state hiring regulations for university language teachers) that once a native speaker has lived and taught here for a certain number of years, s/he is considered to have become assimilated and thus no longer native enough to teach English at a German university. Whether this attitude was born here or merely took root when it became fashionable to import native speakers, German English departments are too conservative to easily extend standards beyond what has been traditionally accepted. In some parts of Germany, the native British English standard has only relatively recently been broadened to include native American English. Since the system is grounded in a sense of its own exclusivity, it is only natural that a sense of inclusiveness which would allow the acceptance of Indian English, Singaporean English or, for that matter, speakers of English who look different will be much slower to develop.

Still, as I read Nayars comments, I couldnt help thinking of a language teaching conference I attended last summer. We were a group of francophone and anglophone native speakers (from the core anglophone areas Nayar talks about), and the anglophones among us spent most of an afternoon discussing what we would consider correct not arguing over authority, as might have been the case ten or fifteen years ago, but rather enriching each others knowledge by talking about what each of us would accept. Afterward, when we met the francophone teachers, they were surprised to hear about our experience; for them there would have been absolutely no question or discussion about what was acceptable. I was struck by the linguistic impoverishment of such a monolithic standard. [-9-]

The English language itself is so much larger, so much more complex, so much greater than any one speaker, that we can only learn from other speakers. The point shouldnt be so much whether a person has been born in this or that country or whether he or she is monolingual, or belongs to a particular ethnic group, but whether s/he is willing to make a long-term commitment to the language. When this kind of commitment to the language becomes the measure, it becomes clear that the native speaker who makes no effort to improve, who rests on his/her native speaker laurels, who stagnates in the sluggish waters of native-speakerdom does more harm to the language and to language teaching than the one who dedicates him/herself to the language for 25 years whatever the country or culture of his or her origin. Think of the so-called non-native speakers of English who contribute to the richness of the English literary tradition and who do so in part by not being bound by all the conventions that native speakers internalize from childhood: Derek Walcott, Joseph Conrad, Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, to name a few.

Think, too, how much more motivated, more enfranchised, and more empowered our students might feel if they thought they had a bona fide stake in the life of the language, if, rather than discouraging playfulness and experimentation and correcting their essays down to conventionality and standards of correctness, we spent more time helping them develop a sense of what works and what doesnt.

Doing so will bring us closer to the reality of an internationalized English which is much larger than any one of us can comprehend. It will also help us see that the language does not belong to any of us or even, finally, to all of us but that we belong to the language, and that each of us has rights to the language commensurate with our commitment to it.

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The Language Teacher

Helping Learners Develop Communication Strategies

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The following is a summary of the Plenary Address to be delivered by Michael Rost to the JALT Fukuoka Bookfair to be held on Sunday, January 26, 1997 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Fukuoka International School, 18-50 Momochi 3-chome, Sawara-ku, Fukuoka.

Like most language teachers and language education researchers, I have continuously searched for metaphors to help me better understand communication and the ways that second language communication can be taught. Perhaps the most powerful metaphor for me has been the notion of "intervening" when the learner is at the point of noticing something new or making a decision about what to do.

For me, the key to understanding the importance of intervention in oral communication is the notion of "real time" language processing. What a learner can do with a second language "in real time" - in face-to-face interaction with another speaker - is usually dramatically different from what the same learner can do "off line" - often with reference materials in hand and with opportunities for private analysis and revision. In "real time," the learner must utilize knowledge *strategically* in order to maximize available memory resources and the learner must *solve problems as they emerge*.

I was recently reminded of this real-time vs. off-line performance disparity with a group of Japanese university students in a conversation course at the University of California. I had asked the students before each class to write out a 50-word paragraph informally stating their views about a chosen topic. (This

method allows the students time to think about their point of view and plan what to say, and, equally importantly, it also commits them to information or an opinion that they can not easily abandon under the pressure of the conversation.)

For one class, the topic was:

Who had a greater influence on you - your mother or your father? Why?

One student, a Hiroko S., had written:

My mother had a greater influence to me. Why? Because she is so bright-eyed and wonders many things. Sometimes she asks many questions, like she is a little child, and she doesn't care that she is adult. I like this. Yes, she influenced me this way.

The conversation task was to read your partner's paragraph, ask for elaboration and examples, then summarize orally what your partner said. Since Hiroko had no partner, I worked with her. The first part of our conversation (which I tape recorded) went like this:

S: (7 seconds silence) Um . . . mother.
T: Right, your mother. You say she's bright-eyed. That's interesting. Can you explain that a bit?
S: (5 seconds silence) My mother?
T: Yes. What do you mean when you say she's bright-eyed?
S: (7 seconds silence, looks confused)
T: Here, in your paper (showing paper), you say, "She is so bright-eyed and wonders many things."
S: (5 seconds silence) Yes.
T: Can you give me an example?
S: Example?
T: Yeah. Yeah. Can you give me an example to show me what your mother's like.
S: Like? Oh, she likes many things.

We went on a little longer and it became clear that I was not going to find out anything more from Hiroko than what she had written. Indeed, it seemed as if the *longer* the conversation went on, the *less* I understood about Hiroko's ideas. I think Hiroko was just as frustrated as I was that she could not manage the conversation, that she could not respond to me the way she wanted, and that *she could not get her ideas across effectively*.

Why is there such a gap between what Hiroko can communicate in writing on her own (given ample time) and what she can communicate orally (in "real

time")? Although we could argue that she "just needs more practice, "a more pointed explanation is that she lacks "*procedural knowledge*." Although she "knows" English well enough to communicate and exchange ideas, she is unable to process language quickly enough to manage the conversation socially *and* to accomplish her communication goals. She needs to learn procedures - to enact strategies - to help her manage her conversations more proactively and effectively.

The "real time" communication problems that Hiroko faces are common for all learners. Most learners, unfortunately, never get proper help in making choices and trying out strategies that can assist them consistently in face-to-face conversations. Instead, they feel they need to (or are told to) "study" more vocabulary and grammar, "memorize" more conversation models, and "practice" speaking faster *in order to avoid these difficulties in the future*.

Of course, there *is* an important role for study, memorizing, and practice in language learning. But I have come to believe that one of the key purposes of communicative language instruction is to help learners *anticipate* and *deal with* conversation management problems, *not to prevent them or avoid them*.

Based on the work of Bialystok (1990), Rost and Ross (1991), and Bremer, Broeder, Roberts, Simonot, and Vasseur (1995), I have compiled for my students some of the strategies that are generally recognized to assist most learners at different levels of proficiency. These strategies can be classified by purpose:

Message strategies - to help the learner control and understand the messages in the conversation:

- clarify unfamiliar words and concepts (preferably words and concepts that are judged to be key ones); clarify the procedures and purpose of the conversation; ask questions (preferably specific questions) about unclear ideas in the conversation; rephrase ideas of the other speakers.

Response strategies - to help the learner express his/her emotions satisfactorily:

- respond to the speaker personally, try to "connect with" the speaker, show hesitation and misunderstanding when necessary, express an opinion, give honest, emotional responses as feedback to the speaker; agree or disagree when appropriate.

Initiation strategies - to help the learner get his or her ideas across effectively:

- get the floor, keep your speaking turn, interrupt when necessary, change the topic when necessary, backtrack when necessary, introduce new information and ideas, expand the conversation; confirm that other speakers understand our

information and ideas.

What I have tried to do in oral communication classes is to introduce these three classes of strategies, demonstrate them (with both positive and negative examples), help students observe and recognize them, and help students realize when they can use them. My techniques and terminology for introducing communication strategies, demonstrating and practicing them vary considerably, but the principles remain fairly constant. In any oral communication class, I try to do the following:

- Contextualize: In the context of communication tasks, I allow the students to experience a conversation which does not work well (e.g., the conversation between Hiroko and me above).
- Observe: I ask the students what went wrong - was it a problem of "controlling the messages," "responding," or "initiating"?
- Demonstrate: I attempt to recreate the problem conversation with the students - *with all the problems intact* - and let the students identify the strategy choices the speaker or listener made (or could have made).
- Retry: I ask the students to re-try the conversation, thinking about their choices for "message," "response," and "initiation."

One of my goals for this kind of class is to get the learners to *think strategically while they are having a conversation*. What can I do to "manage" the message? How can I "respond" better? How can I "initiate" what I want to say? As students gain more conscious control over their choices, they become better at managing and understanding conversations.

Certainly, communication involves *more* than thinking strategically. The purpose of helping learners develop communication strategies is not to supplant the role of building vocabulary, grammar, and discourse knowledge, but to *supplement* that knowledge in a way that makes learners feel more satisfied, and more in control of their own communication and learning.

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He is the author of books and articles in Applied Linguistics, including Introducing Listening (Penguin, 1995). He has also authored ELT books, including the "Real Time English" series (Longman, 1994-95), and has been developmental editor for other successful series, including "Impact" (Lingual House, 1996).

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