

Diversifying proficiency models in EFL programs

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Abstract

In this study I analyze insights provided by students from the English Department in a Costa Rican University, as to why the over-reliance on videos/audios featuring only native speakers of mainstream US English can be counterproductive, as it constructs an unspoken expectation for native-like proficiency. Subsequently, I use their ideas to list a series of pedagogical practices that, instead of making EFL students feel deficient speakers of English and apologetic about their accent (May, 2014), provide them with the validation they deserve for their expanding linguistic repertoire as emergent bilinguals (García, 2009). All in all, herein I continue to advocate for the abandonment of the native speakerism trend (Holliday, 2006) that still prevails in EFL programs and call for the diversification of the English speaker/users models students are exposed to, in order to rid these programs of potential practices of discrimination and marginalization against speakers/users' of diverse varieties of English (including international English/World Englishes).

Key words: native speakerism, proficiency models, nonnative English speaker proficiency, diversity and advocacy

Resumen

En este estudio, expongo las preocupaciones e inquietudes de estudiantes del departamento de inglés de una universidad en Costa Rica en cuanto a las repercusiones que la sobreutilización de videos/audios que incluyen únicamente hablantes nativos del inglés estandarizado estadounidense puede tener, ya que tal práctica construye una expectativa tácita de

proficiencia casi nativa a la cual los discentes deben aspirar. Subsecuentemente, utilizo estas ideas para enlistar una serie de prácticas pedagógicas que -en lugar de hacer a los estudiantes sentirse como hablantes deficientes avergonzados por su acento (May, 2014)- les proporcionan la validación y el estímulo que se merecen por su creciente capacidad lingüística como bilingües emergentes (García, 2009). En resumen, en este trabajo abogo por el abandono de la tendencia a utilizar nativo hablantes, especialmente de Estados Unidos como único punto de referencia (Holliday, 2006), y hago un llamado a la diversificación de los modelos de proficiencia lingüística a los que se expone a los estudiantes. Esto para así empezar a erradicar potenciales prácticas de discriminación y marginalización en contra de hablantes de diversas variedades del inglés, quienes también podrían y deberían ser incluidos como modelos lingüísticos.

Palabras claves: hablantes nativos, modelos de proficiencia lingüística, hablantes no nativos, hablantes de variaciones del inglés, defensa de la diversidad

Introduction

In a study I conducted in 2016 about the trend in the English Department in a Costa Rican university to favor native speaker proficiency models, I found that most senior students agreed with the practice, founded on narratives of marginalization against language proficiency that does not resemble that of native speakers of English. This came as no surprise given that in their classes, native English speakers are idealized and positioned as *the* models to follow, which distorted these students' views of their abilities as English speakers. This was evident in the students' hesitation, and at times, refusal to evaluate their proficiency favorably. In this same study, however, I identified a small group of senior students who provided insights as to why this unspoken expectation for native-like proficiency can be counterproductive: (1) communication involves a multiplicity of interlocutors, (2) exposure to native speaker models only may deprive them from becoming able to

understand international English, (3) overreliance on native speaker models creates unrealistic attainment standards, (4) exposure to alternative models has the potential to demonstrate how diverse nonnative speakers can be in their accents and levels of proficiency, and (5) inclusion of alternative English speaker models can bolster their motivation as these depict a more realistic benchmark of linguistic attainment.

In this paper, I further elaborate on the ideas provided by this small group of senior students and use them to list a series of pedagogical practices that, instead of making EFL students feel incomplete and deficient speakers of English and apologetic about their accent (May, 2014), provide them with the validation and encouragement they deserve for their expanding linguistic repertoire as emergent bilinguals (García, 2009). All in all, herein I continue to advocate for the abandonment of the native speakerism trend (Holliday, 2006) that still prevails in EFL programs and call for diversifying the proficiency models students are exposed to in order to rid these programs of potential

practices of discrimination and marginalization against speakers' whose proficiency does not resemble that of the romanticized native English speaker.

Theoretical framework

In EFL classrooms, native speaker proficiency models –in the form of videos and audios– tend to be favored without critical consideration of how such practice constructs unrealistic linguistic attainment standards that lead L2 learners to believe that, no matter how proficient they become, they will always be second-class speakers of English. This preference for native speaker proficiency models, I sustain, also encourages marginalization and discrimination against nonnative speakers. Sadly, despite the criticism that the notions of native and non-native speakers have received, the practice of idealizing native speaker competence continues to prevail.

I agree with Arnaiz and Guillen (2012) that "... no other area of study presents as much of a threat to self-concept as does foreign language learning" (p. 81), reason why attention should be paid to whether pedagogical practices in EFL programs are directly or indirectly contributing to EFL learners' negative opinions about their language proficiency and overall success as L2 users and to the fueling of the native speaker fallacy (Rudolph et al., 2015). Existing evidence points to the fact that students' perceptions of their success have an impact on their academic achievement. In fact, the 'ego-involving' nature of EFL learning causes students' perceptions of their L2 proficiency to be particularly vulnerable to severe damage that can turn

the EFL learning experience into an ordeal (Arnaiz & Guillen, p. 82). What is more, Genç, Kalusakli and Aydin, (2016) posit that learners' own perceptions are so powerful that a negative opinion can lead to demotivation, especially in the face of impossible and realistic standards (p. 54).

Given the above, in what follows, I list some of the criticism that the notions of *native and non-native speakers* have received on the basis of the privilege, power, and marginalization issues hidden underneath the terms, and elucidate how these two terms perpetuate inequitable relations by positioning *native speakers* as the norm and characterizing EFL speakers as perpetual learners and speakers of fossilized language forms (Han, 2004).

An important critique that the terms *native and non-native* have been the target of is that these have served to divide speakers of English into the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', thus perpetuating marginalization on the latter (Higgins, 2004). This marginalization is evident in the model proposed by Kachru (1992), who employed three concentric circles to represent the spread of English around the world. In the inner circle, Kachru placed countries where English 'originated' (e.g. USA and England) and labeled them norm providing. In the outer circle, he consigned countries where English has been relocated by way of colonization (e.g. India, Nigeria and Singapore) and classified them as norm developing, given that their varieties of English 'deviate' from the norm. Finally, in the expanding circle, Kachru placed the countries where English has no official status but is used as a second/foreign language,

which he designated as norm dependent (e.g. Latin America).

Another criticism of this dichotomous framing is that, “The notion of ‘native speaker’ has been employed as a mark of power and prestige for the benefit of some individuals, while ‘non-native speaker’ has also been used as an instrument to exclude others on the base of race and culture” (Schmitz, 2009, p. 3). In this regard, Schmitz also claims that in the studies conducted by second language acquisition (SLA) specialists, the problem lies in the fact that inner circles members have always been perceived as norm-providing speakers endowed with communicative authority whereas outer/expanding circles members have been seen as perpetual learners. In fact, SLA describes the varieties of English spoken in the outer/expanding circle as fossilized interlanguage forms (Han, 2004) that deviate from the standards emanating from inner circle countries, which plays a part in their marginalization. This fossilization approach (Han, 2004) to L2 learning assumes that language use which differs from that of *native speakers* is taken as evidence that EFL learners failed to become *native speakers* and that their proficiency is in a permanent unfinished state, never reaching a final form (Cook, 1999, pp. 195-196).

Yet other scholars have pointed to the unsuitability of looking at EFL learning through the lens of the terms in question. On the one hand, *native speakers* are taken to be those who had exposure to the language from birth and had a monolingual upbringing. On the other hand, *nonnative speakers* acquired language competence in English later in life and, thus, are constructed

“... as possessing (or striving to possess) a derivative and approximate kind of linguistic competence, one that betrays itself in detectable traces of other languages during [...] language use” (May, 2014, p. 35). Under this definition, learners are marginalized as, “It is by virtue of from-birth exposure to, and primary socialization into only one language that the archetypal native speaker is imagined to possess a superior kind of linguistic competence, one whose purity proves itself in the absence of detectable traces of any other languages during [...] language use” (May, p. 35). The monolingual bias implicit in the *native/nonnative speaker* labels assumes that a monolingual upbringing affords speakers a superior form of language proficiency and that L2 learners inhabit an imaginary space where what is acquired by virtue of birth can never be matched by what is learned in classroom contexts.

Moussu and Llurda (2008) also brought forth arguments against the *native/non-native speaker* dualism. First, they sustain that this dichotomous view is Anglo-centric stance because it ignores that these individuals are *native speakers* of their L1 and positions English as the only language that deserves attention. Second, they posit that this dualistic framing treats indigenized varieties of English spoken in India, Nigeria, Singapore and parts of Africa as *nonnative* based on the fact that these do not abide by the norms of the hegemonic varieties spoken in the USA and England. Finally, they elucidate that this view disregards the interdependence between EFL teaching/learning and its context, in that it fails to account for the different purposes for which English is

used in diverse contexts around the world. All in all, taking *native speaker models* as the arbiter of learning does a great disservice to EFL learners: it leads them to feel apologetic that their performance does not match the *mainstream native speaker standard*, fuels the native speaker fallacy, and perpetuates structures of oppression, discrimination and marginalization.

To conclude, as Aneja (2016) rightfully asserts, despite efforts to rupture the dichotomized framings of language and its users that privilege native speakers and marginalize their nonnative counterparts, native speaker ideologies continue to manifest in many ways (pp. 1-5). Against this backdrop, I sustain that EFL classrooms, where the *terms native/nonnative* are used uncritically and *native speaker models* are favored over proficient *non-native speaker* ones, are bound to become spaces where EFL learners buy into unrealistic standards and unconsciously engage in practices of discrimination and marginalization. Likewise, I sustain that we should abandon the *native speakerism* tendency (Holliday, 2006) still circulating in EFL classrooms and replace it for alternative practices that allow students to see their L2 proficiency in a more positive light. All in all, the criticisms listed in this section point to a much-needed de-colonization of EFL classrooms from marginalizing narratives of *native speaker* competence ideals.

Methodology

As I explained elsewhere, this paper derives from a study I carried out in 2016. Data for this study were drawn

from *open-ended interviews* I conducted with 11 senior students completing a B.A. in English and another 11 senior students finishing a B.A. in TESOL. The four hours of data provided insights into the students' perceptions of their current proficiency and the ideal proficiency implicit in their programs. The present paper, however, focuses on data concerning their perceptions as to why the overreliance on native English speaker models was unsustainable.

Fourth-year students were selected because they had been exposed the longest to the discourses and practices that idealize *native speakers* and belittle the linguistic achievements of nonnative speakers/emergent bilinguals. Thus, the repercussions of *native speakerism* on perceptions of their EFL proficiency were more profound. The data herein examined come from the questions: How often do we, professors, incorporate into our lessons videos/audios featuring native or nonnative speakers of English? What do you think about that practice? What could be some consequences of that practice? The data were analyzed qualitatively using critical discourse analysis (Gee 2011; Fairclough 1995) as well as quantitatively using percentages.

Analysis of findings

The data confirmed that there was a circulating unspoken narrative of native speakerism that had had an impact on the students' perception of their EFL proficiency. Overall, more than half the respondents gave their own proficiency a rating of seven, which was low considering that they had been studying English for four years.

When asked about what they should do to earn a more favorable rating, the vast majority of the participants agreed that further exposure to *native speaker* proficiency models would help them improve their competence while a few confessed that losing the fear or insecurity, triggered by not sounding native-like, would enable them to perform better in the target language and thus earn them the rating of ten. When questioned about the consequences of exposing EFL students to native English speaking models only, several interesting narratives emerged, which can be divided into those in favor and those against it.

On the one hand, those in favor provided reasons that can be lumped into three main categories: (1) indicators of proficiency, (2) role of *native speaker* models in EFL teaching and learning, (3) and perceptions of nonnative speakers' proficiency. Regarding the first category, the students reported that being able to successfully communicate with native speakers, sounding native-like, and being able to 'think' in English are indicators of advanced proficiency. As to the second, they stated that *native speakers* are sources of 'real practice' because they constitute examples of language 'as it should be.' As regards the third, they also sustained that including *nonnative speaker* models in the EFL classroom is counterintuitive because students cannot improve their proficiency by listening to 'mistakes', given that *nonnative speakers* do not speak in 'the best way,' which could hinder their opportunities to further their English proficiency.

These students not only had doubts regarding the incorporation of *nonnative speaker* models in the form of audios

and videos but also seemed to question the value of interacting with their fellow *nonnative speaker* classmates or even getting used to the way they use language. As student overtly stated, "... here in class, it's just very deficient because nobody, I mean, the classmates not professors, because you know, they are not... native... speakers..." (CS, interview #9). Given these students' overexposure to native English speaker proficiency models only, it comes as no surprise that they bought into the discourses that privilege native English speaker models and marginalize and discriminate against nonnative speaker ones.

On the other hand, some students seemed to find fault in this overreliance on *native English speaker* models. As with the previous groups, the categories that emerged from the data were grouped into themes: (1) the diversity of interlocutors, (2) *nonnative speakers'* capacity to be highly proficient, (3) a needed sense of community, (4) and the repercussions of unrealistic proficiency benchmarks. As some students acknowledged, the EFL programs they are completing are in need for a balance of videos/audios featuring both *native and nonnative speaker* proficiency models because they will communicate with a large diversity of interlocutors. They showed preoccupation about this unrealistic expectation for communication to happen between them and *native speakers* of English only (which are taken to be mainly from the USA and England), as they will also communicate with fellow nonnative English users and speakers from India and Nigeria. In this regard, they expressed that exposure to *native speaker* models only may deprive them from becoming able to understand

international English. Others noted that exposure to videos/audios featuring *nonnative speaker* models would show how diverse *nonnative speakers* can be in their accents and levels of proficiency. The excerpts below illustrate some of these points.

JL: I would say like a combination [native and nonnative] because many people I know like to work in a call centers and sometimes there are people who call from other places and they don't get what they were saying because we weren't exposed to that type of pronunciation.

FMS: It is good, but not at a certain point because the problem is, for example, if I go to France, and I want to speak with a person, I cannot communicate because I am not French, but probably I wouldn't understand a French person speaking English because of their specific accent, so I believe that it's important to know and to understand other people's accents.... supposedly we understand English, but the thing is that here what they teach us is just to understand American English... Once I had to interview a guy from Africa and it was really hard for me to understand him because of his accent and those are the things that they do not teach us...

KV: I think that's not real life because if we see English just from one perspective, then when we hear a Chinese speaking English, we don't understand...

JRB: I think that there should be a balance and I think that it doesn't work much if you watch a video in which there is an English native speaker

if you're only going to use your English with bilinguals...

AEA: As I mentioned, I worked at a call center, I worked with an Indian person and I couldn't understand anything.... And I was like "Oh my God", so there are going to be moments in life in which you don't know if you have to talk to, I don't know, Chinese person... and I think that if you start listening or watching those videos since the first year, you are going to get used to their accent and you are going to understand when they speak and it's gonna be easier for you when you finish your major...

On the topic of linguistic attainment, students also claimed that *nonnative speakers* can achieve a high/advanced proficiency level. As one student asserted, despite her awareness that she still needs to improve, experience has shown her that she is a proficient bilingual speaker able to communicate with both *native and nonnative speakers*. This same student reported that *nonnative speakers* can also be proficient and that they do not need to sound native like to be able to use the language successfully. Another student sustained that having a foreign accent is not bad. Similarly, another student defended that she has her own accent and that she finds people's expectation for her to sound native-like to be unreasonable. Finally, there also seemed to be a concern around the fairness of judging the proficiency of a *nonnative speaker* against a *native speaker* model (see excerpts below).

MA: [...] there are people who are not native speakers who are very good at

speaking English... and I think that sounding or, yeah, like, speaking like a native is not a way to say that you know English. You don't need to be a native to be able to speak the language...

JG: I think I like it, it's good that we use native speakers as a reference for us to learn the language, but it wouldn't be bad if we included nonnative speakers that also can do it well, that can also teach us something, because that's also the way we speak, we don't speak like native speakers... Nonnative speakers also can speak well... maybe teachers can also bring videos or audios of nonnative speakers that they also speak the language very, very, that they also do it well....

WZ: [silence] Like they expect that I talk like a native... they, they, they are waiting for me to talk, or they're expecting that I talk like those people they watch on television or TV shows because now everyone sees, watches sitcoms, and shows and they start telling me "Oh, can you talk like a British...? How come? I mean, I have my own accent..."

HB: Well, I remember in linguistics, prof. V, she showed videos of native and nonnative speakers, so that was very nice because you can see that they have their own accent and that's not bad...

MA: well, for me learning languages involves many aspects, not only related to the pronunciation, but also to the culture, and also learning the language is related to your background, your interests, and like I said, you don't have to sound like a native...

Additionally, students also mentioned several reasons in favor of the inclusion of *nonnative speaker* models in EFL teaching and learning. As one student stated, exposure to *native speaker* models is good, but there is also a need to include *nonnative speaker* proficiency models as they create a sense of community and camaraderie among speakers of international English. That is, exposure to speakers, who just like them, have chosen to learn English as a foreign language, demonstrates that there is a community of proficient nonnative speakers who succeed at international communication regardless of the foreignness in their accents. Other students referred to how exposure to *nonnative speaker* models can bolster motivation as these depict a more reasonable and realistic benchmark. Further, other students stated that videos or audios of *nonnative speakers* create a sense that language use that is not native-like but still proficient is valuable and worth of admiration. Yet other students lamented that the video/audios used in class featuring nonnative speakers are used for the purpose of analyzing 'their mistakes' (see excerpts below).

NAL: Yeah, exactly! I'm talking about an idea that is behind that, that if I hear only native speakers and if I hear how they speak, I want to speak in that way, but then when I speak, I don't speak in that way and I feel bad because of that, but I know that that is not the intention of it... but if I see people who also speak well, and they have this, uhhh, not mispronunciation, but they have this trace of their mother tongue, so you say, it's not bad

if I say this in this way, or maybe I can feel more relaxed when I'm talking to another person because I accept that in myself, you know what I mean?

I: And what do you think about that practice of favoring native English speakers models?

NAL: I believe that it's important because it's to get closer to native, it's more like to practice, and it's not the same when I'm talking to another student. But I believe that [the opposite practice] would be better, you would feel more comfortable with your way of talking because you have examples of people that also speak English as their L2, so in that way, you don't feel that bad when you make a mistake or when you pronounce something in this particular way, you say ok, you feel more relieved.

I: How would it be useful [to include nonnative speaker models]?

EA: Because I think it is, like, great to have a native speaker to practice, but if you also have a bilingual speaker to practice with, you, like, you are more like in contact with that person because you both, both of you have gone through the same process and if it's in a video, you feel more identified with the person, and if the person has a good proficiency in English, so you say like "If I practice I can be like that person", so you get motivated...

Finally, regarding the repercussions of having unrealistic EFL proficiency benchmarks in the classroom, some of the students provided important opinions. One student expressed that the expectation to attain native-like competence is overwhelming.

Other students stated that they are aware of such expectation and confessed that they try hard to achieve native-like competence and that the realization that they cannot sound native-like makes them feel bad, nervous, insecure and deficient. This native-like competence ideal is so deep-rooted, one student confessed, that classmates even mock each other on the basis of pronunciation that does not resemble that of *native speakers*. This situation, she reported, has hindered her confidence in her proficiency and deflected her participation (see excerpts below).

RD: I don't know, sometimes I feel like very well, some days after a presentation I say I'm the best but some other days I say my pronunciation is awful.

RD: I don't know, it's... maybe regarding... maybe when I compare myself to native pronunciation I know that's almost impossible, but I always want to get as close as it can be, so... sometimes when I talk to native people I feel like... (laughs) I'm not even close to that! So I feel very bad... Maybe that's why... but when I'm talking to Costa Ricans and any other, um, Spanish speaking or person, um, I feel well.

I: Where does that fear of speaking come from?

VS: From inside of me...

I: But what triggers it?

VS: My classmates [laughs]... It's not even the professor.... it's my classmates because they are so picky, and they criticize my pronunciation when I'm giving like oral presentations in front of the class... I'm from Coto, and [there] I was so happy, I used to talk a lot

and here I'm just so quiet, and that is actually affecting me and I can see it, I can feel it... and it's my classmates...

I: And what's gonna take you to that 10?

AEA: I think more conversations, I think I need to talk more.... Well, last semester we were assigned to have certain conversations with native speakers and I realized that it was really hard for me because I get so nervous and I'm so afraid to make mistakes that I... I was making a lot of mistakes, indeed.... pronunciation mistakes, and grammatical mistakes, and I knew they were mistakes, but it was unconscious, let's say...

In sum, these opinions comprise students' resistance to institutionalized and normalized narratives and practices of native speakerism. Despite overall acceptance of the status quo, some students carry with them counter narratives that are based on the idea that *nonnative speakers'* proficiency needs to be understood through a lens of diversity and community building so that reasonable, realistic, and sound expectations are created within the program. These expectations, the general sentiment seems to be, should acknowledge the linguistic attainment of students in the programs regardless of whether or not their proficiency is native-like. In the next section, I use these concerns to suggest a list of best practices that celebrate linguistic diversity, allow students to see the spectrum of English varieties and accents, and validate nonnative speakers' linguistic attainments.

Conclusions and recommendations

Instructors might think that there is no harm in favoring *native speaker models* in the form of videos and audios in the EFL classroom. However, implicit in this practice there is an unspoken narrative of native speaker competence as ideal that students learn to aspire to and eventually use to evaluate their present EFL proficiency, as noted in the next interview segment: Interviewer: So, if you're saying that you are fully bilingual at this point, um, why did you give yourself a seven? RD: (Laughs) I don't know... I don't know when can you get a 10. Maybe you cannot because you cannot actually talk as a native speaker... (Interview #22). In hindsight, maybe students' desire to further their skills is valid, reasonable and even commendable. Yet, if they acknowledge they can successfully communicate with both *native and non-native speakers*, what images do they hold in their minds when they think of future improvements? What triggered those images? What role do our choices of proficiency models (in the form of videos and audios) play in fueling these students' desire to accomplish native-like competence in English? And what are the consequences of continuing to frame EFL learning in terms of native/nonnative proficiency?

Notwithstanding the above, I should not so hastily blame the body of instructors alone for the students' problematic views of their proficiency and their perceptions of native-like competence as ideal. As Motha and Lin (2014) note, the desire for native-like competence is co-constructed and permeated by the institutional, social, political and economic contexts

in which the students are embedded. As such, I must acknowledge that the students' current aspiration to native-like competence is a composite picture of their own desires, the desires of teachers, the desires of their communities, the desires of the institution, and the desires of governments. However, I do question the fact that the EFL department in question uncritically endorses practices that mirror socially constructed hierarchies where some hold privilege while others are marginalized. I must clarify that the purpose of this paper is not to demonize *native speaker* proficiency models. Instead, I intend to raise awareness about the consequences of uncritically fueling the native speaker fallacy.

The EFL department of this public university cannot afford to form students who, upon graduation, will step out into the world filled with insecurities/fears around their EFL proficiency. Proficient EFL speakers who believe native-like proficiency is the marker of success in the EFL learning endeavor are likely to perpetuate views that marginalize *nonnative speakers* on the basis of language use that bears traces of their L1. As Motha (2014) sustains, "The idea that native-ness in English is more desirable than fluent, comprehensible, NNES (non-native English speaker) speech and an unquestioned belief in the necessity of passing [as a native] in order to be truly successful are rooted in both racism and colonialism" (94). These are narratives our graduates should not continue to spread if the aim is to break away from structures of oppression and discrimination.

Thus, I now venture to use the concerned voices of the minority of

students who agree with this diversification of proficiency models, in the hopes that in so doing I can help rid the department of narratives and practices that marginalize nonnative speakers and privilege native speakers. In what follows, I elaborate on three main changes the department could make in the direction of justice and equity: (1) engaging in critical dialogues, (2) diversifying proficiency models, and (3) encouraging hands-on experiences.

Engaging in Critical Dialogues

The first step in this endeavor would be engaging in debates with EFL students regarding the inequitable relations that the terms *native and non-native speaker* perpetuate. For this purpose, there is extensive literature on the topics of World Englishes (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, 2009; Kachru, Kachru & Nelson, 2009), English as a Lingua Franca (Dewey & Jenkins, 2010; Dewey, 2007; Dewey, 2009; Jenkins, 2007; Kaur, 2009; Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Bayyurt & Akcan, 2015) and English as an International Global Language (Nunan, 2003) that students could examine as they engage in discussions about the marginalization implicit in favoring native speaker proficiency models at the expense of nonnative speaker ones. This would lay fertile ground for a more critical examination of the spread of English around the world (Phillipson, 1992) and prescriptive proficiency standards implicit in EFL teaching practices and didactic materials available.

These discussions should raise awareness in class that students will communicate with a wide array of interlocutors, including fellow nonnative

users and speakers of indigenized native varieties, normally excluded from English teaching materials and classroom practices. Also, EFL students should learn to acknowledge that nonnative speakers have capacity to be highly proficient and competent regardless of the traces of their L1, that nothing is intrinsically wrong about having a foreign accent, and that negative sentiments around foreignness are socially constructed and mirror practices of discrimination and marginalization. Upon examining the underpinnings and repercussions of the native/nonnative framing (Geeta, 2016), students should be introduced to terms such as emergent bilingual (García, 2009), which shifts the focus from the deficit of the nonnative speakers to the surplus of emergent bilinguals' expanding linguistic repertoire.

This, however, as Motha and Lin (2014) caution, should be carried out non-coercively and respectfully with emphasis on (1) raising awareness about what and whose desires are embedded in the curriculum and (2) envisioning ethical pedagogical practices through which students are empowered to analyze their desires and aspirations and to make responsible and potentially liberatory decisions. At times, these dialogues will seem to be uncomfortable, but they are also necessary if we, instructors and researchers, want to ethically practice our profession and to advocate for justice and equity in Applied Linguistics and TESOL.

Diversifying proficiency models

Equally important in this endeavor is the incorporation of proficient *non-native speaker* models into classroom

practices. This diversification should also include indigenized varieties of English such as Nigerian and Indian English. Language instructors in EFL programs should conscientiously choose a wide array of proficiency models so that the learners see the wide spectrum of potential interlocutors they will encounter and become acquainted with different varieties of World Englishes. A word of caution: these marginalized proficiency models should not be included for the purposes of error recognition, as doing so would forfeit the goal of ridding the class from discourses and practices of marginalization and discrimination.

Explorations of diverse varieties of World Englishes should give them a sense of pride that their use of the L2 bears marks of an important facet of their ethnic, national and regional identity. It is pivotal that EFL students develop a sense of belonging to a community of speakers of international English and that they resist the practice of self-derogation implicit in idealizing native speaker proficiency and criticizing speakers for not having native-like proficiency. As difficult as this enterprise may appear to be, some students have already developed awareness of and a critical stand toward the expectation for them to sound native-like, as evident in the interview segment quoted below. This student is emphatic that there are two perspectives through which she can assess her current EFL proficiency: her own experience as an L2 learner and the circulating narratives that idealize native speaker proficiency models.

I: Ok, in general, how do you feel about your proficiency in English?

KV: I feel good, cuz I think that I've been working hard... that I have improved many aspects, but it depends on the perspective... If I see it from my perspective, I have been working hard and I would say that I think it's good, but if I compare myself to a native speaker, I would say that it's not good, not at all.... So I think it's a matter of perspective, and a matter of if I compare myself to someone else, maybe I'm not good enough....

I: Who would like to look at you from perspective #2?

KV: Maybe someone that has been living in the states, or someone that masters the language very well would look at me from the second perspective...

I: Have you ever, at any point, felt pressure to be like perspective #2?

KV: Of course...

I: Can you tell me about it?

KV: Yeah, because we always try hard to speak like a native speaker, but then, I have been changing my mind because I'm thinking that I will do my best, but I will never be like a native speaker because it involves like a cultural process that I have, that I haven't been in.

I: and where do you think this pressure comes from?

KV: from outside....

I: Can you describe that 'outside'?

KV: Professors, the environment, and grades...

Providing hands-on experiences

In the study I conducted in 2016, students reported that in some courses, they were assigned to interact with native speakers of English on campus

for practice purposes and for eventual linguistic analysis. In similar vein, students may also be encouraged to interact with proficient nonnative speakers or speakers of indigenized varieties of English, so that they have first-hand experience with the so-called World Englishes. Similarly, students may also be encouraged to have e-pal exchanges, a practice that is also common in the department, with other fellow EFL or ESL learners. Such tasks, nevertheless, should not be done with the aim of criticizing or finding 'errors,' 'deviations,' or 'mistakes.' Instead, it should point to experiencing the plurality of accents of *othered* native English speakers and the diverse levels of proficiency EFL speakers can accomplish. Eliminating the misconceptions that there is one correct English and that some varieties of English are better than others must be problematized so that the students rupture existing structures of marginalization.

Diversified proficiency models used in class, coupled with first-hand experience interacting with them, should help students stop engaging in self-derogation of their current and evolving language proficiency and start reformulating the proficiency standards that they aspire to. Again, the ego-evolving nature of EFL learning calls for teachers and students to build counter narratives and practices that point to validating the language proficiency accomplishments of EFL learners. This way, the EFL classroom will become a space where diversity of accents and levels of proficiency are celebrated and do not become a reason to engage in marginalization.

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