Research on Native or Lingua Franca Model

Shuang Liao

School of Foreign Languages and Trade, Chongqing College of International Business and Economics, Chongqing, China

Abstract: With the advancement of globalization, English is no longer considered to belong exclusively to a certain nation or community. Instead, it has interacted with different cultures, giving rise to the emergence and rapid development of varieties of English. In the expanding circle countries where English is used as a lingua franca, it is important to strike a balance between language proficiency and cultural background when choosing a medium for classroom-based instruction. It is crucial to select an easy-to-use and sustainable variety of English based on the teaching practices in a particular context, in order to better cater to the needs of learners. Through a critical review of existing literature, this paper concludes that the native speaker model is more suitable for English classroom instruction in the expanding circle countries compared to the lingua franca English model.

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that English has become an international language used by and large among speakers with different L1 backgrounds for the purpose of intercultural communication, and it has been gaining predominance worldwide as a lingua franca. Inevitably, this has led to the occurrence and growth of new local norms in Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1986) countries including China, Korea and many others. English, hence, is getting nativized by involving L1-specific features during meaningful interactions co-constructed by an ever-growing amount of English as a foreign language (EFL) user. As a result, the Expanding-Circle communities have been shifting away from norm dependence as labelled by Kachru (1986). It further complicates the long-debated question for both researchers and educational practitioners: which model serves as the most appropriate for English teaching in classroom contexts? Previous literature on this subject asserted their choices, be it a native-speaker model, a nativist model, or a lingua franca model, mainly on the grounds of political and ideological reasons (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2006, Jenkins, 2006). Nevertheless, this essay will argue from the educational perspective that the native-speaker model is the most desirable for English teaching in the Expanding Circle. Although the development of norms at the local and national levels in Expanding Circle countries, they, differ from the case as in the Outer Circle, are far from systematically complete and numerically ample to constitute a nativized model. In this respect, the focus of this essay will be put on the selection between the native-speaker model and the lingua franca model only[1-4].

I will start by trying to describe the two types of models, then discuss reasons why the native-speaker model excels over the lingua franca model for EFL learners in the context of radical

demographic changes in their ownership of English with supporting literature and empirical studies for both positions. Lastly, I will wrap up all the arguments into a conclusion.

2. Conceptualizing of the native-speaker model and the lingua franca model

Before delving into any discussion about which model is superior over the other, it is necessary to make clear what indeed they are. The native-speaker model states that the varieties of English used by native speakers (e.g., British English, American English) should be the only legitimate basis for any pedagogical decisions made, for example, what content should be contained in a textbook, what kind of learning objectives and evaluation criteria for assessment an instructor should make in his or her teaching. Despite the disputable terminology of "native speaker" (e.g., Cook, 1999; McKay, 2002) per se, users whoever learn English under such environment where the model is adopted are expected to conform to its conventions and norms.

Significantly different from the native-speaker model, the lingua franca model sees English as "a synthetic form which combines features of standard English with those most commonly shared by speakers of all non-native varieties of the language (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006, p. 9)". In other words, English to be taught under the lingua franca model is a hybrid which takes on certain characteristics of the Inner Circle English but adopts some norms and forms carried over from non-native speakers' L1s at the same time as long as they do not cause unintelligibility. However, as non-native speakers of English far outnumber its native speakers (Graddol, 1997; Crystal, 2003), English as a lingua franca (ELF) is often narrowed down unwittingly or even wittingly to a contact language which meets functional needs of interactions in various sociolinguistic settings among exclusively non-native speakers who share no common first language (e.g., Jenkins, 2006). In this respect, native speakers seem to be excluded from lingua franca communication and the native-speaker English is accordingly not given due attention as if it is of little value. Additionally, in spite of the ever-increasing or maybe overemphasized importance, there have been few research that attempt to identify the linguistic features of lingua franca English, which means no feasible models are actually on offer for pedagogical use in classrooms at present[5-8].

3. Standard English as a codified model

As mentioned above, while the use of English as an international language (EIL) relies heavily on the specific contexts where intercultural interaction takes place rather than how correct it is produced with reference to the Standard English, we still need agreed and concrete knowledge about what it is in prior to teaching. However, to the best of my humble knowledge, the descriptions of lingua franca English is far from completion and will be under discussion for a foreseeable long period of time. Among the very limited empirical studies that seek to contribute to the building of the lingua franca core (Quirk et al., 1972), Jenkins (2000, 2002) conducted a study into the phonological-facet of the lingua franca core through collecting and analyzing considerable data. In her articles, she provided a way in which we could be able to distinguish which sounds and aspects of pronunciation that are deviated from the standard English would not hinder mutual intelligibility, and which would. Similarly, Seidlhofer has led a project called the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) (2001a, 2001b), and captured some lexico-grammatical and discoursal features of ELF which are "usually unproblematic" as she suggested.

However, participants in both of the studies were restrained to different-L1 interlocuters only, while native speakers once again were intentionally ignored in that they might either use their ownership or intuition to impose an ELF model that was favorable for their own interests on ELF users as Jenkins (2006) claimed. Yet, the features proposed are by no means effective in real lingua franca communication if they end up with being found impeding intelligibility in any context which

consists native speakers. Moreover, VOICE was compiled from speech uttered by a bunch of "successful ELF users" which are contentiously defined in itself with a lot of debate going on (e.g., Prodromou, 2006). But the major problem with the lingua franca model as I stated earlier is still the existence of numerous blank domains left to be dealt with. Consequently, classroom teachers are not able to determine what should be taught as there is no concise boundary to distinguish forms of making no sense from the acceptable ones in their practices. For instance, in the Chinese-ordered English, the famous example "long time no see" is widely accepted nowadays and is even used in film works of native English-speaking countries, whereas another phrase "good good study, day day up" meaning to study diligently and make progress daily, adversely, is a real bear to understand in and out the Expanding Circle. In short, there is no codified standard to which we can refer when determining if a certain usage of English diverged from the native varieties of English should be regarded as a violation of ELF or it is intelligible in ELF. And it is also fair enough to infer it is almost impossible to come up with a codified ELF model because there just has no core sometimes.

The native-speaker model, on the contrary, is systematic and carefully established, in which the native varieties of English admired are firmly codified in dictionaries and prestigious corpus of literature (Kirkpatrick, 2006). It is crucial to have a workable model amidst the diversities (Quirk, 1985) which helps to prevent teachers and learners in the Expanding Circle communities from shuttling with a sense of uncertainty between language choices of variant intelligibilities, and the native-speaker model caters best for such a model. Within it, reliable and consistent forms can be easily accessed by any user who is in need to consult them for pedagogical purposes. It is especially true for the expanding-circle classroom teachers in that the native-speaker model entitles them with solid and effective criteria for assessing learners' performance, and it also functions as a basis for the formation of teaching content[9-14].

4. Regarding the native-speaker model as a reference point

In his discussion of the disadvantages of the native model, Kirkpatrick (2006) mentioned the adoption of this model will put non-native speaker learners and teachers in particular at a disadvantageous position because they can never fully achieve native-like English. But his statement was refuted later by Van den Doel (2010), who argued that Kirkpatrick mistakenly equated the native-speaker model with the native-speaker target. Van de Doel further distinguished the two terms, stressing the former "merely serves as a reference point and does not make any claims about target levels (2010, p. 352)". In this sense, teaching standard native-speaker varieties of English does not necessarily mean students have no freedom to exercise their autonomy in determining the use of native-speaker norms. Neither does it stand zero tolerance to learners' innovative language use which does not strictly follow the norms and rules of the standard varieties of English. As Dröschel (2011) pointed out, there is a clear difference between input and output and we would better not mix them up. Regarding this, using the native-speaker model in teaching does require teachers to provide input written or spoken precisely in native varieties of English. In turn, it does expect, in most cases, learners could ideally be able to produce native-like English. But if not, they are still considered as competent EIL users provided that they can get meaning across. At this point, someone who against my position may very likely argue that teacher talk is one of the sources of input and further question how "native" the model could be if teachers themselves cannot control it. It is true to some extent because some students look up to their teachers as role models and will somehow be influenced more or less in their acquisition; however, it is also necessary to emphasize that the center of the orientation to employing the native-speaker model is to impart knowledge of what the targeted language is and how we are supposed to use it rather than pay overly attention to the vehicle that carries that knowledge.

The above argument of the native-speaker model acting merely as a suitable starting point for learning is echoed by an empirical study carried out by Wang (2012). The study explored how Chinese college students responded to native norms in two contextualized communicative tasks. The results showed that on the whole the subjects tended to converge to the native norm in one task but would rather stick to their own non-native identity in another after being made aware of the native norms. Thus, the study revealed that the Chinese students participated used native-speaker norms as a significant reference point but were quite flexible in the way they negotiated those norms with their L1 linguistic resources[15-22].

5. Equations adopting the native-speaker model to meet learners' needs

The numbers accorded to equations must appear in consecutive order inside each section or within the contribution, with number enclosed in brackets and set on the right margin, starting with the number 1.

Learners' needs might probably come on top of other elements which have an impact on the decision teachers make as to which model is the most appropriate to implement, as teaching is never an act for the sake of teachers' self-satisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested that practitioners in the educational industry do not impose their preference towards teaching model on students. But in reality, which model to choose is rarely a bottom-up decision. Interestingly, many previous empirical studies into students' views on native-speaker norms and forms have contradicted the prevailing assumptions among applied linguists who have challenged the dominance of the native-oriented model in classroom-based English instructions under the contemporary context of EIL. For example, Jenkins (1997) claimed "the majority express a desire to retain something of their L1", implying EFL students aspired to the lingua franca model. She continued to argue that the native-speaker model benefits only a small minority of the people learning English in the Expanding Circle who are motivated by the longings to communicate with native speakers and to understand native-speaking cultures (Jenkins, 2006).

In order to verify those assumptions, a thorough examination of learner needs should be taken into consideration if any speech community is to have a well-suited model of English. With the attempt to hear the voices of students and classroom teachers in terms of varieties of spoken English, Timmis (2002) investigated almost 600 students and teachers from over 45 countries. Through analyzing their parallel questionnaire surveys, he discovered that the majority of the tested students inclined to comply with native-speaker norms no matter whether they were using English generally with native speakers or not. Besides, he found out a division between students' attitudes with those of teachers. Eight years later, He and Zhang (2010) replicated Timmis's study in China. They noticed that, despite increased awareness of English ownership among non-native speakers over time, the native speaker-based model remained to be perceived as the most desirable model drawing on extensive research data from the 984 engaged tertiary school students and their teachers. Similar results were found in different countries in the Expanding Circle, such as Cambodia with as high as 98% investigated learners reporting preference for the native-speaker model (Moore and Bounchan, 2010), and Japan with 76.2% (Fraser, 2006)[23-24].

To sum it up, educational products should reflect the aspirations and desires of learners. "Anything "less" (or different) would be unbeneficial, demotivating, or patronizing (Subtirelu, 2013, p. 271)."

6. Conclusions

At this point in time, hopefully people reading this essay could feel safely to arrive at the conclusion that from the pedagogical points of view, the native-speaker model is the most desirable for English teaching in Expanding Circle countries. The major concern is the issue of availability. As was assured by Kirkpatrick (2006), teachers and learners would have to rely on the native-

speaker model until adequate descriptions of the lingua franca model were provided. Besides, this essay rejects a common misinterpretation of the native-speaker model by stating it serves merely as a reference point instead of a teaching target. Finally, we have to notice that conforming to the native-oriented model still takes up the mainstream attitude among EFL learners. However, these arguments are made in the light of the current status of EIL and its applications in Expanding Circle communities. It will be of great value to revisit the question again as the development of English around the world.

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