



Linguistic Imperialism: Viability of the Use of Native - Like Accent among English Language Learners

Bassam Hameed Mohammed Mohsen

Department of English, Faculty of Education
Hodeidah University, Yemen
bassam_je@yahoo.com

Pandit B. Nirmal

Assistant Professor,
Sant Tukaram College of Arts and Science
Parbhani (Maharashtra), India
panditbnirmal@gmail.com

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Abstract: This paper argues that English language should be used basically as a tool of communication, not as a tool of imperialism. There is no necessity for English language learners to speak in a native-like accent. Instead of spending much time, money and efforts on learning and emulating the different native speaker accents of English, English language learners should direct their efforts on learning what is important to develop their English language skills. The study devalues the importance of emulation of native accents of English. It uses the argumentative method to prove the argumentation logically. It illustrates that English language has become an international language and not a property of native speakers and it is not important to attach it with native speakers anymore. The study also discusses how that will help to avoid any hegemonic impact on the learners' culture and native language.

Keywords: imperialism, accents, emulation, native, English language learners

1. Introduction

Linguistic imperialism is a term that denotes the transfer of a dominant language to other people. The transfer is basically a demonstration of power not only military power but also, in the modern world it could be economic power. Elements of the dominant culture can be transferred along with the language (Phillipson, 1992). This is a type of power that empowers some while making others powerless. Gilbert Ansre, a well-known Ghanaian sociolinguist, defines it as a situation where language speakers are hegemonized by another language to the degree that they think they can and must only use that foreign language in striations in which require they deal with the more advanced aspects of life such as government, literature, schooling, philosophy, literature, justice, etc.

Robert Phillipson uses the concept which the Ghanaian sociolinguist Gilbert Ansre first used "Linguistic Imperialism". Phillipson claims that English continues to be spread intentionally to fulfill the interests of North American and Britain. Phillipson linguistic imperialism theory takes a lot from Galtung (1980), who explains imperialism under the following interrelated topics: cultural, military, economic, political, social, and communicational. In the domain of multicultural and multilingual development, currently, there is growing concern about the destructive English spreading into

indigenous cultures and languages. The spread of English globally was viewed as linguistic imperialism. Many scholars consider that English has become a powerful instrument for economic and cultural domination which requires resistance (Boyle,1997).

2. The Three Circles of English

The English language plays an important role as a lingua franca in the whole world. The ability to communicate well in English is highly valued and as a response to this, communicative competence has had a progressively major part in the English language education and curriculums all over the world. The expansion of English globally has led to different English varieties generally classified into three: a native, second and foreign language. As a native English means the English which is spoken as a mother tongue in countries such as Britain Canada, America, or Australia. The speakers of this group are part of the inner-circle of English speakers (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009). The second type refers to those who use English as their second language, for example, the former British colonies and other countries affected by the early spread of English. They are part of the outer-circle of English speakers (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009). The third group is referred to as the expanding circle (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009) which indicates the expanding community who use English as a foreign language where English is not being used as the major language for communication and has a pervasive and significant foreign language use in education (Crystal, 2003).

3. English as an International Language

According to Modiano (1999), International English is the term of English which refers to English as an international medium of communication in many dialects and the movement toward an international language standard. There are other terms that are also used to refer to International English for example, Global English, World English, Common English, Continental English, and General English. These terms can be used to refer to the array of varieties of English spoken throughout the world. Calls for the teaching of English as an International Language have currently been made in Asia. International English is usually referred to as English that is spoken both by native and non-native speakers, and a language that is the property of the world rather than the property of native speakers. The reinterpretation of English as an international language is an attempt to detach English and to divest the British and American hegemony of its claim to English. Several leading linguists, such as Braj Kachru and David Crystal have stressed the necessity of global intelligibility rather than a specific native accent as most of English language communication takes place among nonnative speakers of English who use nonstandard varieties of English. So English is no more a limited property of native speakers. Fishman also indicates this in his book *Sociology of English as an additional language* "The growth of English-speaking 'false foreigners' in different parts of the non-English mother tongue world (e.g., India, East Africa) is a sign that a variety of non-native English can be successful not only in getting itself cross-generationally but also in becoming a mother tongue in a certain speech environment (Fishman, 1992, p. 21). So it is unnecessary that all English users use only one of the inner-circles models. According to EIL, this idea has become a part of the past and is not common anymore in the English language teaching industry.

4. Language Accent

What is an accent? According to the Oxford dictionary, accent is a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, particularly one associated with a particular country, area, or social class. And according to Collins English dictionary, accent is the characteristic mode of pronunciation of a person or group, especially one that betrays social or geographical origin.

Accent is a unique way of pronouncing a language, either by native or non-native speakers. English, a global language with a lot of speakers, has many distinct accents in many different regions and in many different social groups. Some are reference accents such as Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). Accents are not a characteristic only of native speakers of English but are also characteristic of English users around the world. There are some people who might believe that they don't have an accent or might think that the others have no accent; however, everybody has an accent.

According to Linguist List, an accent is a way of pronouncing a language. It is therefore almost impossible to speak without an accent. The accent is the outcome of how, when, and where you have learned the language you speak. People may not have just one particular accent that is specified by their experiences. We can also determine the way we speak; we can intentionally or unintentionally do that. We may change our accents according to respondents they speak with. As we have new life experiences, we may change our accents, often without realizing that.

Accent can be divided into two different kinds. The first is a foreign accent which occurs when a person speaks a language using the rules and sounds of that language which is not his/her native language. For instance, if someone has difficulty pronouncing any of the second language sounds they are learning, they may substitute those sounds with similar sounds that are available in their first language. It may sound odd or wrong to some native speakers. The second kind of accent is the way a group of people speaks their native language which is basically determined by the geographical place where they live and what social groups they belong to. People who live in close contact grow to share a similar way of speaking, accent, which will be different from the way other groups in other places speak. If you speak one accent and you find a person from a different place or a group you can easily detect that they don't belong to your place or group.

Accents are defined as varieties in pronunciations of a certain language and refer to the sounds that exist in a person's language. Therefore, everybody has an accent. Generally, accents differ in two subjects, phonetic and phonological (JurgStrassler 2010). When the accents vary in phonetics, in both accents there is the same range of phonemes, but some of those phonemes are realized differently.

5. English Language Accents

English is being perceived increasingly across the world as a language of opportunity and professional advancement. English has become the global lingua franca, is also regarded as the first world language. It is the most commonly used language in international telecommunications, book publishing, publishing newspapers, scientific publishing, mass entertainment, international trade, and diplomacy worldwide (Monroe, 2019). English is not anymore an "English language" in the sense of belonging only to people who are ethnically English. The use of English is progressively increasing country-by-country internally and for international communication.

As a consequence of all those latest development in English, several difficulties are associated with the many accents present in Standard English. The presence of these accents creates difficulties in teaching of English in non-English speaking countries. One of the main problems is agreeing on which of these accents is better and acceptable as a universal norm for teachers and students to use. The first question most of the students ask when they join English course is, which accent is better to use in English?. The diversity of international institutions that are established to teach English language around the world play part in the confusion of the learners some of these institutions claim to teach American English some other British English and a few claim to teach Australian English.

6. The Difference between Accent and Pronunciation

Accent and pronunciation are closely related words but there is a difference between them when it comes to their meaning. Accent as mentioned above according to the Oxford dictionary, accent is a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class. In addition to that accent refers to the stress or emphasis that has to be placed on a letter in a particular word. It is all about intonation and rhythm of speech; it sometimes refers to the tone of voice.

On the other hand, Pronunciation is the way we pronounce sounds, it is all about articulation. It is more about speaking a language and articulation. If articulation goes wrong, then the entire pronunciation goes wrong, and the listener will not be able to understand what the speaker is trying to say. For a better understanding of it, pronunciation is the way a word should be articulated. So if you have a different accent, that doesn't mean you are wrongly speaking a language. However, if you don't pronounce as the word should be pronounced then you are wrongly speaking a language (Whitney, 2020).

7. Native-like Accent Need for English language learners

Accent is a unique way of pronouncing a language, either by native or non-native speakers. English, a global language with a lot of speakers, has many distinct accents in many different regions and in many different social groups. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of accents of English, some of them are very popular and hegemonic for political, military, and economic reasons and the most important reason is that English is the native language of the USA and UK that are the superpower of the world. The most popular of these accents are Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). These two accents are well known and hegemonic and they almost control the policy of language learning and teaching around the world. They are treated as standard accents. It's just an accident of history that their speakers are the ones with power, while other native and non-native accents are little known or internationally stigmatized.

Although some accents have a higher value, no accent is linguistically superior. Linguistically all accents either native or non-native are similar or have the same value. Accents are not only a feature of English native speakers but are also a feature of English users worldwide. In all contexts, English accents are varied. Actually, English is spoken more broadly by non-native speakers. There is no single correct accent of English, there is no neutral accent of English. All English speakers ought to cope with several different aspects and learn how to comprehend them. Accents also carry social information about the speaker. They can reveal where the speaker is from, their social identity, whether the speaker is a native speaker or not. Just like Matsuda reports that Your accent holds the history of who you are – who first spoke to you, your nationality, where you

lived, the position of your class, the language you know: details of your past and culture are woven into your pronunciation" (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1329). So accent put the speaker in a particular group which may result in a speaker's advantage however it may result in a disadvantage. Accents are often associated with stereotypes and judgments about speakers. They may also evoke negative reactions from native listeners and result in discrimination in areas such as general employment, hiring of English teachers, or legal rights. Also, learners may regard their own accents as a source of stigma, which leads them to realize communication problems and lack of belonging (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

As learners of English language, you should ask yourself; do you learn English for the sake of communicating with native speakers only or to stay in native English countries? So why should bother a lot about learning native accents? As English language learners, your purpose should be to make yourself as clear as possible, make yourself clearly understood "comfortable intelligibility" and make sure that you speak English with the right pronunciation. You should also get rid of the misconception that English language is a superior language and is better taught by native speakers of English. There is also nothing such as the best accent. There are many types of English and accents: British, American, Australian, Indian, etc., none of these is wrong or not as important. The most important goal of language is communication and any of these accents can fulfil communication. You can have clear pronunciation which native speakers can easily understand and still, it can be heard with a foreign accent. Eventually, aiming for a native accent is acceptable, but it should not become an obsession that distracts you the main purpose which is to become proficient in English regardless of the variety you use. In terms of your own accent and mother tongue, you should always reveal your identity with pride, and never feel ashamed of them.

8. Conclusion

After what was described earlier in this report, it can be found that there is no need to concentrate on learning English a native-like accent. Since English language learners can be clearly understood, there is no issue in speaking in foreign accents of English, especially when the learners are not residing in English native countries and only using English in non-native countries. There might be a need for English language learners to learn and use a native accent of English if these learners plan to stay or work in English native countries. It becomes necessary to avoid job discrimination as foreign or regional accents sometimes put their users in a particular group which may result in a disadvantage. These accents are often associated with stereotypes and judgments about speakers. So to avoid such discrimination and disadvantage you can learn and use the English native accent of the country or the region where you are going to stay and work in. However, we should understand that the vast majority of English language learners and learning English to use in their own countries and to deal also mostly with non-native speakers of English. So there is no need to spend a lot of time in learning a native accent. Learners should aim to strive for fluency and accuracy so that they can be understood to anyone at any circumstances. Instead of wasting a lot of time and effort in first choosing one of the native accents then learning that accent, you can exploit your time in improving your language skills. Moreover, even native speakers have no problem in understanding any foreign accent but sure they will have a problem in understanding, for example, ungrammatical sentences or wrong pronunciations.

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