

*Does Euro-English have native speakers?
Making sense of conflicting views*

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Abstract

This paper examines the status of European English (EE) in current linguistic theory, in particular the hotly debated issue of whether or not it is possible to treat EE as an endonormative linguistic variety in its own right. Alternatively, EE may remain a form of English as a foreign language (EFL), and the decision has far-reaching socio-political consequences. Some relevant data from Polish English is discussed in this context. It is argued that there is no reason to re-analyse the observed deviations from English native standards as simplifications or innovations characteristic of a new language. The debate is shown to relate to the opposition between utilitarian and epistemic goals in foreign language teaching methodology, as exemplified by the dichotomy between competence and performance or between training for interaction and training of the faculties of the mind.

Keywords: European English, native standards, nativespeakerhood, well-formedness

Let us begin by considering a brief quote from Widdowson (1998): "How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States or anywhere else. . . . It is not a possession which they lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it" (pp. 244-245).

I find this quote puzzling. Undeniably, it is politically correct, and it does foretell the downfall of native speakers (NSs) as ultimate authorities on well-formedness and acceptability issues, since it eliminates the concept of stable norms deriving from native usage. However, it sends confusing signals with respect to the question of ownership. English is not a commodity that NSs can decide to keep or pass on, as the decision is not theirs to make in the first place. If one claims that NSs do not *own* their language, what should we make of the observation that “other people actually own it”? A language is not something to be owned. It is to be learned/acquired and to be used. This goes beyond a mere play on words. As with any learning, experience predicts that there will be better and worse users, more competent and less competent learners. Nature sees to it that the majority of competent users are found in the category of NSs. There is no need for NSs in the United States, or elsewhere in the world to apologize for the fact that they know English and that others are trying to learn it but consistently get parts of it wrong.

Nativespeakerhood is neither a curse nor a blessing and in traditional methodology second/foreign language learners (L2ers) will be assessed based on the match between their production and the native standards observed by the target communities. Nowadays there is growing pressure to accept deviations (innovations, simplifications) from native standards as norms in nonnative Englishes (cf. for example Seidlhofer’s [2006, p. 47] transdialectal enrichment, tolerance for diversity in Jenkins [2002] or the pluricentric approach advocated in Jenkins [2006, p. 35]). This tendency amounts to bestowing learners of English with norm-providing powers, or at least norm-developing powers, in the role of “secondary” or “second-order” NSs. In counter distinction to primary NSs, they are unlikely to serve as language models outside of their “cultural comfort zone” (e.g., their country of origin or speech community). Native users have a right to change their native language, to adopt it to their sociocultural needs or linguistic preferences, so that with time the changes become normative for a particular variety. Needless to say, prescriptive grammarians would vehemently disagree at this point. It also goes without saying that nonnative speakers (NNSs), while not equipped with a similar prerogative, adjust the language they use to the immediate contextual demands, negotiating the shortest effective route between their limited resources and the desired outcomes. Therefore, the question arises of what to do with persistent errors in the speech of an L2 community. I intend to address this issue in some detail below, with specific reference to Polish learners of English: Is the English spoken by Polish people in and from Poland a foreign language to them or do they use a regional variety of English, which may be referred to as Polish English?

The Status of Euro-English

For the discussion to make sense it is necessary to adopt a working definition of European English (henceforth also Euro-English or EE). To avoid certain methodological difficulties, I propose to specify first what Euro-English is *not*, through comparison to related concepts and then zoom in on the *criteria features* for its identification.

European English stands in opposition to and should not be confused with any of the following: native/Inner Circle English (ICE), International English (IE), English as a foreign language (EFL), or English as a lingua franca (ELF). Let us try to make sense of these concepts in terms of their relatedness to native English lexico-grammar and native standards of socio-pragmatic appropriateness.

For the purposes of this paper let us distinguish two broad categories of language users, depending on processing preferences. Category A includes users who do not need to consciously reflect on the formal aspects of how their language operates for successful communication to take place. Instead, they follow standards they have proceduralised and automatised during the acquisition process, unless they are determined (for various geopolitical and socio-cultural reasons, including status, prestige and the like) to oppose the intuitively available patterns and consciously apply prescriptive alternatives. The speech of these users may serve as a model for Category B users, both native and foreign. In this sense, category A is endonormative or norm-providing, this feature being clearly a prerogative of native communities, while category B is exonormative (here: norm-dependent or norm-developing), a commonly recognised trait of nonnative communities (cf. Kachru, 1985).

The distinction can be usefully applied to uniquely characterize the aforementioned five varieties of English and English-like systems (ICE, EE, IE, EFL, ELF), with an important proviso that the terms *exonormative* and *endonormative* are not mutually exclusive, in the sense of not constituting a binary *either-or* option. This is because the recognition of an exonormative or endonormative role of a linguistic system in a given population depends on the willingness of target users to acknowledge the hegemony of NSs AND, *independently*, on their willingness to obey NS norms. Native English, or more appropriately, Inner Circle Englishes constitute(s) a birthright. Native linguistic competence is restricted to NSs. This claim does not call into question the efforts of those L2ers who strive on a daily basis to attain native-like fluency and native-like levels of accuracy. As noted by Bley-Vroman as early as 1982, near-native competence in L2 learners, if at all possible, is rarely achievable via overt tuition, whereas the processes driving forward L1 acquisition remain beyond the grasp of average L2 learners. Native intuitions are the hallmark of

an endonormative and nonexonormative variety. The morpho-syntactic, semantic and phonological rudiments of our vernacular systems are acquired early and resist conscious inspection.

International English (IE) is Inner Circle English used for international communication, real-life English stripped of some of its features, including pragmatic features (cf. Holliday, 2005, pp. 8-9). The existence of IE depends on the recognition of native norms by a group of nonnative users and their willingness to employ these rules in speech production/comprehension in socially acceptable contexts. Consequently, IE is [-endonormative] and [+ exonormative].

The variety referred to as EFL belongs to the same category. The differences, most visible at the level of learner needs and learning outcomes, do not affect the exonormative and nonendonormative character of this linguistic variety. As frequently pointed out, for example, in Kecskesc (2008, p. 204), NNS/NNS communication abounds in transparent (nonidiosyncratic and easily processable) linguistic elements, without relying on socio-cultural background knowledge which varies from speaker to speaker. Unsurprisingly, however, this will be also true – albeit at a different level – of *any* kind of communication, including NNS/NS or even NS/NS. Getting your meaning across, manipulating others, and promoting the self (cf. Wray 2002, pp. 93-102) are the overriding goals of communication and every speaker will adjust the linguistic means at his disposal to the current situational demands.

The Englishes of the Outer Circle (cf. Kachru, 1982 for the Inner Circle/Outer Circle/Expanding Circle distinction in the analysis of the spread of English in the world) used to belong to the [-endonormative] and [-exonormative] category: Norm-providing users are recognized as having the right to act as models of correctness, whereas that right may be denied to Outer Circle (norm-developing) users. That linguistic status is changing rapidly, since English has been allowed to grow undisturbed in the Outer Circle, that is, the norm-providing privileges of these users have been recognised (cf. European Commission, 2011, p. 27; Seidlhofer & Jenkins, 2003, p. 141).

A term that has become fashionable recently is ELF. It is gradually replacing the concept of EFL. Traditionally, a lingua franca was an auxiliary language adopted as a contact language if the parties involved did not have an alternative means of communication (European Commission 2011, p. 5). This concept is compatible with ELF as a medium of communication in the world of academia and for CLIL purposes (cf. Ute Smith, 2010 for ELF in higher education, also Hoffman, 2000, p. 10).

This perception of ELF is clearly in conflict with the newly emerged concept of Lingua Franca English as a new creolized standard of international communication. To appreciate the change, it is enough to consider the recent observation by

the Council of Europe that the concept of ELF “dethrones” the NS and defines the goal of English learning as the ability to communicate successfully with other NNSs (cf. European Commission, 2011, p. 28; Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010). Walker’s book, in particular, is a major source which explores the idea of core phonetic features ensuring mutual intelligibility in international contexts (cf. also Jenkins, 2000 for the concept of a *lingua franca core*).

The new ELF is built around the mutilated native core, it is deprived of what Holliday (2005) calls ICE’s parochial features, as well as its lexical, grammatical and cultural idiosyncrasies. A *lingua franca* has no culture, no NSs, hence every user randomly enriches it with elements of their own culture and linguistic system (cf. the concept of *hybrid cultures* of ELF speakers in Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 12). Having no native monitoring system, ELF is neither endonormative nor exonormative: The standard rules that served as ELF’s input will be ignored or replaced with ad hoc configurations, frequently with a strong lexical (idiosyncratic) flavour, to suit the communicative needs of all parties involved. There is tension between external norms on the one hand and patterns of attested linguistic behaviour on the other. Formal grammatical coherence (or adherence to ICE norms) is not our concern at the moment. Given the instability of ELF, it is only natural to expect that ELF does not become a linguistic variety in its own right. Rather, as the research by Mollin (e.g., 2006) reveals, ELF is a functional extension of EFL, serving some of the less sophisticated communicative needs of its users.

This new polycentric perspective of the European Union (cf. European Commission, 2011, p. 28) affects the status of Euro-English as well. Successful use determines new boundaries of acceptability and, in the long run, of grammaticality. Euro-English turns endonormative, as the properties of the interlanguages of the learners (or, more adequately in this context, the properties of English evident in the target community) become the defining features of specific national varieties. At the same time it remains norm-dependent by acknowledging the existence of a common core that it shares with (and assumes from) English. It will have more and less advanced users, culminating in functional nativism (in the sense of Kachru, 2005), a politically correct concept which effectively puts an end to the tyranny of Inner Circle NSs, who no longer “know better.”

Euro-English is not a specific geopolitical instantiation of ELF. The latter flouts norms, or rather creates ad hoc patterns for immediate communicative purposes to adjust to the needs of conversational partners from various linguistic backgrounds. English as a *lingua franca* is the art of talking to anyone anywhere, with the sole goal of task completion. Euro-Engishes have a growing group of users, whose speech patterns overlap to a considerable degree. Are we, then, looking at one language (EE) with dialectal/regional variety or a

number of languages? Mollin's (2006) research argues against the concept of a single transnational phenomenon known as EE. The alternative, clearly open to investigation, is the existence of numerous national Englishes in Europe, instead of a single EE (for some inspiring discussion of pros and cons of the two options, cf. Prodromou, 2006). What matters for my immediate purposes is that on both the strong interpretation (single transnational variety) and the weak interpretation (regional varieties) the linguistic and socio-cultural habits of European users constitute a coherent, rule-based *communicative system in its own right*. It is this assumption that requires attention, since some serious methodological issues seem to be involved.

Jenkins (2006, p. 35) argued passionately that certain deviations from native norms in ELF users should be reinterpreted as signs of creativity, aimed at appropriating English by these users. Bamgbose (as cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 33) points out that unless such innovations are acknowledged "a non-native variety can never achieve any recognition." This is echoed by Alptekin's (2002) warnings against imposing native models in international contexts and appeals for developing teaching models based on local appropriation. Sarolta (2003, p. 59) predicted that English would become the primary language of the citizens of Europe, differing from ICE in structure and vocabulary due to the two legitimate processes of Europeanization and discursal nativization. In Seidlhofer (1999, p. 239) the reader finds "an exhortation to EFL teachers to assert nonnative norms and local values."

It is important to realize what is at stake before we can commit ourselves to endorsing the norm-providing powers of EE users. This is *not* an issue that can be solved by appealing to research results, unless the research takes the form of an interview, where European users of English are asked, more or less directly, whether or not they would like to be decreed to be NSs of a new variety of English, admittedly not a very brilliant idea in terms of research methodologies. The problem is not obtaining empirical data (samples of speech and written production from a sufficiently representative group of respondents). That is the easy part, even if technically challenging. European English has long been recognised as full of idiosyncrasies. The real difficulty lies in the interpretation of the data: At which point does an EFL sample qualify as an EE sample? Running the risk of getting "stuck in empty preaching and ideologizing" (Seidlhofer, 2006, p. 43), I still insist that statistical records do not decide whether an observed regularity is to be grudgingly accepted as an error or enthusiastically welcomed as an innovation. After all, interlanguage patterns have long been a focus of interest for EFL practitioners. Ever since the advent of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) the interference (negative transfer) from an L1 to an L2 has been recognized as the main factor responsible for observed difficulties in foreign language learning. Even

today, with the behaviourist foundations of the CAH discredited, analyses of linguistic corpora provide more and more data to illustrate the intuitively appealing claim that there are systematic differences as well as systematic correspondences between, say, Polish English and German English. However, this does not bring us any closer to the solution of the basic dilemma: Is EE endonormative or exonormative? How do we treat the deviations from ICE norms observed in the corpus data? Do we want the deviations to legitimize a new variety of English?

Let us take a look at an example. A Polish learner of English produces the sentence *Informations depend from the money which are involved* (all deviant forms listed in Swan and Smith, 2001, pp. 166-175, as typical mistakes). The lexical and morphosyntactic imperfections observed in that sentence are commonly associated with Polish learners of English as a foreign language. Do we encourage our learners to use *informations* as part of their active vocabulary? Perhaps we should go even further than that. If *informations* is part of a new Polish English standard, then maybe the “dethroned” *information* should be banned from this variety altogether?

Poles are known to say things like *I'd like to please you* in the sense of *I'd like to ask a favour of you*. What will happen if the new sense of the verb *please* is attested in statistically significant numbers? What if the new use surpasses the traditional use?

Obviously, common sense dictates that we should allow innovations only up to recoverability. For the two examples just quoted, this would mean that *informations* can be presented as a regular plural (as it would be *unproblematic* in Seidlhofer's sense of the word), while *please* must be discouraged, since it is highly confusing to most non-Polish users of English, just as much as it is confusing to Polish learners who proceduralised the “correct” usage. On the other hand, if Polish users of Polish English have been allowed a modicum of lexico-grammatical independence, why would one want to worry about bits and pieces of the new variety becoming opaque to non-Polish users? If Polish English is a language in its own right, then it is only natural to expect that speakers of other languages will find it difficult to understand. After all, languages are known to be mutually incomprehensible. A jocular Polish English expression *pay from the mountain* is perfectly transparent to Polish users and opaque to just about everybody else, because it is a literal translation of a Polish formula, functionally equivalent to *making an advance payment*. All that it takes now is to demonstrate that this expression is used, or at least understood, by Polish speakers in statistically significant numbers. The creation of new languages based on shared lexico-grammatical preferences is a significant step towards a new Tower of Babel.

It should also be borne in mind that defining recoverability with reference to international, or at least native-English standards, so that Polish Eng-

lish is free to go its own way and introduce new norms as long as the resulting strings can be processed with the intended meaning by non-Polish users (or perhaps native English users), is hardly a revolutionary move. In fact, it is a commonly recognized procedure in communicative language teaching in which one is to teach some form of simplified ICE variety but allow considerable leeway in students' own production.

The real question is therefore the following: Is there any linguistic evidence that the English of Polish L2ers is evolving towards a creolised norm-developing variety and gradually losing the status of a "mere" foreign language?

It is easy to think of properties defining native languages ranging from Hockett's design features to Chomsky's definition of I-language: systematicity, stable intuitions, complete proceduralisation, little awareness of the underlying grammatical regularities, natural focus on the content with unconstrained access to the relevant system resources, ample exposure and opportunity for use against the shared socio-cultural/pragmatic background. None of them apply to the English learned and practised in Poland by adult users.

Therefore, let us assume the following: For a linguistic variety X to achieve the endonormative status in a linguistic community Y there have to be users of X selecting it for the purposes of natural language communication, including, but not limited to, cases of X being a language of choice for communication among native users of Y. The endonormative status of Polish English would presuppose, therefore, that NSs of Polish switch to (some version of) English in spontaneous exchanges while communicating with other NSs of Polish. To the best of my knowledge, this does not happen.

The discussion inevitably takes a sharp turn at this point, and leads us all the way back to 1989 when Bley-Vroman published his ground-breaking paper on the fundamental differences between an L1 and an L2. The validity of that distinction can be (and has been) questioned on the grounds of its being insufficiently attuned to the communicative value of human languages, whether naturally acquired or learned in artificial contexts. Communicative language teaching (a philosophy rather than a particular, coherent approach) elevates communicative success to the status of an overriding criterion of linguistic efficiency but that efficiency is achieved with learners having access to imperfect system resources. That is so, because the communicative tradition focuses on the performative aspect of language use and the learner's satisfaction springs from the realisation of how much s/he can accomplish, with or without being formally accurate: a story of success despite limitations.

The EE philosophy removes the limitations. Surprisingly enough, a rationale for dispensing with a view of a foreign language as an imperfect rendition of some unattainable native standards may be sought in a specific but justi-

fiable use of the term *error*. An error is a deviation from a norm, that is to say, a violation of a guideline about what is typical enough to be used systematically. Interlanguages, at any point in their development, are rule-based and systematic, even though the rules do not necessarily reflect target language patterns and regularities. If this applies to interlanguages as much as to full-fledged regional varieties, then the birthright privilege of NSs no longer makes sense. And so, a form of language starts off as a faulty rendition of a foreign language but some of the faults gain recognition as defining features of a new standard.

Justifying the Methodological Conundrum

Let us see how this could work in practice. It has always been recognized that L1 influence is a major factor shaping interlanguage patterns. A reliable reference book (Swan & Smith, 2001) has a chapter on interference errors commonly observed in the production of Polish adult learners of English. Should these errors, perhaps, be treated as evidence of a systematic growth of a new linguistic variety?

To see what is at stake, please observe short extracts from a few texts produced as midterm requirements of course work at a Polish university (a B2+ reading course for Polish students at an early stage of a 3-year training programme to become teachers of English). The fragments selected contain the errors listed in Swan and Smith (2001) as characteristic of Polish users of English. The texts were verified and graded by native teachers of English with a working knowledge of Polish and in none of the cases was the clarity of the message called into question.

- (1) *Russia contained other nations, like Ukraine, Poland, and so on. While another mentioned countries were smaller because they were independent.*
- (2) *He couldn't understand this political problems, so he didn't formed full questions.*
- (3) *This legacy caused prejudice west habitants. People from the east of Vistula are different.*
- (4) *They lived in poor villages but they have been still a heroes.*

What are the features of the sample sentences above that make them distinct from standard English patterns? Clearly, the morphosyntax of a noun phrase deserves closer attention, since singular determiners *a/this/another*

may select plural heads, tense marking in negated constructions may optionally be marked both on the auxiliary and on the main verb (*couldn't understand* vs. *didn't formed*), and relexification is allowed (*prejudice west habitants*). These patterns (with the possible exception of relexification) are not a specifically Polish phenomenon; in all likelihood the nonstandard use of inflection (tenses, agreement within noun phrases) relates to the primacy of lexis (cf. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003; VanPatten, 2004) and little impact of functional markers on the interpretation of the message. In a nutshell, *he didn't formed another questions* and *he didn't ask other questions* have the same cognitive meaning (cf. the concept of interpretable and uninterpretable features in the sense of Chomsky, 1995). They do not reflect a specifically Polish grammar quirk that gets transferred into another language. They reflect a general cognitive trait at a certain level of learning: We attend to meaning before we are able to turn attentional resources to form. So, the fact that numerous Europeans, along with numerous non-Europeans, drop the third person -s in present tense verb forms shows a *transitory* stage in learning and as such it must be expected (as inevitable and natural) but should not be encouraged or accepted as correct (but cf. Seidlhofer, 2006, p. 47 for the opposite view). It is not a feature of a language; it is a sign of learning in progress. Let me make it absolutely clear at this point that I do not advocate that teachers should focus on inflectional paradigms. When English is taught as a foreign language, the priority of task completion and communicative success is indisputable and logic dictates that -s is a minor detail of execution. The learner reaches his or her goal, although grammar shortcomings are evident. But with EE and ELF the lack of -s gets redefined as a regular feature of a linguistic system. This seems antipedagogical, as it prevents a complete learning cycle from taking place.

Given these linguistic reservations, of which the proponents of EE/ELF models are certainly aware, there remains the question of why the development of new linguistic varieties is still an attractive alternative to treating the emerging Englishes as nonnative varieties.

A careful look at the available literature (Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2007; Mollin 2006; Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006, to mention just a few) indicates that the growth of new Englishes is encouraged and supported for a number of vital, if mostly extralinguistic, reasons. Some of the frequently mentioned considerations include (in no particular order): socio-political identity, cultural authenticity, learners' aspirations, NS tyranny, socio-psychological appropriateness, linguistic imperialism, autonomy of the learner, moral development, democracy, and teacher's prestige. Clearly, it is not within my competence to speak on all these issues with authority. But before I accept these reasons as sufficiently valid, I would like to see some empirical research carried out to indicate that Europeans

are better off being recognised as speakers of a regional variety of English, rather than continuing in their capacity as users of EFL. The recognition of quasinate national varieties is supposed to be rewarding for non-English speakers both sociolinguistically, “through the development of a local standard” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 35), and socio-psychologically, “through the capacity to express their users’ local identity” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 35). But do NNSs really need rewarding? Alleviating the alleged pain of being non-English by the unspeakable joy of becoming “differently English” seems like a cruel sociolinguistic prank.

To take a specific example mentioned by Jenkins (2006, pp. 33-34), it would be psychologically appropriate to tell a German learner of English, pronouncing /w/ as /v/ in initial syllables that this is a valid course of action to take and that this is perfectly within his or her rights to follow his phonetic intuitions here. I think I can understand the frustration that accompanies language learning. But perhaps we should rather take a leaf out of Byram’s book and help learners see the strength and autonomy that L2ers have by being native users of one language and culture *in addition to* being users (no matter how limited) of another language and culture. As pointedly argued in Byram (1997), native competence implies native convictions, cultural bias, patterns of behaviour and perception of the world. There is no reason why we should reasonably expect our learners to give up on aspects of their national and individual traits to become part of another *languaculture* (cf. Risager, 2006, pp. 110-113, where she attributes the term to Michael Agar). A speaker and a half is always better than a monolingual user. This is the area where we should praise our learners the most, for achieving a task in a socially acceptable manner, not by pretending to be part of that community but by demonstrating social skills required to adapt themselves to the new conditions, by being ready to reconcile otherness with their views, beliefs and preferences.

A NS of Polish with working knowledge of English is a more powerful communicator than a monolingual NS of English. There is no need for a Polish speaker of English to feel inferior or superior because his or her English has foreign (Polish) traits.

As a matter of fact, to acknowledge the right of certain countries from the Expanding Circle to set up norms of usage is the first step to eliminating EFL from the linguistic scene altogether, though it is difficult to imagine justification for doing that.

Euro-English and the Epistemic versus Utilitarian Opposition

I would like to suggest that the varying attitudes towards genetically nonnative regional Englishes (from downright rejection to enthusiastic ac-

ceptance) reflect a more basic underlying dichotomy that cuts across the field of language acquisition studies: the epistemic versus utilitarian tradition (cf. Byram, 2010). The views of the proponents of EE and its adversaries can be comprehended better when they are related to the epistemic/utilitarian opposition.

The epistemic tradition is about knowing and about training of the faculties of the mind: It favours the product view of grammar as a stable rule-governed system, effortlessly acquired and intuitively used (in this context cf. Batstone, 1994). The epistemic tradition is also nomothetic, as the authority of NSs springs from their knowing the system. The utilitarian approach is a mirror image of whatever the epistemic tradition stands for. It stresses the importance of doing, rather than knowing, of performance (social use of language) instead of competence: It adopts a dynamic view of grammar as process and communicative, goal-oriented behaviour in the classroom. Focus on form should be avoided, as irrelevant or detrimental for communicative purposes.

The endocentric (norm-providing) character of nonnative varieties is not so much about providing new norms for other nonnative users of English to follow. That would be tantamount to claiming that Polish English is a competing variety. Instead, the claim is more modest: Forms which are systematically produced are assumed to be grammatical. This is, paradoxically, an epistemic perception of acquisition. If an error is understood as a deviation from some norm, and (descriptive) norms are assumed to reflect stable usage, the inevitable conclusion suggests itself at this point: Interlanguage users, like NSs, are immune to errors, save slips of the tongue, lapses, and so on. This is not to say that interlanguages are comparable, grammar-wise, to native languages. *Do you be happy*, frequently heard in Polish classrooms, remains ungrammatical in standard ICE and an L2er who internalised that form deviates from IC norms. However, *Do you be happy* is grammatical with respect to the L2er's interlanguage norms and only with respect to these norms. This is the epistemic rationalisation of the move towards functional nativism.

Language teaching methods draw upon the insights from one or the other of these two traditions, and language use can be accounted for by referring to the utilitarian/epistemic dichotomy (e.g., the interplay between the lexico-grammatical and sociocultural aspects of formulaic competence). And now I would like to argue that the interpretation of linguistic behaviours yields the same polarity effects.

The focus of attention in the debate over EE is a functional NS, a person who is able to successfully accomplish a range of tasks that can be reasonably expected of her/him in the target language. This presupposes some epistemic foundations (knowledge of the system) and performance skills (a major utilitarian factor). The latter constitute the social dimension of language: conversa-

tional skills, going way beyond the richness of vocabulary resources or system clues at the disposal of the learner, and social skills, strategies and techniques that turn language users into actors. In fact, this reflects a major idea by Byram (2010): Discourse participants as *acteurs sociaux*, with skills to apply the knowledge to socially advantageous performance.

To my mind this is the only way to justify any nomothetic claims that “foreign-national” Englishes may have. Functional nativism is understood as the ability to handle natural discourse of reasonable complexity with a view to achieving the desired outcomes. The endocentric (norm-providing) character of nonnative varieties is not about providing new norms for other nonnative users of English to follow.

In short, functional nativism is a set of linguistic and sociocultural tools and procedures to prepare the user for the role of an *acteur social* in any language other than his/her native language. In this definition the word *language* is used twice, yet in two different senses. For the supporters of EE, language, in the best utilitarian fashion, is a framework for social interaction. The opponents of EE perceive language nomothetically as a formal system. That difference in perspective is crucial. Polish learners of English have little chance of becoming fluent, idiomatic speakers of ICE because that presupposes native-like control of the linguistic system. Given the epistemic point of view, this objective cannot be achieved. Hence, the opposition to the concept of new regional varieties of English can be said to have epistemic roots, as pragmatic efficiency is seen as a *consequence* of having a language and not a *defining feature* of it. On the other hand, the utilitarian preoccupation with social skills allows us to define a linguistic variety in terms of interaction, communicative effectiveness and cultural awareness. Under this interpretation the question of (genetic) nativespeakerhood does not even begin to arise because the overriding criterion remains that of functional competence.

Conclusion

Can the utilitarian and epistemic approaches ever be reconciled? There is every reason to believe that they will. The simplest middle-of-the-road solution is to set utilitarian goals with an epistemic mindset. The teaching of languages, at least in the foreseeable future, should be geared to meet the communicative needs of language users, helping them accomplish tasks and cope with linguistic, sociolinguistic and cultural challenges of natural discourse. The required social skills and growing lexico-grammatical resources should be the result of overt pedagogical intervention, as much as accidental learning resulting from primary linguistic data (i.e., exposure to language). To succeed, teachers should carefully distinguish between goal-oriented communicative tasks and awareness-raising

focus-on-form activities and introduce both to suit the needs of their learners. Since today's international discourse is predominantly of the NNS/NNS type, we need to expose learners to all varieties of English, teach tolerance and respect for socio-cultural and linguistic otherness. We should be very careful, however, about proposing such regional innovations for inclusion in the learners' active vocabulary or lexico-grammatical resources.

Perhaps that way we can ensure the required balance between the sociological, psychological and linguistic considerations, without sacrificing the twin concepts of a natural language and of a NS.

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