English 106-14

Unit 2 Project

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Should people learn Native-Speaker Pronunciation?

As the globalization of the world, English becomes the most useful language to help people communicate with each other. By this reason, English is changing faster and spreading widely than any other language (Rohde 1995). At this time, the education of English plays an important role to English learners. We can easily sort English learning as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. From these four things, speaking is the most significant part, because communication is the main reason that why people learn English. The speaking pronunciation is also realized by English learners, so in this paper, I will argue about the question of whether native-speaker pronunciation should be taught as a model in English courses in countries that are not English dominant?

Before I start my argument, the paper will give a background of the using of the English's change and the modification of the native-speaker and non-native speaker pronunciation. Then I'll show the research perspectives about Sung's article. Specifically, I will outline my own position on this issue, and argue that native-speaker pronunciation shouldn't be taught as model.

one of the most familiar ways of representing the global community of English `speakers is in terms of three circles, which was first mentioned in 1985. The three circles classify English learners as native speakers; English as second-language speakers, and English as the foreign-language speakers (Graddoll, 2006, p.110). Native speaker used to be the main part of the people who speak English. Actually, in this new world, More and more non-native speakers choose to learn English as their second language. In many years, ago people are more likely to set native-speakers pronunciation as the learning model, but now native speakers were regarded as the gold standard (Graddoll, 2006, p.114). According to linguists, the spread of English has given rise to interaction between foreign peoples (Rohde, 1995). As the English-speaking world becomes less formal, and more democratic, the myth of a standard language becomes more difficult to maintain." (Graddoll, 2006, p. 115).

In his small-scale study in Hong Kong, sung (2013) asked some questions to fifteen undergraduate students, which are non-native speakers of English, and are willing to improve their English pronunciation. According to the result of the research, sung found that although some of students would like to sound like a native-speakers, several students give another opinion that native-speaker pronunciation were not a good learning model for them. There was an interesting answer from students that although many students choose native-speakers pronunciation as an ideal achievement, they did choose native-speaker pronunciation as a learning model. Most of them thought that native-speaker accent is not intelligible for them, and native accent has its own culture that may let non-native speakers confused (Sung, 2013).

As an English non-native speaker, I found that I have the same thought as Sung's students that I won't choose native-speaker pronunciation as a model. I learnt English almost 12 years, since I was in primary school. I used to think the accent of my teachers is the standard of English, and I totally set native-speaker pronunciation as my learning goal. After I attached some American native shows which had the real native-speaker pronunciation, I found that it didn't sound like my teacher's accent. Another example from myself, when I first chat with my classmates from different countries, I found that I can't understand all the sentences from my American classmates. Their speaking speed is so fast so that they ignore many standard pronunciation, and they like to use slang that I don't know. On the not the hand, some classmates from non-native speaker pronunciation countries can communicate easier than native-speaker classmates. Native-speaker pronunciation was not intelligible as I thought. In the past, there were not so much people speaking and learning English, so the native-speakers are dominant English speakers. It's true that people should learn the native-speaker pronunciation to communicate easier with others. But in this world, the concept of the native-speaker pronunciation is not representing the most common world language any more. It just represents a kind pronunciation around a large number of pronunciations. In this paper, I will hold the position that native-speaker pronunciation should not be taught as a model in English courses in countries that are not English speaking dominant.

The first argument that I want to claim is: native-speaker pronunciation not means intelligible and normative so that it can't be the dominant English. So, we need to ask what is the dominant English? Some observers claim that the real issue about linguistic right and wrong is one of deciding who wields power and who doesn't (Finegan, 2005). In sung's study, a student mentioned that native speakers of English were not necessarily good models of pronunciation, such as some of them said that they don't quite understand what Harry Potter is talking about when they watched the movie, because he sounds too British (Sung, 2013). I remember that in the English class, my teacher Latanya Ptak let us to make an easy research that she played a video that included many kind of English pronunciation around world, and she wanted us to estimate whether this accent is intelligible; whether this accent is pleasing to listen to; whether you want to let this pronunciation as your learning model; The result was comic that after listening such many pronunciation, I found that American pronunciation and British pronunciation, the previous learning model of mine, were not the easy to understand all of the conversation. The native speaker speaks too fast, and they add many native languages that I never heard. Instead, some other pronunciations are more clearly and understandable. So, we can conclude that intelligible is a main standard to test the practicability of the language. As we all know that if a language can't let most of people to understand, why we need to learn and use it?

The second problem is that we can't ask everyone to be the same. Human always have a characteristic that they hope everyone be the same. That's why from primitive to modern, many country leaders launched wars to make the whole world integration. Different regions have different pronunciation behavior, such as the Indian English. The pronunciation of the Indian English is different from the native-speaker pronunciation. Although India had been a British colony many years, and English is used frequently in India, Indian English also sounds different like British English. They can't speak 'R' and 'Th' clearly in English. When they speak 'from' and 'this', these words will sound like 'flom' and 'dis'. The reason is that Indian people use their own Indian pronunciation ways to learn English. Indian English is not the native English, but it is still the largest area that is not English as the native language to use English. Because of the difference of the native language pronunciation, we must use our native language pronunciation habit to speak and learn English. There is an interesting sample from my life. When I was a little child, I used Chinese 'Pin Yin' to learn an English word, such as the word- 'restaurant'. In Chinese 'Pin Yin', I will write 'ruai si te ruang te' to help me read this word. The English class in my country, many English teachers also used this way to teach little children who didn't know the sound mark. I think the native pronunciation should not be the education target in those countries that are not the English as the first language, because the area distraction makes people can't speak totally like the native-speaker language.

The third important issue relate to the argument is the education of English speaking. Although many educators say that student need to learn native-speaker pronunciation so that they can speak English more professional, we are confused about how to make this claim come true. Most English learners more likely choose teacher to teach them rather than learning by themselves or some videos. Teachers give them the most directly way to attach English, so the teacher's pronunciation will affect student's pronunciation. How could we assure that the teacher's pronunciation is perfect as a native-speaker? A specific example of Graddoll's article (2006): in several Asian countries, the definition of the 'native speaker teachers' has been relaxed to include teachers from India and Singapore, which is not the English as the first language countries. This is not just because of the difficulty in obtaining sufficient numbers of native speakers, but represent a revaluation of the needs and aspirations of learners. We can obviously notice that not only the teacher's personal pronunciation is not like a native-speaker, but also the learner's demand is not the native- speaker pronunciation any more.

Nowadays, our world has a new need of the speaking English. The non-native speaker pronunciation is not suit for communicating with everyone. The pronunciation should help people communicate easily, and it also should simply learn. Some areas have unique speaking habit so that we can't ask them speaking like a native speaker. Also, the native-speaker pronunciation is not satisfactory as the education requirement. Different teacher's accent makes students accent different so that the English-speaking instruction is too difficult to be the same. From theses reason, we can summarize a simple conclusion that native-speaker pronunciation should not be taught as a model in English courses in countries that are not English dominant.

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