

# Should Native Speaker Norms be Taken into Account?: A Perspective in Teaching EIL

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## *Abstract*

Considering the global expansion of English as a means of international communication, the paradigm of English Language Teaching (ELT) has deliberately shifted towards teaching English as an International Language (EIL) as a new direction. The main issue is whether teachers in the EFL context like Indonesia and other countries in the expanding circle (based on Kachru's (1985) three concentric circle model) refer to standard native speaker norms or teaching EIL which has a sense of local identity in language use. Taking Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model as the point of departure, this article briefly reviews the concept of teaching EIL and put forwards some arguments why native speaker norms should be abandoned in language teaching particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings and which competence should be enhanced in the light of EIL. It is expected that EFL teachers will be aware of this issue so that they will no longer rely on native speaker norms in their teaching practice.

**Keywords:** *ELT, native speaker norms, English as an International Language, EFL, Communicative Competence*

## **A. Introduction**

Although the number of English users has rapidly increased in contexts where English serves as an international language (EIL), the norms of native-speaker are still popular in English Language Teaching (ELT) particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. As native-speaker norms are still taken into account in ELT, native speakers (NS) are considered as ideal teachers. Consequently, they dominate the ELT positions in EFL classrooms (Celik, 2006; Florence, 2012; Ozturk & Atay, 2010; Sifakis, 2014). Nonnative-speaker teachers (NNSTs) become second-class members in the ELT. This phenomenon is also influenced by students' perception that regards NNSTs as incompetent teachers. Further, some NNSTs have been discriminated in the ELT industry since NSSs are preferable in some EFL countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Korea and China (Holliday, 2008; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012). However, there is inadequate evidence of how ideal NSTs are in the EFL settings. In fact, some prior studies show that NNSTs are more qualified and appreciated in particular tasks in EFL classrooms (Ahn, 2011; Madrid & Canado, 2004; Schenck, 2013; Wang & Lin, 2013). Therefore, this paper argues that NNSTs should abandon native-speaker norms in ELT particularly in EFL settings since the goal of learning English is not only to achieve native-speaker competence, but also to express learners' local identity when it comes to communicate in international settings.

Before discussing whether the norms of NS should be referred in teaching EIL, this article will firstly delve into relevant theoretical and empirical accounts of EIL. Secondly, the article reviews Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model that is currently implemented in ELT and its relation to native-speaker norms. It then puts forward several arguments related to how the EIL context shifts the orientation of ELT in EFL settings based on the framework of Canale and Swain's (1980) four components of communicative competence. Finally, the article provides some pedagogical implications regarding the development of EIL competence in teaching practice particularly in EFL contexts.

## B. A Brief Review of Related Literature

### 1. English as an International Language

According to Ostler (2006), one of three main factors that explain the current status of English is population. Since English is internationally used as a means of communication, the number of people using it has significantly increased. In other words, non-native English speakers who currently outnumber native speakers will have the power to use, modify, and maintain it (Crystal, 2003). As Kachru's (1985; as cited in Jenkins, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010) three concentric circle model describes how English is spreading (i.e. inner circle where people use English as their native language (ENL); outer circle where English as their second language (ESL); and expanding circle where English as their foreign language (EFL)). It can be seen that while 375 million people each falls for both ENL and ESL, 750 million belongs to EFL speakers (Crystal, 1997). There are therefore three times more nonnative speakers (NNSs) in total than the number of NSs.

From the above explanation, it can be highlighted that the growing number of NNSs of English and the position of English around the globe indicate how the ownership of English has been internationalised and indigenised depending on where the speakers are originally from. Even though the term of EIL has come with other interchangeably specific terms such as English as a lingua franca (ELF) (e.g. Gnutzmann, 2000), English as a global language (e.g. Crystal, 1997), and World Englishes (WEs) (e.g. Bolton, 2004; Brutt-Griffler, 2002), they are strongly related to each other. Needless to say, these additional terms to English signal different features from the concept of default English influenced by the conventions of their users (Seidlhofer, 2004). According to Bolton (2004), EIL serves as kinds of local Englishes where the speakers are not English natives. EIL is also defined as an international communication tool across the globes. However, this does not mean English resembles to all variety of Englishes (Jenkins, 2006). Rather, every English speaker from across the countries of Kachru's three concentric circles should recognise the variety of English when it comes to international communication. Further, different norms and expectations may apply as the speakers come from different places of origin and cultures.

### 2. Communicative Competence and Native-Speaker Norms

Considering the shift toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a new approach in the ELT, teachers should set their teaching methods and goals in order to meet students' communicative competences. The notion of communicative competence was firstly introduced by Hymes and recontextualised by Canale and Swain in the 1980s in order to provide a conceptual base in the ELT including second/foreign language curriculum and pedagogy. Canale and Swain (1980, cited in Brown, 2000) mention that the communicative competence approach consists of four aspects of competence: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. This framework addresses social, discourse, and interaction aspects in the ELT. While there are some other different interpretations of this concept among scholars such as Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) with their more detailed model of communicative competence, Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework has significantly influenced second and foreign language acquisition until now. Due to the simplicity and practicality of Canale and Swain's model, many SLA linguists and practitioners still use it as a framework to develop teacher education handbooks and teaching materials (Bagaric, 2007).

As a new direction in the ELT, the communicative competence approach has been implemented in ESL and EFL contexts. Curriculums or syllabuses have been designed and developed based on the framework of communicative competence. There are some components of communicative competence that are considered in designing communicative syllabuses: purposes, roles, settings, and events (Yalden, 1983 as cited in Leung, 2005). For instance, the main purpose of communicative competence is to allow learners to acquire a

target language (L2) by engaging them to use the L2 in a meaningful context. In the ELT process, this can be done by providing them with authentic tasks. Later, it is expected that they can use the L2 in such a native-like way in specified settings. This goal can be achieved successfully in the ESL contexts because the communicative competence approach is designed to work effectively in English speaking environments. However, when applying the communicative competence approach (especially related to discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competences) in the EFL contexts, it may not be practical in the ELT process particularly if language pedagogy still refers to the concept of native-speaker norms (Leung, 2005). Further, teachers may overcome some other issues regarding what English will be taught as norms for language teaching process. Therefore, NNSTs should not be drifted by native-speaker norms in the ELT and figure out how to design instructional materials in the field of EIL.

### **C. The Shift of Communicative Competence in EIL Contexts**

In the light of teaching EIL, the current status of English may raise some issues particularly when it comes to what kind of English should be taught and how to teach it in EFL classrooms. Moreover, NNSTs still consider native-speaker norms as a teaching framework and are lacks of confidence of what they are capable of doing in their teaching practice. What follows is a brief review of how the EIL context has shifted the focus of ELT particularly in EFL classrooms based on four components of Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model.

The first aspect of communicative competence is grammatical competence. Grammatical competence involves the mastery of vocabulary knowledge, grammar (e.g. morphology and syntax), and pronunciation (e.g. phonology). This competence allows L2 learners to understand and use utterances both in spoken and written language. For instance, in terms of pronunciation, NNSTs in EFL classrooms really pay attention to improve learners' pronunciation to be native-like accents as one of the outcomes of stereotyping native-speaker pronunciation standards. This phenomenon further affects learners' motivation and language achievement (McKenzie, 2008). In addition, according to Timmis (2002) and Sifakis (2014), many EFL learners and NNSTs prefer to have native-speaker accents, which are highly considered as a standard to achieve when they speak. In fact, both of them find it difficult to recognise these native-speaker accents (Rivers, 2011). This difficulty might be due to their first language (L1) interference and their lack of exposure to L2 (Iverson & Evans, 2007). To achieve native-speaker pronunciation standards, NNSTs implement different methods of teaching (e.g. using computer-assisted pronunciation exercises) to expose their students with native speaker input. Unfortunately, due to their incapability in applying teaching techniques for pronunciation, some NNSTs even avoid teaching pronunciation in the classrooms (Derwing & Munro, 2009).

By contrast, in the context of EIL, the emphasis of teaching pronunciation is no longer to achieve the standard of native-speaker accents. Rather, it deals with increasing comprehensibility among NNSs (Jenkins, 2006; Levis, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2004). In other words, the focus is not the degree to which particular speech sounds different from standards or norms of native-speaker pronunciation, but how NNSs improve their pronunciation in order to make their listeners understand of what they are trying to say. In brief, NNSTs should not set their teaching pronunciation target to get rid of their EFL learners' accents, but to achieve articulateness in communication in international settings.

The next component of communicative competence in ELT is discourse competence. This component deals with the process of forms and meanings to be connected to each other to produce meaningful text unity (i.e. related to cohesion in form combined with coherence in meaning). While cohesion is attained by using particular cohesive devices such as conjunctions, parallel structures, synonyms, and pronouns, coherence is achieved by putting relevant ideas in order to build up related logical sentences or utterances in texts. Specifically, in written texts, discourse competence covers the relationship among sentences whereas in spoken texts, it refers

to language production that meets interlocutors' comprehension. In other words, both in written and spoken texts, discourse competence is really important not only to understand the unity of a text, but also to view how logic and rhetoric are structured in particular texts.

Regarding teaching techniques to improve learners' discourse competence in EFL classrooms, NNSTs often do not combine these two elements simultaneously in teaching practice. Rather, they usually focus on either forms or meaning in particular text. Consequently, learners end up with being stigmatised by grammatically appropriate without focusing on unnatural sentence wording or collocations (Jaroszek, 2008). L2 discourse is not limited to interactional acts only. Indeed, its forms and meaning may go beyond interactional frame of communication. Further, when it comes to discuss English logic and rhetoric (proposed in Kaplan's 1966 work) in texts, for instance, NNSTs only point out how NSs approach and develop a paragraph in a linear pattern – deductively or inductively. In the case of EIL, teachers should expose learners with both English and their first language's logic and rhetoric. It is expected that learners realise that every language speaker establishes a particular world view including their own language's logic and rhetoric bound with their own culture. Therefore, they can use and comprehend their first language's logic and rhetoric as well as other languages' logic and rhetoric so that they can adapt themselves how to communicate in different settings.

The third component is sociolinguistic competence. This competence refers to the appropriateness of language use in a variety of social settings depending on interlocutors and interactional rules. Particularly, this also includes cultural values and other sociocultural conventions in terms of interlocutors' sex, social status, age, and other aspects affecting registers of speech (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). In the EFL contexts, learners' sociolinguistic competence is difficult to be developed since they are not only lack of knowledge of actual language use, but also NNSTs concentrate specifically on NSs social contexts. In fact, what learners really need in the field of EIL is to be able to communicate in a wide range of social contexts where there will not always include NSs (Sharifian, 2009). Particularly, teachers have to have a commitment to develop learners' cross-sociocultural competence. Teachers should present not only the sociolinguistic aspects of the L2 and L1 simultaneously in their teaching practice, but also introduce learners with sociocultural diversities in multilingual societies. Hence, learners have adequate ability to adapt themselves to fit in international social contexts.

The last component is strategic competence. Strategic competence is quite central to communication. It is about how to overcome communication breakdowns verbally and non-verbally while enhancing the effectiveness of communication through a variety of strategies such as tolerating ambiguity, contextual guessing, and activating background knowledge. While the development of strategic competence in EFL contexts just focuses on how learners to communicate successfully with NSs, in the EIL settings, teachers should provide learners with knowledge of a greater variety of unknown and unshared expectations of language use and behavior in international settings such as in international conferences or business meetings.

Having discussed how ELT has shifted to teaching of EIL based on four components of Canale and Swain's communicative competence model, it suggests that teaching EIL may be more regular and simple in terms of linguistic structures and socio-culturally unbiased in the interactional frame. What is more important is that how intelligibility is achieved in communication or to get across the meaning during communication among interlocutors without considering native speaker norms that can hinder an effective communication.

#### **D. Pedagogical Implications**

Given that the application of EIL is diverse in multilingual societies, it results in modifying communicative competence model that has already existed and is generally used in ELT in EFL classrooms in order to fit into effective communication in international settings. Accordingly, English is no longer a compulsory subject that should be taught in the EFL countries with little or no effect on sociopolitical status or communicative function in society (Tarnopolsky, 2008). Rather, English learners are given some experience and trained to be

speakers of EIL and use English as a means to interact with people from different cultures around the globe. Of course, NNSTs are the ones who will be responsible for guiding this process. To achieve this goal, teachers need to define and develop EIL competence.

According to Nunn (2007a, 2007b), EIL competence or ‘international view of communicative competence’ is not a simplified competence. Rather, it contains broader frameworks of existing communicative competence even though linguistic competence is an important element for both concepts. Further, Nunn (2007a, 2007b) classifies five aspects of EIL competence: 1) multiglossic (i.e. interlocutors’ sensitivity to various identities and their skills to communicate their own identity intelligibly); 2) strategic 3) linguistics (i.e. local communities linguistic competence in at least one variety of English); 4. pragmatic/discourse (i.e. interlocutors’ ability to adapt with different contexts); and 5) intercultural (i.e. interlocutors’ ability to anticipate unknown multicultural situations. These five aspects of EIL competence have to be implemented simultaneously when the language is produced in international settings. To sum up, competence is possessed by its users only and assessed within particular speech communities where the language is used. In other words, there is no one single global standard can fit all language users in particular communities. As long as language users can negotiate norms to successfully communicate among different communities, they can be considered as competent users.

Having defined and developed the aspects of EIL competence, teachers should enhance learners’ skills to gain EIL competence addressed in their teaching practice. Nunn (2011) mentions three enabling skills that should be developed through teaching and learning process under the EIL context. Firstly, learners’ adaptation and transferability should be enhanced through ELT. While the ability to adapt, tolerate, and open to different situations may help to develop learners’ adaptability skills, transferability can be improved when the knowledge gained from unknown contexts are understood, used, and developed by learners. Secondly, learners need to compensate the knowledge of intercultural they have and incorporate it with the knowledge of other cultures in a given context. Lastly, learners should improve their intelligibility skill so that they can engage their audience in meaningful communication. In brief, once teachers can effectively address these enabling skills in ELT, it may scaffold learners to participate in multicultural communities.

## E. Conclusion

Within the framework of EIL, the existing communicative competence model may not be practical in the ELT process in EFL settings if the concept of native-speaker norms is still used. Since there is no meaningful context that supports the acquisition process of the L2, EFL learners may find it difficult to use the L2 like native speakers typically say and do. Therefore, there is a need of modifying the existing communicative competence model to fit into the current status of English as a means to communicate within multicultural societies.

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