The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality

The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality

江苏工业学院图书馆 藏书章

Preface

I grew up in South Wales in what had once been a Norman town and long before that a Roman settlement. Like so many of the world's habitations it had never been completely taken over, always the place of walls, built by the conqueror and inhabited by those the conqueror left behind, never fully native and, as such, always a place attracting anger and envy, contempt as well as imitation. Such places can lose out entirely to the locals who come to settle, first around and then within. But some, it is surprising how many, remain still as symbols and traditions of the faded past they once had. Dublin is still to some extent an Imperial city, Vienna still the centre of the Hapsburg empire and in Granada the Moorish past remains.

My South Wales had been part of what in Ireland was called the Pale. It included most of Southern Glamorgan and southern Pembroke and had been settled by Normans, later by Flemings and Hugenots and always by English speakers. The place names from Milford Haven through Gower to Newport still show this and the local language has always been English. These English speakers lived in the fertile vales and later in the industrial valleys. Above them on the hills and in the mountains were the old

Britons, the Welsh speakers.

Over time the Welsh learnt English, very rarely the other way round. The Welsh and English speaking groups intermarried and Welsh declined as all languages have in the path of a juggernaut like English. It is sometimes claimed that this was deliberate, a policy of language genocide or linguicism (Skutnab Kangas & Phillipson, 1994). But there is another view. In schools where Welsh was marginalized in favour of English, it is possible to interpret this promotion of English as a way of providing access for the minority children to the majority culture, language and society. The argument would have been that since these children already had Welsh what they needed was exposure to English, and the only setting for that was, in Welsh-speaking areas, the classroom. It is, of course, the same argument that is everywhere used in the English, French (and so on) medium schools, the argument too that is used in support of language immersion schemes in Canada and elsewhere. True there is

criticism of such policies on the grounds of the restriction on personal and cognitive development which, it is argued, may well need the channel of the first language for full development. But even if such arguments about cognitive development through the first language are correct, they were not in vogue in the 19th century when Welsh children were first being taught entirely through the medium of English.

The native English of the non-Welsh-speaking South Walians was a stigmatised variety, stigmatised by themselves as much as by others. They were not Welsh speakers (therefore di-Cymraeg) neither were they speakers of a prestige English. This led some to hyper-correct in English and others to attempt to learn Welsh as a second language. In both cases,

what was at issue was a feeling of uneasy identity.

In my own case, as a non-Welsh-speaking South Walian, after many years living outside Wales, I decided when already in my forties that I had to test my Welshness by learning Welsh. Over the years I had made some desultory attempts and, of course, when I was at school, in Wales we had Welsh language lessons on the timetable every day: Welsh taught as if a foreign language. My mother was a Welsh speaker but since my father did not speak Welsh, the language of our home had always been English. But that is itself too glib an explanation. Even if he had been a Welsh speaker, I guess that we would still have made English our home language since English for my parents' generation (whether Welsh speakers or not) represented modernity, openness, new ideas and emancipation. Welsh for them was marked for the tightness of the closed communities of the valleys and the isolated farms, the chapel and the past.

So in the mid-1970s I spent a summer in Aberystwyth where I found that learning Welsh in the right context and with the right mental set was easy and quick. In 12 weeks I had gone far beyond all those years of primary and secondary school Welsh classes where like most of my classmates I had found Welsh boring and old-fashioned. Welsh has not stuck. Easy come, easy go, last in first out. Buf that doesn't matter because I now have the satisfaction of having learnt it easily and the knowledge that I could do so again. Proof of Welshness? Perhaps. More important for our present purposes is the appeal to the common human experience of feeling and asserting identity through language. We all want to belong, we all want to be native speakers, we all choose groups to which we aspire even though we may change our minds and leave, as I left, quite promptly, my adult Welsh-speaking group because I found its nationalism and exclusiveness oppressive and proselytising.

As a proselyte I was expected to choose my identity. I had always vaguely assumed that, like masks, identities could be added on. It seemed

possible in the USA to be black and American, so why not Welsh and British (even indeed Welsh and English)? But among the teachers and learners of Welsh as a second language such dual identity was not acceptable to those who were gryf yn yr achos (strong in the cause). You had to be either Welsh or English, either Welsh or British. Not both. Such a choice I found meaningless. My wife was English, our children had never lived in Wales. It was of course a no-win situation since for those activists among whom I had learnt my Welsh my refusal to choose was in itself a choice, a choice against Welsh. If to be Welsh meant making such a choice then I decided that was a Welsh identity I did not wish to have. Was that what being a native speaker of Welsh really meant?

The native speaker is for a start one who can lay claim to being a speaker of a language by virtue of place or country of birth. But birth place alone as a defining characteristic seems too restricting since children can be moved very quickly after birth from one country to another. We need to add the notion of adoption as an alternative; the definition then becomes: by place or country of birth or adoption. There is the further sense of ascription — a person does not choose to be, can't help being a native speaker.

The cognate of native is naif (both through Old French) meaning natural, with the sense of not being able to help it. Together they comfortably cover the sociolinguistic (country of birth or adoption) and the psycholinguistic (not being able to help oneself) attributes of the native speaker. But the native and the natural can be in conflict when one wishes to change identity, to adopt a new group, because what one then has to demonstrate both to the old and the new groups is that the natural and the naïf are in harmony, that as well as consciously adopting the new group, at the same time one can't help it, that the adoption is without apparent effort.

What I try to show in this book is that being a native speaker is only partly about naïve naturalness, that is about not being able to help what you are. It is also, and in my view more importantly, about groups and identity: the point is that while we do not choose where we come from we do have some measure of choice of where we go to. Difficult as it is, we can change identities (even the most basic ethnicity, that of gender), we can join new groups.

In my years teaching English, first (and briefly as a mother tongue), then as a foreign language and then the long period teaching applied linguistics in Edinburgh, I have always been interested in the social aspects of language learning and language use. In my teaching of sociolinguistics I have increasingly found the native speaker to be a kind of icon to which

discussions about language teaching and learning return. The native-speaker concept appears to be both the process and the product to which we appeal. Process because native-speaker-like behaviours are used in the preparation and investigations of learners, product because it is the native-speaker criterion that is appealed to as a measure of success in learning, teaching and research. As such it is useful but it is also useless in that by being both process and product it provides only its own circular definition.

I have found myself speculating that the native speaker is like the healthy person in medicine (or indeed any such state of assumed perfection) where the only definition seems to be negative, a lack of malfunction: thus the native speaker would be someone who is not a learner (etc.) rather than someone who is something positive. Why is it that such an apparently fundamental idea should be so elusive? Why is it that as a notion it appears to have come into prominence so recently? When was the first use of the term? I cannot find anything earlier than Bloomfield's Language (1933).

Hence this book. What it turns out to be is a kind of introduction to aspects of sociolinguistics using the concept of the native speaker as a focal point. No harm in that, since what I think I manage to do (certainly what I have tried to do) is to tackle some of the recurring issues and problems as they may appear to a beginner interested in applied linguistics. I hope that readers will also see the book in this way. Not for any answers it may have, not even for catching up with the native speaker, but for the issues it addresses and the questions it asks.

The book is dedicated to the memory of my father, a very Welsh (non-Welsh-speaking) Welshman. I want to thank Mary Ann Julian for patient critiques of successive drafts as well as well as for helping me understand why the native and the naīf do not have to be in conflict. I would also like to mention the encouragement I had in completing the book from Terry Quinn, Tim McNamara, Cathie Elder and other friends in Australia as well as the detailed comments by a number of anonymous reviewers. I have tried to take both the encouragements and the critiques into account in revising my manuscript.

Preface to Second Edition

The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics was published in 1991. Ten years later the topic continues to excite and to tantalise. In at least two areas, that of second language acquisition research and post-colonialism, interest in the topic has grown, showing the robustness of the concept as both

myth and reality. For this edition I have made small adjustments to the original text. The main changes are the title which takes account of this double role of native speaker, and the addition of two new chapters: one (Chapter 8) on the challenge to the native speaker by World Englishes, post-modernism and post-colonialism; and the other on the connection between second language acquisition research (SLA research) and assessment (Chapter 9).

My thanks to Mike Grover of Multilingual Matters for recognising the need for this update and for his patience in waiting for it, to John Maher for his insightful comments, to my four children Ben, Sara, Megan and Hester for their love and confidence and to my students in Edinburgh, Melbourne and elsewhere for allowing me to pursue the snark.

I dedicate this volume to the memory of my Welsh parents, my mother, Anne Jane Lewis, a native speaker of Welsh (Cymraes Cymreig) and my father. Wiliam Irfonwy Davies, a native speaker of English (Cymro di-Cymreig). The mismatch of their given names reveals the ambiguity of the Welsh English identity.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Linguistics should acknowledge once and for all that its true object of study is people, the human individual and the human group, Native Speaker and his namesakes. (Yngve, 1981: 43)

The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistics makes constant appeal to the concept of the native speaker. This appeal is necessary because of the need applied linguistics has for models, norms and goals, whether the concern is with teaching or testing a first, second or foreign language, with the treatment of a language pathology, with stylistic discourse and rhetorical analysis or with some other deliberate language use. But when we look for a definition of the native speaker which will act as an applied linguistic benchmark, the concept slips away and we wonder whether after all Lewis Carroll's snark is only a boojum.

The concept of a native speaker seems clear enough, doesn't it? It is surely a common sense idea, referring to people who have a special control over a language, insider knowledge about 'their' language. They are the models we appeal to for the 'truth' about the language, they know what the language is ('Yes, you can say that') and what the language isn't ('No, that's not English, Japanese, Swahili ...'). They are the stakeholders of the language, they control its maintenance and shape its direction. A language without native speakers, whether a dying language (for example Australian aboriginal languages, Celtic languages), the language of an isolated group (for example immigrant communities several generations old) or an artificial language (for example Esperanto), such languages we say are non-viable precisely because they lack sufficient native speakers. But just how special is the native speaker?

This common-sense view is important and has practical implications, as I show later, but the common-sense view alone is inadequate and needs the support and explanation given by a thorough theoretical discussion. Such a thorough theoretical discussion is lacking. True, there are the various

1

Introduction

comments made by well-known linguists and it is with these that I want to begin. These comments are all helpful but they are also quite partial and do not make sense of the complexity of the native speaker. That complexity is what this book is about. It is written with the interests and background of post-experience graduate students in applied linguistics particularly in mind and it is hoped that undergraduate students following courses in sociolinguistics and language teachers in training may also find the discussion of value.

Referring to the Native Speaker

The need for such an extended discussion of the native speaker is explained by Ferguson's comment: 'Linguists ... have long given a special place to the native speaker as the only true and reliable source of language data' (Ferguson, 1983: vii). The argument I present explores and agrees with the view Ferguson puts forward:

much of the world's verbal communication takes place by means of languages which are not the users' mother tongue, but their second, third or nth language, acquired one way or another and used when appropriate. This kind of language use merits the attention of linguists as much as do the more traditional objects of their research. (ibid.)

I do, however, put a query against Ferguson's eventual conclusion: 'In fact the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should preferably be quietly dropped from the linguist's set of professional myths about language' (ibid.). As my discussion shows there is no doubt about the myth-like properties of the native-speaker idea. The question remains, however, of whether it is also a reality. I attempt to answer that question.

Theoretically, as we shall see, the native-speaker concept is rich in ambiguity. It raises, quite centrally, the issue of the relation between the particular and the universal. Chomsky, as a protagonist of the universalist position, conveys to Paikeday's questioning approach about the status of the native speaker (Paikeday, 1985) the strongest possible sense of the genetic determinants of speech acquisition which, as he sees it, must mean that to be human is to be a native speaker.

What Chomsky does is to equate language development with other normal development, finding no interest in questions about developmental states or stages which he regards as contingent and essentially of no theoretical interest. In the same vein Chomsky finds distinctions between synchronic states of language or languages and dialects uninteresting, 'the question of what are the "languages" or "dialects" attained, and what

is the difference between "native" and "non-native" is just pointless' (Chomsky quoted in Paikeday, 1985: 57). Chomsky's whole argument depends on a rationalist opposition to 'incorrect metaphysical assumptions: in particular the assumption that among the things in the world there are languages or dialects, and that individuals come to acquire them' (p. 49).

And so Chomsky must conclude that 'everyone is a Native Speaker of the particular language states that the person has "grown" in his/her mind/brain. In the real world, that is all there is to say (p. 58). This is a major thread in the range of views on the native speaker and we return to it later. Chomsky's view is uninfluenced by any social factor or contextual constraint. Variety and context, he seems to argue, are trivial. This is a thoroughgoing unitary competence view of language in which language use is contingent and the native speaker is only a realisation of that competence at a linguistic and not a language level. For Chomsky, like many theoretical linguists, is not interested in languages: what he studies is language.

For our present purpose, however, we note that Chomsky does bring to our attention the real individual, living, as he says, in the real world, whose speech repertoire is multiple. His view may take no account of social or sociolinguistic analysis or parameters but he is not unaware that the real word consists of complex variation.

Next, two comments on the importance of the mother tongue in education. (We turn shortly to the vexed issued of terminology.) The British/Australian linguist, Michael Halliday, does not use the term native speaker; however what he says about the mother tongue is very relevant. He comments:

Opinions differ regarding the uniqueness of the mother tongue for very many people ... no language ever completely re-places the mother tongue. Certain kinds of ability seem to be particularly difficult to acquire in a second language. Among these, the following are perhaps most important in an educational context:

- (1) saying the same thing in different ways,
- (2) hesitating, and saying nothing very much
- (3) predicting what the other person is going to say
- (4) adding new verbal skills (learning new words and new meanings) when talking and listening.

It is not being suggested that we can never learn to do these things in a second language ... Nevertheless, there are vast numbers of children being educated through the medium of a second language, and of teachers trying to teach them, who have not mastered these essential abilities. (Halliday 1978: 199–200)

The position taken up in this book is generally sympathetic to Halliday's conclusion that it is possible but difficult for an adult second language learner to become a native speaker of the target language. The issue of disadvantage, which Halliday raises in connection with education in a second language, is taken up in Chapters 5 and 7. To what extent educational disadvantage can be attributed to not being a native speaker is debatable, especially since a similar argument of lacking adequate language resources is made for certain groups of native speakers who, it has been claimed (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966), suffer from a language deficit. For our discussion in this book, this raises acutely the question of what it is one is supposed to be a native speaker of.

A contrary view to Halliday's is given by the American linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, author of Language (1933) and a student in the anthropological tradition of early 20th century American linguistics of American Indian languages. Like Halliday, Bloomfield does not use the term native speaker but writes instead of 'the native language'.

The child growing up in the province, say, in some mountain village, learns to speak in the local dialect. In time, to be sure, this local dialect will take in more and more forms from the standard language ... The child, then, does not speak the standard language as his native tongue. It is only after he reaches school, long after his speech-habits are formed, that he is taught the standard language. No language is like the native language that one learned at one's mother's knee; no-one is ever perfectly sure in a language afterwards acquired. 'Mistakes' in language are simply dialect forms carried into the standard language'. (Bloomfield, 1927: 151)

Bloomfield is less accommodating than Halliday. In his view second language learners of target languages do not become native speakers of those languages. Native speakers need to get started at their mother's knee. We should note that Bloomfield does not comment here on the simultaneous acquisition of two languages at the mother's/father's knee.

In another context Bloomfield does refer to the native speaker: The first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language' (Bloomfield, 1933: 43). Here, he makes the obvious point that children learn to speak as they learn to do everything else, by observation and participation and interaction with the people around them.

Katz and Fodor (1962: 218), later American linguists, less interested in descriptions than Bloomfield and more concerned with the relation between language and the mind, opined: The goal of a theory of a particular language must be the explication of the abilities and skills involved in the linguistic performance of a fluent native speaker'.

In this way the native speaker becomes central to the interests and concerns of linguistics, with the native speaker being the relevant example of natural phenomena for scientific study. Noam Chomsky (1965: 24) refers to the native speaker as being both the arbiter of a grammar and (when idealised) as somehow being the model for the grammar: 'A grammar is ... descriptively adequate to the extent that it correctly describes the intrinsic competence of the idealised native speaker'.

Chomsky thereby neatly compounds one of the central ambiguities of the native-speaker idea, using it to refer to both a person and ideal. Or, as Coulmas (1981: 10) states: 'The native speaker leads a double life in Chomsky's work, (1) as a creature of flesh and blood, that is the linguist himself, (2) an idealisation'.

Richards et al. in their Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (1985) and Crystal in his Dictionary of Linguistics (1997) emphasise the importance of intuition in defining the native speaker, Crystal helpfully pointing to the need to take account of bilinguals who are native speakers of more than one language. This relation between bilingualism and the native speaker is a major topic in Chapter 5.

Mary Tay's contribution to the discussion is original in that she comments on the status of the native speaker in relation to the so-called New Englishes, that is the English of Singapore, India and so on. She refers to the lack of clarity of most definitions and notes that the two factors usually appealed to are first, priority of learning and second, an unbroken oral tradition. She comments that both are unsafe criteria; the first because of bilingualism, the second because an adult may have shifted dominance from one first language to another or because a second learned language may have had as much influence on a first learned as the other way around. Tay therefore proposes that a native speaker of English who is not from one of the traditionally native-speaking countries (for example the United States, the United Kingdom) is:

one who learns English in childhood and continues to use it as his dominant language and has reached a certain level of fluency. All three conditions are important. If a person learns English late in life, he is unlikely to attain native fluency in it; if he learns it as a child, but does not use it as his dominant language in adult life, his native

fluency in the language is also questionable; if he is fluent in the language, he is more likely one who has learned it as a child (not necessarily before the age of formal education but soon after that) and has continued to use it as his dominant language. (Tay, 1982: 67–8)

What these views indicate is the accuracy of Coulmas' statement that a tension exists between the flesh and blood and the idealisation definitions. I shall argue that in applied linguistics both definitions are necessary and that there is no necessary contradiction between them. This book sets out to examine the native-speaker concept from various points of view and attempts to develop more precise criteria for its definition. In particular the book considers the relevant question of the relation between being a native speaker and being a second language learner, raising the question of whether the latter can become the former.

The Practical Importance of the Native Speaker

The practical importance of the term is emphasised by Paikeday (1985), who points to the employment discrimination against those who lack the 'ideal' native-peaker attributes: 'native speakership should not be used as a criterion for excluding certain categories of people from language teaching, dictionary editing, and similar functions' (Paikeday, 1985: 88).

Paikeday's own solution seems to be to separate the ideal and the operative meanings of native speaker, making proficiency the criterion for employment, and personal history the criterion for ideal membership. As we shall see such a rigid distinction is difficult to maintain when it comes to judgements of grammaticality which Paikeday wants to associate with the proficient-user meaning of native speaker rather than with the ideal-member use: 'the people we refer to as arbiters of grammaticality are not really so because true arbiters of grammaticality are proficient users of languages, not just native speakers' (Paikeday, 1985:53). As we have already noted, it is not clear how much attention we should give to such judgements of grammaticality. That, too, is an issue to be dealt with later.

In using a native speaker as model for its language plans, curriculum design and remedial schedules, applied linguistics has to take up the Paikeday challenge, which is essentially which native speaker to choose and lurking behind all such choices is undoubtedly the Paikeday dilemma of whether a new model (which can be supported by acknowledged proficiency) outweighs a distant 'historically authentic' model; for example Indian English models or Nigerian English models versus British or American models (see Chapter 8). But this dilemma is, in fact, just one

example of the more general case. There is equally a dispute between the British and American models just as there is among other metropolitan models, and just also as there is between any Standard and other dialects. The important choice of a model, therefore, raises issues of acceptability, of currency and of intelligibility. It is in part for this reason, as we shall see, that Paikeday's distinction between the ideal-native-speaker definition and the operative one is not finally tenable.

Nevertheless, it remains of practical importance. Consider the institutionalised activities of publishing and examining in the written language and of selecting radio and television newsreaders/casters in the spoken language. In such cases there is compelling social consensus in favour of the use of a model type. It is also the case that a particular type of native speaker (or native-speaker-like non-native speaker) is chosen, the prestige model.

The term native speaker is used in two distinct (but related) senses in relation to this consensus. The first is that in some way the native speaker is taken, as we shall see, to represent an idealised model. The second is that an individual native speaker is him/herself used as an exemplar of such a model. And while general or theoretical linguistics may be content to take any individual as an exemplar of his/her native speech (one of our uses of the term native speaker) applied linguistics cannot afford to be so generous and so unconcerned with sampling importance.

The everyday use of the term native speaker can cause offence. University departments where linguistics and applied linguistics are taught commonly make use in their daily discussions of the terms native speaker and non-native speaker. Such use is not intended to be exact, rather it is an appeal to commonsense, to use a difficult and uncertain concept which is at the same time a useful piece of shorthand. Appeals of the following kind are frequently made in academic settings in the UK:

We need 10 native speakers for a test on Friday

I am looking for three non-native speakers to help with a questionnaire

What do the native speakers think about this (piece of discourse, stylistics exercise and so on?)

I've posted a job vacancy for a native-speaking teacher on the noticeboard.

What is clear is that such shorthand requests cause a good deal of offence. In the first place what is not stated is that what is typically being referred to

is a native speaker of English; in the second place the fact that everyone is a native speaker of something is ignored (as in the case of 'innocent' sexist remarks); and in the third place it is denied that a highly proficient nonnative speaker may also have acquired both linguistic and communicative competence and be, therefore, in terms of what is required in formal higher education and in intuitions about Standard English, indistinguishable from a native speaker.

What is also ignored, though it is very obviously there underneath the surface, is the racism of such remarks. What is so often meant by native speaker in this context is the deliberate exclusion of those who are, in fact, in with a chance of being one. A Singaporean, a Nigerian or an Indian might see him/herself as a native speaker of English but feel a lack of confidence in his/her native speakerness. An unmarked message in the UK context ('... native speaker ...') is therefore not reassuring without the addition 'including Singaporeans, Nigerians, Indians and so on ...'. Alternatively the notice might state: We need three native speakers of British English ...'.

There is the counter argument which needs to be stated and that is, that in all such cases it is really up to the individual to identify him/herself; noone else can do it. That is to say that where there is doubt we define ourselves as native speakers or as non-native speakers of particular languages. The problem here is peculiarly one for those who belong to the post-colonial communities, such as Singapore, Nigeria, India, where the New Englishes are in use (see Chapter 8). The hard-line approach to this would be to say that yes indeed they are native speakers if they so decide, either of British/American English or of Singaporean/Nigerian/Indian English. The question is one that is likely to be thought about seriously only by educated Singaporeans, Nigerians, Indians and so on. Membership, as I see it, is largely a matter of self-ascription not of something being given; it is in this sense that members decide for themselves.

In spite of what I have argued about membership coming first it must be the case that those who claim native-speaker status then have responsibilities in terms of confidence and identity. They must be confident as native speakers and identify with other native speakers and be accepted by them. That is exactly what is required in acquiring any new ethnicity.

The Argument of the Book

This book is about the native speaker. Its purpose is twofold: first, to detail the complexity of the knowledge and skills possessed by the native

speaker of any language; and second, to make that complexity seem less exclusive, more ordinary and attainable by non-native speakers. In so doing I hope to illustrate just how difficult are the problems of the second language learner and, at the same time and paradoxically, help learners (and their teachers) feel more confidence about their knowledge, their communicative ability and their intuitions. The native-speaker boundary is as we shall see, one as much created by non-native speakers as by native speakers themselves.

The concept of native speaker will be examined, its uses in the field of applied linguistics discussed and a way of coming to terms with its ambiguities offered. The approach is more speculative than experimental, the intention being to try to make sense of the idea rather than to provide empirical evidence for the distinctive features of native speakerness. Such an experimental approach, necessary as it is, properly follows this attempt to set parameters and uncover uses of the term. The discussion ranges widely across linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

However, the bulk of the discussion is given to sociolinguistic ideas and research. I hope to show that by basing ourselves in sociolinguistic argument and evidence an understanding reconciliation of the different uses of the native speaker idea can be achieved.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The theoretical question raised in Chapter 1 is whether a definition of native speaker is readily available. The corresponding applied topic is that of the model of choice for language teaching and other institutionalised language uses. The native speaker, it is proposed, is important both as an ideal (the 'myth') of the title and as model (the 'reality' of the title).

Chapter 2: Psycholinguistic Aspects of the Native Speaker

Do non native speakers use a separate cognitive system from that used by native speakers as their language develops? That is the theoretical question. The applied issue, which is now at the heart of applied linguistics, is that of second language acquisition. The basis for my argument in Chapter 2 is that in a non-trivial sense native speakers and non native speakers behave differently linguistically. This difference appears to reflect not one complete and one incomplete system, but rather two systems. This is the case however inadequately the non-native speaker may make him/ herself understood (Loveday, 1982) - for example when s/he is making one of the typical errors described by Burt and Kiparsky (1972), such as:

'was a riot last night' (p. 13); 'the girls was decided to play the piano' (p. 53)

or when talking normally as described by Richards (in Crewe, 1977a: 73)

From there step by step I promoted okay. From there I go where I said cannot do night duty. So do change office. Now then the one work with me, together with me, we rotate shift. He said you always do morning while I alway pao (Hokkien borrowing) night How can? Cannot. So they transfer me. Transfer me where are OC office clerk. about how to type. Nothing boy. Go down there and sit and then I do writing only. No ned to learn. There one clerk to do work. I am MP vocation. They just only clerk. So I higher rank la. Then I work in the reservist.

This is a Singapore youth whose English is at the lower end of the speech continuum. Here he is describing his experiences during his military service. The low form, Richards (p. 72) tells us, is fairly widely used as a medium of informal communication by those with limited education and of lower social or economic status.

Chapter 3: Linguistic Aspects of the Native Speaker

Here the theoretical question is the sort of grammar a native speaker has and whether native speakers and non-native speakers have different grammars. The corresponding applied question concerns the nature and scope of pedagogic grammars which are typically concerned with the deliberate shaping of a learner's current grammar so as to match that of a native speaker.

Rutherford (1987: Chapter 12) provides a number of sample pedagogic grammar exercises. One good example is the following: referential relations serving cohesion for example are fairly easy to verify and for these the learner might simply be asked to verbally identify in a given text what the highlighted referent corresponds to, as in:

After they saved a little money, Howard and Ellen wanted to buy a house. So they did. The floor plan was almost exactly the same as that of Ellen's parents' home, where she was reared. Buying it was not easy for the young couple, but Ellen was determined to go through with it. She could not stand living in their small apartment any longer. She wanted the kind of space that she had always lived with. Howard couldn't quite understand his wife's insistence on moving to more spacious quarters. Their small apartment was big enough for him.

In fact it was almost like the one he had lived in as a child. But he could remember his mother saying almost daily, 'If only I had more room'. (Rutherford, 1987: 164)

Exercises of this kind link the practical proficiency aspect of understanding the meaning with metalinguistic knowledge of the grammar; thus the mechanics and the control are bracketed and internalised.

The discussion in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provides the necessary underpinning and background for the main argument of the book which examines the native-speaker concept as a sociolinguistic construct from a variety of points of view.

Chapter 4: Sociolinguistic Aspects of the Native Speaker

The theoretical question I address in Chapter 4 is the extent to which being a native speaker is a social construct, a choice of identity and a membership determined as much by attitude and symbolically as by language ability and knowledge. The applied topic is that of the role and development of language in dynamic multilingual situations especially those of high migrant mobility.

Cross-cultural communication research has shown that communicative breakdown is common in such situations and can be attributed to a range of factors (Gumperz, 1982). A common breakdown in an encounter such as a job interview is where the non-native speaker applicant has low proficiency and is, at the same time, anxious and defensive. An interesting example is cited by Williams (1985: 165):

The monolingual Australian interviewer (I), an officer with the Commonwealth Employment Service, is interviewing an immigrant woman (J) who is a recent arrival from Cuba, for a job as hospital attendant at a senior citizens' hostel in Perth.

- I: Also the hospital is a psychiatric hospital. Er ... so, I don't know if that's going to cause any bother to you ... or any problems at all. Are you familiar with the term 'psychiatric hospital'?
- J: [repeats slowly in Spanish] Psiquiatri ... (people with psychological problems)
- J: [incredulously] In my family?
- I: No ... No ... No! No ... No!'

One of the less obvious causes of breakdown is that of culturally-tied conventions (Gumperz, 1982; Pride, 1985). Several researchers have suggested that misunderstandings may arise because of the differing ways in

which discourse is organised in different languages, the parallel, circular and digressive described by Clyne (1982) for example in contrast with the linear of English. Misunderstandings are frequently interpersonal but they can also be related to tasks as, for example, Kaplan (1966) suggested in connection with a lack of progress in learning to write in a second language.

This topic, that of the boundary problem between the non-native speaker and the native speaker, is taken up again in Chapter 5 in two special senses, those of bilingualism and semilingualism.

Chapter 5: Lingualism and the Knowledges of the Native Speaker

Is it possible to be a native speaker of more than one language or of no language at all? That is the theoretical question I discuss in this chapter. I also examine the kinds of language knowledge possessed by the native speaker. The applied topic I look at is that of disadvantage, in particular educational disadvantage, which has been explained as the outcome of a language deficit (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966). The question of linguistic inadequacy can be shown in the comparison between the Black English sentence analysed by Labov (1972):

It ain't no cat can't get in no coop.

which though heavily stigmatised because of its negative repetition is also totally systematic, and the semilingual stereotype of the

Him plenty rice

type. The argument which we accept is that the first of these is not linguistically crippling, though it may be so socially in contexts where Standard English matters. The latter may be linguistically crippling but is never, we maintain, the sole linguistic resource available to a speaker.

What is evident, however, is that non native speakers can, in principle, achieve levels of proficiency equal to native speakers. But can the same be said for their competence? I now therefore turn to the special claim of the native speaker to communicative competence (and see later).

Chapter 6: Communicative Competence Aspects of the Native Speaker

The theoretical question of this chapter is whether the native speaker is privileged in terms of communicative competence. Arising out of this discussion is the applied question of the validity of communicative language teaching and whether the term 'communicative' implies a method or a content.

The cutting edge of the communicative movement in language teaching has been to emphasise the priority of meaning before form, that is to say that the language acquirer gains linguistic form by seeking situational meaning. This is generally accepted as the chief way in which the child learns his/her own first language (Donaldson, 1978) and is increasingly accepted as the major positive motivation for learning a second language. At the same time, as researchers such as Hatch et al. (1986) have pointed out, the second language acquirer is also concerned to come to terms with and master the forms of the target language — if only because his/her first language already gives access to a wide range of situational meanings.

Work directly related to emphasising and presenting meaning to the second language acquirer right from the start of second language acquisition is that of Prabhu (1987) who has recorded his experience in South India with a task-based syllabus according to which young Tamil-speaking learners of English are exposed to tasks (rather like games or puzzles) which require the use of English for their completion or solution. Prabhu's evidence of the ways in which the search for meaning can promote the development of control over linguistic form is impressive. Doubts have, however, been expressed about the amount of language support actually given to the learners (Brumfit, 1984; Beretta, 1986).

The communicative competence discussion in Chapter 6 raises centrally the issue of the involvement of culture in language and of the acquisition of culture as an analogue to the learning of language (Kramsch, in press). In Chapter 7 I develop this theme by considering the ways in which different ethnicities and social institutions establish membership (and therefore validate participation as well as authority) in comparable terms to language.

Chapter 7: Intelligibility and the Speech Community

The theoretical question for this chapter concerns norms and intelligibility: does intelligibility depend on there being agreed language norms and what status do they have? The relevant applied question here is that of the role of correctness, linguistically and pedagogically, in the use of a standard language in society, in general, and in education, in particular.

Ryan and Giles (1982) have collected research evidence on the importance of attitudes in informing our reactions to language, including our own, and have argued that attitudes can best be represented in terms of two sociostructural determinants, standardisation and vitality. What is badly needed and so often lacking is a clear and steady examination of the

real language in use and an adequate analysis of what it represents and what it means. That is as true of the British Black English example (Sutcliffe, 1982)

mi asks di man fi put mi moni iina him pakit

as it is of the multiple negative Black English example already discussed. It is also true of the ways in which native speakers actually talk to one another when speaking colloquially, and not how they are supposed to talk — or how they talk when they are on their best behaviour. That is precisely the problem with notions about norms rather than the actual norms themselves. The following brief extract (starting with Utterance 10) from a family of native speakers of English breakfasting together shows a number of features which might well be corrected and/or stigmatised if the speakers were known/thought to be non native speakers. We draw attention here particularly to the 'poetic' learning of the term 'yawn' and use of the non-occurring term 'yawn out' (in this excerpt only two speakers are quoted, Anne, mother and Hester, aged 5):

10. Hester: I was ... up watching television at 10 o'clock, Mum

11. Anne: Mm no you weren't

12. Hester: yes I was

13. Anne: (now listen) you were very (COUGH) naughty to

come down again ... (?) (it means) you just get worn

out

14. Hester: I didn't yawn

15. Anne: I said worn out
16. Hester: I didn't yawn out

17. Anne: I didn't say yawn out I said worn out

18. Hester: what's that mean

19. Anne: tired

20. Hester: I'm not tired didn't (??) that wasn't tired. (Davies,

1990b)

An ill-informed language view assumes that certain forms are correct, always so, and certain forms incorrect, again always so. This cannot be so; correctness if it exists depends on context, as shown in this extract.

Chapter 8: Losing One's Language

Chapter 8 evaluates the challenge to the concept of the native speaker from post-modernism and, in particular, post-colonialism. The question is raised of the centrality of language to a sense of loss of identity, expressed

powerfully in the 1960s and 1970s, in the appeal among francophone writers to the concept of négritude.

How to cope with the intrusion of the new imperial world language is the applied problem, found in all sorts of societies wishing to participate in the global economy. How they do so ranges from the insistence in New Varieties of English (NVE) contexts on the status of a local standard to the valorisation in foreign language contexts of the non-native speaker teacher. What matters in all cases, it is argued, is that the community should be confident in choosing its own solution.

Chapter 9: Assessment and Second Language Acquisition Research

In Chapter 9 we discuss the contribution of language assessment to our understanding of the native speaker and then examine evidence of second language acquisition research (SLAR) into the idea of the exceptional learner. What is at issue here is how far we must rely on the critical period hypotheses (CPH) and indeed on maturation as crucial distinguishers of native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS). Recent evidence suggests that there is no discrete borderline and that the NS-NNS connection is a continuum.

Chapter 10: Conclusion: Who is the Native Speaker?

In Chapter 10 we draw the discussion to a conclusion, clarifying our own view of the native speaker and linking the native speaker to the earlier discussion of identity to the idea of the standard language and to proficiency. The major theoretical question discussed in Chapter 10 is whether an adult non-native speaker can become (cross over, pass as) a native speaker of a target language. The applied question which arises naturally out of a theoretical discussion on the relative status of language varieties is just which (version of a) target language it is appropriate to use for international purposes and so our applied question in this chapter is that of the validity of international English.

When Kachru (1985: 13) can write of the 'claims of English as an international or universal language' he is explicitly drawing our attention to the seemingly inexorable growth of English as the most widespread second language ever. But there is also behind his and similar remarks the implicit question of what if anything can be done to promote the situation in which some version of English would be Haugen's 'world language'

(Graddol, 1997; van Els, 2000). Such a proposition was very much in mind in the 1940s in the concern with and promotion of Basic English by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, and even by Winston Churchill.

What Basic English does is to focus our minds on the question of simplification in language. It raises both the fact of simplification actually happening, as of course it does as a common language strategy and of the uncertainty as to whether deliberate simplification is ever possible.

Terms of the Argument

To be the native speaker of a language means to speak it 'from your mother's knee' (Bloomfield), as your mother tongue or first language (L1). Or so it seems. As we shall see such a definition is not straightforward and is difficult to uphold. It is not wholly clear, for example, what is meant by mother tongue and by first language. Other terms used to indicate a claim to a language by an individual are: dominant language, home language. Let us examine each in turn.

Mother tongue

The mother tongue is literally just that, the language of the mother and is based on the normal enough view that children's first significant other is the mother. Of course there are situations in which that caretaking person is not the biological mother but instead the father, grandparent or nurse. But in most cases it probably is the mother and therefore it is the mother who provides most of the spoken input for the child and with whom the child identifies and wishes to exchange meanings. If language learning is indeed learning how to mean (Halliday, 1975) then for the child it is the mother that s/he wishes to mean to and be found meaningful by. As we have just noted, it is not always straightforward in that the role of 'mother' may be taken by some other adult; similarly the mother, biological or not, may provid bi- or multi-lingual input for the child either because the 'mother' is herself bilingual or because the role of mother is shared by several adults who use more than one language in speaking to the child. It is therefore not inappropriate that the term mother tongue is used rather than mother language because what is meant is that the child's first input is that of the mother. To what extent the child's own developing idiolect is identified as that of the mother rather than that of the child's own peer group is a matter for empirical investigation (Ochs, 1982).

First language

Introduction

'First language' refers to the language which was learned first. Again this seems straightforward. Your first language is the language ('tongue') you learned from your mother, biological or not. This however, is, straightforward for only a small group of people and may reflect the monolingual nature of much anglo-centric society. Many people live in multilingual societies and we all live in multidialectal societies. The mother tongue and the first language may be different because, first, the mother tongue is, as we have seen, influenced by peers as well as by parents, it may be more than one language and then it is not easy to decide which one is first. Second, what is the first language may change over time so that, for example, a young child for whom Welsh is the mother tongue or 'first language' in the sense of time of learning, may gradually come to use English more and more and relegate Welsh to a childhood experience. It may not be completely forgotten but is, in some sense, no longer as useful, no longer generative or creative and therefore no longer 'first'.

For the large number of people in this category the mother tongue is no longer the first or dominant language. Equally it can be the case that such people would claim to have more than one first language and this raises what is in some sense a philosophical question of whether it is possible to have more than one first language at the same time. As we shall see later, it cannot be only a philosophical question since there may be certain criteria (in addition to an individual's own self-identification) determining one's claim to a first language which enables us to distinguish first from second language and being a first language speaker from being labelled semilingual (that is having no first or adequate language).

Naturally this takes us back to the relation between mother tongue and first language because in the case of the bi (or multi) dialectal mother, if we accept that one's mother tongue is the code of the individual mother and is not isomorphic with any one or more language, then we may be led into surmising that what mothers speak is either an interlanguage or a set of semilingual codes.

Dominant language

The term 'dominant' language links in here because of the underlying assumption that what was one's first language can change over time and another code take its place as one's first language. This must be the case of the Welsh child mentioned earlier (or the African or Singaporean child and so on) who moves through education or some other major life change into a situation in which s/he uses English or other language of wider communication (LWC) for most if not all purposes; in such cases it can happen that not only the child but the whole family shifts in this way, leaving behind the child's so-called first language. But in most cases it is the child who shifts alone and then for him/her it is English, French or some other LWC which is now dominant. Or perhaps it is safer to say that it is English or French which is dominant in domains outside the home while it is still the mother tongue which is dominant at home. In other words the child has more than one dominant language, each language being dominant in certain areas of life.

Home language

'Home language' (rather like mother tongue) refers to some factor outside the speaker, in this case the home and is, for that reason, easier to distinguish. The home language is the language of the home (and may, as we have seen with mother tongue, in reality be a mixed language or a set of languages/dialects). In a certain sense, home language is defined negatively in terms of what it is not (rather as the other terms are) since it is perhaps easier to define the public code which is often a recognised (and described) standard: English, French and so on. The home language then is - for many children - what is left after the public, standard code has been removed. At the same time, for some children the public standard code is also the home language. Thus in the case of middle-class native English speakers the home language may well be largely identical with the Standard English that is used as a medium in schools and taught to foreigners (and this applies whether we are talking of England, the USA, Australia or other metropolitan native English speaking country). I say 'largely' because there may be another language in use (one parent may be the first language user of another language) or one or more non-standard dialects may be in use some of the time or we may wish to claim that there is in use some kind of unique family variety. For present purposes it is helpful to note that these terms can be defined in relation to what they are not: first language in relation to second language, dominant language in relation to the language it has superseded, home language in relation to the public official code, and mother tongue in relation to what one's peers are speaking.

Native speaker tends to be used in each of these ways: native speaker means having language X as one's mother tongue, as one's first language, as one's dominant language, as one's home language.

Langue

Introduction

There are other terms which we also need to consider since they too are invoked as being relevant to the native speaker: they are competence — both linguistic and communicative — and langue. Let us take langue first since that is the older term. Saussure's use of langue (de Saussure, 1966) was an attempt to define not the native speaker but what it is that is shared by a language community. In putting forward his trinity of categories:

- langage (everything going on linguistically in the speech community),
- langue (the system employed and
- parole (the utterances actually used by people)

Saussure was, in my judgement, more interested in the atypical, monolingual community than in multilingual communities. For him langue is what people share, the average of their individual speech differences. Langue for Saussure is therefore the linguist's object of attention.

The question Saussure addressed is important theoretically and practically. It has already come up implicitly in our earlier discussion in terms of mother tongue, although we have not yet mentioned it explicitly. The argument goes as follows: if it is indeed the case that the mother tongue is what the 'mother' has as her own idiosyncratic idiolect then although that is the chief source of what the child acquires it cannot be identical with what the child acquires. Otherwise it would not make sense to speak of the mother tongue as being the mother's own idiolect. There must be certain differences between the mother's own code and that of her child, and if that is the case then the differences both between adults and between the child on becoming adult and the child's own mother must be even greater. And yet, as Saussure pointed out, the members of a community, including the mother and child, understand one another. They must therefore share something which enables them to understand one another - to be mutually intelligible and which they acquire as they acquire the mother tongue, first or dominant language.

Of course they do not all speak the same way — indeed it does not disturb Saussure's case if we accept, as we have already, that everyone speaks differently. That is allowed for under Saussure's term of parole. Nevertheless the point that he makes — and it is a valid one worth repeating — is that all members of a community do share the set of rules which make up langue. As will be observed, this is a circular definition since it is not clear what that community is except in terms of the very thing it is set up itself to define, the rules of its langue. In spite of this it remains a

20

valuable heuristic to recognise that speakers of English possess a language different from that of French: equally that speakers of British English and speakers of American English have somewhat different languages. But that is precisely the point at which the argument becomes difficult because it is not clear how big such differences have to be in order for them to imply a different language. The point is that the differences of dialect and indeed the differences between subdialects (such as in family uses) can, given fine enough descriptions, be viewed as systematic and not just as differences at the parole level and therefore - however minuscule - differences of langue. Should such family differences then be regarded as different languages? The langue solution also raises the serious question of just who it is that has access to a langue and whether a special type of experience is necessary. In other words it raises the question of whether or not late acquisition of a first language is possible. Do second language speakers have access to a second language langue? And if so is it the same langue as the langue of first language speakers? Or to put the issue another way does one need to be a mother tongue/first language speaker in order to have its langue? As will be observed, this raises the same sort of issue as our earlier discussion of being a mother-tongue speaker of more than one language and of being semilingual. Langue then appears to be a useful attempt to label that which so-called native speakers have in common (for the moment we will avoid having to decide whether one can become a late native speaker) but in the event a vain attempt since it remains circular and does not help us define exactly what it is that language means. It labels membership of the community who claim to speak a language without defining what it is that they have. Nevertheless, as a social definition, for that is what it is, it is very powerful since as with all social definitions it recognises that membership is largely self-defined, a matter of selfascription. What it also does is to recognise that speakers necessarily share community membership. In the same way that members of a community share a culture so members who speak a language share langue. Although that definition is circular, at least it gets us over the dangerous solipsism which insists that languages do not exist (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) and that they are mere social or linguistic artefacts. This is not the case, surely: languages are both social facts and human reality in that people can communicate with others who 'speak the same language'. This is the problem that language addresses and for which it provides an explanation.

Why is it that members of a community can communicate with one another remains unclear. Do they share attitudes, norms, etc., or do they somehow have the same linguistic system, or both? According to Renate

Bartsch, Saussure never made his own position clear, wanting language somehow to include both norms and system:

Saussure seems to have made a distinction betweem norm and system — as two aspects of the whole which he calls language ... [he] assumes that applying the method of classification by the two kinds of relationship will result in one language system with only small deviances between language uses. This is an assumption the truth of which is by no means obvious. (Bartsch. 1988: 152)

Competence

The related notion of competence was introduced by Chomsky (1965) to specify both the knowledge ability of an individual which enables language acquisition to take place and represents that mature ability and also to signify the goal of linguistic theory, that is to explain and describe competence. Language evidence for competence is provided by performance which, like competence, is subject to systematic idealisation. Thus competence is the system (both the linguist's and the native speaker's), performance the processing of the system and language use (combining performance and competence), the data which we use to test our theory

The notion of linguistic competence moves the argument on one stage in that it seeks to answer the question of what it is that the members of the langue community possess. It appears to address precisely the problem that we claimed earlier langue does not solve, the question of defining what the label langue means. Why do we say 'appears to address' the problem? The question can be put another way: does competence need to assume langue in order to consider meaningfully what it is that language speakers do or know?

There are two answers to this question. The first is that we can assume that a different description will be needed for all idiolects; that seems a possible way of establishing the competence enterprise and is in line with such possible statements as: linguistics seeks to define the properties of grammars, whether or not they have anything to do with human beings; or linguistics is not about human communication.

What this view is really saying is that competence is about idealised speakers: indeed Chomsky's definition of linguistics as being about the idealised native speaker in a homogeneous speech community is of obvious relevance. Such an approach is not a social one; it takes no account of situation, purpose, domain or variety. It is psycholinguistic or cognitive-scientific and linked to the computer analogue for the brain. It raises the

interesting question of what systems must underlie human communication but it ignores all aspects of social concern. It also assumes different languages as given, because its main focus of interest is in what all individuals possess, both the assumed general language faculty and the idiolect.

Within this view different languages are not important; but what is of interest is the individual's idiolect, not because it is different from other idiolects but because it must, according to the theory, provide evidence for the universal code we are all supposed to share.

However, even so extreme and rigorous a view must take some account of limited social aspects since any elicitation of data, and even the concept of the idealised native speaker, must mean there is some account being taken of the speaking world. Otherwise it would be possible for someone who does not know the language or whose speech is full of performance errors of a severe kind or who is aphasic to be used for elicitation and clearly that is not what happens. So that even here there is a tacit assumption that the world is made up of speech communities of more than one person. Or, to use Coulmas's terms, the double life of the native speaker does come together on occasion, the idealisation can put on flesh and blood (Coulmas, 1981: 10).

The second answer to the question as to whether competence needs to assume langue is that competence does need to assume langue on the grounds that langue itself needs an explanation as to how it is that (native) speakers understand one another. In other words what competence sets out to do is to provide a description of langue. So far we have been discussing linguistic competence; one of the debates which the interest in competence stimulated was precisely what should be done about the social aspects of language which linguistic competence refused to take account of and which can be subsumed under language appropriateness. Interests in these social aspects is not new, indeed they have always been thought important, as Saussure's appeal to langue (itself a 'social fact') shows. Saussure seems to have borrowed the notion of langue from the sociological ideas of Durkheim. British linguistics, influenced in part by the Prague School, was also concerned to reflect the social context of language in its descriptions, as Malinowski's (1923) and Firth's (1950) discussions of the context of situation remind us.

Chomsky's insistence on examining competence without social factors was deliberate since the task of linguistics in his view has been to consider only the underlying systems. There is a counter argument which states that what is linguistics is never totally separate, even at the abstract level, from what is cultural or social. This is a view usually put forward by anthropologically minded linguists such as Halliday (1978) and Hymes (1970).

Communicative competence

As a consequence, Hymes (1970) proposed the term communicative competence in order to point to the learned knowledge of cultural norms which is crucial to language use. The position taken up by communicative competence is that knowing what to say is never enough; it is also necessary to know how to say it. And by 'how' is not meant the performing of the speech that is getting the words out; rather what is meant is using the appropriate register, variety, code, script, formula, tone and formality. Once again the issue for our consideration is to what extent such cultural knowledge can be acquired late; and to what extent getting it right, that is using the appropriate forms, only comes to those who acquire the language as their 'mother tongue'. It is commonly assumed that communicative competence may be harder to acquire than linguistic competence — if we put aside those well-known cases of fossilisation in foreign accents. We consider this question in Chapters 6 and 8.

Whether or not it is conceptually helpful to treat commumcative and linguistic competence as separate remains an open question, as we have noted earlier.

Second language, foreign language and bilingual

The topics second and foreign language are also relevant to our consideration of the native speaker. We have already noted that defining the mother tongue and the first and dominant language is done in opposition to, for example, the second language. This suggests that we might hope to define in separate and perhaps rigorous ways the second language and the foreign language. Alas! that is not the case. A second language is, in fact, defined in term of a language which is learned after the first language (or the mother tongue) — not of course that it is inferior in any way, just that it comes after the first in time of learning (Stern, 1983). And so we are back at finding ourselves unable to define the first language except in terms of what is earliest acquired.

A distinction is perhaps useful between the language of a bilingual (or multilingual) child acquired in a home or environment where more than one input is available) and the child who acquires a non-home or non-intimate language in a more public setting (Romaine, 1989; Hamers & Blanc, 1989). Such a setting is often education and the second language is sometimes used to define a situation in which the child is being educated in a language medium which is not the home language; but the second language does not have to be the language of education — it may be the

lingua franca of the public environment in which the child begins to grow (for example Nepal). What seems to underlie the use of the term second language is that it indicates a command which is less than that of the first language, but stronger than that of the foreign language.

Foreign languages then seem to be acquired in order to interact with

foreigners, that is groups outside one's native environment.

This also seems to imply that a foreign language does not carry with it the kind of automatic grasp of its systems that are appealed to in terms of the first language and are suggested in some areas of the second language. A foreign language has not been, it can be surmised, internalised in the same way that a first (and perhaps a second) language has. A foreign language speaker cannot be appealed to for authoritative pronouncements about the language's rules and its use. First language speakers, of course, can be; and, as we shall see, this is the problematic and very interesting issue about second languages: whether control of a second language, which, as we have seen, is by definition learned after the first, can become as internalised as the first; whether being a native speaker and being a first language speaker (or a mother tongue speaker) are synonymous and whether a second language speaker can be a native speaker of that second language.

Summary

In this chapter we have considered the role of the native speaker in applied linguistics, set out our argument, provided a plan for the book as a whole chapter by chapter and noted the range of views in the literature. We examined the commonsense view of the term, noting the set of terms which the concept of native speaker implies: mother tongue, first language, dominant language, home language, linguistic competence, communicative competence, second language, foreign language. In the chapters which follow we tease out the distinctions among these terms further, seeking an answer to the question of whether being a native speaker is, in fact, a matter only of self-ascription or whether it is also (or instead) a matter of objective definition. The commonsense view alone is inadequate. It needs support which is available in the central linguistic disciplines. We turn now in Chapters 2 and 3 to brief considerations of the native speaker from a psycholinguistic and a linguistic point of view.

Chapter 2

Psycholinguistic Aspects of the Native Speaker

In this chapter I deal with a number of matters already raised in Chapter 1. My purpose in raising them again (as will be the case in later chapters) is to add to our understanding by bringing in information in the case of Chapter 2 from the field of psycholinguistics.

First, however, by way of illustration, I will quote an example of one important difference between the language of a learner and that of a native speaker. This comes from a paper by Faerch and Kasper dealing with the interlanguage of request modification. They are here discussing internal syntactic and lexical phrasal modifiers:

From a psycholinguistic point of view, one can assume that native speakers use them with little conscious attention, precisely because they are void routines ... that do not contribute to the propositional development of the discourse ... hearers (do not) consciously attend to them when interpreting incoming speech. What hearers do notice, however, is their absence, as is evident from the following conversational exchange between a German learner (L) and a native speaker of English (N):

(N has taken L's library seat)

L: hey what did you do

N: pardon

L: you put my books on the other side and it's my seat now (a bit later)

L: you wouldn't be angry if you er come back and you see that there's something er that there's somebody other

N: well at least I would ask them the other person if they er if they needed long to complete their work or or if if I could possibly have my seat back but I wouldn't come up and say hey what are you doing with my seat. (Kasper, 1981, quoted in Faerch and Kasper, 1989: 243)