

How L2 speakers of English can benefit from their ‘non-nativeness’

Garai Luca

This presentation attempts to show a number of reasons why L2 users might benefit from being non-native speakers of English both in terms of further language acquisition and everyday life. As an L2 learner of English, one might be discouraged to continue with their acquisition of the language by notions such as “non-native speakers can never achieve a native speaker’s competence” (Medgyes, 1992), especially in terms of their pronunciation, fluency, and contemporary vocabulary. This idea of unreachable perfection raises the question in the learner: if I can never be as competent as they are, why should I try in the first place? Based on articles focusing on the qualities of English teachers, and, in part, on personal experience as a non-native learner of English, the presentation explores several ways in which non-native speakers of English can take advantage of their ‘unfortunate’ situation, including more obvious aspects of their language use and acquisition, as well as elements which one might not take into account at first glance.

REFERENCES:

- Birdsong, D. (1992). Ultimate attainment in second language acquisition. *Language*, 68, 706–755.
- Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33 (2), 185–209.
- Garai, L. (2016). How L2 speakers of English may benefit from their ‘non-nativeness’.
- Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: Who’s worth more? *ELT Journal*, 46 (4), 340–349.
- Medgyes, P. (2001). When the teacher is a non-native speaker. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language, 3rd edition* (pp.429-442). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.