

fine start is important in order to do well in life, and therefore a co-relation is useful. A good milieu for early human development through emergent language acquisition is important. However, it does not mean that children who may have had a comparatively less advantageous start will not be able to make it up later in life. Therefore, while acknowledging the contributions in this edited collection, it is essential to keep other lines of inquiry around language learning in early human development and related aspects open.

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Alan Davies, 2003, **The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality**, Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, pp 237 Hardbound.

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Davies' book is published in the series 'Bilingual Education and Bilingualism: 38' of Multilingual Matters Ltd. This book explores and examines critical questions pertaining to the concept of a native speaker from different perspectives. The idea of a *native speaker* always appears fresh in linguistics. Researchers in various sub-fields of linguistics define *native speaker* with the traits that are typical of a sub-field. *Knowledge of Language* appears as a common thread in most of the working definitions of native speaker. Chomsky's works (since 1965) also contribute to the idea of the *Knowledge of Language*. In fact, most definitions seem to incorporate the idea that the '*Knowledge of Language*' makes a

speaker native to the language. This book is an attempt to look at the *native speaker* in a more comprehensive manner. It is also an attempt to bring several perspectives on native speakers together in one book. It has ten chapters including the introduction and conclusion. Out of this, eight chapters examine the questions and the concepts of native speakers in linguistics from the psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and language acquisition perspectives. The book effectively argues that the concept of a native speaker is in fact a myth, and concludes that a native speaker is a nothing more than a social construct. The book begins with personal anecdotes that are significant for the discussions on the native speaker. It engages the discussion in the context of many previous works namely Chomsky (1965), Paikeday (1985), Ferguson (1983), and Katz and Fodor 1962 among others. Defining the goal of this book, the author aims to make the concept of a native speaker unambiguous.

With regard to examinations, Davies supports the view in Felix (1987). This position argues in favor of the following: (a) language processing is done by two different cognitive systems, (b) where native speakers know two or more languages, both these languages use different cognitive systems (c) the adult learner primarily uses the problem-solving system in addition to the language-specific system. Davies seems to agree with Felix that the use of two systems makes language acquisition harder for an adult learner. Hence, he seems to be giving due recognition to Chomsky for the technical contributions that define *Knowledge of Language*, and Paikeday for the discussion on 'practical significance' of the term native speaker.

In the first few chapters, Davies highlights how difficult it is to define 'first language' or 'mother tongue', especially in multilingual homes and communities as some people are

mobile by circumstance, and therefore become proficient in multiple languages. There are many similar situations which lead individuals or communities to become multilingual where one could have *many first languages*. It is difficult to discount them as non-native speakers of all that they speak. He argues that language and linguistic identity is more a socio-political tool than a reality. The actual membership of a language is very fluid. In fact, people even fall out of this membership if they do not use a language for a long time.

Chapter 1 of the book explains a readily available definition of a native speaker. Chapter 2 discusses the psycholinguistic aspects of a native speaker. It talks about the language development of the native and non-native speakers, and questions the cognitive aspects involved in their development. Chapter 3 deals with the theoretical linguistic aspects of the concept of a native speaker. It elaborates on the significant question of whether native and non native speakers work with two different grammars of the language. In a sense the first three chapters form the prelude to the discussion of native speakers as a social or sociolinguistic construct in chapter 4. The subsequent chapters (5, 6, and 7) examine the idea of a native speaker from the perspective of his knowledge, communicative competence, and other aspects covering the intelligibility of a native speaker in a given speech community respectively. Chapter 8 looks at the e-identity of a native speaker and chapter 9 deals with the construct of the idea of a native speaker in the second language research. Finally, chapter 10 concludes the argument and the idea of a native speaker.

According to Davies, the proficiency-based definitions of native speakers are problematic. Birth-based definitions are akin to ethnic label and are hard to argue with. They do not seem to serve any practical purposes

as far as the study of language is concerned and for which we need to define a native speaker. He thus supports the notion that it is possible to be a native speaker of more than one language if exposed to them at an early stage. He defines competence in multiple ways including recognition of appropriateness of language constructs, the ability to express an idea in multiple ways, the choice of words grounded in socio-cultural context, etc. Davies rejects the views in Kachru (1985), which sees language speakers as concentric circles primarily based on their place of living. For example, in the case of English, the British, the American, and the Australians form the inner core of 'Native' speakers, followed largely by former British colonies such as India and Singapore in expanding circles, and then the rest of the world in the outer circle. He favours the view where this nativity is defined contextually, based not only on the environment at birth, but also proficiency at the time of speaking.

Overall, this is a well written book with a comprehensive treatment of questions such as "Who is a native speaker", "How can we test nativity in a language" and "How does the membership to the native speaker club change functionally and socially." The author does not short shrift any of the traditional argument in favor of the notion of 'nativity', yet he pulls no punches in demolishing them one by one.

## References:

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