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JALPP SUBMISSION/FORUM DISCUSSION

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Abstract

In this Forum Discussion paper, we put forward the concept of “speakerness” and discuss how this notion can be of relevance to the professions associated with language teaching and learning. By “speakerness” we understand the processes through which social actors get defined by their language practices. We connect this concept with the ongoing debates around the so-called “non-native” speakers of English, which have clear implications for “non-native teachers.” We revisit these debates by widening the scope, that is, by making connections with another controversy around speakerness, namely that around the so-called “new speakers” of European minority languages. By aligning the two strands of debate, we argue that they respond to common trajectories of nation-building and colonial expansion articulated through the ways in which nationalist and colonialist discourses have constructed languages and deployed them as means of state and colonial rule. After tracing the historical origins of the notion of “native speaker” and summarizing the debates on “non-native speakers” and “new speakers”, we point to the ways in which a critical engagement with the concept of speakerness can throw light on other sociolinguistic areas in which the issue of speaker legitimacy is often recruited to naturalize inequalities of race, class or gender.

Keywords: Non-native speaker, new speaker, World Englishes, linguistic minorities, multilingualism, colonialism

Theorizing the speaker and *speakerness* in Applied Linguistics¹

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Speaker status is socially recognized and evaluated in complex ways. The idea of the native speaker has traditionally played a pivotal role, with consequences for access to specific professions such as teachers, translators, interpreters and, less explicitly, researchers, writers of learning materials, and other forms of expertise. This has been addressed in debates around the so-called “non-native” speaker in Applied Linguistics, with its specific implications for the “non-native teacher.” Here we revisit this debate by widening the scope, that is, by making connections with another controversy around speakerness, namely that around the so-called “new speakers” of European minority languages. In relation to European territorial minorities, people are affected by these categorizations not in the same way as happens with major languages. Research on new speakers in different European contexts such as the Basque Country, Ireland or Brittany points to local debates around who owns the language and who can be presented as the legitimate speaker (O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011; Ortega et al. 2014; Moal 2017).

In this Forum discussion paper, we claim that these issues can be considered as different aspects of what we call “speakerness.” By “speakerness” we understand the processes through which social actors get defined by their language practices. We align research on new speakers of minoritized languages with existing debates on “World Englishes” to produce new insights into issues around legitimacy and language ownership, and we discuss how these can be of relevance

to the professions associated with language teaching and learning. The overall questions we explore are as follows: How do such categorizations emerge? What conditions lead specific people to assign, claim or deny, themselves or others, the status of legitimate speaker? What are the consequences?

We begin with a historical appraisal of how speakerness has been historically constituted, particularly in relation to Western modernity and colonialism. Following this, we compare and discuss the two abovementioned areas of research and argue that they touch upon different manifestations of the same problem. In conclusion, we point to the ways in which these two issues can be subsumed into a common conceptual framework that can later be projected onto other sociolinguistic areas in which the issue of speaker legitimacy is often recruited to naturalize inequalities of race, class or gender.

1. Understanding speakers

The work of Thomas Bonfiglio (2010) has shown the historical contingencies that brought about the concept of “mother tongue” in the late middle ages. Much later, the term “native speaker” spread during the 19th century, together with the nationalist and evolutionist ideologies that supported the articulation of nation states and colonial rule. Both terms – one designating the language, the other the population – were incorporated into the vocabularies of various scientific disciplines and administrative procedures that characterized the new forms of modern governance. However, these concepts were never critically examined; not even when they were formally mobilized after the first world war to draw up the map of Central and Eastern Europe, or when they were later used by Hitler to determine the territories that constituted the core of his “Third

Reich". In a historical context in which multilingualism and cultural hybridity were regarded as moral anomalies and/or political threats, "Mother tongue" and "native speaker" were simply used to assign language and nationality to individuals. They also implicitly expressed the importance of ascendancy, and are still used today in ways that betray the fact that the concepts emerged amid debates about evolutionism and race hierarchies.

2. English worldwide and its "non-native" speakers and varieties

To our knowledge, the first signs of unease with the term "native speaker" appeared precisely in relation to the teaching of English in former colonies (Prator 1968). Later Paikeday (1985) published an interesting survey amongst leading linguists enquiring about the concept of the native speaker. He found that his colleagues had not given much thought to the matter, and that many actually believed that there was no need to do so. In his foreword to Kachru's (1982) *The Other Tongue*, Charles Ferguson (1982: vii) proposed that "the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue [be] quietly dropped" from the vocabulary of linguists. Kachru challenged the assumption that traditional Anglo-Saxon varieties had to be given pride of place. He basically fostered a program of academic legitimation of "World Englishes", i.e. varieties of English spoken in former colonies. He posited the well-known scheme of the three concentric circles: the inner circle (the Anglo-Saxon countries), the outer circle (former colonies) and the extended circle (those using English as foreign language or lingua franca) (Kachru 1985). Kachru's breakthrough, however, was of the kind centred on the description of language or of language use, not on speakers, so that the possibility of social and historical critique was diminished. Research largely framed this issue in terms of "interference varieties", "polylectal continua" or descriptive or comparative studies of variation.

The long history of British world hegemony has created new profiles of speakers of English substantially different (e.g. racially) from those of European settlers, soldiers and administrators. English remains an official language in most British former colonies such as India, South Africa, Pakistan, Kenya and Singapore, where it is often the medium of instruction in education. In fact, the standing of English in these countries has a lot to do with the principles of language planning that were fostered by English and American sociolinguists (often with the support of the British Council or the Ford Foundation) in the decolonization period back in the 1960s and 1970s (Spolsky 2009; Block et al. 2017). Additionally, English has become the most widespread lingua franca for international politics and trade. Crystal (2003) estimated that non-native speakers of English outnumbered native speakers by three to one. In this context, it is clearly more than just a language as it mobilizes hundreds of thousands of teachers, academics, trainers and researchers backed by mostly British and American aid agencies, public and private schools, and also publishing corporations that market their teaching materials (Phillipson 1992).

One key question of the “World Englishes” debate was the implication for the teaching and academic professions of English as a foreign or second language. Should non-native teachers or researchers of English always be ostensibly in a one-down position with respect to their “native” counterparts? One landmark in this process was the Kachru-Quirk debate on “liberation linguistics”, in which the British grammarian basically expressed his view that British English had to maintain its status as the model for education (Quirk 1990; Kachru 1991). The ramifications of this debate yielded a wealth of publications for which excellent reviews are already extant (Modiano 1999; Bhatt 2001; Bolton and Kachru 2006; Jenkins 2006; Proshina 2014; Görlach

1993; Moussu and Llurda 2008; Seargeant 2012). For our purposes, we have divided this field between the studies that stick to the traditional view of language as a bounded system, and those that are more socially oriented.

2.1 Non-native speakers from a linguistic perspective

Within studies centred on language, we find many dialectological and sociolinguistic descriptions of how English is spoken in “outer circle” countries, a strand which makes around 30% of conventional articles in the journal “World Englishes”. One specific derivation has been the debates about denominations as reported by Jenkins (2006): English as a Second Language (ESL), or as a Foreign Language (EFL), as an International Language (EIL), as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as International English (IE), as World Englishes (WE), as World Standard (Spoken) English (WS(S)E), and so on, all expressing finely qualified positions as to what model should be adopted for teaching and evaluation or defined as the object of scholarly research and description.

These denominational debates are important in terms of building consensus upon which to develop wide research programs such as corpora (Prodromou 2008), description of variation patterns or processes of dialect formation or creolization (Schneider 2003), or standard language models complementary or alternative to the British and the US ones, with its attendant resources such as dictionaries (Görlach 1998). These approaches often claim to have a purely linguistic or descriptive interest; but it is important to understand the ways in which they are part and parcel of the political contentions over the ownership of English and of the debates on how English must be taught, by whom, and how competence is evaluated (both in relation to learning and teaching). They generally rely on the assumption that it is possible to build alternative linguistic models of

the English language that can be established, stabilized and otherwise used in ways equivalent to how Standard (British or American, etc.) English was historically established and deployed.

Davies' (1991) work did provide the most elaborate attempt to delimit the uses of the concept through strictly linguistic criteria; and claimed that there was evidence that native and non-native speakers could generally be shown to present different patterns of language acquisition, grammatical features or patterns of communicative competence, although a native competence was possible (but difficult) to acquire. Otherwise, there have been a variety of attempts at redefining the concept of the native speaker (Rampton 1990; Kachru 1998; Moussu and Llorca 2008; Dewaele 2018). However, by the time Llorca (2009) published his appraisal in a conventional Applied Linguistics (AL) handbook, the practical and conventional uses of the term had been little affected.

2.2 Non-native speakers from social and political perspectives

The political critique of the notion of the “native speaker” was significantly boosted by Phillipson (1992), who proposed that much academic work on language planning and Applied Linguistics contributed to legitimize imperialistic practices under a 'scientific' pretence. Pennycook (1994; 1998) also argued that the native/non-native distinction constitutes a contemporary translation of the civilized/savage dichotomy of the colonial period and hence an instrument for the reproduction of the unequal relationships between metropolitan centres and postcolonial peripheries. The teaching of English plays a major role in the legitimization of this post-colonial regime under the guise of a “modernization” agenda. Within this order of things, Pennycook saw non-native learners and teachers as a potential source of resistance, as having the opportunity to question colonial

hegemony as well as to actively embody the emergence of the global cultural disjunctures or diverging modernities that Appadurai (1996) documents.

These debates have led to a productive research strand that basically advocates for the pedagogical virtues of “non-native” language teachers. The contributions of Medgyes (1994) and Braine (1999) eventually mobilized Non-native English-speaking Teachers and academics into what has been labelled the NNEST movement (Selvi 2014). They argued that NNEST a) provides good learner models; b) can teach learning strategies better; c) can provide more information about the language to their students; d) understands the difficulties and needs of the students; e) can anticipate and predict language difficulties; and f) in EFL settings, can use the students’ native language to their advantage.

The contentions on the so-called “non-native” speakers of English have triggered important debates and a wealth of research threads across academic fields, particularly in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics. However, most research and discussion has focused on the technical aspects of linguistic description, language teaching, language evaluation and teaching evaluation. Even the most politically oriented critiques of the dynamics of English Language teaching (ELT) worldwide have delimited their purview to this particular area of human activity, and not extended the critique to linguistics as a field that has participated and is participating in the ideological (re)production of inequalities.

In Applied Linguistics, notions such as “learner identity” have also been important to complexify our understanding of what it takes to learn and use new languages, i.e. to become a speaker. Norton

(2000) proposed to investigate the social identities of learners within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and language pedagogies more generally. The term “Second Language Identities” has come to be widely used. Block (2007) proposes a framework whereby this concept potentially includes all possible language learning contexts, including adult migrant learners and conventional foreign language and study abroad contexts. The work of Pavlenko and Piller (2001) sought to articulate Applied Linguistics with poststructuralist approaches, and often focused on the experience of “L2 learners” or “bilingual minds” and critiqued the notion of “native speaker” as a construct being mobilized to reproduce inequalities. This need to characterize specific linguistic identities can also be found in García and Kleifgen’s (2010) work on “emergent bilinguals”, or Kramsch’s (2009) work on “multilingual subjects”. This has opened up new space to explore ethnographically how speaker identities and the native/non-native concepts are embedded in historically specific relations of power relevant to each context (Doerr 2009). The notions of “linguistic citizenship” (Stroud and Heugh 2004) or “sociolinguistic citizenship” (Rampton, Cooke and Holmes 2018) have also been posited in order to create more space for speaker agency both in sociolinguistic research and in language policy development.

In the next section, we seek to widen the scope of these debates by focusing on “new speakers” as another disjuncture with received notions of language, nativeness, belonging and modernity.

2. New speakers of European minority languages

The term “new speaker” was originally coined by researchers of regional minority languages in Europe. It was first used colloquially in the Basque Country (in northern Spain) to characterize speakers who had learned Basque as adults. In the late 20th Century, those who participated in the

mass movements to “relearn” Basque in adult schools were called *euskaldun berri* ‘new Bascophone’. Although the term was used for decades in political debates and survey analyses, it was not critically examined by social scientists until very recently (Gatti 2007). O’Rourke and Ramallo (2011) first argued that “new speakers” deserved attention in the context of Galicia and Ireland (see however Robert 2009 for an earlier occurrence). They observed that the term was used in opposition to “native speaker” to express the experience of speakers who did not fit with traditional assumptions about these speech communities, i.e. people who had acquired Galician or Irish through formal learning rather than conventional family transmission. They also noticed that language planning authorities rarely considered new speakers in their policy design, and also that some tensions emerged between “new” and “native” speakers in some contexts.

Through the articulation of research networks in Europe, it became evident that such a situation was widespread amongst other minority language contexts. In addition to the Basque Country, Galicia or Ireland, similar issues could be found in Wales (Trosset 1986; Robert 2009), Scotland (McLeod, MacCaluim, and Pollock 2010 for Gaelic), Cornwall, Catalonia, Occitania, Łemkowie (in Poland, see Hornsby 2015), Sámi land, Brittany, the Isle of Man, Monaco, Jersey (Sallabank 2017), and amongst Kven speakers (in Norway, see Lane and Räisänen 2018), Sorbian speakers (in Poland), Yiddish speakers or Meänkieli speakers (in Sweden) (see below for the complementary citations).

In the Basque country, new speakers feature centrally in how language activists and language planners now present with undisguised pride the success of three decades of language revitalization (Ortega et al. 2015). In Galicia, the so-called *neofalantes* are visibly bringing Galician into urban

contexts from which it had been historically excluded (Ramallo and O'Rourke 2014; O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011). In Ireland, studies show that the largest population of Irish speakers can now be found in Dublin and no longer in the dwindling rural Gaeltacht (Walsh 2012). Dołowy-rybińska (2016) sees new speakers as the only hope for the maintenance of Sorbian languages. New speakers also constitute a new trend in terms of their social profile. They are predominantly middle-class urban families, educated professionals who engage in social movements to "relearn" or "reclaim" the minority language. Attending adult, community or summer language courses, sending children to immersion or bilingual schooling are now common practices from which new speakers result.

However, research in different contexts attests to the fact that new speakers are often met with mixed feelings. In Brittany (McDonald 1994; Hornsby 2009; Timm, Ball and Müller 2010) and Occitania (Costa 2010a; 2010b) one can reasonably speak of open conflicts or tensions between people who see themselves as the true inheritors of a linguistic and cultural tradition and those who claim a right to re-appropriate this tradition but also to modernize it. Dunmore (2016) also found that many Gaelic-medium educated adults in Scotland did not identify with the Gaelic speaking community and regarded native speakers as backward. McEwan-Fujita (McEwan-Fujita 2010) explored the feelings of frustration and exclusion experienced by learners of Scottish Gaelic when they found difficulties to practice or establish rapports with native speakers. O'Rourke and Walsh have also detected tensions: learners of Irish often claim that native speakers are reluctant to speak the language to them, while native speakers may resent the strong public visibility of new speakers in the media (O'Rourke 2011, 2015; O'Rourke and Walsh 2015). Sometimes, the divide between native speakers and non-native supporters of the language plays out in specific institutional settings. In Sámi land, Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2011) found tensions in

immersion preschools because they were attended by numerous children that were not ethnically Sámi. In Ireland, the spread and prestige of immersion schooling (a system devised, after all, for speakers of English) creates tensions amongst native speakers, as the availability of regular Irish medium education is more restricted than that of Irish immersion.

New speakers may also feel insecure about their linguistic abilities, i.e. about their “learner” speech. Many new speakers of Basque feel ambivalent about their status as legitimate speakers because of a perceived lack of authenticity in their speech (Ortega et al. 2014; Lantto 2016; Urla 2012). Galician “*neofalantes*”, as they are called, also assign greater authenticity to native speakers (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013). McLeod and O’Rourke (2015) examined speakers of Scottish Gaelic in urban contexts such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, looking at the ambivalent perceptions by new speakers about the authenticity and appropriateness of their ways of speaking compared with those of native speakers. In Brittany and Occitania, for people who inherited their mastery of Breton or Occitan from their families, the “heavily” Frenchified accent of new speakers is unacceptable (McDonald 1994; Costa 2010a). Ireland features specific areas as officially “Irish-speaking”, the *Gaeltacht*. Gaeltacht residents are conventionally considered native speakers, although their linguistic profiles are in fact diverse. Learners from outside these areas may also feel that their Irish is not good enough and may even actively strive to speak in one of the Gaeltacht local dialects (O’Rourke and Walsh 2015).

These differences may materialize in disputes about which ways of speaking or writing are legitimate, such that specific linguistic ideologies are mobilized to justify positive or negative evaluations of speakers or their linguistic performances. What is of interest here is that this state

of affairs produces a divide between ideologies that were traditionally seen as compatible in the context of linguistic nationalism. The divide can be roughly represented as separating two possible interpretations of what would constitute “genuine” or “authentic” language. On the one hand, traditional native speakers can present a genuineness associated with the display of fluency and spontaneity, as well as the use of idiomatic expressions (Lantto 2016; Urla et al. 2017). On the other hand, new speakers obtain legitimacy from their mastery of the “standard language” and thus have their own claims to genuineness substantiated by expert linguists.

The establishment of standard languages commonly involves an effort towards “purification”, i.e. *cleansing* – so to speak – the language from words, structures or other habits “borrowed” from neighbouring languages. However, many native speakers often reject that expressions borrowed from the majority language get treated as “incorrect” by linguists, particularly expressions that have long been nativized (Lane and Costa 2017). When conflicts appear, the divide between native speakers and new speakers may well take the form of contentions over the standard, which can lead to the concurrence of alternative orthographies or to the rejection of standardization altogether by traditional speakers. Traditional Breton speakers, for instance, reject the use of the word “*pellgomz*” ‘telephone’ instead of the more traditional “*telefon*” (Lane and Costa 2017; Moal 2017). These contradictory criteria of evaluation and ownership may also be positively experienced: in Galicia, new speakers idealize traditional speakers as referents and models of competence while traditional speakers reportedly show high regard for the new Galician speakers whose literacy skills and symbolic capital enhance the prestige of the language (Ramallo and O’Rourke 2014; O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013).

An interesting contrast is provided by research on communities in which conventional native speakers have practically or effectively died out. Ó hIfearnáin (2015) explains that, in the Isle of Man or Monaco, it is linguistic and cultural activists that are generally regarded as “models” for the learning and practicing of the local language, whereby criteria of legitimacy by direct transmission get replaced by other criteria closer to the notions of expertise, engagement and dedication. Such cases provide evidence that linguistic legitimacy does not rely on fixed universal properties or criteria; but on the logics of each local linguistic market in which the overall availability of linguistic resources determines what practically counts as linguistic capital (in relation to Cornish, see Sayers and Renkó-Michelsén 2015; Croome 2018).

As O’Rourke and Ramallo (2011) initially pointed out, the emergence of new speakers called into question important aspects of revitalization policies. Minority sociolinguists and language planning agencies in those European regions have historically concentrated their efforts on reversing the decline in the numbers of speakers in these communities, which entailed to invest centrally in bilingual education and adult language learning (Fishman 1991). The appearance of large numbers of new speakers of these languages constituted evidence of the success of these efforts. However, they had not anticipated many of the reactions that both “old” and “new” speakers were having towards each other.

From a historical perspective, most regional minority languages in Europe share a sad history. Industrialization and nation-state formation eroded the socioeconomic standing of these languages. Industrialization brought about migration to urban centres and a gradual incorporation into the industrial workforce. At the same time, universal schooling, conscription and the new state

bureaucracies imposed the learning and use of the state languages over the local languages. Thus, incentives to adopt a dominant language associated with new economic opportunities and social mobility were significant. Language shift was also reinforced by ideologies that portrayed minority languages and their speakers as backward, locked in past traditions and often as uneducated and illiterate. Ridicule and physical punishment of children was common in schools and, in extreme cases, outright repression, incarceration, internment of children or deportation of adults. Thus, native speakers of these languages were until recently associated with people *in the peripheries* in every sense of the word: political, geographic, economic (employed in primary sectors) and cultural (as possessing devalued forms of cultural capital) (Grillo 1989; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013).

Critiques of colonialism provide a useful framework to connect the experience of European regional minorities with the scenarios in which this term is customarily applied. Feminist thought has long established how modernity was constituted in ways that endowed European male, white, upper-class elites with the cultural values of rationality that legitimized control over the colonies, women, minorities, and the lower classes (Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Cain 1993; Pratt and Mudimbe-boyi 2002). From this perspective, “peripheral” or “subaltern” Europeans were treated in the modern period in ways not fully coincident but analogous in many aspects to the so-called “inferior races”. The Occitan sociolinguist Robèrt Lafont (1968) proposed the concept of *colonialisme interieur* ‘internal colonialism’ to explain how economic exploitation and cultural subjugation defined the relationship between Paris’ capitalist elites and France’s regions. Nationalism was the correlate of colonialism in mainland Europe in that it ensured for the same

metropolitan elites a position of domination over the structures of economic reproduction (industry, capital) and symbolic reproduction (government, language, culture, family).

One key difference with colonial contexts was that, in Europe, peripheral populations could assimilate into the dominant language/culture through education, participation in the modern economy and the administration. Otherwise, European minorities overwhelmingly adopted nationalism as the ideological framework upon which to combat marginality. Indeed, most revivalist movements originated in the 19th Century and drew from the same concepts of nativism and purity to develop literary or standard languages, and to substantiate claims for the self-determination of the territories settled by their speakers.

Many new speakers represent now the return of a section of the population that had undergone assimilation in the recent past. For them, it is a process of reclaiming or recovering a heritage that was “lost” as a result of state repression or “abandoned” due to economic deprivation. It is against this background of nationalist/colonialist ideologies that we can understand the contradictory perceptions that the rise of new speakers is causing in Europe’s minoritized communities. New speakers constitute a very different trend from that which traditional revivalists expected. It is typically led by middle class urban families who engage in movements to “relearn” or “reclaim” the minority language. These speakers possess symbolic and economic capital. They are multilingual and socially mobile. As such, they embody the modernization of the community, but also the disengagement of the minority with the values of authenticity, and with the specific bonds with the land and its sublimated heritage that traditional speakers represented.

3. The speaking others: indigeneity, sign languages and migration

The cases of non-native speakers (of English) and of new speakers (of European minorities) leave out other significant experiences of how speakerness has been historically constructed and is still operational in other contexts. First, European regional minorities have obvious parallels with the so-called “indigenous languages”, a label often applied to non-European languages in (post)colonial contexts. In these contexts, there is also an ongoing debate on whether revitalization policies should focus on the production of new speakers. There is a growing concern, particularly in the US, as to the weight given traditionally to this productive approach to language revitalization. Wesley (2017) provides a good review of these debates, and contends that such approaches are often based on Eurocentric notions of how languages define communities and why they should be revitalized or maintained. For instance, many community members do not pursue a reconstruction of their language similar to how “modern languages” are standardized and used. Instead, they aim at using the language in specific activities that are important to the community. Wesley (2017) calls for a renewed engagement in “language reclamation” that incorporates “community epistemologies” to effectively decolonize indigenous communities ideologically.

The theoretical exploration of speakerness leads to other strands of sociolinguistics beyond the study of multilingual contexts. Sign language research is a promising area in this regard, with the potential to connect issues of speakerness with disability studies. De Meulder (2018), for instance, posits the existence of old signers, new deaf signers, and non-deaf signers with or without contact with the deaf community. The experiential connection with deafness, rather than nativeness, constitutes in this case the pivotal element, together with the historical transformations that medicine and pedagogy have produced on deaf communities (see also Foote 2020).

A third possible field of application for a critique of speakerness is the sociolinguistics of migration and racial difference. This includes a vast array of studies approached from many different angles in different contexts. However, very few have addressed issues that specifically engage with speaker categorization or the ways in which language is constructed as the embodiment of socially relevant features. Research in this area has tended to treat language as a proxy for group relations and as an indicator of prejudice or racism. It is mainly present in Western Europe and North America, the historical sources of nationalism and colonialism. These nation-states construct migrants as a population in need of “integration” or cultural assimilation in ways that present Western cultures as superior (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009). Although migrants are, in fact, mostly the “natives” from former colonies, this trajectory has not been treated as theoretically relevant.

There are, in any case, some studies that point in this direction. Lippi-Green’s book *English with an Accent* (1997) was primarily concerned with the ways in which “non-native speakers of English” were positioned as problematic participants in service jobs, education and the courts. Jacobs-Huey (1997) and Bucholtz (1999) have focused on the “talking black” genres, whereby white adolescents adopt features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to produce specific displays of class and masculinity while still reproducing racial boundaries. Alim (2012) has also produced a nuanced account of how US president Barack Obama navigated the complexities of the US linguistic economy as a Black speaker of Standard American English who was wrongly presumed to be a native speaker of AAVE. Alim’s formulation of the “raciolinguistics” paradigm of addressing “[what it means] to speak as a racialized subject in contemporary America” (2016: 1) would constitute a key component of what we posit as the study

of speakerness.

In the research network on new speakers funded by the European COST agency (Cooperation in Science and Technology), a few researchers focused on migrants in minority language communities. Higham (2014), for instance, reported that the language provision for adult immigrants in Wales concentrates on teaching English and largely ignores Welsh. Bermingham and Higham (2018) observed that in Galicia and Wales, migrants are often addressed in the majority language and their competence in the minority language ignored (see also Bermingham and O'Rourke 2018; Rosiak 2016). Bermingham's study on immigrants from Cabo Verde in a Galician coastal town shows that local people address them in Spanish despite the fact that Galician is a closer variant of their native Portuguese. Research on migrant new speakers is of interest in contexts like Catalonia or Francophone Canada, where the marginalization of the minoritized community is not so acute and both Catalan and French are strong in urban areas and amongst the middle classes. Significantly, the term "new speaker" is not normally used in these contexts. However, Québécois do retain a preoccupation with who is *Francophone de souche* 'Francophone at root' (Lamarre and Heller 2012; Lamarre 2013), while Catalans often refer to "new Catalans" (Frekko 2009; Woolard 2011). So, the tensions between old and new speakers play out differently in the sense that traditional native speakers in these contexts do have command of essential economic and symbolic means that ensure that their way of speaking is the legitimate one.

What we see in all European minority contexts is a more explicit treatment of local languages as "insider languages" of the community in the face of immigrants. Many locals refuse to speak the local language to outsiders, so that a racialization of people's ideas about native speakers becomes

more transparent than in majority contexts. In contrast, in communities speaking “majority” or state languages, what we see is that migrants do become speakers of the host language in practice, but that the local community develops a sensitiveness to accents or any signs of difference in speech patterns that gets mobilized to construct and reproduce immigrants as different.

4. Towards a sociolinguistics of speakers

We have sought to summarize research and debates in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics, especially Minority Language Revitalization, that engage with issues of nativeness. We have situated the contentions historically from the emergence of the “native speaker” concept in the 19th century and through the deployment of nationalist and colonialist ideologies that problematize “non-native speakers” of English and “new speakers” of European minority languages. There is a meeting point in these two main trajectories: that of communities that have been subject in different ways and in different circumstances to the systems of authority of modern European national/colonial elites as they expanded their control over territories inside and outside Europe and developed the forms of extraction, industrial transformation and exploitation of capitalism.

We contend that the concept of speakerness is the bridge that enables the connection between these two main strands addressed here, and it also points to other possible connects that we have just sketched out in adjacent fields, such as Indigenous Languages Revitalization, Sign language studies and Raciolinguistics. Inscribed in the forms of modern rule that were deployed by the European dominators were specific conceptions of personhood and of a desired and required social order. Race and language were key axes of co-articulation of this modern regime of authority: the white Man as the embodiment of the rational human, the national/colonial language as encoding

the authority of the law, science and technology. From this viewpoint it is not difficult to appreciate the pivotal role played by the concept of the native speaker as the node of articulation between modern subjects and modern languages as organized in a framework of racial hierarchies inspired by Darwinian evolutionism. The European rulers were thus, as it were, “born into modernity” because of their racial ancestry but it was through language that their superior authority was turned into a perceptible performance, i.e. the person who spoke as “native” to the language and therefore enjoyed a birth right as member of the language community and to everything that participation in this community entailed.

As the Applied Linguistics literature has amply shown, the enterprise of English Language Teaching worldwide in the second half of the 20th century inherited significant aspects of this colonial legacy both in the language policies that were promoted in post-colonial states and in the specific principles and methods of teaching and evaluation that were favoured for many years (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1998). Within Europe hierarchies between languages were produced in other ways, i.e. through subtle internal hierarchies between accents or language varieties that mapped onto class differences. The so-called “minority languages” designated those varieties that could not be presented as simple “dialects” of the dominant language, and whose speakers had to be “modernized” and “civilized” in ways not unlike those used with colonial subjects. We posit that all these contentions about speaker legitimacy are but specific cases of what Bourdieu (1982) treats as processes of “authorization”, that is, the ways in which specific markets regulate what the legitimate forms of expression are and who is in a position to use them. As the enactment of any social role is fundamentally a linguistic achievement, the social construction of speakerness is key

to understanding how social categories and relationships (and hence inequalities) are produced and reproduced.

From an Applied Linguistics perspective, attention to speakerness provides a wider framework for understanding the specific contentions associated with the question of (non-)native speakers in the field. Speakerness can be explored across multiple contexts (certainly beyond ELT) in which language is mobilized in different ways to exert domination. This conversation can obviously be connected with the ways in which other formal colonial powers deploy similar policies (Pujolar 2007). José del Valle (2007), for instance, traces similar modes of operation to those described by Phillipson (1992) on the part of the political and academic authorities of Spain in order to establish European Spanish as the legitimate variety internationally. In the examples of European minoritized language contexts shown above, non-native speakers get associated with social privilege, which makes evident the extent to which language-based evaluations simply stand as a proxy for social evaluations.

The genealogy of the concept of the native speaker in the 19th century also attests to the participation of mainstream Linguistics in the production of the linguistic ideologies that reinforced the hierarchies of race and class in Europe and beyond (Errington 2008; Heller and McElhinny 2017). Seen from this perspective, the attempts to apply “purely linguistic” concepts and procedures to address the tensions does not bode well. No matter how many descriptions of local variants are published in *World Englishes* or how much work goes into substantiating alternative “international” standards, the underlying problem is unlikely to go away without acknowledging its political and economic aspects. The acrimonious dispute that emerged after

Singh's (1995) argued that the term "non-native varieties" was incorrect because the speakers concerned had acquired English natively is another example of a problem to which the wrong (mainstream linguistic) epistemology is being applied.

Our discussion on speakerness has repeatedly brought us to what in Foucault's (1984) terms can be formulated as the production of "linguistic subjects" through discourse. Given that language (even when understood in the traditional, restricted, logocentric sense) constitutes most of our ways of becoming social beings in interaction with others, addressing speakerness implies engaging with contemporary debates on subjectivity, including the processes of subjectification that Judith Butler (1990) placed at the centre of feminist debates. In this field, and again following Foucault (1984), a key focus has been the critique of normativities and of normalization processes seen as the articulation of systems of rule that recruit institutions and technical expertise in the production of the desired social subjects. These lines of work have also been important for Post-Colonial Studies or research on race relations, in which the connections have been facilitated through the theorization of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Cain 1993), that is, to the ways in which modern elites established specific categories of normality in relation to gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and language. This perspective could productively inform a Critical Pedagogy of English (Pennycook 2001) productively, as it would allow AL to take part in the critiques of power obtaining in all these fields of social critique of inequalities. and engage with issues of subjectivity and power in order to develop people's understanding of how structures of domination are projected onto and contested in everyday life through language both inside and outside classrooms. This is to follow the steps taken by sociolinguists and applied linguists to explore the relationship between language and subjectivity

(Kramersch 2009; McNamara 2019), and move towards an engagement with relevant debates in postcolonial studies, such as Bhabha's (1994) notions of "third space" or "mimicking" .

Studies on language, gender and sexuality are especially suited to providing important conceptual input for a critical understanding of speakerness. Kira Hall's (2014) discussion on "exceptional speakers" provided elements that point to a more general theory of speakerness. She reflected on how different strands of research on "women's" or "gendered" language have historically produced a variety of ideas as to who constituted exceptional, peculiar or "queer" speakers from a gender perspective. From early 20th Century evolutionism to 1980s culturalism based on social constructionism, Hall (2014) connects the emergence of categories such as the "effeminate", the "tomboys" or the "sissies" to the ways in which dominant normativities have engaged with gender and sexuality not just in Linguistics, but also in Psychology and the Medical Sciences in general.

In the meantime, and using Hall's (2014) expression, the world is getting more and more populated by *queer speakers* or speakers who do not live up to the standards of dominant normativities. The crisis of the native speaker concept questions long established beliefs about linguistic transmission, linguistic ownership, language purity and authenticity, linguistic territorialities, language and identity, the validity of language models for use and learning, or the illusion of citizen equality in contemporary nation states and its institutions. In this context, the whole idea of the nation-state and its cultural correlates is stripped from one of its foundations (see also Lo Bianco 2014).

Alternative ways of understanding language and its socio-political dimension are being developed mainly by sections of the European middle classes that invest in heritage languages, and by

formerly colonized populations who strive for access to the global economy by appropriating English or by moving to where the resources are. These new profiles of speakers constitute supporting evidence for the new forms of modernity that Appadurai (1996) argues is now “at large” and no longer an exclusive badge of European and North-American identity. The active work conducted by new speakers of minority languages to construct a sense of self that reconnects with tradition also reminds us of Giddens’ (1991) reflexive character of self-identity. Included in the picture is the tertiarization of the economy in which language is not just a means to organize production but a means of production itself (Heller and Duchêne 2011), and here language teaching and its structure of academic legitimation constitutes a key strategic industry. All these works converge in depicting modern nationalism as currently in crisis, as an ideology able to define the self, public life and community bonding through spaces and relations that are linguistically and culturally unified, with its implicit forms of racial and cultural hierarchization.

We suggest that sociolinguists and applied linguists should take issue with explicit and implicit categorizations of people based on language and reflect on why they are emerging now and what these processes tell us about the ways in which language structures social inequalities in contemporary societies. Engagement with these issues should not be reduced to the study of emergent varieties, the search of alternative forms of standard languages, the development of politically correct formulations in curriculum design, or the redefinition of what we understand by the term “native speaker”. If the mobilization of “non-native” speakers puts standard languages in crisis and their associated power structures, the solution can hardly be to tamper with the definition of nativeness. In a context in which language as an object of study dissolves, we believe that it may be a good moment to recognize speakerness as our object of study. We see this agenda, the

theorization of the speaker, as central to Sociolinguistics and to Applied Linguistics, or at least to a critical linguistics that aims at understanding how linguistic processes participate in the structuration of social relations.

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