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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SPEAKING “LIKE A NATIVE”

The desire to speak English “like a native speaker” is being frequently heard in the educational environment. A lot wonder, firstly, what makes a native speaker and, secondly, if it is really as necessary as it might seem to sound exactly like them. Opinions differ: for one category of both teachers and learners it is an inseparable part of the foreign language perfection, while for others – deserves neither too much time nor effort.

We can try and have a closer look at the issue and start with the meaning.

There are several features which characterize a native speaker’s manner and make it sound authentic. The corner stone here is that native speakers gain knowledge of the language from their birth, gradually copying adults, it is their first language, the language of the locality they live in. Over the years they learn to speak, then read and write, use the language with the family and friends, in the yard, school, parties, work - everywhere. It is used significantly more in life than any other language, being learnt later as the second or third. It constitutes a method of communication, its essence. Such language is distinguished by definite features. You are likely to instantly notice: firstly, the specific accent, depending on the continent, country and area the speaker comes from; secondly, consequently goes pronunciation because of the same reasons; thirdly, perhaps the flow, i.e. how words flow one into another within a sentence missing or creating some extra or different sounds at their beginning or end in the course; then – the use of idioms, which might vary from country to country; and finally, slang is the thing one might notice when listening to native speakers. These are the major features which make one sound native and thus,

define the areas a learner should deal with when deciding to master the language to a native speaker's level.

If we move on to the second issue: worth or not worth any time and effort, we have to consider several factors again. This time we speak about human factors, target audience. In most tutors' opinion the core, which actually fuels one's intentions here is an objective. We consider that magic question, a kind of a trigger: "What for?", which in its turn includes the ones about why we learn languages, what level are intitled to achieve, where and how we are going to use them. Depending on the answer to these questions, trainees set personal targets and make different input into the study process.

We are going to have a look at both viewpoints.

The supporters of speaking English like a native speaker have their own objectives, which are also various. Educators, for instance, work hard on pronunciation, toning, sentence stress, etc. as they are supposed to be the models for their trainees to copy and follow. Besides, there has always been a group of people who are in favour of the "like a native speaker" idea, because they are ambitious, perfectionists and/or ostentatious by nature, thus, not economical with either time or effort to get to the top.

In addition to the abovementioned, there exists a tendency of complaining and underestimating personal achievements in this country. We are used to regularly hearing remarks about various mistakes, either supposedly or really being made in the course of speaking. This fear, permanent anticipation of "inevitable", yet virtual drawbacks, prevents a great deal of people from speaking, but constantly pushes them to improve more and more. Many are practically never satisfied with how they are already able to operate the language.

On the other hand, have you ever been to a multinational company, their staff meeting, online reporting session or any other discussion? Have you heard managers from different countries speaking about projects at different stages of their

implementation or making presentations at conferences? One cannot but notice that their language, irrespective of a manager's status or occupation, is far from being perfect, as the language in this case is purely a tool which helps them meet the main objective – effective communication. Their aim here is not to show up and sound like a native-speaker but to do business and, in most cases, it is only the level, enough to communicate your idea coherently, is the thing that matters. Practically, an intermediate level allows to clearly exchange opinions, argue, discuss, report, set targets, analyze and evaluate achievements. Because of that, many trainees stop taking language courses as soon as they reach the one. In a word, a lot depends on the reason, conditions and capability.

In any case, a teacher of English has to know trainees' goals – their desire to learn English to be able to speak, write, and read for business or personal use, or to improve their English language skills - whether for academic purposes or to simply pass an English exam, or maybe all of the above. They have to be aware of the objective to help achieve the goal.

To conclude, we can say that speaking a foreign language like a native is a combination and application of several specific features, in addition to basic ones, but defining its authenticity, i.e. choosing definite accent, practicing word flow in a sentence, using idioms, etc. Being too effort and time consuming, it is not in the sphere of interest of all people, either learning or already speaking a foreign language. Major factors that inspire us to make more or less efforts are personal traits, business requirements, ambitions, status and a lot more.