

Nativespeakerhood: A *Subject Matter* Revisited

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Much of the discourse on nativespeakerhood in LADO has centered on whether non-linguist native speakers are more suitable to act as analysts than linguists who may not necessarily be native speakers (e.g. Cambier-Langeveld, 2010; Fraser, 2011). This paper, however, aims to shift the focus from the nativespeakerhood of the analyst to that of the asylum seeker and, in particular, its significance for actual LADO procedures.

While the language that asylum seekers specify as their native language plays a crucial role within the current asylum procedure in Switzerland, the value of this information towards determining the person's principal area of socialization varies from case to case. In an ideal scenario, an asylum seeker will claim to speak a language as his or her native language or 'mother tongue', which can then be confirmed or disproved by means of a linguistic analysis of their speech sample. In practice, however, these proceedings prove to be much less straightforward and raise a significant number of questions that need to be addressed both in general terms as well as with each individual biography. When an asylum seeker does not conform to what to an analyst sounds like a native speaker of a certain language, one needs to reassess the significance of the alleged 'native' language on multiple levels: On the one hand, it is necessary to consider sociolinguistic factors that prevail in the area in question, such as pidginization or existing basilect-acrolect continua as well as the consequences of diglossia or multilingualism. Which degrees of native-likeness can therefore be expected? On the other hand, in most cases it remains unclear what qualifies as 'native-like' in the first place. Does the linguistic evidence based on phonology, morpho-syntax and lexicon, for instance, suffice towards this end? And if not, what other measures can be taken?

In this paper, we draw on actual problems that arise among the current LADO practices of LINGUA for the asylum procedure in Switzerland. We aim to present real-world examples illustrating how the above issues are addressed as well as why and where further research on nativespeakerhood can prove useful for LADO.

References

- Cambier-Langeveld, T. (2010) The role of linguists and native speakers in language analysis for the determination of speaker origin. *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*. 17(01), 67-93. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from <http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/IJSLL/article/view/7318/6448>.
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