Eng Breaking's Three Techniques to Speak English Like a Native Speaker: A Response Paper

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Abstract. This article aims to deliver the writer's reaction towards the Eng Breaking claim's that the online course helps the learners to speak English like a native speaker. In reality, native speakerism is more like a marketing strategy to persuade the English language learners to buy their product rather than a true promise which will come true. A pile of research in second language acquisition has reported that the likely of non-native speakers to achieve nativelike proficiency is slim. There are many factors which prevent it from happening, like learner's age of learning, method, materials, motivation, and learning environment. Furthermore, the writer uses the literature of second language acquisition studies to support her arguments to counter the Eng Breaking's claim as a face value promise. The writer also discusses the Eng Breaking three techniques of learning English from the literature point of view. The writer argues that the learning techniques can help the learners to learn English but not likely will lead the learners to possess the native speaker proficiency. In conclusion, the writer sums up that Eng Breaking online course is just a normal English course, whereas native speakerism is exercised and sponsored to merely attract lay people to spend their money into buying their product.

Keywords: *Second language; native-speakerism; Eng Breaking.*

Abstrak. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyampaikan sebuah reaksi ilmiah dari penulis terhadap klaim yang dibuat oleh salah satu kursus Bahasa Inggris online bernama *Eng Breaking*. Klaim tersebut berbunyi bahwa mereka bisa membuat siswa mereka berbahasa seperti layaknya penutur asli. Kenyataannya, kemampuan berbahasa seperti penutur asli seringkali menjadi maskot marketing dalam industri kursus Bahasa Inggris, dan bukan merupakan sebuah janji yang benar-benar bisa diwujudkan. Sejumlah besar penelitian pemerolehan bahasa kedua melaporkan bahwa kemungkinan penutur non-asli untuk berbahasa seperti penutur asli kecil, karena berbagai faktor seperti usia siswa, metode belajar, materi belajar, motivasi, dan lingkungan belajar mempengaruhi hasil belajar. Oleh sebab itu, penulis menggunakan literatur dalam pemerolehan bahasa kedua untuk mendukung argumen yang disampaikan. Penulis juga mendiskusikan tiga teknik belajar dalam kursus *Eng Breaking* berdasarkan tinjauan literatur. Penulis menyatakan bahwa teknik belajar tersebut bisa membantu para siswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris namun tidak akan membuat mereka memiliki keterampilan seperti penutur asli. Sebagai kesimpulan, penulis beranggapan bahawa kursus *Eng Breaking* hanyalah kursus Bahasa Inggris biasa namun mempelintir *native speakerism* untuk tujuan marketing kepada masyarakat awam agar membeli produk mereka.

Kata kunci: Bahasa kedua*; native-speakerism; Eng Breaking.*

INTRODUCTION

The need of non-native speakers of English to speak English gets higher. They are required to have sufficient English command in their studies, work, and social relationship. Some forms of entertainment and lifestyle also require English proficiency. Therefore, the industry of English learning becomes bigger than the past. As reported by the PIE news (June 17, 2021), in a 2021 report, it is estimated that the industry worth $10 billion worldwide for traditional offline and online learning sectors. It says that the enrolled students were estimated 1.7 billion students. The trends for online learning rose during pandemic covid-19. From the statistic figures, ELT industry is an extremely big business with a continuously growing market. Inevitably, the business enterprises compete with one another to win the customers preferences. They come with different strategies.

Eng Breaking is a digital English course whose advertisement pops frequently on YouTube contents. It claims that within three months of learning, the learners could have the language command like a native speaker by following its 36 topic materials (144 lessons) within less than one hour of study for three months of learning duration. Another claim is that it can help learners to speak English like native speakers within one month of pronunciation practice. Lastly, it also claims that it could solve students' common problems of learning English such as low confidence of speaking publicly and the fear of making mistakes.

From the official website (X3english.org), audience can get some information about the founder of Eng breaking. The founder of Eng breaking is Nam Nguyen from Vietnam under a company so-called X3English. The business was launched in 2013 with the first target market was Vietnam. The business was later expanded to neighbor countries, like, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, China and Brazil. The main offices are located in Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand. The official YouTube channel under the name Eng Breaking has been publishing contents in multiple languages of their target audience since 2017 with 199 thousand of subscribers by September 2022. The channel is the platform to advertise the Eng Breaking products to the prospective customers globally.

Eng breaking reveals that it does not use the traditional learning method which focuses on vocabulary memorization, grammar practice and little speaking practice. Instead, it claims that it uses new learning techniques so-called the three techniques which in their words are described as the revolutionary learning method, namely, deep listening, catching up, and rapid response. It says that their learners learn English like the children do in acquiring their first language, which is an interesting idea in the field. The idea of first language acquisition seems relatable to a mass of audience because each of them speak their mother language well. Let's imagine if they can speak English as they do in their mother language. Thus, to live this idea, Eng Breaking says that

listening is the first step of the learning program as the same as the natural acquisition that children undertake in their first language development. However, listening is not easy for most non-native speakers thus to anticipate it, Eng Breaking has figured out to equip the listening audio with two different speeds, namely, a slow-paced and normal-paced. As in natural learning, the learners are described to be able to absorb the language input during this phase. They argue that the learners start to develop their pronunciation as the native speakers by listening to the audio diligently. The learning technique is continued by the third phase, that is the rapid response. During this phase, the learners are trained to speak English like the models in the conversation audios. The process also similar to natural learning development whereas children will slowly speak like their surroundings and be good at it.

On the YouTube channel I found that two videos which indicate that Eng breaking sponsors the native speakerism ideas, namely introduction to Eng breaking (Eng breaking new version 2019) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6gehi8I-Jc) and the English pronunciation practise video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZzM-mwollk). Native speakerism is the attitudes that native speakers as the authority and standard of all matters concerning the language use (Tupas, 2022). The ideas should not be promoted any longer in the marketing because it gives a false hope to the foreign language learning in general (Escobar, 2018). The students and teachers may think that they do not speak English well enough as they see that they cannot speak like their native speaker fellows (Coskun, 2013; Reis, 2011; Zacharias, 2010). On another side, it allows a discrimination to exist, whereas some group communities are judged based on their similarity of speaking to the native speaker's norms, meanwhile, all cultures should be treated equally (Gao, Jia & Zhou, 2015; Rivers, 2011; Tanveer, 2007; Kubota & Lin, 2006). According to a pile of research in SLA, non-native speakers of adult age will not likely achieve the native speaker competence because their biological circumstances seem do not permit language acquisition happens as in their first language acquisition (Hulstijn, 2011; Mulder & Hulstijn, 2011, 2019; Gilakjani, 2011; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Sagarra, & Herschensohn, 2010; White, 2014; Dekeyser, 2013, 2020; Cook, 2010; Fauziati, 2011).

A response paper is a part of academic paper. It consists of the writer's opinion, feelings or analytical review on certain topic. The present response paper aims to deconstruct the Eng Breaking's three techniques of learning English in separate components or topics and then evaluate the topic for the readers. According to the writer knowledge, a response paper on EFL online course is scarce. The purpose of this article is to criticize the claims made by Eng Breaking that it can teach their learners to have a native speaker's proficiency within three-month of learning duration and one-month of pronunciation practice within less than one hour of study every day. Recent theories in SLA are used in the discussion. The discussion of the article will not discuss the

material of content of Eng Breaking as the writer does not have a copy of the book. Put differently, the writer makes the critique based on what is observed from the official website and the commercial ads.

DISCUSSION

The literature acknowledges that there are some similarities and differences between language acquisition and language learning (Kuls, 2010; Håkanson, 2005; Clahsen & Felser, 2006). The similarities are assumed that both language acquisition and language learning likely go through the same stages of development. Meanwhile, the differences lie in the different circumstances of learning. For example, the circumstances of the initial state and the final state (Seville-Troike, 2012). In the first language acquisition, the babies begin from zero cognitive ability as they are extremely weak physically and cognitively. The situation for second language learning is quite the opposite, whereas the learners have a sound knowledge of how the first language works. They also have a cognitive ability to learn the target language in any means that they prefer. In addition, the second language learners already have some interaction skills. Put differently, the second language learning seem to have more promising chance to succeed. However, the circumstances of the final state do not work accordingly. The babies who are healthy physically and mentally succeed in their first language acquisition in age five, yet, only a little percentage of the second language learners succeed in the second language learning, even though they spend more amount of time and efforts. The mystery of human's amazing language learning has been deconstructed through different research approach since 1960s.

For example, Chomsky (1965) says that first language acquisition is successful due to the availability of the language acquisition device (LAD) in human brain. The animals do not have this in their brain therefore no animal have a sophisticated language design like the human do. In other words, language acquisition is something ingrained in the human's DNA. The researchers investigated further whether the failure of second language learning have any relation to the unavailability of the language device in later age. The researchers believe that the language device is still there (Kuhl, 2010). In fact, the developmental stages of the second language learning approaches imitate the ldevelopmental stages of the first language. As a consequence, some scientists argue that the second language learning should be made like the first language acquisition. Among them is the natural approach which is close to the techniques introduced by the Eng Breaking. In the course of investigation, the researchers find out that the even though second language learning can imitate the first language acquisition but some differences emerge.

Meanwhile listening is agreed as a foundation of language acquisition but the research in SLA mentions that there is a limited period of language acquisition whereas one can attain a native-like

proficiency so-called critical period hypothesis by Lenneberg (1967). Scovel (1988), for example, claimed that phonological native proficiency is not found among learners who started learning after the age of puberty. Even though, for other aspects such as morphology and syntax, the learners who come to native speakers' countries after age of puberty are possible to reach native-speaker's proficiency (e.g., Birdsong, 1992). Even though some research show that there are different aspects of language proficiency which are affected and not affected by age (see. Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1977; Singleton, & Lengyel, 1995) but we see in reality that most of the children have a superior ability to imitate a second language accent that we rarely seen among the adult learners' speaking proficiency. The children's ears are like sponges in which it can absorb anything they hear from the language input (Targujeff, 2022; Viola, 2011; Gelman, 2009; Seriadi, 2019). Adults' ears do not work in the same way anymore. Their brain perception towards sound is filtered by their first language knowledge (e.g., Luu & Siriyothin, 2021; Patil, 2012). It means that adults can hear the sounds well but their interpretation of the sounds is closely linked to the sounds they have known earlier. Thus, their listening ability alone does not lead them to find out the real sounds of the target language. Instead, the learners may turn focus their attention to reading the text. If they do so, their pronunciation is guaranteed as far from the native speaker's pronunciation.

According to Setyadi (2018), Bahasa Indonesia has 35 phonemes (25 consonants, 7 vocals, and 3 diphthongs) which are much less than the number of phonemes in English that is 44. It means that Indonesian learners of English face some foreign sounds which are not available in their first language. In addition, Bahasa Indonesia and English are from different roots which result in quite different speech sounds. As the consequences, the difficulty of listening to English utterances gets higher. For majority of Indonesian students, listening to English native speaker's conversation is perceived as among the most difficult tasks (Gumilang, 2019; Abdulrahman, Basalama, & Widodo, 2018; Hidayati, Dewi, Nurhaedin, & Rosmala, 2020).

The second step is called catching up. Eng Breaking claims it as the pronunciation and intonation makeover for the Eng breaking learners. As explained in the official video, in this phase, the learners do listen and repeat to each conversation. The learners slowly develop their pronunciation skills by imitating the speakers' speech. This method is commonly used in audiolingual method of learning and is specifically aimed to build the pronunciation practice in the target language. However, producing the correct sound requires a well-trained muscle system in the speech apparatus because production of target language sounds gets some interferences from the mother tongue's speech habit. These interferences explain why many of non-native speakers do not attain the native speaker's pronunciation level, even though they have spoken English actively for decades (e.g., Birdsong, 1992; Zhang, 2009). Eng breaking seems to have recognized that deep listening and catching up alone do not lead the learners to reach native speaker's pronunciation.

Therefore, Eng breaking also has a pronunciation lesson in a separate video tutorial. It teaches the learners how to differentiate the short and long vowels. Yet, the method gives too little knowledge about target language's pronunciation elements. Pronunciation elements consist of suprasegmental (linking sound, intonation, and stress) and segmental features (consonants, vowels, phonemes). Long and short vowels belong to some part of the segmental features. In other words, reaching the native speaker's pronunciation through catching up technique does not give the learners enough tools to work with. To do so, a detailed and explicit phonological guide which tells the learners the articulation manners of the sounds is the most possible answer.

The main advantage among other advantages of learning the phonological system of the target language is that it helps the learners to recognize where the consonants and vowels sounds are produced in the speech apparatus. In addition, it involves an explicit knowledge about how to apply the intonation patterns, where the stress is located in a word (a sentence), and how the words may change their sounds when they are combined with other words in one stream of speech. All in all, this practice takes day to day consistency as the muscles of speech organ are not developed instantenously. Furthermore, the learners need to study the sounds systematically. Thus, what has been claimed in the Eng Breaking's pronunciation practice video that in one-month long study of the minimal pairs practice of short and long vowels, then language learners are able to achieve the native speaker's pronunciation ability likely fall short of expectation.

Rather than forcing the norms of nativelikeness, the language learners may embrass a realistic perspective about non-native pronunciation that is psychologically more liberating. The research has reported that non-native speakers suffer inferiority with their own English pronunciation (i.e., Nigar & Kostogriz, 2019; Lee, Schutz, van Vlack & Martinez Agudo, 2017; Llurda, 2014). However, the research also argue that the adult-age learners have a slim chance to speak like native speakers. As a matter of fact, adult learners are normal to have accents. The accent often times becomes their cultural identity when speaking in a different language (Delaine-Smith, 2021).) which deserve appreciation rather than a mochery. It does not mean that a clear pronunciation is not important (i.e., Uchida & Sugimoto, 2021; Chen, 2016). Indeed, learning a language does not have to make someone to make exaggerated sounds or sound like someone else (a native speaker). Every language learner surely has to work on their pronunciation clarity but they are still permitted to take a pride in their accent, instead of an awful feeling that they are not competent in someone else's mother tongue (i.e., Kaur & Raman, 2014; Aneja, 2014). Ideas which lead to language inferiority should be eradicated instead of promoted.

Feeling confidence about one's ability in speaking a foreign language is far more important in the learning process than what we used to think (i.e., Boonkit, 2010; Liu & Jackson, 2011). Many extroverted language learners with limited English can communicate in English well because they

feel confident with themselves (i.e., Chen, Jiang & Mu, 2015). Otherwise, many more language learners who have studied English for years and have a good command of English feel afraid to use it in real communication because they feel inconfident about their English (i.e., Hakim, 2015). Language performance often times deal with the psychological inhibitions rather than actual linguistic limitation (i.e., Ariyanti, 2016; Haidara, 2016). Thus, building positive attitudes is probably equally important as building the linguistic competence (i.e. Hashemi, 2011; Mak, 2011).

The last technique of Eng Breaking is rapid response. It is a repetition practice of some taped conversations. Ebf Breaking argues that through repetitions of the modelled target language, the learners will slowly achieve speaking fluency like the native speaker. Probably the learning is intended to follow the first language acquisition by babies. However, this idea seems to simplify a complex process. According to sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Brunner, 1983), actual interaction is a very important element in language acquisition. Babies with delay speech or autism are those who lack of language experience in actual social interaction (Kuhl, 2010). So, to get the speaking competence like a native speaker, the language learners probably must do a lot of practice of real English conversation with real native speakers rather than memorizing it from taped conversations which they might never encounter the exchanges in their actual conversation. The adult speakers build their speech fluency from real interactional speaking countless times (Kuhl, 2010). The native speakers hone their speaking skills their whole life.

It would be impossible to compare the language skills from Eng Breaking's three months of learning with the duration is less than one hour per day with the language skills of the native who use their language 24/7. Yet, in the advertisement, the paid models are those who are not perfect themselves in speaking English as they have not reached the native speakers' level themselves after three-month of study, even though they claim they have succeeded to get their dream. Eng Breaking's claim is extremely higher than what the learners could actually achieve by the end of the third month. Hence, I call upon the language learning courses anywhere that they present commercial ads as closer as possible to the reality.

CONCLUSION

To wrap up, the techniques to learn English via the Eng Breaking techniques are reasonable in developing the speaking skills, but rather impossible to achieve a native speaker's proficiency. Deep listening as the first step of learning is widely agreed as an ideal start of learning speaking in the target language, but the non-native learners need specific help to recognize sounds which are probably not present in their first language during deep listening. What commonly happen to non-native learners is that they mishear the sounds for something else. For the second step, catching up, the students are directed to do listen and repeat by following the model of conversation as a way to

build native speaker's pronunciation. Similarly, as in deep listening, producing target language's utterances correctly also needs explicit helps as well on how to make the sounds clear. The available pronunciation practice helps for the non-native learners on the website is far from enough. When speaking a foreign language independently, the non-native learners unconsciously produce sounds which are similar to the sounds in their first language, thus it requires some explicit teaching to guide the pronunciation practice. Lastly, the rapid response practice needs a lot of real time conversation chances to develop speech fluency rather than from listening and repeating exercises. Real interaction is very much different from what is presented in the prepared textbook. In real interaction, speaking fluency does not require good linguistic skill alone but the learners have to have a good confidence with themselves and their own English in different speech contexts. Native speakerism norms which is promoted in this online course seems to be an inhibiting burden for accented pronunciation which the non-native learners usually have. Thus, being able to speak clearly in the communication events is a more realistic idea to spread out for multiple backgrounds of non-native learners, whom may not wish to sound like no one else but themselves.

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