Describe and compare the attempts to classify and label different kinds of speakers of English by Barbara Mayor and David Graddol. What are the problems and issues raised?

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Many factors contribute to the gradual spread of any language: military, political, economic and religious. These factors affect the way in which speakers of other languages view its growth. It could be argued that the development of a single global language (English being the current main contender) would give its culture of origi n unprecedented influence in world affairs, eroding the status of minority languages and threatening national identity. This, in turn, is somewhat countered by the ways in which foreign speakers of English have taken the language and shaped it to meet thei r own social and psychological needs. What results is a sufficiently different form to that of original English that a new problem is encountered in actually classifying the different varieties. Indeed, affording different languages the title 'English' is generating concern amongst those who observe its degradation or even potential loss. The global spread of English therefore can be seen to have negative consequences by both external and internal parties.

Typically, these concerns surface and are themselv es compounded by language. In particular the different connotations attached to the terms used to describe and categorise the different varieties and their speakers. In the first article, Mayor doesn't try to classify speakers of English, rather she tries to provide a balanced assessment or critique of the many terms that have been used so far. Mayor employs a sociolinguistic approach in her approach to analysing the metalinguistic terms. When discussing the expressions used to describe language, She sees i t (language) as a social construct, communicating more than just the overt message carried in the construction of the grammar and vocabulary. The issues involved end up having more to do with the identity of the speaker as perceived by themselves and other s, than the language they use every day. For example, someone living in Cardiff might consider him or herself to be a staunch Welsh native without being able to speak a word of the language. As Mayor puts it, the issues are "concerned with the speaker's attitudes and… particularly hard to measure".

In contrast, David Graddol's article entitled 'Who Speaks English?' is much more concerned with problems arising from trying to accumulate quantifiable data regarding the global spread and type of English speak ers. Graddol's approach is pragmatic and removed from the arena of the individual. He also deals with ownership of the language but his analysis is not focussed on the social connotations of labelling someone descriptively. Instead, Graddol simplifies types of English speakers into three groups: first language speakers, second or additional language and those who speak it as a foreign language. This simplified holistic approach, favoured by some linguists, is partly to enable a global overview without getti ng bogged down in detail.

In a factual manner, Graddol commences with a historical account of the reasons behind the development of the three types of English speaking groups identified above. Colonialism was responsible for a great deal of the

spread of English globally. Originally introduced and destined to be used a means of control and conformity in these foreign outposts of the Empire, as time has moved on and attitudes changed, so has the language. Now, too ensconced to be easily discarded, speakers have adapted their use of English and stamped their own individuality on it.

Apart from the two types of colonisation (mass colonisation and sparser settlement) Graddol identifies a third type, whereby first language English speaking settlers displaced the indigenous population by bringing in a foreign labour force, resulting in "the creation of hybrid varieties of English called creoles". Graddol's point is that linguists are divided as to whether they regard creoles as languages in their own right (they are after all used as a primary language), or varieties of English existing beside the standard variety. Given this complex series of cross-culture mixing, it is no surprise that we have trouble distinguishing and categorising the different varieties of English in use today.

Most models and descriptive terminology tends to commence with, and therefore favour, the seminal language. Inevitably, Graddol begins his analysis with the English first-language countries. They automatically become a point of reference and comparison, so, one could say that English first-language is the benchmark against which all others are measured for difference. Graddol confirms this by explaining that although there may be local forms of English used in many second-language countries, in formal situations, the language often reverts to the standard English variety of that region (examples are British English in former colonies and US English in other places).

In learning English as a foreign language, it is generally accepted that the correct variety is the standard (British/US). This has recently begun to create new problems to be discussed and debated. Which variety of English should (if any) be regarded (and taught) as the true global variety? American? British? Indian? If the decision is to be based on existing numbers of speakers then it seems of paramount importance to correctly identify the different groups to the satisfaction of each.

Returning to Mayor's account, the wording of the terminology used seems to try to deal with issues of origin. 'home', 'community' 'mother', 'heritage' and 'native' are all heavily emotive words, carrying with them inherent judgements about the roots and origins of the subject. The terms also have implications about the level of competence in the language of the speaker, which may be incorrect or simply disagreed with. Does origin have to correspond with knowledge of a language for the term 'native speaker' to be applied accurately? The term 'speaker' may even be too exclusive, for, according to Mayor, individuals with a 'passive' knowledge (able to read, understand spoken English) are often overlooked in language studies.

For Mayor, when undertaking the recurring dual task of defining the criteria behind the terms and avoiding making value judgements, the term 'native language' causes the most problems. This is because 'native' is a relative

term. Each variety of English – Nigerian, Indian etc. – is native to that particular country. Mayor asserts that to assume that differences in the type of English used by speakers are simply intrusions from other languages would be a mistake. She asks the question: At what point do we consider the language used to be sufficiently different to our own, that we wouldn't acknowledge the speaker as a fellow native English speaker? It appears that in describing the language use of English speakers, it becomes a case of each description being the attempts of speakers with particular knowledge and self-identity trying to classify other speakers of equally valid knowledge and identity. As a result it is all too easy to assume and offend.

Emotional and psychological attachment to a language by its speakers is well documented. There is a history of power being exerted through language, especially English. The word *Eng*lish carries with it an intrinsic territorial connection, which, for many justifies a sense of 'ownership' of the language. Mayor quotes Rampton's idealistic advice that "we abandon notions of biological inheritance…in favour of… communicative expertise ". Just how many native English speakers would be willing to admit that a second or foreign language speaker had the same control over *their* language is arguable. These socio-cultural attachments that many have to their native language has been the basis for the search for an ideal unbiased global language by many linguistic theorists.

Mayor gives numerous examples of terms used to classify language use along with a critique of each. She ranges from criticism of the literal meaning of terms such as 'mother tongue' (the language spoke by parent or country or culture of origin), compounded further by the ways in which certain peoples refer to their national identity, whether it's 'Mother Russia' or 'The Fatherland' (Germany). As with so many other idiomatic phrases, they are not completely interchangeable between cultures.

Mayor suggests that speakers attachments to language is not always necessarily due to contextual demands (having to speak and be understood). Her application of the term 'heritage language' extends to languages that are no longer used, but serve the purpose of uniting a community, perhaps displaced from their country of origin. Her example is the fierce national pride of Italian-Americans. 'Community language' and 'heritage language' do not necessarily correspond, the spoken language of a community may be a dialect somewhat different to that which is considered the 'heritage' or 'standard' language of that particular culture. In India, for various reasons, many families have adopted English as the language of the home, but with familial outsiders may speak a community dialect that differs from the national standard.

Both Mayor and Graddol agree that data is hard to come by and can be unreliable. Linguists are constantly trying to describe and identify language in a state of flux. Mayor substantiates this both in her first and final paragraphs, emphasising that ascertaining a speakers knowledge of a language is difficult when the parameters of that knowledge are not set, and pointing out the fleeting reality of bilingualism and the lifelong shift between the two (or more)

languages used by polyglots. As so much prior study has revealed, context has much to do with language choice, factors such as sex, age and politeness count, and the labels we use to describe general English usage may not apply in every situation.

Graddol concludes with another caveat: that there is a progression from foreign language to second language areas. What this means in terms of the development of English is uncert ain. The de facto variety for foreign language speakers is standard English while the type of English in use in second language countries is often a distinct variety, influenced by the other predominant language(s) of the that country. It is feasible that foreign language speakers developing English as a second language will adopt the variety of English closest to home (be it Indian English in Asia or Nigerian English across parts of Africa). Ultimately, each country could end up with it's own forms of English, existing beside indigenous language and a standard variety. What it does mean is that although the global figures are constantly changing, English is still looked upon somewhat as a prestige language. It is the language chosen by speakers in second -language and foreign countries to convey scientific thought, the language of learning and of personal development in the world.

The two main problems highlighted by both Mayor and Graddol concern the quantifiable and qualifiable aspects of English language study. The sheer diversity and amount of English speakers throughout the world and the different varieties that they use make collating data very difficult. As a result, the terms developed to describe the categories are imperfect. At best, they are generalisations and at worst, exclusive and ambiguous. Linguists persevere.