

Abstract:

What native speakers don't know (but don't know they don't)

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This presentation explores first the political, religious, and ideological factors that native speakers of a language or variety might need to overcome in identifying authentic speakers of their own or closely-related varieties. It goes on to consider how more linguistically oriented social psychological factors, most prominently those of so-called language attitudes, may make this task even more difficult. I also hope to show that those language attitude factors interact with low-level linguistic factors in contributing to misidentifications and that those linguistic factors are precisely the sort linguists are most comfortable with and would expect to find verification of in native speaker accounts. In other words, I begin by showing why native speakers can't be trusted but go on to show how linguists may not be able to even recognize or lead us out of that confusion. I end somewhat more optimistically by suggesting more realistic expectations of both linguists and nonlinguists in this enterprise.