SPECIAL COLLEGE DRAMA AWARD

YoUr EnGlIsH iS sO GoOd

A ten-minute choreopoem

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER, a speaker for whom English is their second language, who may or may not speak with an accent when conversing with others in English; a friendly acquaintance to MONOLINGUIST, yet on the same professional and/or educational level.

MONOLINGUIST, a native English speaker who only speaks English, who’s part of a greater collective of native English speakers; a friendly acquaintance to ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER, yet on the same professional and/or educational level.

MONOLINGUISTS, greater collective of native English speakers.

SETTING

A professional and/or higher education setting.
(Ex. A library, an office, a court, other)

PRODUCTION NOTES

// signals an interruption, or where the next line by another character begins
A professional and/or higher education setting, crowded with MONOLINGUISTS, each involved in their own activities.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER and MONOLINGUIST are involved in a friendly conversation. This conversation is either mimed or mumbled, incoherently.

UNTIL:

MONOLINGUIST
But your English is so good!

The room freezes along with everyone in it, except for ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER is dumbfounded—“Did they just?—yet reacts silently.

The silence is kept up until it becomes unbearable and the moment, uncomfortably awkward.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
(to self or to audience)
Every time I hear this statement my world stops as it is revealed to me that finally after speaking fluent English for what is now . . .

(counts, first mumbling then loudly as they reach “20”)

1 . . .
2 . . .
after 20 years of speaking fluent English for the first time my English is—AT LAST!—so good—or at least, good enough to be understood—and worthy of such a great compliment

_MONOLINGUIST restarts their dialogue, AND/OR is joined by a second MONOLINGUIST in their dialogue._
MONOLINGUISTS also unfreeze and restart their activities during the length of MONOLINGUIST's dialogue.

MONOLINGUIST
But your English is so good!

MONOLINGUIST and MONOLINGUISTS freeze

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
And every time
I hear this statement,
I try to make sense of it,
yet can only bring myself to play dumb
since the statement
only makes sense
if I play the part that it suggests
—that of a dumb—
a person who lacks the ability to speak—.

MONOLINGUIST(S) restart(s) their dialogue, AND/OR is joined by another MONOLINGUIST in their dialogue.

MONOLINGUISTS also unfreeze and restart their activities during the length of MONOLINGUIST's dialogue.

MONOLINGUIST
But your English is so good!

MONOLINGUIST and MONOLINGUISTS freeze.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Every time
I hear
this statement—.

MONOLINGUIST(S) unfreeze(s) and restart(s) their
dialogue, AND/OR is joined by all other
MONOLINGUISTS in their dialogue.

MONOLINGUIST
But your English is so good!

All MONOLINGUISTS freeze.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Every
time
What bothers me
is not the statement itself
but what underlies it—
how it matters
not what I say
but how I say it,

How
NO ONE
is really
listening—.

All MONOLINGUISTS unfreeze and restart their
dialogue.

MONOLINGUISTS
But your English // is so good!

All MONOLINGUISTS freeze.
Every time I hear this statement, this implied condescension that deems my speech adequate. But // Unacceptable

All MONOLINGUISTS unfreeze and restart their dialogue. A MONOLINGUIST is the only one to get closer to ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER in what seems a consoling manner.

But your English—.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER doesn’t hesitate—they do not allow an interruption. Instead, they continue their dialogue:

... from monolinguists who have not the ear or will to understand sounds other than their own, yet who are quick to compensate their ignorance with backhanded compliments
ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER cues in all MONOLINGUISTS, mocking them as they speak:

MONOLINGUISTS
But your English is so good!

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER cues out all MONOLINGUISTS. They freeze.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
(swears in a non-English language of their choosing)
FUCK!
(in English)
Sometimes I hear this statement and I swear—.

Beat.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
What is worse than hearing it is that
Sometimes I actually listen
“But your English is so good . . .”

and I believe my accent to be a noise that cancels my voice.

And I swear to never speak again,
And take a vow of silence.

*ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER is silent for 10 seconds.*

**ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER**
But my English is so good!

**MONOLINGUISTS**
But your English is so good!

**MONOLINGUISTS** envelop **ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER** in a dance. They speak in place of **MONOLINGUIST**, interchangeably.

**ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER** joins in, slowly.

**ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER**
(to a random **MONOLINGUIST**)
Do you really think so?

**ADDRESSED MONOLINGUIST**
It is.

**A MONOLINGUIST**
(with a so-so gesture)
Good good.

**A DIFFERENT MONOLINGUIST**
So good!

**ANOTHER MONOLINGUIST**
Your English is so good!

**MONOLINGUIST**
So good!

**ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER**
Good? My English?

ANOTHER MONOLINGUIST

Sooooooooooo goooooooood!

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Good?

MONOLINGUIST

*Good.*

MONOLINGUIST

*(pronounces slowly)*

GOOD.

MONOLINGUISTS

*(spell it out)*

GOOD.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Other times—.

MONOLINGUIST

*(pronounces slowly)*

YOUR.

MONOLINGUISTS

*(spell it out)*

YOUR.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

When I hear this statement—.

MONOLINGUIST

*(pronounces slowly)*

ENGLISH.

MONOLINGUISTS

*(spell it out)*

ENGLISH.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

I do entertain—.
MONOLINGUIST
(pronounces slowly) MONOLINGUISTS
(spell it out)
SO.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Its false validation.

MONOLINGUIST
(pronounces slowly) MONOLINGUISTS
(spell it out)
GOOD. GOOD.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Thank you!

MONOLINGUIST
It is

MONOLINGUIST
(pronounces slowly) MONOLINGUISTS
(spell it out)
GOOD. GOOD.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Thank you.

ALL MONOLINGUISTS
(spell it out and/or pronounce slowly)
GOOD.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER
Other times—.

ALL MONOLINGUISTS
(spell it out and/or pronounce slowly)
GOOD.
I am too tired.

Too tired
to play dumb
or to pretend
to be flattered

too tired to speak
and not be listened to

Too tired
to be
good.

All characters reset to their starting positions and actions by the end of the word “good.”

The conversation between ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER and MONOLINGUIST continues from where it stopped:

GOOD.
UGH.
Wow.
Thank you.

Your English is pretty good, too!
How are you so good?
END SCENE.