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 . . .
3 . . .
4 . . .
5 . . .
6 . . .
7 . . .
8 . . .
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 abi//lity 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.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

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:

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

. . . 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 MONOLINGUISTS
But my English is so good! 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

Sooolllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllloooood!

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)
SO.

MONOLINGUISTS

(spell it out)
SO.
ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Its false validation.

MONOLINGUIST

(pronounces slowly)

GOOD.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Thank you!

MONOLINGUIST

It is

MONOLINGUIST

(pronounces slowly)

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.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

I am too tired.

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Too tired
to play dumb
or to pretend
to be flattered

ALL MONOLINGUISTS

(spell it out and/or pronounce slowly; they repeat as needed)

GOOD.
ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

too tired to speak
and not be listened to

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

Too tired

to be
good.

ALL MONOLINGUISTS

(pronounce slowly; they
repeat as needed)

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:

ALMOST NATIVE SPEAKER

GOOD.
UGH.
Wow.
Thank you.

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

END SCENE.