

## NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS (NESTs) AND INDONESIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS (IETs): EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES

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**Abstract.** This paper explores EFL students' perception of Indonesian English Teachers (IETs)/ Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) and Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia. 32 Indonesian EFL university students participated in this study. Employing a five-point Likert scale questionnaire (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree) distributed to participants, this study found that (1) students perceived IETs/NNESTs to be better in teaching beginning learners as IETs/NNESTs apply Indonesian into English instruction, sharing the same first language and the same culture, understanding students' problem in learning English, understanding the questions and providing clear answers, and sharing the same language learning process; (2) students perceived NESTs to be better in teaching advanced learners of English as NESTs are superior in their English proficiency. NESTs are perceived to be better in teaching speaking, pronunciation, listening, and culture. This study implies that both IETs/NNESTs and NESTs have their strengths and weaknesses in the English language teaching context.

**Keywords:** *NESTs, NNESTs, IETs, EFL learners, Perception, Preferences*

### INTRODUCTION

The position of English as a global language has attracted many people from expanding circle countries (see figure 1 for the concentric circle model) to learn and master English to communicate with people from different nationalities. English is the language used widely in mass media, in printed books and newspapers, and on the internet. Having English fluency means that the ones get more opportunities to access news or references presented in English. Although the importance of English is obvious, the success in learning English as a second or foreign language is never obvious. Some learners could reach a

certain level of English proficiency but some others are still struggling or even failed (see Pariyanto & Pradipta, 2019; Renandya, 2013 for factors influencing learners' proficiency). One of the problems that rises around the success and failure of English language learning is the problem in the teaching and learning language itself. The majority of students assume that it is the Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) who can make the best teaching and who lead the students to the success of learning English (Barany & Zebari, 2018; Tsou & Chen, 2017; Torres, 2004). Their remarkable fluency in English is believed to

be a tool to boost students' success in learning English.

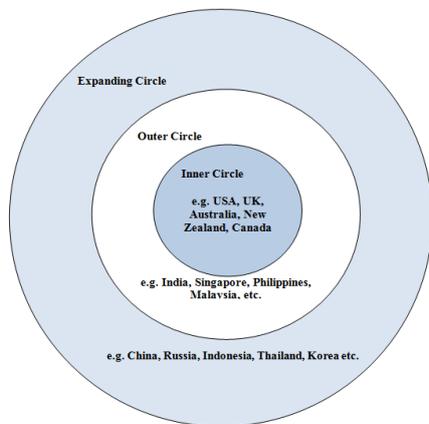


Figure 1. The concentric circle model by Kachru

However, Canagarajah (1999) maintains that language teaching is an art, a science, and a skill that requires complex pedagogical preparation and practice. Not all speakers may make good teachers of their first language. The success of language teaching is not merely measured by the fluency of a particular language one has, but several factors need to be taken into accounts such as the nature of learners, social context, and cultural background of the learners. These factors are highly understood by Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) as they share learners' first language and better understand the students' learning difficulties (Braine, 2010; Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

In the Indonesian context, along with the demand for good quality teaching especially the teaching of English, either central or local government emphasizes the professional development of the teachers. The teachers are required to undertake pre-service and in-service teacher training and have a particular level

of English proficiency to be able to teach school/university students.

The government provides scholarships (e.g. Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education [LPDP]; Ministry of Religious Affairs' scholarship [5000 Doctors Program]; Ministry of Education and Culture's Scholarship [Excellent Scholarship] ) to upgrade the teachers' degrees to higher-level either in the universities in Indonesia or foreign countries. This initiative has been taken to keep the local teachers well informed about the current practice and issues related to language teaching.

Setting up in different contexts, Indonesian EFL Learners with online learning mode, this article explored students' perception and preferences of NESTs and NNESTs or Indonesian English Teachers (IETs, the terms [NNESTs & IETs] are used interchangeably in this paper).

## METHOD

The present study employed survey research. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was distributed to 32 Indonesian EFL university students through the class WhatsApp groups. Students' responses to 25 statements on IETs/NNESTs and NESTs in English language teaching were then coded and analyzed. The average response rate was calculated by multiplying the number of responses per point (i.e., 1-5) and add them together. The total number obtained is then divided by the number of respondents. Number of average response rate was interpreted as the following: 1.00-1.80 = strongly disagree (very low); 1.81 -2.60 =disagree (low); 2.61-3.40 = moderately agree (moderately high);

3.41-4.20 =agree (high); and 4.21-5.00 =strongly agree (very high).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Students Perception and Preferences of IETs/NNESTs

The results of the study are presented below. Table 1 shows students' perception and preferences of IETs/NNESTs. Table 2 shows students' perceptions and preferences of NESTs.

**Table 1.** Students' Perception and Preference of IETs/NNESTs

No.		Average Response
1	I learn English better from IETs because we share the same first language.	3.71
2	I learn English better from IETs because we share the same culture.	3.96
3	I feel motivated when I take a course with IETs.	3.56
4	I feel anxious when I take a course with NESTs.	3.21
5	IETs are better than NESTs because they can understand my problems in learning English	3.09
6	IETs always understand my questions and provide clear answers.	3.40

7	IETs are a good model in learning English because they have gone through the same language learning process.	3.50
8	In general, intermediate and advanced learners learn better with NESTs because they rely less on Indonesian language support and need more opportunities to practice their English	4.40
9	In general, beginning learners learn better with IETs because IETs apply Indonesian to English instruction	3.93
10	In general, I would prefer IETs as a teacher	3.31
		<b>3.60</b>

As shown in Table 1, the average response of the ten statements on IETs/NNESTs is 3.60. It suggests that students agree on some qualities possessed by IETs/NNESTs. Students agree that IETs/NNESTs are better in terms of teaching beginning learners as IETs/NNESTs apply Indonesian into English instruction, sharing the same first language and the same culture, understanding students' problem in learning English, understanding the questions and providing

clear answers, and sharing the same language learning process.

This is in line with previous research studies by Braine (2010) and Arva and Medgyes (2000). The experience of learning English as a foreign language, IETs/NNESTs are perceived to have more to do to make successful English language teaching and learning. The role that IETs/NNESTs can play is that they provide a better learner model. Unlike NESTs who acquire English as their native language, IETs/NNESTs are the ones who started learning English after the acquisition of their mother tongue. The success the IETs/NNESTs possess can be shared with the students in which students need to take similar steps in learning English.

As a multiethnic country, Indonesia has many local languages that the students acquire when they are childhood and as a language of communication amongst people within a community. Bahasa Indonesia is then introduced when they enter kindergarten as a national language or a lingua franca between people from different ethnicities. After the acquisition of the two languages above, English is taught and learned a few years later in elementary school. This process is experienced previously by the IETs/NNESTs before being a teacher of English. Therefore, the IETs/NNESTs know exactly what to do to deal with the second language acquisition as they have been through these stages and can relate their learning experience to students' learning. Students, in this context, would see a relevant model of English language learner which in turn could encourage them to

keep learning it, having shown the achievement reached by their teacher.

Medgyes (2006) contends that a successful teacher is a successful learner of English. Poor language learners are unlikely to make good language teachers. The IETs/NNESTs go through some efforts and encounter difficulties in the process of learning English. They try to make sense of the complexity of the English structure that is completely different from the structure of the Indonesian language. The richness of vocabulary that English has requires extra time to remember. Being able to cope with numerous stages in acquiring English, IETs/NNESTs portray a good learner of English that students can follow to make successful learning. Besides, in terms of vocabulary, IETs/NNESTs can explain the difficult words which the students feel hard to understand using the mother tongue. This will make students easy to connect the words with their context.

IETs/NNESTs, additionally, can teach language learners learning strategies more effectively. Language learning strategy is said to contribute to the success of learning a language. A learning strategy as defined by Mayer (2003) is cognitive processing performed by a learner at the time of learning that is intended to improve learning. According to Brown (2007) strategies means particular methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for accomplishing a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. The ability to select the most appropriate strategy for dealing with a specific learning task is likely to lead the learners to succeed

in the journey of acquiring the language. IETs/NNESTs as successful learners of English are thought to be conscious strategy users that can inform which strategies have worked for them and which have not. Sharing learning experiences as well as assisting students to find out other strategies that should work for them is what the IETs/NNESTs usually do in this case. They better understand Indonesian students' nature and learning style than NESTs since they shared the same culture and first language.

The learning strategies that IETs/NNESTs suggest for students to employ in remembering vocabularies, for instance, by linking the words of English with the words of Bahasa Indonesia or similar sounds found in English words to be connected to the sound of words found in Bahasa Indonesia. Similar sound of words between English and Bahasa Indonesia such as "buku" means book, "mama" means "mum", "sekolah" means school, and so forth. It is, as I experience with learning English, proved to be effective in remembering English words rather than routinely consult to the dictionary to find out the meaning. Reading aloud English text soon after wake up in the morning, as my school teachers suggested to do to me and my classmates are very helpful in reading skill as well as in improving pronunciation. There are myriad other strategies that IETs/NNESTs employ to assist students' learning. Therefore, students can achieve the goal of English language learning.

The following role that IETs/NNESTs can play is that they supply more

information about the English language. Research by Medgyes (2006) comparing teaching behavior between NESTs and NNESTs shows that NNESTs were found to be more insightful than NESTs. It is said that the process of mastering the English language is different between the two where NESTs are largely unaware of the internal mechanisms directing language use, and thus less able to supply relevant information about the target language to the students. NNESTs, however, have considerable knowledge about the English language throughout their learning process.

It is often that Indonesian students compare and contrast the structure of the English language with the structure of Bahasa Indonesia before fully understand what the teacher has taught. Students in this situation might experience what Yule (2006) called 'transfer' or 'interlanguage' where students feel confused in using expression or structures from the L1 when performing in the L2. For example, students say 'father I go with sister I yesterday' instead of saying 'my father went with my sister yesterday'. A sentence produced by the students is in the structure of Bahasa Indonesia but the vocabularies used in it are English. Since the possessive pronoun in Bahasa Indonesia is the same as subject or object, modifier comes after noun and adverb of time is not necessarily change the verb form, students unintentionally make a combination of both languages.

IETs/NNESTs with substantial insights into the English language can supply more information and address students'

difficulties. This is why teaching English in the Indonesian context IETs/NNESTs put emphasis more on form than on function. It is widely understood that function is crucially important to see the meaning of learning English and how it is used in real-life communication. However, before going further to that stage there are some basic forms that students have to acquire for their communication to be understood by others. Students surely cannot produce any English sentence without firstly introduced by the teacher how to correctly construct it. Unlike the ESL context where students have ready access to English outside of the classroom (Brown, 2007), Indonesian students as the categorized EFL setting have no exposure to English other than in the classroom. The presence and the roles of IETs/NNESTs highly contribute to the students' understanding of how English works by giving them applicable information.

Han (2005) contends that IETs/NNESTs are more successful in terms of mutual cultural understanding between teachers and learners as well as sharing similar learning experiences. This makes IETs/NNESTs to be more sensitive in teaching English to Indonesian students. Situated in the host country with native students, IETs/NNESTs know better what is going to achieve or the goal of English language learning in line with the institutional or national education policy. Say, for example, the students will face a national examination where some feelings of depression almost haunt every student. To help students anticipate and prepare for the test IETs/NNESTs often approach it

with a teaching method that emphasizes more on grammatical test exercises and assigning home works.

IETs/NNESTs are often seen to be stricter than NESTs since they require students to do a lot of homework and to complete grammar exercises. This, however, does not mean that NNESTs do not have great empathy for students with a lot of work to do but rather it is a sort of effort that students have to undergo to pass the exam. It is unlikely that IETs/NNESTs employ the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in this given situation. In general, CLT which is viewed as an outstanding approach to teaching language is considered to be less appropriate to be used in Asian countries (Bachrudin, 2001; Ellis, 1997; McKay, 2002). This is especially because the language learning environment, needs, goals, and cultural traditions of the students are different from those of western learners.

Having said so, the IETs/NNESTs know more about the goals of language learning in the Indonesian context. Goals are thought to affect students' performance. Dornyei (2001) contends that goals affect the students' performance at four mechanisms; (a) directing attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities; (b) regulating the number of effort students expend to the difficulty level required by the task; (c) encouraging persistence until the goal is accomplished; (d) promoting the search for relevant action plans or task strategies. Additionally, the cultural traditions, social conditions, and economic needs of the students, as Canagarajah (1999) contends, are the area

that IETs/NNESTs put more of their attention. They can integrate these language attitudes and sociolinguistic patterns into teaching English as a foreign language.

Another role of IETs/NNESTs in ELT is that they take Indonesian students to an ultimate understanding of the English language by using the Bahasa Indonesia in explaining difficult parts of English features. The use of L1 in the monolingual classroom is seen to be the most genuine vehicle of communication between IETs/NNESTs and their students as well as become a powerful teaching and learning tool in any situation (Medgyes, 2006). IETs/NNESTs can perform better at explaining linguistic features in which they can express the difficult explanation through the shared mother tongue. As English is learned as a foreign language, it is common for Indonesian students when encountering any difficulty in using English to use and ask for clarification in Bahasa Indonesia. If the classroom instruction is conducted fully in English, the students will find some difficulties especially when the level of students' proficiency is at elementary or at the beginning.

With limited knowledge and exposure to English, students are thus best taught using both languages. Bahasa Indonesia is employed as a language of instruction specifically for the particular linguistic feature of English that is considered to be hard to understand by the students. Regarding the use of bilingual in classroom instruction, a study about the Chinese views of western teaching by Cortazzi and Jin (1996) demonstrates that

Chinese students gain more knowledge about the English language from NNESTs (Chinese teachers) whereas the western teachers (NESTs) stress more on fluency without any explanation about grammatical rules and correct students' error.

While it is strongly needed by Indonesian students who learn English, using both Bahasa Indonesia and English is quite helpful in making students fully understand the complexity of English structure and how it is used in communication appropriately. When I was a high school student, I often asked my English teacher about the use of English in Bahasa Indonesia. Teachers in Indonesian students' perspective are the agent of knowledge and they must know everything about the profession they hold. With limited resources and individual preferences, Indonesian students are unlikely to generate their learning and research to find out information. Being able to explain all necessary information about the English language in the native language, IETs/NNESTs can lead the students to succeed in the process of acquiring English.

## **B. Students Perception and Preferences of NESTs**

As can be seen in Table 2, the average response of students' perception and preference of NESTs is 4.19. This suggests that students agree with the idea that NESTs are better at teaching spoken language and assessing students' language production. NESTs are perceived to be more competent in making the students

able to speak. This validates previous research findings by Barany & Zebari (2018), Tsou & Chen (2017), and Torres (2004)

**Table 2.** Students' Perception and Preference of NESTs

No.		Average Response
11	In general, NESTs are better at Explaining grammar	4.03
12	I learn more vocabularies with NESTs	4.50
13	My pronunciation is better when I learn with NESTs	4.37
14	My listening is better when I learn with NESTs	4.34
15	My reading skills are better when I learn with NESTs	4.09
16	I speak English more frequently when I have a class with NESTs	4.56
17	NESTs give me more strategies/ideas to learn English better	4.12
18	I learn more about English speaking countries with NESTs	4.28
19	I have positive attitudes towards English speaking countries and their speakers when I have a class with NESTs	4.21
20	NESTs assess my listening	3.96

	comprehension better than IETs	
21	NESTs assess my reading comprehension better than IETs	3.93
22	NESTs assess my speaking better than IETs	4.21
23	NESTs assess my writing better than IETs	4.21
24	NESTs assess my pronunciation better than IETs	4.06
25	NESTs assess my knowledge of grammar better than IETs	4.00
		<b>4.19</b>

As indicated in the study by Barany & Zebari (2018), Tsou & Chen (2017), and Torres (2004), NESTs are seen to be superior in their English proficiency. NESTs are perceived to be better in teaching speaking, pronunciation, listening, and culture. Also, students think that they have positive attitudes towards English speaking countries and their speakers when they have a class with NESTs. Hence, teaching English culture is considered to be one of NESTs' competencies.

Medgyes (2006) listed more comprehensive NESTs and NNESTs teaching behavior as perceived by learners. The teaching behavior was classified into [1] own use of English, [2] general attitude, [3] attitude to teaching the language, and [4] attitude to teaching culture. Regarding

NESTs, perceived own use of English includes speak better English, use real language, and use English more confidently. NESTs' perceived general attitude includes adopt a more flexible approach, are more innovative, are less empathetic, attend to perceived needs, have far-fetched expectations, are more casual, and are less committed.

Dealing with attitude to teaching the language, NESTs were perceived to be less insightful, to focus on fluency, meaning, language in use, oral skills, and colloquial registers. They were also perceived to teach items in context, to prefer free activities, to favor group work/pair work, to use a variety of materials, to tolerate errors, to set fewer tests, to use no/less L1, to resort to no/less translation, and to assign less homework. Concerning attitude to teaching culture, NESTs were perceived to supply more cultural information.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, students perceived IETs/NNESTs to be better in teaching beginning learners as IETs/NNESTs apply Indonesian into English instruction, sharing the same first language and the same culture, understanding students' problem in learning English, understanding the questions, and providing clear answers, sharing the same language learning process, providing a better learner model, teaching language learning strategies, supplying more information about the English language, being sensitive in teaching English, and taking Indonesian students to ultimate understanding by

explaining difficult part of English features of the English language using the shared L1. Students also perceived that NESTs to be better in teaching advanced learners of English as NESTs are superior in their English proficiency. NESTs are perceived to be better in teaching speaking, pronunciation, listening, and culture. Additionally, NESTs allow students to have positive attitudes towards English speaking countries and their speakers. This is students' perception that NESTs have more competency in teaching English culture.

This study implies that both IETs/NNESTs and NESTs have their strengths and weaknesses in the English language teaching context.

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