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Enhancing The Role of Native Speaker and Non-Native Speaker English Teachers in Indonesia

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Abstract

There has been a growing debate on the differences between native speaker and non-native speaker teachers in English language teaching in Indonesia. The issue of native-speakerism has put non-native teachers in the corner where they feel inferior over native teachers. This native-speakerism issue then make the students and language institution favour the native speakers more than the local teachers. Thus, this research aims to investigate the role of both native and non-native English teachers in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative literature review method, drawing on scholarly articles, books, and academic publications related to English as a Lingua Franca, and native-speakerism. The data were collected through systematic analysis of relevant literature from reputable academic databases. The findings indicate that the distinction between native and non-native English speakers remains influential but is gradually being redefined. Both native and local teachers have their own strengths and weaknesses. Native speakers teacher may have some benefits on language teaching, however, marginalizing the non-native teacher is also not a good idea. Recognizing the legitimacy and contributions of non-native speakers is essential for developing more inclusive and realistic approaches to English language use and education in a globalized world.

Keywords: *Native Speakers; Non-Native Speakers; English Teachers; English Teaching*

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INTRODUCTION

The global role of English has changed dramatically over the past century. Once associated mainly with countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, English is now used worldwide as a lingua franca—a common language for communication among people with different first languages. Today, the majority of English users are non-native speakers, which has reshaped traditional ideas about language ownership, authority, and proficiency. McArthur (1998) as cited in Zacharias (2005) defines native speaker as a speaker who uses particular language for daily communication since their childhood. As a result, citizens from USA, UK, Australia, and Canada are considered as native speakers. In other words, those countries are named as Inner Circle countries. As a matter of fact, many other speakers outside those nations also speak English since their childhood. Thus, this definition is somehow problematic. Zacharias (2005) questions on the reason why people who come from countries such as Malaysia and India cannot be considered as native speakers although English is spoken since their early years. Thus, it is inferred that the term native speaker itself is controversial and unclear.

Besides the vague definition of native speakers, there has also been a continuous debate on the issue of native speaker English teachers and non-native English teachers in the context of teaching English as a second language or foreign language. Lauder (2010) argues that in the practice of teaching English in EFL countries, there seems to be the need to teach the Standard English. The standard English means the English which is spoken in Inner Circle countries which include North America, Britain, and Australia (NABA). It is argued

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that as English originally came from those countries, thus, English should be taught according to how English is spoken and used in those Inner Circle nations.

As the need for teaching standard English is very high in non-English speaking countries, the demand to hire native English teachers is also getting higher. The native speakers are assumed to have a better understanding of the Standard English as they originally came from English speaking nations and they speak this language in their everyday life. In addition, the use of language by the local teachers in Indonesia also triggers the need to hire more native teachers. A study conducted by Marcellino (2008) found out that due to the lack of language fluency, local or non-native teachers significantly use Bahasa Indonesia in English language classroom teaching such as in grammar explanation. As a result, students have inadequate exposure to the English language because their teachers do not frequently model the language. Due to this problem, it is inferred that there is an urgent need to have native teachers in Indonesia to give more exposure to English to the students.

According to Elyas and Alghofaili (2019), many institutions prioritize native speakers regardless of teaching qualifications. Zacharias (2005) explains that English courses and institution in Indonesia value native speaker teachers more compare to local English teachers because according to them, native speaker teachers can attract and trigger the students to learn English. However, even when the demand of having native speaker teachers is really high, Lauder (2010) notes that there is still inadequate native speaker teachers at a school in EFL countries. As a result, the students are still lacking in having exposure toward that Standard English. In Indonesia itself, there are only a few schools which have native teachers. Most institutions which have the native teachers are usually the schools which centralized in capital or big cities.

On the other hand, Philipson (1992) brings the issue of 'native speaker fallacy' which defines the belief that considers native speakers as an ideal teacher to teach English. Due to this assumption, people have certain favouritism toward native speaker which is commonly known as *nativespeakerism*. According to Holliday (2006), native-speakerism is rooted in the belief that native speakers represent the ideal model of language use and teaching. Certain favouritism toward native speaker teachers actually disadvantages the non-native teachers. This problem then makes local English language teachers in Indonesia lose their confidence as the teachers. Dewi (2007) notes that local teachers in Indonesia are given less appreciation for example in terms of salary and professional acknowledgement compare to the hired native English teachers. Furthermore, Zacharias (2005) who analyses the local English teachers perspective on native-speakerism revealed that those local teachers need more acknowledgement for being a language teacher. They argue that ideal teachers should not be determined based on their nativeness but they should be valued based on their educational background and their teaching practices. This problem of native-speakerism is only one among many problems that teachers and students face in English education in Indonesia.

Overall, the evolving role of native and non-native English speakers reflects broader changes in globalization, communication, and identity. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing more inclusive and realistic perspectives on English use in the modern world.Hence, this study will discuss the issues which surround native speakers and non-native speakers English teachers in Indonesia. This study gives an overview of English language teaching in Indonesia and provide critical discussion of both native teachers and non-native teachers in several aspects and then followed by the discussion of problematic issues surrounding them. Moreover, this research explores and offers some recommendations for both teachers on how to improve their teaching practice and attitude toward teaching English in EFL context.

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METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature review approach. The purpose of this method is to analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate existing scholarly works related to the roles of native and non-native English speakers. Rather than collecting primary data, this study focuses on secondary data derived from academic publications to identify patterns, debates, and emerging perspectives in the field. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how native and non-native speaker roles have been conceptualized, challenged, and redefined over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part analyzes the teaching English in Indonesia, the issue of native speakers vs non-native speakers English teachers in Indonesia and recommendations for English teachers in Indonesia.

1. Native Speakers teachers VS Non-native speakers teachers

In general, native speakers and non-native speakers teachers differ in two aspects. First, their teaching behaviour which includes teaching approach and teaching practices. Second, their use of language which includes language proficiency and competence. This part will discuss the role of both teachers.

1.1 Native English teachers

a. The model of English fluency and proficiency

Reves and Medgyes (1994) in their study found out that native teachers are regarded more fluent than non-native teachers. Their fluency is seen from the aspects of their readiness to speak, their speech rate and their skill to speak coherently. As the native speaker teachers speak English in their everyday life, it is undeniable that most of them are more fluent and proficient in English compared to non-native teachers who speak another native language. Medgyes (1992) argue that native speakers have an advantage over the non-native speakers. It is because the native speakers can master English with less effort as they are born and grow up with that language. He also argues that non-native speakers can never achieve the native speakers' language competence in English. It is because their use of English is mostly imitating the native speakers and focus on how to speak accurately so they cannot be creative in using the language. Not to mention, they also tend to compare their native language competence with their target language competence which is actually not comparable at the very first place. So, Medgyes concludes that as the native and non-native teachers use English differently, as a result, they teach this language in a different way as well.

The presence of native speakers is argued to be able to create a positive environment in a language classroom. As stated by Reves and Medgyes (1994), as most of the native speakers have better language proficiency, they are most confident in using English. As a result of this confidence, it triggers more trust from the students in learning how to become a proficient and fluent English speaker. Furthermore, the students consider the native teachers as the model for using and practice their English. A study by Benke and Medgyes's (2005) as cited in Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) revealed that students consider native speakers as being a friendly and resourceful model for imitation, so it positively encourages learners to speak in the target language. It can motivate the students to learn and create English

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environment at their school since there is no other way to interact with their native speaker teachers unless they employ the English language at school.

b. Cultural knowledge

Language and culture are inseparable. According to Hall (1997b), teaching language also carries the teaching of culture of where the language is spoken. Thus, native teachers are regarded as a good source to learn the culture of the target language. As learning the language cannot be separated from learning the culture, it is important for language learners to gain an understanding of the target language culture. Based on Romadhon, Indrayanti, Firmansyah, & Qurohman (2024), native speakers provide insights into target-language culture, idiomatic expressions, and real-life communication. It is emphasized by a study by Zacharias (2005) exposes that English teachers believe that it is essential to teach the knowledge about target culture in order to enhance students cross-cultural understanding. Students may be curious to know the lifestyle of people in English native countries and how English is used there. This curiosity can positively encourage them to learn better. Thus, native speaker teachers are seen as the suitable resources to provide this information for them.

1.2 Non-native English teachers

a. Teaching strategies and language competence

Although many students favour the native speaker teachers, Reves and Medgyes (1994) explain that non-native teachers, in fact, have better preparation and strategy in teaching. A study of Chinese college students by Liu and Zhang's (2007) as cited in Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) found out that the students view their non-native teachers as being well-prepared and have better teaching organisation rather than the native teachers. Medgyes (1992) adds that non-native teachers were found to be able to teach learning strategies more effectively to the students. It is because as Medgyes states, these teachers also make reflection and take their personal experience as a language learner into account when deciding and adopting the best method of teaching which can suit the learners. In line with this, Mahboob's study in 2003 as cited in Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) revealed that non-native teachers are valued for having experience in learning the target language and deeper understanding of English teaching methodology. Moreover, they are considered to have better ability to predict learners potential and anticipate the learning difficulties that the students might face (Reves & Medgyes, 1994 ; Medgyes, 1992). As they have experience in learning English as a foreign language, they may share the same difficulties and constraints during the learning so that they will have strategies on how to anticipate those learning issues faced by their students (Medgyes, 1992).

Moreover, although local teachers are considered as having lack of fluency compare to native teachers they are in fact regarded to have better insight and understanding about the English language. Moreover, a study by Reves and Medgyes (1994), found out that they have better knowledge of grammar compared to native speaker teachers. Again, it is due to the fact that they have studied how to learn English previously so they are regarded as the model of successful English language learners (Medgyes, 1992). Thus, they are assumed to be able to provide more information and knowledge about linguistic feature of English.

b. Cultural and background similarity factor

As the non-native teachers share the same culture with the target learners, it benefits both students and the teachers. The teachers are found to have more sensitiveness toward the students as English language learners progress (Medgyes, 1992). It is because as has been

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mentioned before, the teachers have experience on difficulty and constraint in learning a second or foreign language. As a result, they understand the students better and they have more tolerance for the students' mistakes and challenges faced during the learning process. They can serve as successful examples of language learners, which can inspire students (Kurniawati & Rizky, 2018). So, it can positively motivate the students and build their confidence to be a successful learner just like their teachers. Moreover, as the teachers and the students speak the same mother tongue, it is easier for the students to communicate and build a personal connection with the teachers.

Relating it to Indonesia context, the use of mother tongue in Indonesia is also criticized. Marcelino (2015) disfavour the frequent use of Bahasa Indonesia in English language classroom because it gives learners less exposure to English. If native language is used in English language classroom, the students will not get adequate opportunity in using English. However, Medgyes (1992) believes on the opposite. Medgyes argues that the use of mother tongue is actually necessary in English language classroom to facilitate learning. By communicating in mother tongue, it is easier for the teachers to explain complex knowledge about linguistic aspects of English and give further explanation to the students related to the lesson. Sometimes the students do not understand if the teachers only use English in explaining the lesson, so the teacher can use native language to ensure the students receive total understanding toward the lesson. For example, native language can be used to explain the description of the tasks, difficult vocabulary, and complex grammar knowledge. Hence, the teachers are allowed to use mother tongue in the classroom only if it is necessary in order to assist the learners more meaningfully. This can also lessen the gap between the students and the teachers. People who share similar culture and language are considered to have more empathy and closer relationship one another. Therefore, this same cultural background can effectively create positive environment in language learning classroom.

2. Problematic issues surrounding native and non-native English teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context

2.1. Teachers identity

The issue of identity conflict is really significant on this matter. Being a foreign language teacher is not only dealing with the way to employ learning strategies effectively in order to help the learners achieve the goals of learning the target language. Although the non-native teachers and the native teachers share the same teaching profession, they perceived their identity as English teachers differently. Based on Dewi (2007), identity of teachers is formed through their individual belief and society's behaviour toward them as teachers. The self-perception of the teacher then will affect their teaching behaviour and teaching attitude (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). According to Hall (1997a), identity is determined based on certain context and circumstances. Dewi (2007) argues that professional identity of non-native English teachers in Indonesia is really problematic. Although both native and non-native teachers play a role as an educator, the way they sense their identity and position themselves as a teacher can be different due to some external factors such as background, people's perception, race, etc.

Inner circle countries play a powerful and dominant role in setting the teachers identity. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) as cited in Le Ha (2003) examines that many works of literature infer that the English language belongs to the native speakers. As a result, they note that native speakers are positioned in a greater role where they control the language and determine the way teaching it to the language learners. The problem according to Seidlhofer (1999) is also added when the school curriculum demands the teachers to teach

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an authentic and real language which refers to the Standard English of the native speakers. Because of this demand, Rajagopalan (2005) as cited in Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) examines that the non-native speaker teachers in EFL countries are being dependent on the NABA countries which then make them disempowered by those countries. Then, this issue positions the non-native teachers as being inferior, unconfident and lack in many aspects compared to the native speakers (Le Ha, 2003). In line with this, Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) state that non-native teachers tend to consider their identity as being deficient educators.

Moreover, this identity issue is also getting worse by the occurrence of native-speakerism. native-speakerism distinguishes non-native speakers of English as the Other because they do not share the same background and native language with the native speakers. Thus, it creates certain favouritism toward native speaker teachers by the school institutions which consider native speakers as the most suitable English teachers instead of local or non-native teachers. It is also supported by Reves and Medgyes (1994) who claim that there is different attitude addressed toward the native and non-native teachers. Based on Medgyes (1992), there is an assumption that native speakers are the most ideal teachers of English language. This different attitude generally caused by the fact that native and non-native teachers have different language background and different teaching practices. It is supported by Medgyes (1992) who conducted a study to find the perception of native and non-native teachers by the people. It is found that 68% of his respondents perceived native and non-native teachers differently and this difference is mostly due to the linguistic factor. Seidlhofer (1999) also conducted a study by analyzing Austrian local teachers perspective and found out that the majority of the local teachers feel insecure for being non-native speaker English teachers. The non-native teachers are being considered as deficient English speakers, lack of fluency, poor pronunciation, and lack of understanding of the target culture (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). It can be inferred that this believes disadvantages the non-native teachers and trigger pressure toward them as language teachers.

However, the problematic issue on how the local teachers perceived themselves as being marginalized can be diminished. Moreover, Zacharias (2005) also notes that as the definition of native speakers itself is unclear as currently English has been spoken across nations, it is important to not to rely too much on the native speaker teachers. Creese, Blackledge, & Takhi (2014) argue that the issue of native speaker teachers superiority is no longer relevant because nowadays, non-native teachers have been seen as the ideal model of successful language learner so that the learners have a positive attitude toward them. A study by Reves and Medgyes (1994) indicates that learners consider their non-native or local teachers are even better qualified in teaching English because they prepare their lesson well and they have sensitivity on learners difficulty on learning English since they share the same experience and same native language. Hence, it can be inferred that the issue of identity can be decreased if the local teachers themselves do not put too much reliance of native-speakerism issue and focus on how to enhance their learners' trust toward them as a language learning model and resources.

2.2. Cultural difference issues

The cultural difference between the native teachers and the students becomes an issue on the effect of employing native teachers in Indonesia. Although many school institution in Indonesia favours the presence of native speaker teachers, the teaching practice in Indonesian context is also a challenge for those native teachers. Cultural difference is one of the issues. As stated by Hall (1997b), culture is a shared meaning and the one who shares the same

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meaning usually come from the same environment, race, or nationality. As native speaker teacher and the target students do not share the same culture because they come from different nations, the teacher may have challenges in understanding the students need and how to deal with the students in different context. Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) argue that as they share different cultural background, the native teachers are found to have difficulty in establishing rapport with the students. Thus, local students according to Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) may find interaction and classroom activities with native teachers as a face-threatening one. For example, the native speakers are used to talk in a more direct way, but the students find it pressuring as their cultural countries do not usually interact or speak in direct manners. Moreover, many Indonesian students prefer to be in silent mode when it comes to speaking English. This habit may be unusual for the native teachers. As a result, although native teachers can trigger students motivation to learn English due to his language competence, the students find it challenging to learn with native speaker teachers because of differences in cultural behaviour and norms.

Moreover, there has been a debatable issue on whether to teach local culture or target culture in teaching English as a foreign language. The problem is the native teachers have knowledge of English speaking countries culture which is needed by the learner but they find it difficult to adjust their teaching to the learner's culture which is Indonesia's culture. On the contrary, the local teachers have little understanding of target language culture but it is easy for them to contextualize their teaching practice into the learner's context since as being Indonesians, they share the similar culture.

Sometimes, target language culture is completely different with the local culture or even against the norm in the local culture. So, the need to adjust the teaching English by involving the local culture is considered essential. It is supported by Harmer (2013) who claims that as English is taught in many different contexts, thus, it is important to plan the lesson based on the context appropriately. Canagarajah (1999) as cited in Le Ha (2003) proves that Srilanka is one country which successfully adjusts the teaching of English with its own culture and purpose. However, native teachers may have little knowledge of the target learner's culture. This idea is supported by Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) who state that native teachers are considered to have lack of understanding toward the local culture so that it is difficult for them to contextualize their teaching. Thus, McKay (2003) as cited in Le Ha (2003) claims that since the need to teach local culture in teaching English is getting higher, the belief of the native speaker as the ideal English teacher is no longer relevant in the current situation. If the language teaching is to teach the local culture, then native speakers presence is not urgent as Indonesia teachers can do that as well. Thus, it can be inferred that the role of non-native teachers is enhanced in teaching English language practice in Indonesia.

2.3. Determining the ideal teacher

Based on Philipson (1992), the native speakers in the society are seen as the ideal model for standard English grammar, pronunciation and fluency and the non-native speaker teachers have to take after. However, Philipson rebuts this idea of over-reliance toward the native speakers. He believes that teachers are made instead of born. So, being an ideal English teacher has nothing to do with their nationality or personal background. Instead, being an ideal teacher, they have to have experience and insight into language learning, have the ability to teach the language appropriately with a strategic method, and have the ability to explain the language to the students. All of those skills according to Philipson, are gained through the process of learning regardless the aspect of the race, gender, nationality or other personal backgrounds of the teachers. Thus, the best English teachers are proven by their

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experience and qualification (Philipson, 1992). Britten (1985) as cited in Seidlhofer (1999) also emphasizes than non-native teachers can also be more qualified than native teachers if they can successfully learn English and then transfer their learning insight toward their students.

In addition, as English has been spoken internationally, students' purpose and style of learning English may vary depending on the context. Zacharias (2005) notes that if the teaching of English puts too much emphasis on native speaker competence, the practice of teaching will not be able to serve the need and purpose of from students from various context to learn English. Like many other non-native English countries use the English language as their daily life communication, such as India and Malaysia, native speaker competence is no longer seen as the only correct standard. It is supported by Kamhi-Stein (2016) who states that valuing nativeness in teaching English and emphasizing the teaching practice which requires the learners to achieve the standard of native speaker competence is such a traditional believe which is no longer relevant to current situation. Seidlhofer (1999) also shares a similar idea. He states that someone does not have to be a native speaker in order to teach a language because teaching a language requires experience so that it somehow advantages non-native teachers who have more experience and familiarity with the concept of learning a language. Thus, Seidlhofer claims that non-native teachers are not that necessary.

3. Recommendation to enhance the role of English teachers

Regarding the problematic issue of native speaker teachers and non-native speaker teachers, some recommendations and suggestions are proposed. The recommendations generally focus on maximizing the role of both native and non-native teachers in Indonesia context.

3.1. Collaborative work of native and non-native English teachers

It is advisable that native and non-native teachers should collaborate in school. As it has been discussed in the previous part, both of them have their own strengths and weaknesses. So, instead of competing each other and too much arguments about which one is better than the other, all English teachers regardless their personal background should work together on how to improve their teaching competence and figure out which strategies are best to help students achieve their goals in learning English. This is because an ideal school is a school where their native and non-native teachers collaborate together and complement each other rather than being compared (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). They can collaborate on how to plan effective and communicative lesson, exchanging opinion and strategies in ways that it can improve learners English language competence.

3.2. Equal standard of recruitment

As there has been a discussion about how some native speakers are hired, it is advisable to apply equal standard and requirement in recruiting both native and non-native teachers (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). As both of them are English teachers, they should be employed based on their qualification as a teacher, regardless their background such as race and nationality. It is also supported by Kamhi-Stein (2016) who notes that teachers should be recruited based on their professional background and ability. Therefore, it is important to note that native teachers should not be hired only because they are native even when they have no teaching background and teaching qualification. Thus, everyone can be English teachers if they have the experience and skills to teach language learners without considering their country of origin or their cultural background.

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3.3. Training for both teachers

There should be more training and professional development addressed to both native and non-native teachers in Indonesia. As non-native teachers are lack of their fluency, it is suggested that they need to improve their language proficiency and experience in English speaking countries (Kamhi-Stein, 2016). Meanwhile for native teachers, their understanding about teaching in EFL context in Indonesia should be enhanced so that it will be easier for them to teach across cultures. Fourth, Reves and Medgyes (1994) recommend that more training should be given to both teachers. It is prominent so that they can improve their qualification and competence in teaching English in Indonesia. Non-native teachers should be trained to improve their language competence so that they can gain more confidence to teach English to their learners. Moreover, native teachers should also be trained on how to teach learners with different context such as Indonesia and on how to understand the culture of the target learner so that they can help the learners to fulfil their learning goals and establish positive relationship with the learners. Hence, although native-speakerism is considered as no longer relevant to the current needs and purpose of learning a foreign language, the presence of native speaker teachers is still necessary. It is because as it has been discussed earlier, language learners need authentic model for the exposure of English and need understanding about the target language culture. Thus, native teachers are necessary to provide these learner's need.

CONCLUSION

The vague definition of native speaker term on the way how language teaching practice shows that there is the need to also evaluate the role of native speakers in teaching English in Outer circle countries, especially in Indonesia. It can be inferred from the above discussion that both native and local teachers have their own strengths and limitations. IThe idea is not on which one is better than the other. Both native and non-native teachers are encouraged to collaborate each other to maximise their role as a language teacher. By helping each other, it will decrease the debate among the identity and importance of both teachers and people will value both of them equally regardless their personal background which has nothing to do with their teaching practice and strategy.

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