

NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS: PESANTREN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN INDONESIA

Imra'atus Shalihah

English Language Teaching Study Program
Postgraduate School, Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia

Email: Imraatusshalihah06@gmail.com

Abstract

The findings of a study on pesantren students' attitudes toward native and non-native English-speaking teachers (NEST and NNEST) in Indonesia are presented in this paper. Interviews with ten students from one of the secondary schools in a pesantren in Jember, East Java, Indonesia were used to gather qualitative data. The results of this study revealed that the participants were aware of the advantages and disadvantages of NEST and NNESTs. The advantages that students perceived about learning English with NEST include oral skills such as speaking, pronunciation, and enriching new vocabularies. In addition, students could also learn new culture from NEST, and it made students feel motivated and wanted to study English more deeply. The study, on the other hand, revealed a number of NEST disadvantages related to grammar explanation. While in the cultural aspect, most students did not like NEST because of different culture and religion. Consequently, some students felt unmotivated to learn English with NEST. About the advantages and disadvantages of learning English with NNEST, the findings indicated that the advantages of learning with NNEST were that NNEST could provide clear grammar explanation and understand the needs and learning difficulties of students, so that the students felt comfortable in asking something they did not understand to NNEST. Moreover, they felt comfortable because of having the same culture, religion, habits, and appearance. As a result, they thought that learning English with NNEST increased their motivation. The disadvantages of NNESTs, on the other hand, as seen by students, were poor pronunciation and a lack of vocabularies. Furthermore, students could not learn or share new culture. Consequently, their insights and experiences did not increase.

Keywords: NEST, NNEST, English learning, Qualitative, Pesantren

INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization has made English become the most widely studied and used internationally. The ability of English teachers as native and non-native English speaking teachers has become an important issue of discussion as the number of English language learners and the demand for English language education has grown. There are some studies about the role of NESTs and Non-NESTs in the ELT context from the students' point of view. Such a study held in 2019 by Tsou and Chen, focused on investigating students' perceptions and preferences toward NESTs and Non-NESTs, showed positive aspects about native English speaking teachers were related to have good English proficiency, accurate pronunciation, provide opportunities to students to practice English language, have awareness of the culture of the target language, and create an active and relaxed classroom atmosphere. However, native English-speaking teachers have been accused of being difficult to communicate with, speaking too quickly and making it difficult to grasp what they are saying, not being mindful of students' requirements, and heightening students' nervousness when conversing. In the same element, the participants showed that one of the main aspects where NNESTs were better to NESTs was their master in explaining grammar, understanding to students' needs, difficulties, and problems, and share a preceding experience when studying English. While the negative features of NNESTs are inaccurate pronunciation and speaking. In line with this, Jieying and Gajaseni (2018), found that NESTs was only effective in teaching culture, speaking, pronunciation, but They had a hard time interacting with the

students. Meanwhile NNESTs are better in teaching grammar, writing and reading.

Ramita and Ratmanida (2020) conducted another study to determine the difficulties of students in accepting native and non-native lecturers from two perspectives: linguistics (accent, vocabularies, pronunciation, and grammar) and non-linguistics (lecturer's speed, topic and ideas of explanation, students' personality problems, and lecturer's ways of giving explanation). It was found that native lecturer gave more problems with accents and unfamiliar vocabularies that were difficult for students to understand (in the linguistic aspect). Regarding non-linguistic problems, the weakness is in the speed of speaking. However, except for the manner the professor explained things, non-native lectures did not pose any substantial issues.

At the University of Karachi, Iqbal et al. (2019) compared students' opinions about English among Islamic learning and education faculty. The findings of this study refuted the premise that Islamic learning faculty students have a negative attitude toward the English language. Furthermore, it was discovered that there was a little variation in attitude between students from both faculties, with students from the Education faculty having a more positive attitude toward English language in several respects. However, the difference discovered is statistically insignificant, therefore it is not deemed a discovery.

Non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) continue to outnumber native English speaking teachers in Indonesia's EFL context (NESTs). Despite the fact that NNESTs have a larger number, NESTs appear to be favoured in the field of English education. The growing number of

native English speakers teaching in Indonesian institutions attests to this. According to Zaharias (2006), native-speaker teachers are preferred to teach English in Indonesian English courses and institutions because they attract more pupils. In addition, given the growing importance of English around the world, the Indonesian government has designated English as a top priority for foreign language acquisition. This demonstrates that English is expected to be learned by people at all levels of society, not just the upper crust. As a result, the number of schools that employ English as a medium of instruction has exploded, ranging from kindergarten to university levels (Zaharias: 2006).

Not only in formal institutions or courses, learning English by inviting NEST as a teacher also takes place in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The place which is known as a center for Islamic religious learning is also trying to improve the quality of learning English for its students. Like one of the pesantren named Bustanul Ulum, located in Jember, East Java, Indonesia. This Islamic boarding school has several institutions under it. One of them is a senior high school named SMA plus Bustanul Ulum. This school invited a volunteer (NEST) by collaborating with the Peace Corps for two years. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this agreement was only run for six months, and the NEST had to go home to her home country, America.

During NEST was teaching at this school, she was given the opportunity to teach grades X and XI and was accompanied by NNEST (the English teacher of that school). NEST was also given the opportunity to teach students outside the classroom, such as guiding students who would

join competitions at the district level, or guiding students who would perform at school events.

The fact that happened in class, when NEST finished explaining the material or talking something, NNEST always repeated NEST's explanation in her own words. Sometimes she used English, and sometimes she mixed it with English and Indonesia. It could make students more understood and felt more satisfied in getting an explanation. When NEST guided students outside of class, she always carried a dictionary with her. When she spoke and the students didn't understand, she would translate some words into Indonesia.

From the picture above, it made me curious about the students' perceptions when they taught by NEST and NNEST. The previous studies were mostly done in the English as a second language contexts and in the university levels. This study was conducted in the EFL context (particularly in senior high school level under the auspices of pesantren in Indonesia). Theoretically, this study reveals perceptions of students of pesantren toward NETs and NNETs in L2 learning in Indonesia, which must be a consideration for teachers in order to achieve learning objectives. These findings also broaden the conversation about middle school students' perceptions of NETs and NNETs in L2 learning in Indonesia, which seem sporadic. This study opened up opportunities for students of pesantren to express their opinions about NETs and NNETs in their L2 learning experiences.

In order to describe the overview, this study is conducted under the following research questions;

1. What advantages and disadvantages do learners identify about learning English from a native English-speaking teacher?
2. What advantages and disadvantages do learners identify about learning English from a non-native English-speaking teacher?

METHOD

The data for this qualitative study was collected using a focus group interview approach (Ary, et al. 2010:441) and an interview design. This method is more flexible and efficient in terms of time and money than individual interviews, and it is also more socially oriented (Ary, et al. 2010:439). The semi-structured interview was carried out with 10 students of SMA Plus Bustanul Ulum in Jember, East Java, Indonesia. This school invited a volunteer (NEST) by collaborating with the Peace Corps for two years. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this agreement was only run for six months, and the NEST had to go home to her home country, America. The participants in this study were chosen using a convenience sampling method. (Dornyei : 2007).

Data for the present study was collected from two focus group interviews (five male and five female). The interview questions were derived from Walkinshaw and Oanh's (2014) questions, which focused on the benefits and drawbacks of learning English with native and non-native English speakers in the aspect of (1) pedagogy such as English skills: grammar, writing, speaking, reading, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. (2) cultural: including religion, customs, and appearance. (3) motivation in learning English. The data from the interviews was

transcribed and read several times before being processed, and the accuracy of the data was checked with the participants through member checking. The final data was then evaluated and grouped based on the three aforementioned features or themes, and sub themes were discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Learning English with NEST

One of the main finding about pesantren students' perception toward the advantages of learning English with NEST in the aspect of pedagogy are improving English skills, such as pronunciation, speaking and accent. It is suitable with the result of study conducted by Tsou and Chen (2019) that the participants expanded more opportunities to perform speaking and listening skills when studying with NESTs. Besides, some participants showed that NESTs had valid accent in vocabulary. Dealing with vocabulary, the result of this study also informed that studying with NEST can increase students' new vocabularies, and improving the quality of reading. This result was consistent with Butler's research findings (2007).

However, the study also revealed some shortcomings of NEST in terms of pedagogy when it comes to teaching grammar. The students did not understand the NEST's explanation of grammar. As a study conducted by Tsou and Chen (2019), they discovered that some participants felt NESTs were unable to teach grammar rules in detail. In contrast, Some participants of their study were recognized to be more recognizable with the ordinary grammar mistakes made by NESTs. As a result, learning grammar through NESTs allowed students to become more familiar with the various applications of language in everyday life.

It was discovered in the cultural component, as Sung (2014) discovered that NESTs were considered as a valuable source of knowledge when it came to the cultural characteristics of the English language. Students also believe that by studying with NEST, they may learn English from the ground up and gain insight into the language.

On the other hand, one of the most interesting finding about the disadvantages studying with NEST of this study in the cultural aspect was most students did not like NEST because she has different religion and culture with them. As a result, in order to increase their perceived teaching efficiency, NESTs should try to understand the students' local culture, needs, and educational settings, particularly learning environments in the classroom, such as pray before and after learning. It's comparable to Sung's (2014) study, which found that interviewees found it difficult to form a close relationship with NEST because to perceived cultural barriers. While it is different from a study conducted by Jieying and Gajaseeni (2018) that participants considered NESTs were more effective in teaching culture. Another students' opinion is that learning English with native teacher is good as long as the students do not affected by her culture. Moreover, one student feel there is no advantage learning with NEST, even afraid of being influenced by native speaker's culture.

Students' perceptions toward NEST in the aspects of pedagogy and culture became a benchmark for how motivated they were in learning English. Some of the students stated that they feel motivated to learn with NEST because she was a new teacher and they felt challenged. Another perceptions, students feel motivated and wanted to study English more deeply and they also felt that it was a good chance. It was in accordance

with the result of the study conducted by Tsou & Chen (2019). The last perception was very different from the perceptions that have been mentioned before. Some students felt unmotivated learning with NEST because of their lack of understanding of what was described by the NEST.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Learning English with non-NEST

Turning to students' perceptions of NNEST, one of the most important findings was that the perceived benefits of NNEST were consistent with previous findings (Ling & Braine, 2007; Mahboob, 2004), such as the fact that the majority of the participants were aware of NNEST's advantages in teaching grammar and understanding students' learning needs and difficulties. Students also felt safe approaching NNEST with questions they didn't understand. This advantage is due to NNESTs' previous L2 learning experience (Medgyes, 1994). Furthermore, because NNEST and Indonesian students shared the same L1, the linguistic advantage in describing new grammatical structures should be fully utilized to improve teaching efficacy. According to Tsou & Chen (2019), more than half of their participants believed that non-NESTs performed better in grammar because they spoke with learners in their native language. Those in attendance claimed that when NNEST taught grammar, they were given Indonesian examples to demonstrate English grammatical rules. Learners would be able to get a clear picture of the rules in their heads and would be able to comprehend how and when to utilize English grammar correctly as a result of this. Non-NESTs were also more effective in transmitting basic information (especially grammatical structures),

writing, and reading, according to Jieying and Gajaseeni (2018). NNEST's past English learning experiences were also valued by the pupils. These aid NNEST in better understanding students' learning challenges, recognizing students' English competence in practice (Inbar-Lourie & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2020), and knowing how to better teach Indonesian students.

The downsides of NNEST, on the other hand, as perceived by students, include poor pronunciation and a lack of vocabulary, corroborating earlier research findings (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Mahboob, 2004). Most students remark that one of the benefits of learning English with NNEST was that they feel more at ease because they share the same culture, religion, customs, and appearance. However, one drawback of studying English with NNEST was that pupils were unable to discover or share different cultures. As a result, their knowledge and experiences did not grow. Some students stated that learning English with NNEST enhances their motivation because NNESTs were sensitive about their requirements and the teacher's explanations were simple to understand. Tsou & Chen's (2019) research is comparable.

CONCLUSION

From the finding and discussion of this study, it is concluded that there are many similar findings of this research with another previous researches. Such as the advantages of studying with NEST include; students can learn accurate pronunciation, practice speaking fluently with the native teacher in the class, enrich vocabularies, provide opportunities for students to learn English to experts, learn and share other cultures. It makes students feel motivated and wanted to study English more deeply and they also feel that it is a good chance. On the other side, the study indicated that NEST has a number of drawbacks when it comes to teaching grammar. Then, on a cultural level, most students dislike NEST because she does not share their religion or culture. As a result, some students are unmotivated to learn using NEST.

Another responses and comments received from participants were about the advantages and disadvantages learning English with NNEST. The finding indicated that the advantages learning with NNEST are students can learn grammar well and NNEST understand the needs and learning difficulties of students. So, students felt comfortable for asking something they didn't understand to NNEST. Moreover, students feel comfortable because of having the same culture, religion, habits, and appearance. That matter can make students revealed that learning English with NNEST increases their motivation. The downsides of NNESTs, on the other hand, as seen by students, are poor pronunciation and a lack of vocabularies. Additionally, students are unable to learn or share new cultures. As a result, their knowledge and experiences do not grow.

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