

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Perceptions of Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers Towards Methods and Teaching Styles of Native English-Speaking Teachers

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Abstract

Native-Speakerism is a view or a stereotype in language teaching, especially foreign languages, that relies on the belief that the most correct and appropriate method of learning English is conducted by Native English Speaking Teachers (NEST) (Holliday, 2005; Silalahi, 2019). This phenomenon has an impact on the emergence of labeling 'cultural stereotypes' and negative stigma on the quality of teaching of the non-native speaker (Wu & Ke, 2009). On the other hand, Non-NEST feels that the learning methods and styles used by NEST are not appropriate to the social and cultural context of learners. This is qualitative research which is specifically directed to analyze ideological conflict and focused on describing holistically Non-NEST perceptions of NEST teaching methods and styles. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to be able to find out Non-NEST perceptions of the quality of NEST. The FGD was conducted with 18 informants from three different private higher educational institutions that carried out Teaching as a foreign language (TEAFL). 18 informants were divided into three groups, each consisting of 6 informants. Each informant was asked to answer and give opinions on a number of questions raised in the forum. All the answers and responses given by the informants can be used as the basis for argumentation in this study. This research is expected to be able to answer ideological problems and enrich knowledge about language ideology in the context of TEAFL.

Keywords – Native Speakerism, ideological conflict, stigma, stereotype

Introduction

The term 'ideological conflict' explicitly shown in the title above shows the conflicting views regarding the concept of foreign language teaching, specifically English Language Teaching (ELT). The term 'conflict' emphasizing the opposition among ideologies in the context of ELT. The opposition represented in this conflict is a derivation of the terms 'Native' and 'Non-native'. Silalahi (2019) states that this dichotomy has an impact on a long debate about the methods and teaching styles of foreign language teaching

(specifically ELT) that are considered appropriate and correct.

This ideological conflict is clearly reflected in the concept of Native Speakerism (Silalahi, 2019; Holliday, 2005).

Native-Speakerism can be seen as a view that believes that foreign language learning is best done by native speakers because (Holliday, 2005). Native speakers are considered capable of presenting the culture and social conditions that underlie the proper use of their language (Holliday, 2005; Silalahi, 2019). This statement

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implies the belief that non-native speakers are unable to represent the culture and social conditions of language. This linguistic phenomenon triggers a negative stigma against the quality of non-native teachers.

Unconfident, inactive, and uncritical are a number of negative stigmas that are often labeled to the Nonnative English speakers (Holliday, 2005, 2006; Pennycook, 1994; Kubota 2001). The opposite labels are actually given to the native English speakers.

In educational institutions, Native Speakerism has an impact on the phenomena of inequality and injustice in the context of ELT (Silalahi, 2019). Institutional policies that prioritize Native teachers, reflects the phenomenon of inequality. Not infrequently this leads to failure because not all native speaking teachers can teach foreign languages according to classroom conditions (Silalahi, 2019).

This phenomenon on the other hand can be seen as a reflection of imperialism in the context of teaching (Silalahi, 2019). Educational institutions use the power they have to form policies that fully control recruitment. On the other hand, the application of this power leads to actions that are unfair to Non-Native teachers. This phenomenon shows a very clear conflict between native and non-native teachers

The main objective of this study was to determine the non-native teachers' perceptions of the teaching quality of native teachers. The main objectives of this study are reflected in the following two objectives: (1) How do non-native teachers' perceptions of the Native Speakerism phenomenon? (2) How do non-native teachers' perceptions of native teacher teaching methods?

Methodology

This is descriptive qualitative research which is intended to know teachers' perception toward ideological phenomena of Native-Speakerism. Referring to these objectives, the intended perception is abstracted through the informants' attitudes and perspectives toward teaching styles and methods applied by the native speakers.

To ensure the credibility of the informants, the informant must meet the basic criteria as follows: (1) Non-native English speakers and (2) Has taught as an English teacher for at least three years at an educational institution (university level). Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 18 informants who are English language teachers from three different private universities conducted in three sessions. Each session was attended by six informants.

Each FGD session is held for a maximum of one (1) hour and the researcher plays a role as a group leader. All processes are recorded in audio and converted according to audio format (Wav). This audio form will be transcribed and used as the data to strengthen research results.

The collection is done through the stimulus-response method. The stimulus is the questions asked by researchers, as follows.

1. How do you see the phenomenon of native-speakerism in Indonesia?
2. Does English teaching have to be done by people who are actively using the language in the native context?
3. What are your attitudes and perceptions of the style and methods of teaching performed by the native speakers in your institution?
4. Are native speakers better than non-native speakers?

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Additional questions can be asked, according to the informant's response. Each response in the study will be recorded and used as the premises to answer the following questions.

1. What are the attitudes of non-native speaking teachers to phenomena native-speakerism?
2. How are the attitudes of non-native speaking teachers toward the method and style of teaching of native speakers?

The response given will be elaborated with theories related to native-speakerism, stereotypes, and ideologies in language teaching.

Finding and Discussion

Linguistic Stigma in Educational Institutions

Native-Speakerism is a form of language stigma that is clearly seen from the labeling of speakers of certain languages. This linguistic stigma reinforces people's belief that the best language teaching can only be done by native speakers because they are believed to have better language skills and contextual understanding.

Institutional policies that are oriented towards native-speakerism ideology can be seen from the policy of salary and bonuses (more than 90 percent of informants confirm this). Foreign teachers get higher salaries and greater bonus variations than Non-Nests. This is understandable because the standard of the salary of foreign language teachers is adjusted for foreign exchange rates.

Some NESTs get a number of facilities that are not obtained by Non-NESTs. Transportation and housing are a number of facilities provided and the costs are fully borne by the institution.

Responding to this, Non-NESTs feel this is basically acceptable. Foreign language instructors get very special treatment

because their presence can influence the promotion of the institution. In addition, NESTs in Indonesia are obtained through collaboration with foreign universities.

However, 40 percent of the speakers feel that this is a form of injustice and inequality because the quality of teaching language is not only judged by the ability of teachers to use language skills flawlessly and contextually but also seen from how a teacher is able to control the class and transfer knowledge to students most of which are non-native speakers of English.

Non-NESTs feel that teaching done by NESTs does not always get positive responses from students. This can be seen from the results of the assessment conducted internally by the institution.

Non-NESTs (informants) state that the phenomenon of Native Speakerism in the context of ELT in Indonesia is very natural to happen because the majority of Indonesians feel that everything that comes from the western world is something that is advanced and good to learn. Meanwhile, Indonesians unconsciously give labels and negative stigmas to Indonesian cultures. Old-fashioned, not modern, and rigid are a number of stigmas that are often found in society. Meanwhile, the western world is always associated with technology, economic progress, and democracy.

Does English Teaching have to be done by Native Speakers?

This question is intended to provide an overview of the instructors' perceptions of the most ideal ELT. All respondents stated that teaching can be done by anyone (NESTs or Non-Nests) as long as the instructor is able to meet the class objectives.

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Therefore, the Institution must not only pay attention to who the instructors are but also how the teaching that is carried out is able to answer questions that arise during class and be able to meet the targets at each meeting.

However, some informants (80%) felt that several courses should be delivered by foreign speakers. Subjects related to basic language skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing (grammar or structure) can be taught by Non-NESTs. However, the subject of conversation and English culture (American culture or British culture) should be delivered by NESTs because foreign speakers have broader cultural knowledge than the Non-NESTs.

English teachers at the university, at least have a good linguistic competence because the institution requires teachers to have adequate language qualifications. Some universities that conduct language teaching require teachers to meet language qualifications which can be seen through language proficiency tests. Therefore, the language skills of the lecturers should be in accordance with language skills standards. In addition, a number of institutions require all teachers to regularly take the language proficiency test.

Are the Teaching Methods and Techniques Used by Native Speakers Better?

This question is directed to illustrate whether the quality of teaching of the NEST is better than the Non-NEST. For some informants, the question seems to overgeneralize teaching phenomenon. However, this question is actually intended to be able to provide a general picture of Non-NESTs' perceptions of NESTs.

Almost all Non-NESTs admit that NESTs build a more open and democratic

atmosphere. They do not give too many rules in the class. So that the process of communication between teacher and student seems more intimate. However, this method of teaching does not always work in all classes. Especially for early semester students where there are still many students who do not yet have sufficient linguistic competence.

The full use of English in the classroom should not be applied to classes in the early semester. However, this can still be done if the class is taught by team teaching consisting of NEST and Non-NEST, so that if there is a problem in communication, Non-NEST can help provide an explanation in Indonesian.

Native teachers are recommended to start teaching without assistance in semester 3 and so on because, in the first two semesters, students have begun to be equipped with a number of language skills.

Discussion

Native-speakerism is an ideology that develops in educational institutions. This ideology is based on people's belief that teaching foreign languages, especially ELT, should be done by native speakers. To strengthen marketing; institutions recruit foreign teachers (native speakers) to teach and they make policies that seem to give privileges to native teachers. This is done with the hope that prospective students have more confidence in the quality offered by the institution.

The assumption that NESTs have better qualifications than Non-NESTs is basically widely accepted. However, this issue continues to be opposed by Non-NESTs, because language teaching is not only measured by language skills and cultural knowledge, but it is also measured by the teacher's ability to build a classroom

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atmosphere and transfer knowledge to students.

Therefore, Silalahi (2019) states that native-speakerism in educational institutions is part of linguistic imperialism. Because language for the benefit of marketing and economics actually strengthens the stigma of language without considering the quality of teaching. Economic reasons cause this ideology to still get acceptance from various parties.

The quality of teaching is not only seen in the teacher's language competence. Learning can be declared successful or good if students understand the material provided in the classroom and can use it to strengthen their language skills. The competence and language skills of the teachers may support the quality of teaching. However, this must be supported by methodological and technical capabilities.

NESTS naturally have better language skills than Non-NESTS. In addition, they also have a higher level of cultural knowledge than non-native speakers. However, this must also be supported by the ability to teach. In addition, it is important for teachers to carry out mapping in class to ascertain whether the method to be applied is appropriate and in accordance with the course objectives. Non-NESTS feel that teaching done by NESTs should be aimed only at the second year (semesters 3 and 4) because they have gained basic knowledge in the previous two semesters. However, NESTs want to teach the first semester, they should be accompanied by the Non-NESTS. These Non-NESTS will bridge the communication problems in the classroom with the occasional use of Indonesian. The informants inform that the teaching of ELT by NESTs should be directed to conversation and culture courses.

Conclusion

Native Speakerism triggers ideological conflicts in educational institutions. Economic reasons and marketing impulses make institutions unconsciously strengthen this ideology through language stigmas. This results in a conflict between NESTs and Non-NESTS. Language teaching does not only focus on who the lecturer is but also on how the lecturer successfully fulfills the class objectives.

Nevertheless, the existence of this ideology received acceptance from various parties. Institutions must be keen to see this phenomenon. This research shows that NESTs should be placed in certain subjects that are appropriate. It is suggested that conversation courses should be taught by foreign speakers because they have better pronunciation skills than non-native speakers. Teaching related to native English culture should also be taught by the NESTs because they can provide examples and real applications related to the topics. Therefore, native speakers are advised to teach students starting from semester 3. This is based on the assumption that students already have sufficient knowledge so that they can understand the material provided.

Despite opposition, Western culture that is open and democratic can build a healthy atmosphere of teaching. However, teachers must periodically do the mapping so that the teaching process runs well and is in accordance with the objectives of the lecture.

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