Native Vs Nonnative English Teacher: A Qualitative Study Towards Student Perception In Vocational EFL Classroom

Syaefani Arif Romadhon[1], Iin Indrayanti[2], M Sofyan Firmansyah[3] M Taufik Qurohman[4]

[1,2,3,4] Politeknik Harapan Bersama, Tegal
[1] E-mail: syaefani1984@gmail.com
[2] E-mail: iinindrayanti@poltektegal.ac.id
[3] E-mail: sofyanfirman19@gmail.com
[4] .Email: taufikqurohman87@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to determine the perception of vocational students towards foreign teachers (native speakers) and Indonesian nationals (non-native speakers) in teaching English. The research method used interviews with 10 students. The results of the study show that the majority of students have a positive perception of native-speaker teachers because of their pronunciation skills, classroom authenticity, cultural understanding, and motivation and confidence in speaking English. Meanwhile, students also positively rated non-native speaker teachers because they better understood the difficulties of learning English, made students comfortable asking questions and were able to explain the material well. This finding is expected to be an input in optimizing English learning in vocational colleges.
Keywords: *native, nonnative, student perception, speaking, vocational*

1. Introduction

In the context of vocational education, the need to master English is increasing in line with the demand of industries that demand a workforce with good international communication skills. English is one of the important skills that vocational education graduates must have in order to be able to compete in the global job market (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in vocational institutions, especially in Indonesia, are one of the important means to achieve this goal. However, the teaching methods and the presence of foreign teachers (native speakers) and local teachers (non-native speakers) provide a unique dynamic in the classroom (Perry, 2023). Therefore, it is important to explore how vocational students perceive the different teaching approaches of these two types of teachers, in order to ensure more effective learning and according to their needs.

This research is relevant because graduates from vocational institutions are often expected to be able to jump into the world of work with appropriate skills. In this regard, effective English language skills are essential, especially in the face of challenges in an increasingly multicultural work environment (Aizawa et al., 2023). Understanding students' perceptions of native and non-native teachers can provide valuable insights for educators in developing teaching strategies that are more adaptive and responsive to student needs (Fitria, 2023). It can also contribute to the development of an English curriculum that better supports speaking skills and intercultural interaction for vocational students.

The use of native speakers in teaching listening poses a big challenge to teachers. Teaching methods and techniques have a great influence on student success. Lecturers must be able to choose and present learning materials in an intensive, responsive, and material-appropriate manner. Sometimes students still have difficulty listening to native speakers due to a lack of vocabulary. Students need to be creative and active in dealing with native speakers by improving vocabulary, and concentration, and learning about pronunciation and language style. Lecturer support and a conducive campus environment are also needed (Sinta, 2019)

Although teaching English with native teachers has many benefits, there are several problems faced by vocational students in adapting to their teaching methods. One of the obstacles that often arises is the difference in accent and speaking speed that can hinder students' understanding, especially for those who have limitations in vocabulary or grammar (Maji et al., 2022). Additionally, due to differences in cultural backgrounds, native teachers may lack understanding of the specific difficulties students face in learning a foreign language. On the other hand, although non-native teachers usually better understand the challenges experienced by students, they are also often considered less capable of providing an authentic language experience (Fatahillah, 2024). This imbalance creates a challenge for vocational institutions to design effective and balanced teaching approaches, which can not only improve students' English language skills but also equip them with skills relevant to the needs of the global market.

Research by (Wulandari et al., 2021) Native and non-native-speaking teachers have their specific roles in the Indonesian context. The need for balance and collaboration between native and non-native speakers in English language teaching. In line with research (Pariyanto, 2021), (Lestari et al., 2022), (Wang & Fang, 2020), (Kirana & Methitham, 2022), (Ghane & Razmi, 2023)

Research by (Nurhaliza, 2023) discussed the impact of the program "Invited Native Speakers" on students' confidence in speaking English. There are several positive impacts of the program "Invited Native Speakers" on students' confidence in speaking English, namely: increasing student confidence. Encourage students to evaluate themselves in communicating Improve students' English vocabulary and pronunciation. The causes of low student confidence in speaking English are Lack of mastery of pronunciation and vocabulary and Fear of making mistakes. This program has a positive impact on students' confidence in speaking English. However, students still have obstacles in mastering pronunciation and vocabulary, as well as fear of making mistakes. This research is the basis for current researchers to conduct research related to students' perceptions of native speakers. There are some differences between previous research and current research on the research subject. The previous research, namely students of the College of Health Sciences, was limited to 2 students who were interviewed, and there was no data collection through questionnaires. For the current research, namely polytechnic or vocational college, there were 10 students interviewed and equipped with a questionnaire filled out by 60 students.

Based on the experience of the researcher, one of the English lecturers at Politeknik Harapan Bersama, the campus invited a native speaker from the UK, to motivate students to communicate with the native speakers. This activity is strongly supported by the institution, and it is planned that similar activities will be carried out regularly every 1-2 months. The researcher observed that during the activity, the students' responses were very enthusiastic and eager to communicate. Therefore, this study is intended to find out how students' perceptions of native English speakers and non-native English speakers during English teaching and students' preferences for both. This research is focused on vocational education students, especially engineering majors where similar studies are still not widely conducted. This research study will be able to provide recommendations in compiling English learning that is more in line with the character of students in vocational education.

2. Literature Review

The Importance of Speaking Skill

Speaking is considered an important skill. These skills are used in effective communication and communication is a basic need in today's world. People cannot survive without communication. They need to express their thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions and these needs can be met through language. People all over the world need to communicate with others and this goal is fulfilled through the English language. Currently, the need for English speaking proficiency has increased dramatically due to the strengthening of the position of English as an international language of communication. Undoubtedly, without language, there would be no communication. People share their problems through language. To fulfill these communication tasks, speaking skills are needed. Because of the importance of Speaking skills, EFL students struggle hard to master (Akhter et al., 2020).

Native-Speakerism

Native speakerism is an ideology embedded in the practice of English language teaching, which believes that native speakers represent the Western culture that gave birth to the English language and its ideal teaching. This ideal English teaching is reflected in the selection and use of learning materials, such as teaching methods and book texts imported from the West. Next. Native-speakerism is a "regime of truth" defined by the interests of stakeholders inherent in English language teaching around the world. Native speaker ideology contributes to skin color racism, where teachers who are considered native speakers are identified by white color (Harsanti & Manara, 2021).

Non-Native English Speaker

The contribution of non-native English speakers, their ability to provide effective structural grammar lessons, and empathy for students' learning difficulties. Non-native English speakers can utilize their shared language with their students to facilitate and accelerate the English learning process by utilizing the student's native language when needed. Critics of non-native English speakers argue that they have poor oral skills and cultural knowledge. Non-native English speakers have foreign accents, which limits their ability to teach students with native speakers' pronunciations, and their lack of cultural awareness hinders their ability to train learners to be effective communicators in English-speaking countries (Ghane & Razmi, 2023).

Vocational Students

Free trade that has been realized requires the availability of skilled and highly competent labor to compete in the labor market, both regional, national, and international. Consequently, formal educational institutions such as vocational education are required to produce graduates who are ready to work, have entrepreneurial attitudes, characters, and behaviors as well as life skills to work in all fields by the needs of the industrial field. It is necessary to develop integrated entrepreneurship education that is needed in soft skills and Competency Training so that it can

improve the quality of creating student entrepreneurship at the level of personal maturity, achievement of student competence, reduction of the gap in labor needs, reduction of the unemployment rate, and increase in the number of entrepreneurs who are the strength of the national economy. Vocational education can produce individuals who have expertise according to their talents and interests in certain fields, both in the fields of technology, administration, health, agroindustry, and others (Apriana et al., 2019).

3. Method

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore students' perceptions of native and non-native teachers in English classes for vocational education. The case study design was chosen because it allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigatif of the student's experience and views in a specific context, namely vocational education (K.Yin, 2003).

Participants

The participants in this study are 10 active students from Politeknik Harapan Bersama who are members of PEC (Politeknik English Club). The selection of participants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, where students who have experience interacting with native and non-native lecturers are selected so that the data obtained can reflect their perceptions and views in more detail and relevant to the research objectives.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with each participant. The interviews use a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in the exploration of emerging issues, while maintaining a focus on key aspects such as the learning experience with native and non-native teachers, the challenges faced, and students' perceptions of the teaching methods of the two types of teachers.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, where the results of the interviews were coded based on themes relevant to the research objectives. This thematic analysis includes the identification of key themes, categorization of data based on themes, and interpretation of findings to understand student perceptions and experiences in learning with native and non-native teachers. The findings were then associated with existing literature to gain a deeper insight into the dynamics of English learning in vocational classes.

4. Result and Discussion

Data collection using interviews, there were 10 questions with 10 participants with the following analysis results;

1. **What is your opinion on speaking classes taught by native speakers? Explain the Advantages and Disadvantages!**

   Excerpt 1
   "kesan pertama cukup bagus dan menyenangkan, Antusiasme mahasiswa sangat terasa. Kelebihan dari kelas ini yaitu memberikan pengalaman baru, belajar speaking dan listening dari native, serta belajar budaya dan cara berpikir orang luar. Kelemahannya mahasiswa kurang responsif sehingga kurang interaksi dua arah antara native dan mahasiswa, kelas kurang variatif metodenya"

   The majority of students have a positive view of speaking classes taught by native speakers, with words such as "good" and "fun" often appearing that describe a good general impression. The main advantages mentioned include new learning experiences, improved speaking and listening skills, as well as an understanding of the culture and ways of thinking of outsiders. Students also appreciate the opportunity to hear native speakers' authentic pronunciations and dialects, although this also poses challenges. The disadvantages that are often cited are the lack of two-way interaction and monotonous teaching methods, which make some students feel bored. In addition, different speech speeds and native dialects often lead to difficulty understanding and misunderstanding of meanings. Some students also feel less confident in interacting in English, which reduces the effectiveness of learning. Overall, this class is considered to provide significant benefits in terms of language and cultural learning, although it needs to be improved in teaching methods and interaction to overcome some of the existing

shortcomings.

2. **Is there any difference you feel when taking a speaking class with a native speaker compared to a non-native? Explain!**

   Excerpt 2

   "Saya merasakan perbedaan dari segi bagaimana cara speaking dan budaya di negara asal native. Saat belajar dengan native speaker lebih menantang dan merasakan pengalaman baru. ada perbedaan aksen dan metode pembelajaran, native speaker seringkali menggunakan learning by practicing sedangkan non native lebih menekankan pada teoritis seperti Grammar"

The majority of students felt a significant difference when taking speaking classes with native speakers compared to non-native speakers. Words such as "accent," "learning method," "pronunciation," "fully English," "new experience," and "challenge" appear frequently, indicating that students are aware of differences in their way of speaking, teaching methods, and learning experiences. Students found the native speaker classes more challenging and provided a new experience, but they also noted difficulties in understanding fast pronunciation and accent differences. In addition, there is a feeling of lack of confidence when interacting with native speakers, although the use of English entirely in the classroom with native speakers provides an advantage in improving language skills. Cultural differences are also a concern, with some students finding it more helpful in understanding the way of thinking and culture of the native speaker.

3. **How do native speakers affect your motivation and confidence in speaking English?**

   Excerpt 3

   "Terdapat pengaruh yang positif, mahasiswa mampu beradaptasi saat berbincang dengan native, untuk melatih kepercayaan diri dalam menghadapi Masyarakat luar negeri baik dalam forum, interview, maupun perbincangan santai. Cukup berpengaruh untuk meningkatkan pronounciation dan speaking sehingga pengucapan kita menjadi lebih jelas dan percaya diri"

The presence of native speakers in speaking classes has a significant positive influence on students' motivation and confidence in speaking English. Most students mentioned that they felt more motivated to learn and more confident when speaking English after interacting with native speakers. Improvements in pronunciation are also often mentioned, signifying that students appreciate the opportunity to improve their pronunciation. Direct conversations with native speakers are considered very beneficial, both in improving speaking skills and in understanding cultural contexts and more natural language use. Overall, the presence of native speakers is considered very important in motivating students and increasing their confidence in the use of English.

4. **What strategies or techniques do native speakers use in teaching speaking skills that you think are effective?**

   Excerpt 4

   "Metode diskusi atau conversation dengan native secara langsung walaupun awalnya terpaksa, Sebagai contoh diskusi bersama setelah menonton film, trending news, music"

The most effective method often mentioned by respondents in teaching speaking skills to native speakers is conversation or direct discussion. This shows that direct interaction with native speakers provides a good opportunity to practice and improve English speaking skills. In addition, direct speaking practice, two-way interaction, the use of everyday language, and the provision of feedback or correction are also important factors in enriching students' learning experience in the context of English.

5. **What challenges did you face when communicating orally in English in a class taught by a native speaker?**

   Excerpt 5

   "Tantangan yang saya alami adalah Grammar yang tidak teratur, karena saya belum cukup menguasai susunan Grammar yang tepat dalam berkomunikasi, kekurangan vocabulary. Adanya perbedaan kultur yang saya rasakan dan juga extra perhatian dalam mencerna kalimat yang disampaikan native"

Challenges that often arise when communicating orally in English with native speakers include irregular grammar problems, lack of vocabulary, difficulty in understanding the speed of delivery, as well as nervousness and lack of confidence. Cultural differences, access to new vocabulary, and the speed of native speakers' speaking are also factors that affect students' ability to communicate. This shows the importance of adjusting and improving English skills, both technically and mentally, to effectively overcome these challenges.

6.   Are there any differences in terms of materials, activities, or feedback provided?
Excerpt 6
"Native lebih mengajarkan tentang budaya, atau perspektif menurut pandangan orang luar, sehingga mahasiswa belajar hal dan perspektif baru, namun dengan native kita masih merasa malu-malu, ada rasa ragu, takut salah bicara"

From various interview answers, it can be explained that teaching with native speakers offers a richer cultural perspective, different teaching characteristics, more intensive interaction, and more in-depth feedback. Students also experience different challenges and excitement when learning with native speakers compared to non-native teachers. However, there are still challenges such as embarrassment, doubt, or difficulty in understanding that are also part of the learning experience with native speakers.

7.   How is the atmosphere taught by native? Relaxed or depressed?
Excerpt 7
"saya lebih rileks dan semangat dengan adanya kelas bersama native. Suasana lebih fun"

Excerpt 8
"Suasana kelas yang dibawakan native lebih rileks namun saya sendiri gugup karena takut salah pengucapan"

Based on the interview answers, the atmosphere in a classroom taught by a native speaker can vary from relaxed and fun to depressed or nervous. For some students, this experience provides an opportunity to experience a more relaxed and fun atmosphere, while for others, it is a challenge that requires more preparation and courage. This shows that each individual's experience in facing a class with a native speaker can vary, depending on personal comfort and confidence factors in communicating in English.

8.   Overall, do you find it helpful to improve your speaking skills after being taught by a native?
Excerpt 9
"saya merasa sangat terbantu, native memberikan pengalaman yang berbeda, saya belajar tentang pronunciation, grammar, cara merespon dari native secara langsung"

Excerpt 10

"tidak terlalu membantu karena jika ingin meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa inggris tidak bisa hanya mengandalkan native speaker, harus ada kemauan dan belajar sendiri"

Overall, the majority of students felt helped in improving their speaking skills after being taught by native speakers. They found added value in aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary development, and deeper motivation to learn. For a small percentage of others, this experience does not have a significant impact or they feel that skill improvement also depends on other factors besides native speaker teaching. This shows that teaching by native speakers generally provides meaningful added value in the development of English-speaking skills for students.

9.   If given a choice, what kind of lecturer would you prefer for a speaking class? Give a reason!
Excerpt 11
"Untuk speaking saya lebih suka diajar oleh native speaker, karena bahasa inggris adalah bahasa utama mereka jadi sangat kecil terjadi kesalahan pronunciation"

Excerpt 12
"native atau non native semuanya OK, yang penting dalam penyampaian materi jelas, aktif dan ada feedback. saya suka dua-duanya karena masing-masing mempunyai kelebihan"

The majority of students tend to prefer to be taught by native speakers in speaking classes, with the main reason being better English language skills and hands-on learning experience from native speakers. However, some also see the added value of a combination of native and non-native teachers, or choose non-native teachers if they feel they still have challenges in their English speaking skills. It shows preferences that vary depending on the personal experience and learning needs of each student.

10.   **What advice would you like to give to learn to speak with native speakers more effectively in the future?**

Excerpt 13

"Perbanyak kegiatan di luar bersama mahasiswa dan native lebih sering mengobrol dengan mahasiswa secara individu, kenungkinan hasilnya akan lebih maksimal. Tambahkan juga games-games berbahasa inggris dan dipandu langsung oleh native"

In general, students suggest increasing direct interaction with native speakers, utilizing fun learning methods such as games or group activities, and providing more opportunities for hands-on practice in supportive situations. These suggestions aim to maximize the learning experience of students in improving their English speaking skills.

The results of this study show that the presence of native teachers has a positive impact on students' motivation and confidence in speaking English. These findings are in line with the theory of native-speakerism, which states that native teachers are considered to represent Western cultural ideals associated with the authenticity of the English language. According to (Harsanti & Manara, 2021), students tend to view native teachers as the best representation in teaching authentic English, which leads to an increase in student motivation and confidence. However, on the other hand, non-native teachers are preferred in terms of understanding the learning difficulties faced by students, which is in line with the opinion of (Ghane & Razmi, 2023) that non-native teachers can leverage their own experience in learning English to better understand the challenges faced by students. This shows that both native and non-native teachers have unique advantages in supporting English learning in a vocational environment.

5. Conclusions

This research provides valuable insights into the perception of Politeknik Harapan Bersama students towards native and non-native teachers as English lectures. The results showed that students generally had a positive perception of native teachers, considering native teachers to have superior English skills. However, students also get several challenges in communicating with native speakers, such as accent differences and the use of unfamiliar idioms. On the other hand, students also have an appreciation for non-native teachers who can understand the difficulties they experience in learning English. Non-native teachers are considered to be able to provide clearer explanations and provide greater empathy in facilitating English language learning. These findings show that both native and non-native teachers have unique strengths and weaknesses in English language teaching. The implication is the need for a balanced and collaborative approach between native and non-native teachers in English language learning programs, in order to take advantage of each other's strengths to create a more comprehensive and effective learning experience for students. This research makes an important contribution to understanding the perception of non-native students towards native and non-native teachers as English teachers. These findings can be used to develop English teaching strategies that are more responsive to the needs and preferences of students in various countries.

References

Aizawa, I., Rose, H., Thompson, G., & Curle, S. (2023). Beyond the threshold: Exploring English language proficiency, linguistic challenges, and academic language skills of Japanese students in an English medium instruction programme. *Language Teaching Research*, *27*(4), 837–861. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820965510

Akhter, S., Haidov, R., Majeed Rana, A., & Hussain Qureshi, A. (2020). Exploring the Significance of Speaking Skill for Efl Learners. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology*, *17*(9), 6019–6030. https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/5149

Apriana, D., Kristiawan, M., & Wardiah, D. (2019). Headmaster's competency in preparing vocational school students for entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, *8*(8), 1316–1330. https://www.ijstr.org/final-print/aug2019/Headmasters-Competency-In-Preparing-Vocational-School-Students-For-Entrepreneurship.pdf

Fatahillah, B. F. (2024). The Challenges and Strategies Faced by Native and Non-Native Teachers Teaching in an ESL Context: A Case Study. *JPX*, *X*(X), 1–18.

Fitria, T. N. (2023). The Issue of Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers: Which is the Ideal English Teacher? *Issues in Applied Linguistics & Language Teaching*, *05*(01), 48–58.

https://10.0.145.133/iallteach.v5i1.7800

Ghane, M. H., & Razmi, M. H. (2023). Exploring the Effectiveness of Native and Non-Native English Teachers on EFL Learners' Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity in Speaking. *Education Research International*, *2023*, 19–22. https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/4011255

Harsanti, H. R., & Manara, C. (2021). "I have to teach the 'English' English": Native-speakerism ideology among the English teachers. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *11*(2), 330–340. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i2.26379

K.Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research Design and Methods*. Sage Publications. https://iwansuharyanto.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/robert_k-_yin_case_study_research_design_and_mebookfi-org.pdf

Kirana, S. N., & Methitham, P. (2022). Native-Speakerism in a Locally Developed Indonesian EFL Textbook: A Critical Discourse Study. *Journal of English and Education (JEE)*, *8*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.20885/jee.v8i1.23063

Lestari, H., Hidayat, D. N., Husna, N., Alek, A., & Anita, A. (2022). Native Speaker Interaction with Young Learners in English Class - Hybrid Learning Models. *Loquen: English Studies Journal*, *15*(1), 36. https://doi.org/10.32678/loquen.v15i1.5751

Maji, E., Samanhudi, U., & Mokoagouw, M. E. (2022). Students' _ difficulties in speaking English: (a case study in SMKN 3 Sorong). *Soscied*, *5*(1), 95–109.

Nurhaliza, N. (2023). The Impact of the Invited Native Speakers Program on Students' Confidence in Speaking English at STIKes Bina Cipta Husada Purwokerto. *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, *4*(3), 2986–2995. https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v4i3.529

Pariyanto, P. (2021). Native English Speaking Teachers (Nests) And Indonesian English Teachers (Iets) Efl Students' Perception And Preferences. *Anaphora: Journal of Language, Literary and Cultural Studies*, *3*(2), 112–121. https://doi.org/10.30996/anaphora.v3i2.4620

Perry, S. (2023). Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and Self-Appreciation: How Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers Can Gain Equity by Learning to Appreciate Themselves. *Merits*, *3*(4), 654–667. https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3040039

Simanjuntak, M. B., Sutrisno, S., & Lumingkewas, M. S. (2024). Enhancing English Speaking Competence for Vocational Students: Descriptive Qualitative Analysis. *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, *5*(3), 3487–3494. https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i3.1122

Sinta. (2019). Effectiveness of Using Native Speaker in Teaching Listening Comprehension. *Journal of English Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature*, *1*(1), 54–61. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35438/ettli.v1i1.194

Wang, L., & Fang, F. (2020). Native-speakerism policy in English language teaching revisited: Chinese university teachers' and students' attitudes towards native and non-native English-speaking teachers. *Cogent Education*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1778374

Wulandari, R. A., Rosnaningsih, A., & Sintawati, F. (2021). Students' perceptions towards native and non-native english speaker teachers. *ETERNAL (English Teaching Journal)*, *12*(2), 80–95. https://doi.org/10.26877/eternal.v12i2.8705