

The differences in students' attitudes and perceptions of NEST and NNEST

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ABSTRACT

Students might have different attitudes and perceptions of different types of teachers. The present study aims to analyse the differences in students' attitudes as well as perceptions toward two different types of teachers; NEST (Native English Speaking Teachers) and NNEST (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers). The present study used a mixed method approach by distributing a set of questionnaires to sixty junior high school students and interviewing four of them. Despite showing relatively positive attitudes toward both teachers, the findings revealed that the participants paid more attention to NEST than NNEST. Although most participants do not think English should only be taught by NEST, there is a preference over NEST whom are considered as more effective in teaching speaking skills, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge. However, the participants show more relaxed attitudes when they were being taught by NNEST due to shared L1 as well as teachers' knowledge in learning English as non-native speakers. In addition, NNEST were perceived as better teachers of grammar than NEST. Thus, both teachers should learn from each other to create a better learning environment for students. Besides that, teacher trainings should equip pre-service teachers with knowledge to overcome their weaknesses either as NEST or NNEST.

Introduction

In addition to motivation, attitudes can influence students' interest in FL learning. In this sense, both students' attitudes and motivation can predict their success in language learning (Ellis, 1994; Gardner, 1985). Therefore, positive attitudes toward FL learning help students whereas negative attitudes hinder their success in FL learning (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2002). Furthermore, there is a link between motivation and attitudes. Considered as a prime concern in FL learning, students' attitudes determined their motivation to learn FL (Bradford, 2007; Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Providing positive attitudes toward FL learning among students might lead to the increase in students' motivation (Lennartsson, 2008; Oroujlou and Vahedi, 2011). Without positive attitudes toward FL learning, students might find it hard to focus on their study. It can be said that students' attitudes and motivation are two inseparable factors that influence the success in FL learning.

One of important factors which influence students' attitudes toward FL learning is teachers.

Stipek (2002) argues that students with better reports with teachers tended to have better attitudes toward learning. In this regard, learners' attitudes refer to their reactions to anything related to language learning (Zhao, 2015). Students' motivation is highly influenced by their attitudes toward FL learning. Thus, positive attitudes toward FL learning help learners achieving their learning goals while negative attitudes acts as the barriers (Ellis, 1994). It can be said that without positive attitudes toward FL learning, students are unlikely to be motivated to learn FL. In addition, students' attitudes can be influenced by teachers. The point is argued by Gardner (1985) as he maintained that teachers can create students' positive attitudes toward FL learning if they are skilled in language, attuned to the feelings of their students, and having informative as well as interesting teaching methodology. The weight of evidence suggests that teachers are influential factors which affect students' attitudes in FL learning.

The aforementioned point leads to a further question; what kind of teachers influences

positive attitudes toward FL learning? In the present study, the previous question is specifically addressed to two types of teachers; NEST (Native English Speaking Teachers) and NNEST (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers). There is a debate on the superiority of NEST (Native English Speaking Teachers) over NNEST (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers) which has sparked extensive research toward it (Albakrawi, 2014; Aslan and Thompson, 2016; Pae, 2017; Walkinshaw and Oanh, 2014; Wu and Ke, 2009). In this regard, non-native speakers can be defined as “speakers of language that is not their L1” (Boecher, 2005: 68). Besides that, Davies (2004) remarked non-native speakers as ones with limited access to the language or have few attributes of native speakers. On the other hand, native speakers refer to people who acquired a language from birth and know the language intuitively (Davies, 1991; Paikeday, 1985; Phillipson, 1992a; Stern, 1983). Besides that, native speakers have certain characteristics such as dominance, comfort of use, self-perception of linguistic identity, having comprehensive idiomatic forms of language, and able to produce spontaneous discourse (Davies, 2004; Nayar, 1994). Due to those characteristics, native speakers are perceived as better than non-native speakers, leading the former ones to be preferred as the ideal model of language as well as language teachers (Jenkins, 2000; Phillipson, 1992b). In this regard, language proficiency seems associated with teaching competence (Seidholfer, 1999). A study of Walkinshaw (2012) on NEST and NNEST in Vietnam highlighted the preferences of students in Vietnam over NEST whom were regarded as more fluent and possessing high level of subject knowledge. Cheng (2009) reported that a group of Taiwanese elementary school students preferred to have NEST due to their American accent. Similar to the previous study, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) indicated the preference toward NEST because of their pronunciation and cultural knowledge.

However, the superiority of NEST over NNEST has been debated in some studies. Phillipson (1992) dubbed the belief of native speakers as better teachers as ‘Native Speaker Fallacy’. Bueno (2006) claimed that despite a long-held belief of NEST’s superiority over NNEST, there is no research which indicates the claim. This fallacy has been debated in several studies. Medgyes (1994) conducted a study on teaching success of NEST and NNEST in ten different countries. The results showed that both teachers had an equal chance to be successful English teachers. Although Medgyes (1992) argued that NNEST might not achieve similar level of competency as NEST, the ownership of language does not always trans-

late to language competence (Rampton, 1990) and guarantee the success of teaching his or her native language (Canagarajah, 1999; Medgyes, 1994, 1999). In addition, non-native Speakers have undergone similar process of learning a language that makes them more qualified than those who were born to it (Braine, 1999; Medgyes, 1994). Besides that, students might value other factors such as teachers’ methodology, teaching skills more than the native language of their teachers. Research conducted in various countries such as Hong Kong (Cheung and Braine, 2007), the USA (Liang, 2002), Vietnam (Walkinshaw and Duong, 2012), and the United Kingdom (Pacek, 2005) revealed teachers’ pedagogical background, teaching experience, teaching qualification, personal qualities (friendliness, enthusiasm), and understanding of the local culture as factors that are valued more by students than teacher’s native language. The weight of evidence suggests that the superiority of NEST over NNEST is still dubious and the native language of teachers might be something valued less by students than other factors.

Furthermore, some studies which focused on students’ perceptions toward NEST and NNEST showed the effects of those perceptions on students’ motivation and attitudes in learning English. A study of Pae (2017) indicated students’ perceptions of learning time with NEST as more motivating and showed more positive attitudes. Cheung and Braine’s (2007) study on 420 students in Hong Kong demonstrated generally favourable attitudes toward NNEST who were perceived by students as effective as NEST. The participants of Walkinshaw and Oanh’s (2014) study revealed being taught by NEST can be motivating to those enjoy learning about other cultures. On the other hand, the 120 Palestinian undergraduate students who participated in a study of Nafi *et al* (2016) showed positive attitudes toward both teachers. However, the participants seemed to prefer NNEST over NEST and showed more positive attitudes toward the latter teachers. There are many factors that may affect the results. A study of Moussu (2010) on 22 intensive English programs throughout the United States reported students’ attitudes were influenced less by teachers’ native language but more by teacher-contact time. The weight of evidence suggests that students’ perceptions influence students’ motivation and attitudes toward English learning.

In regards of previous paragraphs, investigating the differences in students’ attitudes and perceptions toward NEST and NNEST might be beneficial to provide more insights on this matter. Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) argued that attitude is

imperative in their study on the internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. In this regard, every aspect of students' attitudes seems important to be investigated to provide more information that will help teachers to provide a suitable learning condition for their students. Although Rozak and Kuswardhani (2016) have performed a study on the perceptions of Indonesian students toward NEST and NNEST' attitudes and performances, they did not specifically discuss the differences on students' attitudes toward both teachers. On the other hand, a study on the differences between students' attitudes and motivation toward NEST and NNEST has been performed by Pae (2017) on a group of English learners in South Korea. However, a study which specifically designed for English learners in Indonesia has not been conducted yet. Investigating attitudes of English learners in Indonesia might provide researchers and educators with different results than ones provided by researchers who focused on students from different countries. That is why the present study is important to be conducted as it might fill the gap of knowledge in the differences on Indonesian students' attitudes toward NEST and NNEST. In addition, the present study aims to investigate factors which lead to the differences on students' attitudes and perceptions toward NEST and NNEST.

Method

The present study applied a mixed-method approach to investigate the matter. There are two research instruments used in the present study; a 60-item questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from Gardner's (2004) AMTB (Attitudes Motivation Test Battery) and Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self Determination Theory. Using the Likert scale, the questionnaires use following four response-options:

- Strongly disagree.
- Disagree.
- Agree.
- Strongly agree.

The participants are sixty junior high school students in a private school in Bekasi, Indonesia. The participants were chosen because they had been taught by both NEST and NNEST for more than two years. They attend twice a week English lessons with NNEST for two hours as well as a weekly English session with NEST. A session with a NEST is always accompanied with a translator. Both NEST and NNEST that taught them were qualified English teachers. However, whereas NNEST are permanent teachers in that school, NEST are hired by an English teaching

agency which specializes in providing teachers to companies, schools or private courses. Due to the nature of present research, obtained data will be analysed differently. In this regard, quantitative data is analysed using SPSS whereas qualitative data is transcribed and coded according to several categories; students' attitudes to English learning, students' attitudes and perceptions of NEST and NNEST.

Results and discussions

This section aims to discuss the results of present research. Table 1 shows the findings related to students' attitudes toward English learning. Items 1 to 5 were designed to observe students' positive attitudes to English learning. Most participants consider English as one of the most important school programmes and plan to learn English as much as possible. They are followed by students' positive feeling as well as enjoyment to English learning. Generally, the participants seem to show relatively high level of positive attitudes to English learning. On the other hand, items 6 to 10 were designed to investigate students' negative attitudes to English learning. Findings of these items show low results, also indicating students' generally favourable attitudes toward English. Similar to the present study, several studies highlighted students' positive attitudes toward language learning (Lamb, 2007; Ushida, 2005; Zhao, 2015). On the other hand, a study of Abu Melhim (2009) on 45 female pre-service teachers students in Jordan reported the participants' negative attitudes toward English learning which were considered as a waste of time. Most participants chose English because they were not accepted in other majors such as science or math. On the contrary, Drbseh's study (2015) on motivation and attitudes of Middle East students in a university in the UK toward English learning recorded varying degrees of participants' attitudes toward English learning. Investigating students from four different countries in Middle East (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi and United Arab Emirates), Drbseh's (2015) study indicated that while majority of Saudis' and Egyptian students have favourable attitudes toward English learning, Jordanian and UAE students lean to negative attitudes. It can be said that different teaching context might have different influence on students' attitudes toward language learning.

In regards to the point above, the differences in students' attitudes to language learning might be influenced by several factors such as teachers, teaching method, or students' attitudes to L2 speakers. On his study toward the attitudes of a group of EFL learners in Turkey, Karahan (2007) highlighted that most of his participants only showed mildly positive attitudes toward

No	Items	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
1	Learning English is really great.	3.1000	3.0000	.54306
2	I really enjoy learning English.	3.0300	3.0000	.63691
3	English is an important part of the school programme.	3.2300	3.0000	.49972
4	I plan to learn as much English as possible.	3.2300	3.0000	.69786
5	I love learning English.	2.9500	3.0000	.69927
6	I hate English.	1.5500	2.0000	.56524
7	I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	2.4700	2.0000	.76947
8	Learning English is a waste of time.	1.6800	2.0000	.56723
9	I think that learning English is boring.	2.0700	2.0000	.60693
10	When I leave school, I shall give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.	1.6200	1.0000	.78312

Table 1. Students' attitudes to English learning

English language despite the amount of support they obtained from their environment. Although Karahan's (2007) participants were aware of the benefits of being fluent in English for their life, they did not have a strong orientation to learn English. In this sense, orientations refer to "...precursors of the components [motivational intensity or the effort] and their role is to create motivation" (Köseoğlu, 2013: 801). Without strong orientations, students' interest in language learning might not be sustainable. In this regard, external support might not always lead to students with more positive attitudes on language learning. However, unlike Karahan's (2007) participants, the participants of the present study show relatively high level of positive attitudes toward English learning. The differences in learning orientation between these groups might be one of the causes. Following are the comments from participants about English learning:

"English is exciting and interesting to learn."
Student A

"Because [English] is interesting." Student B

"I just want to learn English because I think it's...it's pretty fun. And...I want to... I know someday I want to...umm, visit other countries and maybe use that language, to speak to other people." Student C

"I like, umm, English subject. I really like it, and...my dream is to go college in London and...Harvard, yeah." Student D

The above comments show the participants' strong orientation as well as interest in learning English. The findings of present study suggest that promoting sufficient learning ori-

entation among students might lead to better attitudes in language learning. Other studies also suggest the same (Bradford, 2007; Köseoğlu, 2013; Okuniewski, 2012). Thus, teachers need to provide either activities or encouragements that promote students' strong orientation as well as positive attitudes in language learning.

RQ2: Are there any differences in terms of students' attitudes toward NEST and NNEST? What factors influence the differences in students' attitudes and perceptions toward NEST and NNEST?

To answer the above question, findings related to students' attitudes and perceptions toward NEST will be discussed before they are compared with ones related to students' attitudes and perceptions toward NNEST. Following table shows students' attitudes and perceptions toward NEST.

The above table indicates that most participants do not really care the nationality of their teacher as long as they can teach well. The point is similar to the comments below:

"They're good. In their own specific way..." Student B

"Each of them has their own way of teaching so I have to respect them...I think both of them are same to me. At least they can teach me how to speak English." Student C

"No. They both are fine, they...teach us, umm, same." Student D

The participants seem to consider both teachers benefit them in different ways. Few studies also suggest students' positive attitudes on both teachers (Cheung and Braine, 2007;

No	Items	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
11	I like the pronunciation of my native English speaking teachers.	2.7833	3.0000	.82527
12	I don't understand what my native English speaking teachers said.	2.4667	3.0000	.85304
13	I pay more attention when being taught by native English speaking teachers.	2.2500	2.0000	.79458
14	Native English speaking teachers sometimes make grammatical mistakes.	1.7000	2.0000	.72017
15	I like native English speaking teachers more than non-native English speaking teachers.	2.6833	3.0000	1.01667
16	I don't care where my English teachers come from as long as they can teach me well.	3.1667	3.0000	.84706
17	Native English speaking teachers give me more knowledge of British or American cultures.	2.6667	3.0000	.81650
18	I see no difference in learning English with native or non-native teachers.	2.0500	2.0000	.81146
19	I learn a lot of vocabulary with native English speaking teachers.	3.1167	3.0000	.61318
20	Native English speaking teachers sometimes don't understand what students said.	3.0167	3.0000	.46910

Table 2. Students' attitudes and perceptions toward NEST

Lipovsky and Mahboob, 2010; Nafi *et al*, 2016). Nevertheless, Table 3 shows that majority of the participants in the present study consider learning with NEST help them gaining more vocabulary. The participants in Luk's (2001) study also believed that through increased opportunities to use English with NEST, their English proficiency would be improved. Nevertheless, the table indicates that some participants of the present study do not think NEST really understand what they say. In addition to the preference of present study' participants to the pronunciation of NEST, they also prefer NEST to NNEST. This preference is crucial because it can lead to students' positive attitudes toward learning English and teachers (Pae, 2017). In this study, such preference over NEST is reflected in following comment made by Student C:

"Umm, I think. No, wait. I think the...the native speakers are actually more, more... They have a lot of knowledge...Starting from their accent. Their...style of... teaching. And? Yeah, I guess that's it. Native speakers I guess." Student C

Several studies also suggest students' preference toward NEST (Braine, 1999; Clark and Paran, 2007; Kelch and Williamson, 2002; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2002). Furthermore, Rozak and Kuswardani (2016) suggested that students prefer NEST to NNEST because students consider NEST

as more creative with materials and teaching performance as well as better in time management. In addition, some studies noted that a western English teacher who looks different from their students will attract more attention from students, resulting in more positive learner attitudes and stronger intentions to learn English (Lamb and Budiyanto, 2013; Moussu and Llorca, 2008; Pae, 2017). Besides the aforementioned points, NEST' accent is mentioned in Table 3 as one of the reasons of students' preference over them. A study of Kelch and Williamson (2002) on ESL students' attitudes on toward native and non-native-speaking instructor's accent showed that students were more critical to instructors with non-standard varieties of English. However, students' concern on teachers' accents might not always be caused by their preference on NEST. Some students might think that some accents are more understandable than others. A study of Alghofaili and Elyas (2017) on the impacts of NEST and NNEST on Saudi Arabian EFL tertiary students concluded that students care less about the nativeness of teachers' accent but more on whether it is understandable or not. On a study of the effects of teachers' accent on students' perceptions, Liang (2002) found that teacher's accent does not have negative effect on the students' attitude. Thus, further research seems imperative to know whether students' prefer NEST to NNEST because NEST' accents are more understandable

than their counterparts or not.

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates that some participants think that NEST give them more cultural knowledge of native speaking countries. Some studies also found NEST as more effective in teaching cultural knowledge (Mahboob, 2004; Zhou and Hou, 2015). Nevertheless, the table shows that some participants admit that they sometimes do not understand what their NEST say. Following comment also reflects the latter point, "...they don't know the word so when we want to speak English but, but don't know the word so we ask them to help us but they don't know the word, too so...it's kinda hard..." Student D. A study of Benke and Medgyes (2005) on the perceptions of English learners at secondary and university levels in Hungary showed that lower levels students found NEST to be difficult to understand and provided less grammatical explanations. This language barrier might cause some participants to pay more attention to NEST. This point also happened to Student A who admitted that he tended to sit more tightly and speak differently to NEST. Student D also said that she showed more discipline in front of NEST. Despite the language barrier, Student D said that she was still motivated to study English with NEST because "...when we go home, we can search [the meaning of difficult word] in

Google...and [NEST] teach us more...than local teachers [because they are from native English speaking countries] and know the culture..." Finally, it can be seen from the table that some participants do not think that NEST can make grammatical mistakes. It can be said that despite students' perceptions of NEST as more effective in teaching cultural knowledge of native speaking countries and their sufficient knowledge in grammar, students still find it hard to connect with NEST. Wu and Ke (2009) on their study on NEST in Taiwanese setting argued that NEST' lack of understanding toward students' cultural background might also cause a barrier between NEST and students. Taiwanese students who are used to teacher-centred and test-based classroom might look passive and reluctant to express their opinions when they are taught by NEST. Thus, learning students' culture as well as L1 may help NEST to understand their students (Barrat and Kontra, 2000). Related to the present study, besides understanding students' cultural background, it seems imperative for NEST to reduce the barrier between them and students by providing more grammar explanation and using vocabulary suited to students' level.

Table 3 demonstrates students' attitudes and perceptions toward NNEST. It can be shown

No	Items	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
21	Non-native English speaking teachers teach me grammar better.	2.8500	3.0000	.70890
22	Non-native English speaking teachers sometimes make grammatical mistakes.	3.0167	3.0000	.59636
23	Non-native English speaking teachers are more prepared to teach in the class.	2.7500	3.0000	.85618
24	I don't like the pronunciation of my non-native English speaking teachers.	2.5167	3.0000	.91117
25	I respect non-native teachers more than native teachers.	2.4667	2.5000	.85304
26	Non-native English speaking teachers speak as good as native teachers.	2.3167	2.0000	.65073
27	I like being taught by non-native English speaking teachers better.	2.5833	3.0000	.76561
28	I understand the pronunciation of my non-native English speaking teachers easily.	3.2167	3.0000	.71525
29	I think English should be taught by native speakers only.	1.5667	2.0000	.59280
30	I don't enjoy the class taught by non-native English speaking teachers.	1.9667	2.0000	.82270

Table 3. Students' attitudes and perceptions toward NNEST

from the table that most participants understand the pronunciation of NNEST as well as aware that NNEST occasionally make grammatical mistakes. This point is also confirmed by following comments:

"Because...they have a grammar mistake but they...teach us the meaning of the word...if native speaker, they like, no, no. Local teacher teach us the meaning of the word with Bahasa (Indonesia) and English but native speaker (do not)...Local teacher...is, really great too, like, his, his English is very great, like I want to learn it too, and sometime he help me to speak it, to pronounce it, right...To be honest it's local teacher because, native teachers can't speak in Bahasa (Indonesia)." Student D

"Because I really don't know all the vocabularies that other, that the natives say so I like more understand local once because they can also speak Bahasa (Indonesia)." Student C

It seems that most participants are aware of NNEST's occasional grammatical mistakes but the participants did not consider it something crucial because they think NNEST explain the meaning of some English words better than NEST. This might be caused by the fact that the participants and NNEST share same L1, Bahasa Indonesia. The participants of Chang's (2016) study also show positive attitudes toward NNEST whom are considered as capable of delivering efficient instruction. Thus, sharing L1 with students might be one of advantages of NNEST. A comment from Student A indicates student's perception of NNEST's deliverance in the classroom, "My local (teacher) is pretty good as well... I understand the locals the best...Because...their way of...speaking and explaining the lesson." The study of Adara (2018) also shows students' preference toward NNEST due to shared L1. Although this idea needs to be investigated extensively in further research, NNEST should use their advantages of sharing L1 with students to provide better instructions to students.

In addition, Table 3 shows that the participants perceive NNEST teach grammar better than NEST. NNEST are also considered to be more prepared than NEST and some participants also like being taught by NNEST more. Following comment indicates the participant's view on NNEST:

"They're also very helpful. They teach us, umm, different grammars and...yeah, that's it... But they're not as good as the natives but, local teachers actually teach us what is on the test. Like daily test or something...Local teachers help students to pass the test..." Student C

"The more basic learning, I think it will be

more easy to understand local teachers. Local teachers? Teach like...the well, the basic stuffs you know? You know, like translating. Yeah grammar. Like past tense, perfect tense." Student D

The idea of NNEST as better teachers of grammar is also indicated in some studies (Adara, 2018; Mahboob, 2004; Nafi *et al*, 2016; Zhou and Lulu, 2015). It can also be seen from the table that although some participants express dislike to the pronunciation of their NNEST, they respect their NNEST more than NEST. In addition, Table 3 suggests that some participants think NNEST speak English as good as NEST. Besides that, it shows that the participants enjoy being taught by NNEST and do not think English as something should only be taught by native speakers. The above findings suggest that most participants seem to have positive attitudes toward NNEST. Besides the above findings, some studies also show students' positive attitudes toward NNEST (Chang, 2016; Moussu, 2006; Nafi *et al*, 2016). It can be said that most participants are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of being taught by NNEST. Nevertheless, most participants still maintain positive attitudes toward NNEST.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the differences in attitudes and perceptions of a group of Indonesian EFL learners. Applying a mixed-method approach, a set of questionnaires adapted from Gardner's (2004) AMTB (Attitudes Motivation Test Battery) and Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self Determination Theory were distributed to sixty junior high school students in Bekasi, Indonesia while interviews were conducted to four participants. The findings of present study indicate relatively positive attitudes of participants toward English learning. However, it should be noted that the participants come from a private high school with good access to qualified English teachers as well as learning equipment. The results might be different if the participants come from different socio-economic background. A study which compares students' attitudes from various socio-economic, ages, and English level background seems important to be conducted to yield a balanced view of students' attitudes toward English learning. Besides that, the present study indicates a positive correlation between learning orientation to students' attitudes. In this regards, teachers seem to have significant roles in fostering positive learning orientation and attitudes. Thus, teacher training needs to promote this idea to pre-service teachers. In addition, there should be either mentoring programs or regular

workshops for in-service teachers to help teachers maintaining students' positive attitudes on English learning.

Besides the above points, the results show that most participants have positive attitudes toward NEST and NNEST. However, most participants prefer NEST whom they consider as more competent in regards of vocabulary teaching, pronunciation, and teaching cultural knowledge of English speaking countries. Nevertheless, the present study is not without limitation. Firstly, the present study would benefit more from a bigger number of participants. Unfortunately, there is still limited data about students whom had been taught by NEST and NNEST. Secondly, the present study might obtain better insights with various research instruments such as student' journals to record students' perceptions from time to time or a classroom observation to analyse students' attitudes during language class.

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