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THE IMPACT OF NATIVE SPEAKERISM ON THE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF 'ENGLISH TEACHER AS AN ENGLISH SPEAKER': VOICES FROM INDONESIA

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Abstract: *Some non-native English speaker teachers have trouble constructing the identity of an English speaker in their professional practice, although they have spent years in formal educational institutions to learn and teach the language. In the context of Indonesian English language teaching, the topic of whether the proliferation of native speaker standards contributes to the battle is one that is rarely investigated. As a result, the goal of this study was to evaluate the impact of native speakerism on the construction of English speaker identity among Indonesian teachers of English. In this particular research project, the participants consisted of two female English teachers who worked at different senior high schools in Aceh, Indonesia. Life-history interviews and teacher journals serve as the research instruments, and the discursive perspective on identity serves as the theoretical underpinning for this study. Through the use of thematic analysis, this study found that the participants struggled to construct the identity of an English teacher as an English speaker due to the belief that a native English speaker is an ideal English speaker. It can be concluded that native speakerism affects the English teachers' teaching practice.*

Keywords ***: non-native English speaker, native speaker, English teacher***

Abstrak: Beberapa guru penutur bahasa Inggris non-asli mengalami kesulitan membangun identitas penutur bahasa Inggris dalam praktik profesional mereka, meskipun mereka telah menghabiskan waktu bertahun-tahun di lembaga pendidikan formal untuk belajar dan mengajar bahasa tersebut. Dalam konteks pengajaran bahasa Inggris di Indonesia, topik tentang apakah proliferasi standar penutur asli berkontribusi terhadap kesulitan tersebut adalah topik yang jarang diselidiki. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi dampak ideologi penutur asli terhadap konstruksi identitas penutur bahasa Inggris di kalangan guru bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Dalam proyek penelitian khusus ini, pesertanya terdiri dari dua guru bahasa Inggris perempuan yang bekerja di sekolah menengah atas yang berbeda di Aceh, Indonesia. Wawancara riwayat hidup dan jurnal guru berfungsi sebagai instrumen penelitian, dan perspektif diskursif tentang identitas berfungsi sebagai landasan teoretis untuk penelitian ini. Melalui penggunaan analisis tematik, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa para peserta berjuang untuk membangun identitas seorang guru bahasa Inggris sebagai penutur bahasa Inggris karena keyakinan bahwa penutur asli bahasa Inggris adalah penutur bahasa Inggris yang ideal. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa ideologi penutur asli mempengaruhi praktik mengajar para guru bahasa Inggris tersebut.

Kata kunci : penutur bahasa Inggris bukan penutur asli, penutur asli, guru bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

English teachers are generally assumed to be English subject specialists who can speak English fluently rather than merely teaching the language.

This notion is normal because English teachers spend years learning and using the language before they can teach it (Llurda, 2018). Their context of learning English, whether they study at home or abroad, will also give an effect on their language gains (Suryani, 2015). Based on these ideas, many non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) strive "for their professional legitimacy in real time as English speakers" (Zhang & Zhang, 2015). Moreover, since English is not their first language (L1), they also struggle to construct an English-speaking identity in their professional fields. The NNESTs' Anglophone mindset and belief that a native English speaker (NES) is a better English teacher also cause this legitimacy struggle. Indeed, as Norton and Toohey (2002) express, identity is "a site of struggle."

With regard to the Indonesian English Language Teaching (ELT) context, there is an ongoing issue of poor English proficiency attributed to Indonesian English teachers. Some authors, such as Jayanti and Norahmi (2014), contend that this is due to the widely recognized native speaker (NS) standard orientation in the country. Even the majority of Indonesian English teachers are eager to adhere to NS norms in terms of pronunciation and grammar (Jayanti & Norahmi, 2014). However, less research has been conducted in this context to determine whether the poor English proficiency associated with Indonesian English teachers is a direct result of their NS standard orientation. This study aims to fill the gap by examining if the NS standard orientation is responsible for Indonesian English teachers' inability to speak English. To achieve this objective, the following research question will serve as a guide: What identity do Indonesian English teachers struggle to construct?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Native and Non-Native Speaker

ELT traditionally divides NS and non-native speaker (NNS) (Llurda, 2016). The dichotomy overestimates NS and underestimates NNS, making it one of the most disputed and complex notions in ELT theory and practice (Selvi, 2016). Many scholars have challenged the dichotomy's native and non-native terms (e.g., Holliday, 2005, 2006; Matsuda, 2003) and the inaccuracy of its theories and principles (e.g., Jenkins, 2000; Pennycook, 2016; Phillipson, 1992). For instance, native has positive connotations, while non-native has negative implications (Matsuda, 2003), like "a disadvantage and deficit" (Holliday, 2005). “In common talk and even writing, to ‘native’ and non-native, the latter’s identity is further weakened by appearing ‘not native’ to anything” (Holliday, 2005). "Native is dominant, non-native is marginal." (Matsuda, 2003). Jenkins (2000) then criticizes the dichotomy's beliefs and concepts as follows:

> The term … fails to recognize that many varieties of English in outer circle countries, such as Singapore, are spoken not only as official language but also in the home … that English is often one of several languages available in the repertoires of the multilingual populations of, for example, India and African countries … [where] it is often difficult to ascertain which language is a person’s L1 and which is their L2. The term perpetuates the idea that monolingualism is the norm, when, in fact, precisely the opposite is true of the world at large. (Jenkins, 2000, p. 8-9).

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According to (Llurda, 2016) and (Selvi, 2016), since Chomsky's (1965) linguistic theory, which is "primarily concerned with an ideal-speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community," the NS construct has been the standard in linguistics. Kachru (1994) names such a hypothesis "monolingual bias" in ELT. Consequently, English teachers are often evaluated based on their relationships with intrinsic English entities, such as their native language (whether English or not), place of birth (such as the UK or the US), and race (i.e., white) (Kubota & Lin, 2009), rather than their actual educational and professional investments in ELT. Recruitment procedures reflect such value-laden discourse, for instance (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010).

Holliday (2005, 2006) suggests that "native speakerism" causes the above inequalities. He points out that "native-speaker teacher represents a "Western culture" from which spring the ideals both of the language and of language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2005, p. 49). According to Selvi (2016), this belief poses two ELT threats. First, the concept legalizes the investment in schooling and the profession of some native English speaker teachers (NESTs) simply based on the 'NS' construct. Second, the idea perpetuates NNESTs' low professional self-esteem and self-confidence, which disempower them (Llurda, 2016) and lower their professional morale.

Moreover, the NS/NNS dichotomy has caused NNESTs to struggle to become legitimate ELT professionals (Reis, 2015). Because their goal is NS competency, they often feel inadequate and insecure (Llurda, 2018). More ironically, even though many scholars have revealed the misconceptions of the NS construct (e.g., Braine, 2010; Cook, 2007; Holliday, 2005, 2006; Jenkins, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Llurda, 2015, 2016, 2018; Mahboob, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011; Selvi, 2014, 2016), it is undeniable that NS still dominates NNS in society and language teaching worldwide (Llurda, 2016; Selvi, 2016).

Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers have many varied beliefs about what good teaching is (Levin, 2015; Pajares, 1992; Widdowson, 2018), and these beliefs drive their classroom practices (Richards, 1998). To comprehend what teachers' beliefs are, one must first comprehend what 'beliefs' are (see Borg, 2018). Pajares (1992), whose definition of beliefs is frequently cited in the literature, defines beliefs as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition." Thus, if related to teachers, teachers' beliefs could be defined as their arguments and perspectives regarding what is correct and incorrect in teaching and learning (see Haney et al., 1996). In order to comprehend beliefs, it is also essential to be aware of the types of constructs that can be classified as beliefs. Pajares (1992) and Richards (1998) list alternative terms for beliefs as values, attitudes, theories, perceptions, images, expectations, and presumptions. After that, by comprehending teachers' beliefs, it is also possible to comprehend their teaching practices (see Borg, 2018), which leads us to the discussion of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices.

Based on the findings of studies, Buehl and Beck (2015) demonstrate four possible relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices: (1) beliefs influence practices; (2)

practices influence beliefs; (3) teachers' beliefs are disconnected from their practices; and (4) a reciprocal but complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. In this paper, however, the emphasis is on the first connection because it is more pertinent to this study.

Besides, some beliefs are presumably more powerful than others, so they have a more significant impact on behavior (Green, 1971). The stronger ones are referred to as 'core beliefs,' while the weaker ones are 'peripheral beliefs' (Buehl & Beck, 2015). Buehl and Beck (2015) illustrate this dichotomy by referencing Phipps and Borg (2009), who discovered that teachers' peripheral beliefs, such as about language learning, did not manifest in their classroom practices, whereas teachers' core beliefs, such as about student learning, did manifest in their teaching. Borg (2018) supports the concept of core and peripheral beliefs by stating, "Different beliefs will also carry different 'weight,' and when tensions arise, those that are more central or core will prevail over those that are peripheral" (p. 77).

Identity Construction In Discursive Perspective

Discourse must be understood if the focus is to comprehend identity construction from a discursive perspective. Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin (2011) discuss capital-D discourse, small-d discourse, and narrative in connection to identity. Capital-D discourse considers individuals as constructed in and via existing discourses. Capital-D discourse theorists like Foucault (1972) and Habermas (1979) believe that social norms and traditions constrain individual and institutional identities (Bamberg et al., 2011). According to Foucault (1972), discursive community practices shape people and their realities. Thus, one's identity is shaped by societal macro conditions, which change over time (Bamberg et al., 2011).

While small-d discourse theorists view humans as constructing themselves through discourses (Bamberg et al., 2011). They also view identity as local or contextual (Bamberg et al., 2011), which means that situations/contexts shape discourse, and then discourse shapes identity (Wodak et al., in press). However, with regard to this present study, it uses capital-D discourse because it is the professional discourse that leads the participants of this study to construct the English speaker identity in their professional practice.

In terms of narrative discourse, identity construction can be explored and analyzed through narratives. Identity studies are increasingly using narrative to study how people form their identities (De Costa, 2015). Labov (2001) defines narrative as "reporting past events that have entered into the biography of narrator." According to McAdams (2011), storytelling has a character as well as a history. Lastly, according to Bastos and Oliveria (2006), telling our tales conveys a feeling of who we are and creates a sense of self—how we want to be recognized by others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

METHODS

This study uses a narrative inquiry because of the idea that identity is strongly linked to narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In short, narrative

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defines its narrators.

Research Participants

This study recruited two female English teachers from Aceh, Indonesia, as participants. To facilitate identification, it is best to refer to them as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 (pseudonyms) instead of their actual names.

Teacher 1

Teacher 1's L1 is Acehnese. However, she is also proficient in Indonesian. In 1999, Teacher 1 attended a private university in Banda Aceh to study in the department of English language education. Upon graduation in 2004, she began her career as an honorary English instructor. One year later, she passed an exam to become a contracted teacher. Finally, she became a civil servant teacher in 2008 and now teaches in Banda Aceh at the school where she currently works.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2's L1 is also Acehnese, and she is also proficient in Indonesian. In 2005, Teacher 2 graduated from a public university in Banda Aceh. However, during her undergraduate studies, she had already started teaching English at school. In 2002, for example, she taught English at a boarding school until she obtained her undergraduate degree. She then also became a lecturer's assistant at her university after graduating. She eventually became a permanent teacher at the school where she currently serves as a civil servant teacher.

Research Setting

In terms of the research setting, this study was conducted at two distinct senior high schools in Aceh, Indonesia. Again, for anonymity's sake, the school where Teacher 1 teaches is referred to as School 1, and the school where Teacher 2 teaches is referred to as School 2.

School 1

Even though School 1 is in an urban location, its enrollment is below average. It is probable because this city school is not prestigious. Despite its long history, the school remains underfunded. Then, this school also employs university graduates. Some of them are civil servant teachers. Last, its students are mostly from outside Banda Aceh city.

School 2

School 2 is a well-funded rural boarding public school in Banda Aceh City. It attracts top junior high school students from across Aceh Province who desire to attend top universities after graduation. This school has non-Acehnese students and teachers. It also often holds art, science, and religion competitions. This program is aimed at showing the school's dedication to Aceh's education.

Data collection

The data collection for this study lasted three months. This utilized three semi-structured life history interviews (each lasting approximately forty minutes) and one journal (consisting of approximately one thousand words) obtained from each participant.

Data Analysis

In this investigation, thematic analysis was used for analyzing research data. The steps can be described as follows: (1) Data management. The interview data was transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. (2) Data review. The researcher read the interview transcripts and teacher journals twice to identify the most important data points. (3)

Coding. Using NVivo, the researcher coded interview and journal data under the "identity" category. Inductive coding was used here to highlight novel topics. (4) Theme generation. Here, themes are developed as the findings. The researcher examined all of the data in the "identity" category and modified emergent themes as the primary findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English Teacher as an English Speaker

The participants see the role of English teacher as an English speaker as the identity they want to build in their professional practice. However, they chose a native English speaker teacher (NEST) as an example of an appropriate English speaker for them to emulate because NEST can speak English fluently while teaching. As a result, they keep struggling to construct that identity. This is summarized in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 1

Researcher: Why do you want to be able to teach English in the same manner as native English speakers?

Teacher 1: True, it is so. If (I) see it on the internet, (I) like it even (they speak) full English without halting and having to consider which word to use correctly. There are still vocabularies about which we know little. Oh, I aspire to be like that so much. (Teacher 1, interview)

Clearly, Teacher 1 believed that she and her fellow English teachers lacked the ability to speak the language fluently due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge. As a result, they, including her, did not feel as though they were competent English speakers. The inclusion of her fellow English teachers is indicated by her use of the pronoun 'we' when expressing this type of weakness.

Moreover, Teacher 2 viewed NES as the best English speaker to imitate. She believed she had achieved flawless English when her English pronunciation resembled that of NES. This NS standard orientation is characterized as follows.

Excerpt 2

Researcher: Why do you wish for your English to be similar to that of NES?

Teacher 2: Everyone desires perfectness when deciding a course of action. This is not intended to change him or her or their culture as a whole, but for some things. Students will be more interested when our dialect and pronunciation resemble (those of NES). So it will be of a great assistance. In addition, I believe it increases confidence. If it lacks quality, we are lazy to utilize it.

Researcher: [laughing]

Teacher 2: Embarrassed.

(Teacher 2, interview)

However, for Teacher 2, having flawless English does not imply a change in her identity or culture. Instead, it serves only to attract students and develop her self-assurance. In addition, she believes that if her students are already interested in learning English from her because of her NS-like English, it will be very beneficial for her.

Furthermore, it may be deduced that it is vital for Teacher 2 to speak English as a NES does because, as their English instructor, she sees herself as a linguistic and communicative model of English for her students. This conclusion is derived from her statement that “If it lacks quality, we are

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lazy to utilize it", which means she was lazy to speak English if her English differed from that of NES since she would be embarrassed in front of her students. Avoiding embarrassment is, in essence, a sign that she is a role model for her students.

In addition, Teacher 1 and 2 consider the inability to speak English fluently in class to be a shortcoming. This is demonstrated further in the following excerpts, respectively.

Excerpt 3

> As a teacher who teaches a foreign language that I do not use very often in my daily life, I have to admit that I have a weakness. My view is that I have trouble listening, and I cannot speak full English in class yet. (Teacher 1, teacher journal)

Excerpt 4

> Despite this, I believe that my ability to speak English correctly according to the pronunciation of native speakers is still quite limited. This can sometimes be detrimental to using the language as frequently as feasible in conversation. Therefore, I do not teach exclusively in English. There is a dominant national language in addition to the Acehnese language that I occasionally employ when instructing. (Teacher 2, teacher journal)

Both teachers think that an English teacher's weakness is not being able to speak English fully in class. Teacher 1 has this weakness because she does not use English in her daily life, so she is not very good at listening to it either. While Teacher 2 believes she has this deficiency because her English pronunciation differs from that of NES. Therefore, she prefers to speak Indonesian and occasionally Acehnese in class.

According to the two teachers in this research, speaking English fluently in front of students is a necessary specialization for English teachers. This English speaker identity is an imposed identity (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) or a designated identity (Martel, 2017) for them.

Also, since they adopt the NS standard orientation, they feel inadequate. This supports Llurda (2018)'s claim that NNESTs will feel inadequacy and lack of confidence if their final goal is to speak like NSs. Here, their implicit assumption that they are a linguistic and communicative model of English for their students drives such compliance. As a result, due to such conformity, NES becomes their imagined professional identity, so that they seem to constantly feel that they are not a good model of English communication for their students.

The identity of English teacher as English speaker, which both teachers struggled to establish, is profoundly mediated by their professional expectations but constrained by what Gao (2017) refers to as a dominant societal discourse or what Foucault (1972) and Habermas (1979) term a Capital-D discourse, namely that NS is the optimal language model. This belief ultimately influences their practices (Buehl & Beck, 2015), namely not speaking English fully in the classroom because their English differs from that of NES.

Indeed, a teacher's numerous identities can clash, particularly when one is prioritized over another, resulting in an identity dilemma or struggle (Barkhuizen, 2017). Here, the two instructors must choose between the identity of an English teacher as an English speaker and NNEST, resulting in an identity conflict for them. Indeed,

many scholars have argued against native speakerism (e.g., Braine, 2010; Cook, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2015; Llurda, 2015, 2016, 2018; Mahboob, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011; Selvi, 2014). Yet, many NNESTs worldwide continue to believe that NES is a valid speaker of English (Llurda, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Native speakerism affects the professional performance of some NNESTs (Llurda, 2016) and forces them to struggle to construct an identity imposed on English teachers in general, namely that an English teacher is an English speaker, despite the fact that they are already trained as English teachers in formal educational institutions (Llurda, 2018). As a consequence, NNESTs lack the confidence to speak English fluently in the classroom, as they perceive their English pronunciation to be dissimilar to that of NES.

The identity of an English teacher as an English speaker becomes a dilemma for such teachers because, on the one hand, they view themselves as the model of English users for their students in terms of speaking English, but on the other hand, they believe that this never occurs because they are not as proficient as NES in terms of speaking English.

Suggestion

This study relied on participant reports rather than observations. To better understand how instructors form their identities in the classroom, classroom observation should be done in the future. Interviews inform practice, while observation describes it (Flick, 2018).

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