"HELLO, I'M A NATIVE SPEAKER": NONNATIVE TUTORS' PERSPECTIVES ON NATIVE-SPEAKERISM IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

Native-speakerism is an ideology in foreign language teaching that believes that Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) have better competencies than Nonnative English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs). There are marked differences between NESTs and NNESTs in private classroom learning; for instance, the hourly fees of NESTs are much higher than NNESTs regardless of the long language teaching career. More importantly, there is hardly any research on Native-speakerism ideology from the perspective of nonnative English private tutors. This research, therefore, is conducted to give a broader conception of how NNESTs perceive the native-speakerism ideology in a private class context and contribute to the relatively unexplored area of language teaching. The data of this qualitative study were obtained through a small-scale interview with nonnative English private tutors. Results show that private learning, based on the informants' standpoints, is more oriented to making speakers able to use language skills to communicate fluently than to understand the target language culture, which NNESTs may not fully comprehend. The identity as a NEST and NNEST insignificantly affects tutors' linguistic and teaching competence. However, it significantly creates a massive gap in the teaching costs despite most NESTs' lack of classroom management skills and communication effectiveness to explain teaching materials due to language barriers.

Keywords: *Native-speakerism; teacher stereotype; English tutor; private course*

1. Introduction

Technological advancement has resulted in consequential reforms in English Language Teaching landscape (Agudo, et al., 2015; Zhou & Wei, 2018). Nowadays, the number of English learners and speakers has been escalating drastically with easy access to the internet, mainly due to autonomous learning and information dissemination. English learners who have a high level of learning autonomy can use technology to achieve high language proficiency on their own (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021; Cruaud, 2017), such as by watching Youtube videos and doing free online worksheets. Meanwhile, students who need a study companion can search for English tutors worldwide without constraints in space and time, for countless digital language learning platforms facilitate communications at a

distance (Ekmekçi, 2015). In consequence, the number of non-native speakers of English has surpassed the number of native speakers of English (Wang & Fang, 2020).

Along with that, English has now been regarded as universal, liberal, secular, and international. English as a Lingua Franca starts transitioning and legitimating all users of English with differences, for instance, in dialects, accents, and nationalities, as the native standard is less likely to enjoy international and intercultural communication (Fang, 2018). Native-speakerism ideology, however, is deeply entrenched in most ELT contexts that any deviation from native use is considered to be language errors and unprofessional teaching. Consequently, nonnative English speakers are socially considered incapable of presenting the authentic English culture and social conditions that underlie the proper use of the language (Silalahi, 2019). This issue adversely impacts nonnative English teachers in that they struggle with the negative stigma of being unconfident, inactive, and uncritical (Birney et al., 2020; Russo et al., 2017), then gives a significant difference in rates between native and nonnative English teachers.

These stigmas cause the so-called "native-speakerism" to arise as an ideology that English native speakers are the best teachers because they represent the western culture and grow with the student's target language (Hwang & Yim, 2019; Silalahi, 2020, 2021, 2019). Being a teacher, however, is not only limited to teaching culture and language but also teaching methodologies and the effectiveness of communication. This expertise is certainly not shared by everyone, including native speakers. A language enthusiast, a NEST himself, also suggests that "expertise" rather than nativeness should be an essential criterion for effective teaching (Gibreel, 2018). The prevalence of this ideology has been the rationale that unifies the NNESTs' criticism and concern about their English teaching capacities using social media. On the other hand, research showed a contradictory result that in terms of pronunciation that 'nativeness' was considered more important to indicate whether a teacher could perform effective teaching quality (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012).

The title 'Hello, I'm a native" is quoted from the Tutoroo web (*Indonesian Tutors in Jakarta*, 2022), which provides information about 73 private English tutors for students across borders. In the tutor's identity section, a brief description of the private classes offered is attached, for example, 'Private Tutor in Jakarta,' 'Learn English with Private Courses.' However, a relatively high occurrence rate only sides with tutors with such description: 'Improve your English with a Native Tutor.' Here, the tutors claimed themselves to be NESTs though they are not in expectation to boost the confidence of their prospective students as well as the hourly fees. Several tutors write down their identities as native speakers, followed by their teaching experiences. Therefore, the research aims to figure out the private tutors' perspectives on the importance of native-speakerism to their job.

To the best of our knowledge, there has been a very small number of research discussing the native-speakerism ideology involving nonnative English private tutors as the participants in the research field. Previous research on the ideology of native-speakerism is oriented towards the existence of the ideology of native-speakerism in an educational institution. Analysis oriented toward students' perceptions of NEST and NNEST is one of the most frequently conducted research topics (Adara, 2019; Silalahi, 2019). This research aims at describing the forms of linguistic imperialism that are cognitively embedded in students' minds or even language teaching institutions. Other research shows that the ideology of native-speakerism is closely related to the belief that native speakers have advantages in terms of cultural understanding and language fluency. Therefore, the materials used in learning need to use materials that are published internationally (Harsanti & Manara, 2021).

Other research bridges teacher identity in L2 with pronunciation learning (Alghazo & Zidan, 2019). This research is different from previous research because the object that is the focus of research is not a formal linguistic institution or organization but a non-formal institution established individually. In addition, this study also looks at how an ideology can be commodified to strengthen the marketing and promotional dimension. The researchers, therefore, intend to fill the gap by bringing up the following research question "How do nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) perceive native-speakerism ideology in the private teaching contexts?"

2. Literature Review
2.1 World Englishes

The development of information technology strengthens the position of English as an international language, especially in the non-native speaking of English contexts (Pun, 2013). English has a significant role in global communication as a lingua franca that is not only used by native speakers but also by non-native speakers (Silalahi, 2020, 2019). This condition allows the emergence of various variants of English that develop along with the acculturation of English with other cultures and languages. It also emphasizes the contradiction of monocentric and pluricentric ideas in English, which has implications for the emergence of the terms (standard) English and (world) Englishes (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Kachru, 2019; Kubota, 2015; Silalahi, 2021).

This contradiction is seen in determining the best learning model and whether variations in English have standards. Several experts argue that English should be taught according to English standards and follow the assessment model. The existence of variations of English will only weaken the English language itself (Harsanti & Manara, 2021). Meanwhile, as a lingua franca, English is declared to be multi-interpretations and functions (Al-Mutairi, 2019) English is not only owned by native English speakers (America, England, and Australia) but is also used by other speakers as a first, second, and third language. The English variation is then called Nonnative English Varieties, New Englishes, or World Englishes (Al-Mutairi, 2019). The spread of English impacts the emergence of several variations of the English language, thereby replacing the traditional view of language as a bound, unified, and fixed system with a more pluralist understanding of language as diverse, fluid, and multifaceted (Kubota, 2015). Furthermore, World Englishes are also considered a general idea of the English language worldwide, associated with English teaching (Marlina, 2017). It raises controversy because learning does not necessarily have to be carried out in native norms, and not all teachers are adequate.

World Englishes represent pluralism originating from western identity into several variations (Africa, Asia, or other language communities) because it can also be seen as cultural reincarnation (Kachru, 2019). Even though it is delivered differently and in different contexts, everyone owns English. He also developed a concentric to illustrate the expansion of language in the world in three circles, as Figure 1 shows: i) the inner circle or a country whose dominant language and language are English (i.e. England, America, Britain), ii) the outer circle of countries whose second language is English (i.e. Philippines, India), iii) the expanding circle of countries that position English as a foreign language (i.e. China, Indonesia, Iran).
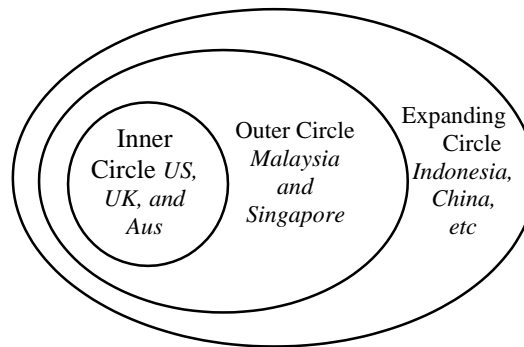
Figure 1. Kachru's Three Concentric Circles

2.1 Native-speakerism

The dichotomy of native-speakers and non-native speakers encourages a debate about the quality of foreign language learning (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Silalahi, 2020, 2019, 2021). In the end, it leads to the emergence of the term native-speakerism. It reflects the ideology of learning English, which believes that the ideal English language learning is carried out by native speakers or Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Holliday, 2018; Silalahi, 2020, 2019, 2021) because they can present an English-speaking West culture.

Native-speakerism reflects a form of inequality in English Language Teaching (Silalahi, 2019). The view of the superiority of NESTs over NNESTs, especially in the context of language teaching, reflects the imperialism behind the ideology of native-speakerism (Silalahi, 2019). NESTs' meaning as the ideal English teachers is wrong because cultural knowledge cannot be the only parameter to measure teacher quality (Harsanti & Manara, 2021). On the other hand, this has implications for the belief that Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) do not have better cultural skills and understanding than NESTs (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Silalahi, 2019).

The ideology of native-speakerism extends based on cultural orientation, not just linguistics (Liu, 2021). It encourages the emergence of negative stigma and cultural stereotypes against non-native speakers and NNESTs (Holliday, 2014, 2018; Silalahi, 2019). In the context of learning, for example, NESTs are often associated with positive labels, such as 'active,' 'confident,' and 'critical.' In contrast, negative labels, such as 'passive,' 'undemocratic', and 'uncritical' are attached to NNESTs (Aslan & Thompson, 2017). Native-speakerism is oriented toward the implementation of learning English and the materials used in the learning process (Liu, 2021). Belief in the quality of learning materials published internationally, and doubts about materials made in the outer and expanding circles also indicate negative labelling of the quality and ability of NNESTs. This discrimination is also seen in work where course institutions with financial capabilities prioritize NESTs and instructors from the Outer Circle compared to teachers from expanding circles (Al-Mutairi, 2019; Silalahi, 2020, 2019, 2021)

3. Research Method

This research was conducted in a qualitative framework. Aiming to find out the perception of English tutors on the phenomenon of native-speakerism, small-scale interviews were conducted with 8 informants who are English tutors in Jakarta and surrounding areas branding themselves as NNESTs.

Tutor's Initials	Education	Experience	Sex	Background Information
SL	BA in English Education	16 Years	Male	Private tutor in Serang dan Cilegon, ESP Teacher
IR	BA in English Studies	5 Years	Female	Private tutor in Kelapa Gading
AL	BA in English Education	8 Years	Female	Private tutor in Bintaro
SH	BA in English Education	2 Years	Female	Private tutor in Bekasi
VN	BA in English Education	5 Years	Female	Private tutor in Kelapa Gading
TN	BA in English Education	3 Years	Male	Private tutor in Ancol
MT	BA in English Education	4 Years	Female	Private tutor in Serpong

Table 1. Informants' Demographic Information

Informants are non-native English-speaking tutors who hold private English classes in Jakarta and surrounding areas with at least two years of teaching experience. Due to the pandemic, interviews were conducted online through Zoom and Google Meet. All information from the interview was recorded and transcribed. Two days before the interview, the researchers distributed Terms of Reference (TOR) to all informants to facilitate them to further understand the research objectives. The interview itself was directed to answer the following questions:

1. What do you think about native-speakerism in Indonesia?
   a. Do you agree that learning English in your private courses should be delivered in a native context?
   b. Does anyone agree that the materials used in private courses must only be internationally published materials?
   c. What do you think about the materials made by Native English teachers?
2. What is your perception of native tutors?
   a. Are native tutors better than Indonesian tutors? Why?
   b. Are native tutors methodologically and technically better at teaching English for private classes?
3. What is your perception of the English native context? Do private class students have to learn English in a native context?
   a. Can English private classes be taught using the local context?

Question 1 aims to find out the tutors' perceptions of the native-speakerism phenomenon in Indonesia. Perceptions of native-speakerism can be seen from how informants view native context learning and the materials used in private classes. Question 2 shows the informants' views on the quality of NESTs. Question 3 aims to provide an overview of the use of the natural-cultural context of learning in private classes. The researchers also raised initial questions which were asked at the beginning of the interview to enrich the analysis and

provide clear background information of informants. The informant answered the questions based on his/her experiences as private tutors. The questions are as follows:

1. Why did you decide to become a private English tutor?
2. Have you ever taught English at a language institute?
3. How long have you been working as a private English tutor?
4. What is your educational background?
5. How many English private students have you taught so far? What are their proficiency levels?

4. Results and Discussion

The ideology of native-speakerism can be seen in how society labels native English tutors have higher qualifications than non-native tutors. The native speaker status may promote the personal brand of private tutors. Students are willing to pay them more than local tutors or those who do not write themselves as native speakers. The phenomenon of 'prioritizing native speakers' in the context of teaching has long existed in applied linguistic studies. It departs from the stereotype that teaching English is better delivered in its native context or English Speaking West (Holliday, 2018). This is often also associated with the emergence of various variations of English 'Englishes' (Al-Mutairi, 2019; Kachru, 2019). Many people think that teaching English should be delivered according to Standard English or the standard used by countries that use English as their native language. It can be concluded that English is no longer seen as a communication process but also as a medium of promotion. Even in the context of private learning, tutors can increase the selling value or hourly fees by showing off their native identity.

Taking private classes is generally done by students who have sufficient financial ability. The *Tutoroo* webpage (*https://www.tutoroo.co/*) shows that the hourly cost for private classes ranges from Rp100.000 to Rp300.000. The varied costs are determined by each tutor based on his/her qualifications put in the description. It shows that the cost of tutors showing off identity as natives or speakers from the outer circle (such as the Philippines) is higher than that of local (Indonesian) tutors and those who do not write themselves as English native speakers.

The interview started with the question "Why did you decide to become a private English tutor?" Most of the informants stated that it is a financially promising and flexible job as it is not limited to working a specified number of hours in a service week and administrative provisions. Despite the fact that the English language has been seen as a defacto standard medium of communication all over the world (Mappiasse & Sihes, 2014), the need for teaching English in Indonesia is still high considering that English is a foreign language for most Indonesians and the level of Indonesians' English proficiency is categorized as low. According to a survey on English Proficiency Index, Indonesia ranks 80 among 112 countries around the globe (*EF English Proficiency Test*, 2022).

Excerpt 1
Today, English is very important. Everyone should be able to speak English. English is open again only for people who want to live abroad or want to further study. In the office itself, employees are required to be able to communicate fluently in English to support their work […] Every month, I always get one student who decides to take private courses because of work demands. Even the office sometimes pays for the course fees for its employees because most Indonesians are still not very fluent in English, so

it is difficult for them to communicate with clients whose first language is English. (IR – 18/12/2021)

According to a tutor, the urgency to master English is very high in this country. One of the skills that must be possessed by employees is speaking English. In several job interviews, applicants are required to present or introduce themselves in English. Not to mention when one has to communicate with clients who do not speak English. In the context of work, an employee is at least required to be an active English speaker that will greatly facilitate the firm's performance in business conversation, negotiation, corresponding, and presentation. These foreign language competencies must be possessed by employees to support their professional performance too.

<u>Excerpt 2</u>
Usually, employees ask for intensive tutor programs to support their work and even the company can finance the course fees for its employees. Usually, they ask to join special programs, such as conversations, negotiation, correspondence, and presentations. (AL – 19/12/2021)

When the researchers asked all the informants what skills were prioritized for the needs of employees, all respondents agreed that conversation and presentation were the pivotal skills they need to support their careers. Meanwhile, for private classes, children decide to take private classes because of parental involvement in their children's education with a belief that learning in classes with a large number of students still has some drawbacks, so additional classes outside school hours are also necessary. Aside from that, many parents still doubt the quality of English teachers in Indonesia. Though a child's decision to take intensive course classes is frequently influenced by parents, their reasons for taking a private course varied when the tutor asked them. For example, an English private tutor, SL, stated that the children's decision to take English courses was because they wanted to be with their friends.

<u>Excerpt 3</u>
Almost all of my students took private classes because their parents told them to. Parents often worry that students will not be able to follow the class lessons or that the teacher is incompetent. […] if I ask the children who are taking private lessons with me, their answers are unique. Some decided to take private lessons because their friends were also taking courses or even becoming Harry Potter. (SL – 19/12/2021)

To fully understand the phenomenon of native-speakerism in a private teaching context, the researchers also asked about the necessity of delivering learning materials with native cultural contexts. In private courses, learning does not have to focus on understanding the native culture but on being able to communicate using English. Informants agreed that in a private class understanding the context of native culture should not be a major concern. However, the stigma that exists in society is that NESTs have better abilities than NNESTs. This does not become a real basis for private class students to follow intensive English programs. Knowledge of English can be incorporated into learning, however, is not the focus of learning because being fluent in English is not only shown from cultural knowledge and understanding.

Excerpt 4
The private course student does not need to learn English culture. What for? They also basically study because they can't speak English. All they need are English basic skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. The point is already able to understand terms in English. […] The problem is that Indonesians always feel that English teachers are better than Indonesian teachers. But this is not the main reason for them to take intensive courses with native speakers because the fees for native tutors are usually much more expensive than local tutors. (SH– 18/12/2021)

One of the obstacles faced by English tutors is that the material published in Indonesia is considered unstandardized. In this case, the nationally or locally published materials are judged by the quality of the writing or teaching materials used. This is the reason why all informants feel more confident and better about using books with international standards. The use of foreign publications is preferential. After all, it has detailed and appropriate information to use for learning English because it was made through an in-depth research process making it suitable for every proficiency level and age.

Excerpt 5
Honestly, at first, I used materials published in Indonesia. However, when I apply it in class it seems that a lot of the material is wrong. Wrong grammar, wrong writing, and the material does not seem to take into account the student's competency level […] Not to mention the practice section. The exercises seem contrived and offline considering the level of competence of the students. (TN– 18/12/2021)

Excerpt 6
I think Indonesian books are very bad. I always use books published by Cambridge because the material that Cambridge makes is tailored to the abilities of its students. Even Cambridge provides appropriate standards for each of its books according to the Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT). I always ask my private students to take CEPT. Through CEPT, I will be able to determine the level of competence and the appropriate material to be used according to the level. (SL-19/12/2021)

What do you think about the quality of native tutors? The quality of tutors is not only assessed on the teacher's linguistic ability but also to make students actively involved in the classroom. Native teachers often experience problems related to this. Especially in terms of giving instructions in the classroom. NESTs often have problems with students because not all students can understand the instructions given, meanwhile, their tutors can only provide instructions and explanations in foreign languages. This is common in private classes for children. NNESTs themselves can bridge this communication problem by providing explanations and examples in Indonesian (first language).

Excerpt 7
The quality of English is not only judged by his/her ability to speak English like a native speaker, but also by his ability to manage the class. This is one of the problems that native teachers often face when teaching English to non-native speakers. Some of my students who have been taught by native

speakers are often confused in understanding the material taught by their native teachers. They do not understand the instructions given by the teacher and the teacher himself cannot explain in detail the material being taught. […] usually, this is not the case with non-native tutors. Non-native teachers can usually facilitate communication problems in the classroom by using Indonesian or through examples that are easily understood by students. (MT-19/12/2021)

From the respondents' standpoint, learning English should be directed to be able to communicate well and minimize the possibility of miscommunication. Learning English, therefore, should have no limits. Respondents felt that learning should not mainly focus on contextual understanding of English. To meet English competency standards, learning can be carried out in various contexts, as long as it can help students understand the learning material and improve their ability in English even using local context.

English In Indonesia is still regarded as a foreign language thereby increasing the urgency for learning English as nowadays it significantly influences one's professional career. Silalahi (2020, 2019) states that English abilities give positive impacts on various aspects of life, such as economics, politics, and education. English skills are oriented to conversation, negotiation, correspondence, and presentation in work. Even to join a company, job interviews are often conducted in English. Parents usually decide to take private classes for children for this reason. Most parents enroll their children in an intensive tutor program to cover the lack of learning in formal institutions which accommodate relatively a large number of students. Hence, it is certain that there is no strong reason for a child to take a formal intensive course.

Interviews with private tutors show clearly that the ideology of native-speakerism is developing in Indonesian society (Silalahi, 2019, 2021). Most Indonesians still believe in the stereotype that native speakers should deliver the teaching language of English in their native context. However, tutors argue that private classes are more focused on language skills if it is associated with intensive courses. Meanwhile, knowing contextual knowledge of English is important but not a priority in the learning process. Moreover, the quality of English is not only viewed from his/her ability to speak English like a native speaker, but also by the classroom management ability. The problem is that most Indonesians hold a social stigma that NESTs are better than Indonesian teachers in almost aspects of teaching because of the higher fees native tutors offer. This fee gap results in an impression that they have a higher level of professionalism than NNESTs do.

This phenomenon has a consequence for NNESTs that they need to claim themselves to be English native speakers when promoting themselves on the *Tutoroo* website (*Indonesian Tutors in Jakarta*, 2022). This is done with the expectation of getting more students and higher income. It shows the comparison between online tutors who enclose information about their nativeness statuses and who do not for a promotional and pricing strategy to stimulate demands. Tutors enclosing the native identity set higher hourly prices than tutors who are not. Most prospective students, in tutors' assumptions, are holding the stigma of NNEST, and therefore would be more convinced by the tutors' English ability and teaching and would willingly pay them higher. Only a few tutors with native statuses set a lower price than tutors without native statuses. The lowest price of the online tutor on the *Tutoroo* webpage (*Indonesian Tutors in Jakarta*, 2022) is IDR 75000/hour and IDR 150000/hour for tutors with NEST identity.

Despite all the merits of having private courses with NESTs, some students who have been taught by native speakers often find it difficult to understand the given material as the teacher himself cannot explain it in detail. This is not the case with non-native tutors. NNESTs can usually facilitate communication problems in the classroom by using the students' native language, such as Indonesian, or through examples that are easily understood by Indonesian students, particularly those whose proficiency levels are low to intermediate. This statement is the antithesis of the negative stigma of NNEST and proves that NNEST can facilitate English learning better and more effectively than NESTs do in some ways.

However, the reflection of native-speakerism is seen in the material used by the tutors (Liu, 2021). The tutors argue that the teaching materials produced by Indonesian teachers are of poor quality compared to standard materials published from countries in the inner circle country (Al-Mutairi, 2019; Kachru, 2019) because they are made through an in-depth research process and are made with full consideration of the level of education and learning levels. This study shows that the teacher's identity does not entirely determine English teaching quality. The quality of teaching is seen in the ability of teachers to manage the class and encourage students to learn in the classroom actively. Education should make students understand how to communicate in English without focusing too much on the socio-cultural aspects.

5. Conclusion

This article shows that the phenomenon of native-speakerism is a stereotype that grows and develops in Indonesian society. It ultimately affects the perspective of students and parents on the quality of local teachers and materials made by Indonesians. It naturally happens because native speakers actively use English to have better language competence than speakers of the language. In private teaching, the ideology of native-speakerism does not develop because learning is directed at increasing linguistic competence, not cultural understanding. Private learning is more oriented to making speakers able to use language skills to communicate fluently with native speakers or with other English speakers. This article does not deny the importance of teaching native culture, but it does not need to focus on learning.

This research still has shortcomings, especially those related to the informants involved in the interview. Development can be done by increasing the number of students involved in research. The use of mixed-method research in the next research will provide an in-depth description of the private course students' perceptions of the ideology of native-speakerism. On the other hand, data collection can also be done directly without using online media to know in-depth students' views on the phenomenon of native-speakerism.

Acknowledgments

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