EFL SECONDARY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD NATIVE AND NONNATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING TEACHERS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Since English became one of the international languages, local contents for high school in Indonesia have made it as one of the compulsory school subjects. However, most of the time, English lesson at school does not seem to completely cater for each student's capabilities in language. Therefore, a lot of English courses or language schools mushroom. Among them, there is one famous English course, which is one of the most leading English courses in Surabaya. It is the head office of five other branches in the city. This English course under study (hereinafter shall be referred to as **"X" English course**) attracts more and more students to learn English since it provides English curriculum and interactive lessons which are more suitable for the student's language capabilities, e.g. a high-school grade 11 student could be placed in Elementary level while another student with the same grade may be placed in Pre-intermediate level. Furthermore, this leading English course also provides more English input, such as interactive teaching methods, textbooks, multimedia materials, and teachers, so students can experience English more naturally in the hope that their language abilities can be catered and even improved.

As for the English teachers, "X" English course follows the common two categories of hiring its English teachers: native English-speaking teachers (hereinafter shall be referred to as **NESTs**) and nonnative English-speaking teachers (hereinafter shall be referred to as **NNESTs**). For hiring both teachers, "X" English course has somewhat similar requirements, i.e. the candidate must have a higher or further education certificate with a minimum of Bachelor's degree and Bachelor's degree in English major would be priority, he/she must be willing to teach a range of courses with students of different age groups, he/she must posses a

TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) certificate issued by Cambridge (although the test can be taken after the teacher is accepted and starts working, at the teacher's expense). The difference is NESTs are required to own a TEFL certificate from on-site courses such as the CELTA, Trinity or equivalent, with a minimum of 100 hours' study that includes observed teaching practice while NNESTs are not. Hence, upon NESTs' arrival in Surabaya, they do not need to do a teacher training as what happens to NNESTs.

There are currently ten NESTs and four NNESTs in "X" English course since its goal is to provide natural English learning environment. Coming from England, America, and Australia, most NESTs in "X" English course have had less experience in teaching EFL students than most NNESTs in "X" English course since most NESTs have been teaching English in EFL countries (including Indonesia) for about one year while most NNESTs in "X" English course have been teaching English in Indonesia for more than five years. However, there are five NESTs who have been teaching English in EFL countries (including Indonesia) for more than five years and they are trusted to teach international English test preparation classes, such as FCE (First Certificate in English), CAE (Certificate in Advanced English), and iBT-TOEFL (internet based TOEFL). Furthermore, most NESTs are non-English department graduate while most NNESTs are English department graduate. Interestingly, half NNESTs have experienced in living in English-speaking countries, which could affect their English teaching technique, especially in supplying cultural information about English-speaking countries.

Each teacher in "X" English course usually teaches a range of courses with students of different age groups (children English classes, teenager English classes, and adult English classes). As a matter of fact, "X" English course provides co-teaching between NESTs and NNESTs for all levels (children, teenager, and adult English level), which means NESTs and NNESTs will share 24 meetings in teaching one level apart from the fact that NNESTs have the privilege to teach adult English classes beginner level zero while NESTs have the privilege to teach toddler classes, conversation classes and international English test preparation classes, such as FCE (First Certificate in English), CAE (Certificate in Advanced English), and iBT-TOEFL (internet based TOEFL).

Although "X" English course supports the co-teaching system for some levels, it seems that general interest of choosing NESTs as English teachers is increasing. Based on several informal interviews and informal observations which were conducted by the researcher, more and more parents prefer NESTs to test their children during placement test

and to be their children's English teachers, because they believe that NESTs are more fun, provide a good linguistic model for their children, and are more able to teach the target language better than NNESTs. Besides, they also feel the prestige of having someone from English-speaking countries to teach their children. However, it is not parents who sit in the class and learn English. Students are the ones who experience learning English from NESTs and NNESTs in the classroom. "X" English course's student population consists of various age: kindergarten students (3-5 years old), elementary students (6-11 years old), junior high school students (12-14 years old), high school students (15-17 years old), university students (18-22 years old), and even employees as well as businessmen/women. Nevertheless, secondary (high school) students dominate the whole population and this would be interesting to ascertain what they experience in the class.

Hence, this phenomenon should not be overlooked; rather, it should be conducted into a research in hopes to ascertain the real situation, particularly in Indonesia where English is still considered as a foreign language and more and more schools and English language schools hire NESTs and NNESTs to teach English. Studies on teachers' and students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs have been conducted for years to examine teachers' and students' real viewpoints and to glean the underlying matters as they are the one who knows what works and what does not for their improvement in English skills. The existence of these studies is very crucial as to help schools, teachers, employers, parents and students to see the underlying matter and true perceptions more objectively.

Interestingly, Kasai, Lee, & Kim (2011, p. 275) claim that compared to the amount of NEST/NNEST studies conducted from teachers' perspectives (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Llurda & Huguet, 2003, and Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik & Sasser, 2004; Moussu, 2006), fewer studies have focused on students' views of the two groups of teachers (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Mahboob, 2004; Moussu, 2006). Therefore, this study aims to contribute more inquiry concerning students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs by exploring and extending previous studies, especially in the EFL context. Furthermore, this study will be only limited to secondary students as most previous studies have investigated tertiary-level students. Regarding secondary students, as it has been informed previously, they are the domination of "X" English course students' population. They mostly are categorized in adult English classes, such as Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate level, FCE preparation class, and CAE

preparation class. Thus, they will be a great source of data in ascertaining strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs.

1.2 The Problems

Based on the aforementioned problems, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do Indonesian EFL secondary students perceive their NESTs and NNESTs with regard to their teaching competence?
   a. How do Indonesian EFL secondary students perceive their NESTs and NNESTs with regard to cultural knowledge in English Language Teaching?
   b. How do Indonesian EFL secondary students perceive their NESTs and NNESTs with regard to teaching styles?
   c. How do Indonesian EFL secondary students perceive their NESTs and NNESTs with regard to classroom management?

1.3 The Objectives

Derived directly from the problems mentioned above, the objective of the present study is to gain Indonesian EFL secondary students' perceptions toward their NESTs and NNESTs with regard to their teaching competence, cultural knowledge, teaching styles, and classroom management.

1.4 Assumptions

This research is based on the assumption that both teachers' (NESTs and NNESTs) language competence and language skills are equal since most NESTs from "X" English course have EFL or ESL teaching certificate, half NNESTs from "X" English course graduated from English department, and all NNESTs received internal teaching trainings.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Brown (2000, p. 7), teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. He stated that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning. Furthermore, Brown (2000, p. 7) also mentioned that the teacher's understanding of how the learner learns will determine your philosophy of education, the teacher's teaching style, approach, methods, and classroom techniques.

Therefore, possessing teaching competence is very essential for every teacher. There are a lot of aspects in teaching competence, but several important issues in teaching in EFL contexts which are examined in this study are cultural knowledge in English language teaching, teaching style, and classroom management. These aspects would influence how the students will perceive both their NESTs and NNESTs. Language competence and skills are also parts of teaching competence, but this study does not examine these aspects since it is assumed that both NESTs and NNESTs' language competence and skills are equal.

Teaching competence includes the awareness of the teacher's role, the understanding of their students, the understanding of what their students should learn, how to give the right feedback to his/her students and the importance of having a lesson plan. Regarding the teacher's role, Harmer (2001, pp. 56-63) states that teachers have multiple roles in learning, such as giver of knowledge, facilitator, controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer, in order to achieve a successful lesson since one lesson can contain various activities. Then, since the study is about secondary students, understanding who the students is needed, especially secondary students or adolescents. Ur (1991, p. 290) supports Harmer (1991) in stating, "adolescents' learning potential is greater than that of young children, but they may be considerably more difficult to motivate and manage, and it takes longer to build up trusting relationships".

Another thing to affect students' perceptions is that cultural knowledge in teaching should always be shared to students, especially EFL students, because it might be impossible for them to be fully aware of the second language culture without the help of the teacher. Brown (2000, p. 182) states that many students in foreign language classroom learn the language with little or no sense of the depth of cultural norms and patterns of the people who speak the language.

Moreover, teaching styles can also determine students' perception. Although there are many kinds of teachers, Scrivener (2005, p. 25) states that there are three broad categories of

teachers: the explainer, the involver, and the enabler. There is no right or wrong since it depends on the need of the class or the activity and every teacher certainly has unique styles and character. Regarding character or personality, there is no real definition of a perfect teacher's personality. This is due to different personality which is possessed by each teacher and students manage to adapt themselves with it. Teaching styles can be seen from teacher's talk. It determines the improvement of the students' language skills since teacher is the important exposure for them. However, Gower, Philips, and Walters (1995, p. 33) states that teachers should remember that they must not dominate the talk in the class since the aim of most language classes is to get the students using the language. Then, teaching styles should be seen from whether the teacher can establish rapport with his/her students. Although it looks simple, but having rapport with students can make teaching and learning process go easily and smoothly.

Finally, classroom management also plays an important role in teaching since it determines the learning and teaching atmosphere. Traditionally, teachers might think that classroom management is all about disciplining, but that concept has changed. Bosch (1999, p. 2) describes classroom management as how the teacher works, how the class works, how the teacher and students work together, and how teaching and learning happens. Gower, Philips, & Walters (1995, p. 8) claim that classroom management covers a lot of things, such as gestures, voices, and seating arrangement Scott & Ytreberg (1990, pp. 8-27) also add student groupings as one of the elements in classroom management.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The sample of this study uses only secondary students since it is the main population of "X" English course, i.e. 96 secondary students of "X" English course who has been actively learning English there in the first phase (questionnaire) and 38 secondary students for the second phase (focus group interview). Besides, the objects of the study use only 10 NESTs and 4 NNESTs of "X" English course. Accordingly, the literature used as the base of this study will only limited to research on students' perceptions towards NESTs and NNESTs as well as teaching competence, cultural knowledge, teaching style, and classroom management.

Due to the difficulty in getting permission for conducting research, this research can only be held in one of "X" English course branches in Surabaya.

1.7 The Significance of the Study

Practically, this study is expected to provide insightful evidence for "X" English course about their teacher's teaching ability which can lead to a better English teachers (NESTs and NNESTs) training procedure. This study also helps acknowledge the potential of NNESTs that has not been widely recognized by prospective employers. Thus, students, parents, and even employers can find NNESTs as reliable as NESTs.

Theoretically, the findings are expected to ascertain advantages and disadvantages or strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs from the EFL students' viewpoints as these are vital to improve teaching effectiveness. It is also important to have the students' objectivity in the hope that in the future EFL society will judge both NESTs and NNESTs more objectively, instead of looking at their appearance and accent. Furthermore, the findings are hoped to enrich the study concerning students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in the EFL context

1.8 Definitions of Key-terms

The following is alphabetically ordered list of terms that are used frequently in the present study:

a. **Classroom Atmosphere.** Classroom atmosphere is a situation in class where students feel secure and therefore they can get the maximum out of the language lessons (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990, p. 10)

b. **Classroom management**. Classroom management is a skill which a teacher should have in order to be able to create and maintain motivation, classroom control and discipline, and organize learning activity (Brewster, 2007, p. 218)**.** Classroom management also means the skills of creating and managing a successful class which involves the teacher's attitude, intentions, personality, relationships with the learners, and organizational skills and techniques (Scrivener, 2005, p. 79)

c. **Cultural knowledge in English Language teaching** is defined as the customs, typical food, typical weather, typical transportation which characterize a given group of people who speaks English as their native language, which should be known by EFL (English as Foreign Language) or ESL (English as Second Language) students.

d. **NESTs**. NESTs stand for Native-English-Speaking Teachers. NESTs are teachers who come from English-speaking countries (America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) and speak English as their L1 (Medgyes, 2001, p. 430).

e. **NNESTs**. NNESTs stand for Non-Native-Speaking Teachers. NNESTs are teachers who come from non-English-speaking countries, so English is a second of foreign language for them. They work in an EFL environment and speak the same native language as his or her students (Medgyes (2001, p. 433, in Ulate, 2011, p.58).

f. **Perception.** Perception is opinion which is obtained from questionnaires and interview.

g. **Teaching competence**. Teaching competence is a certain amount of (English language teaching) knowledge, attitude, and skills in order to achieve the effective organization of class activities (Bhat, Chaundhary, & Dash, 2008, pp. 6-7). In this study, the teaching competence was measured through **teaching performance**. **Teaching performance** deals with how teachers teach language skills (grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing), how teachers teach language components (pronunciation and vocabulary), and how teachers can meet the students' learning needs (how teachers can understand what each students should improve more (their weaknesses and strength) in learning English.

h. **Teaching style**. Teaching style is actions that define the behavior of the teacher and learner for the purpose of accomplishing objectives in subject matter and behavior. This could refer to teaching method or teaching strategy (Ashworth, 1998, p. 120).

i. **Focus group interview**. Focus group interview is a form of interviews where the interviewees interact with each other rather than the interview and therefore it will lead to data (Cohen, Lawrence, & Morrison, 2000, p. 376). Then, the data will be useful to support the interviewees' answers in the questionnaires.