



Exploring Challenges and Strategies of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in Teaching Using Authentic Materials

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges and strategies of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in utilizing authentic materials for teaching speaking in a non-formal educational setting in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with one NNEST and students at varying proficiency levels. Thematic analysis revealed several prominent challenges, including mixed-level classrooms, technical limitations, and the ideological pressure of native-speakerism. These challenges were particularly evident in the use of digital authentic materials, which were disrupted by power outages and limited resources. Despite these constraints, NNEST demonstrated pedagogical resilience by employing flexible teaching strategies such as using whiteboards, printed realia, games, and emotional engagement techniques to foster students' motivation. Additionally, the teacher implemented a learner-centered approach by conducting placement tests, tailoring materials to students' needs, and prioritizing intelligibility over native-like pronunciation. Students responded positively to these strategies, noting that the use of authentic materials and engaging classroom activities improved their speaking confidence and made learning more enjoyable. The findings highlight the importance of adaptability, cultural awareness, and strategic planning in enhancing speaking instruction through authentic materials. This research adds to the literature on NNESTs and provides insights for EFL teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking at least one foreign language fluently used to be regarded as an important objective by individuals for many nations worldwide (Hashim et al., 2023). The importance of learning English as a tool for acquiring new information and opportunities in an international setting has been highlighted Oder & Eisenschmidt in Hashim et al., (2023). The majority of English language teachers (ELT) are multilinguals with backgrounds in languages apart from English. The ability to speak English is not just a sign of language competence, but also a necessary skill in academic and professional settings. According to Harsanti & Manara (2021), there is an interesting phenomenon in which English teachers in Indonesia are still trapped in the notion of "native-speakerism," creating pressure to teach English to native speaker standards. This worldview influences not only how teachers educate, but also students' confidence in growing their speaking skills.

A paradox in EFL education in Indonesia, where authenticity and interculturality frequently conflict with classroom speaking practices. Learners are torn between keeping their linguistic individuality and adopting native speakers' ways of speech (Munandar, 2023). Meanwhile, Fitria (2023) emphasizes the ongoing argument about the perfect English instructor amongst native and non-native speakers, which has a direct impact on how speaking skills are taught. Teachers of non-native speakers frequently feel compelled to promote native norms such as pronunciation, which might, paradoxically, impede the natural development of their learners' spoken abilities.

The complexities of mastering speaking skills are highlighted in higher education, where students must be able to interact in both academic and professional settings. According to Hashim et al., (2023) research in Turkey, non-native teachers have problems when teaching speaking skills, such as providing an authentic learning environment. Balancing the use of the mother tongue and the target language presents challenges. Constraints in objectively assessing students' speaking abilities. The complexities of incorporating cultural components into speaking classes.

Several things contribute to the importance of focussing on speaking abilities in this study, including the fact that speaking is the most difficult productive skill for EFL learners in Indonesia (Munandar, 2023). There is an urgent have to reconsider the paradigm of teaching speaking so that it is more focused on local needs and settings (Harsanti & Manara, 2021). The global labour market places an increasing value on good oral communication abilities. The importance of creating speaking learning models that can accommodate worldwide English differences. Hashim et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of pedagogical approaches that take psychological and sociocultural factors into account when learning to speak.

In Indonesia, English Language Teaching (ELT) occurs within a context where English is classified as a foreign language (EFL). Despite its widespread use, English continues to be regarded as a foreign language in the country (Setianti et al., 2024). In the context of classroom teaching, teachers in Indonesia use a bilingual approach, with teaching switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate student understanding (Setianti et al., 2024). It can also make it easier for teachers to clarify complex ideas or tough issues. However, this technique may result in pupils receiving insufficient exposure to English, affecting their ability and confidence. Students' lack of exposure to English contributes to a lack of vocabulary. Teaching English in Indonesia presents a substantial barrier due students' poor vocabulary (Setianti et al., 2024). This limits their participation in classroom

activities and has an impact on their overall language development and fluency. Adopting a bilingual approach in the classroom can improve students' comprehension but can also lower their English skills and confidence. Students' limited exposure to English, combined with insufficient educational resources, exacerbates these challenges. To address these issues, more resources, creative teaching approaches, and expanded chances for English exposure are required (Setianti et al., 2024).

Occasionally students' learning motivation drops, resulting in learning performance that does not match the instructional plan in (Hasanah & Utami, 2019). Measuring good teaching is unpredictable and difficult since it might lead to subjective conclusions. Two studies Frenzel et al. (2019); Oder & Eisenschmidt (2018) as cited in (Hasanah & Utami, 2019) measuring effective instruction involves two aspects: internal and extrinsic. Intrinsic factors include characteristics of teachers such as motivation, excitement, and interpersonal relationships with students. Extrinsic features are instructors' skills, which can be developed through training to increase effective teaching, such as their knowledge of instructional materials and teaching tactics. Designing and developing syllabi, lesson plans, and supplementary resources are all examples of instructional materials. Then there are teaching techniques, which deal with how to teach, classroom management, and instructional methodologies (Raganwati, 2015).

Based on the above, the identified gaps include: limited research exploring effective strategies to develop speaking skills by considering the local context and specific needs of Indonesian learners (Munandar, 2023). The absence of comprehensive studies on how to integrate aspects of interculturality in speaking teaching without falling into the ideology of native-speakerism (Harsanti & Manara, 2021). There is no clear framework to evaluate speaking skills by considering global English variations. While Fitria (2023) has examined language teacher identity focusing on NEST and NNEST distinctions, limited research addresses the specific challenges NNESTs encounter when implementing authentic materials in speaking instruction. Therefore, this study investigates how Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) overcome challenges in using authentic materials for speaking instruction in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the lived experiences of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in teaching speaking skills using authentic materials. The case study approach was selected to allow an in-depth investigation of a bounded system within its real-world context, where the researcher acted as an observer rather than a manipulator of variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The setting involved a non-formal English course in Karawang, Indonesia, with one teacher and fifteen students from junior and senior high school levels in General English.

Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The observations focused on learning strategies, class dynamics, and the use of authentic materials during three class meetings. Interviews were conducted with one teacher to gain deeper insights into the challenges and strategies employed in speaking classes. The observation checklist and interview protocol were developed based on existing theories adapted from Harmer (2001) and previous studies by Pakula (2019) and Munandar

(2023) to ensure validity and triangulation. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze the data. The process involved familiarization, coding, theme development, and reporting, with attention to identifying patterns related to NNEST challenges and pedagogical strategies. Ethical procedures were strictly followed, including informed consent, anonymity through pseudonyms, and respectful engagement with all participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the challenges faced by a Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) in using authentic materials to teach speaking and the strategies employed to overcome those challenges. Based on the results of observations and interviews, this study reveals three main themes: (1) the challenges faced by NNESTs in using authentic materials for speaking classes; and (2) the strategies employed by NNESTs to overcome these challenges. The following section will explore these three themes in depth and provide insights into the implementation of authentic materials in teaching speaking.

a. Challenges Faced by NNESTs in Using Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials has become an integral part of the teacher's instructional strategy in speaking classes. The teacher stated that authentic materials such as pictures, videos, podcast, realia, interactive maps, and PowerPoint presentations help students, especially children and teenagers, generate ideas for speaking. These materials also create a more realistic context, encouraging students to use English more actively and naturally. This statement also supported by teacher:

T Stated: "Yes, for me it's one of the necessary teaching aids, especially when teaching children. Teenagers and children need visual elements to encourage them to speak up ... So, teaching aids related to authentic materials are needed to support the learning process itself, especially speaking. ...I'm comfortable using PowerPoint ..."

The teacher stated that visual elements are essential teaching aids, particularly when teaching children and teenagers, as they help encourage students to speak more confidently. This approach demonstrates the teacher's understanding that visual and authentic materials are crucial for engaging young learners and facilitating their language production in meaningful contexts.

The challenge was further exacerbated by various technical issues, such as frequent power outages and malfunctioning projectors, which significantly disrupted the flow of planned lessons. These interruptions not only hindered the effective delivery of teaching materials particularly those that relied on multimedia or digital content but also forced the teacher to make spontaneous adjustments to the lesson plan.

The teacher emphasized that the use of authentic materials plays a crucial role in increasing student participation during speaking lessons. Reflecting on past teaching experiences, the teacher noted a significant difference in student engagement when authentic materials were absent. In one instance, the class felt unengaging and uninspiring, which was reflected in the students' expressions as they left the classroom. In this case, it is reinforced by the teacher's statement in the interview:

T Stated: "Yes, the challenge is how to create comfortable learning that isn't boring, that isn't flat, and makes students curious about what we'll learn, what we'll get, what fun things we'll experience today..."

This experience reinforced the teacher's belief in the importance of well-prepared, context-rich materials that mirror real-life language use. Authentic materials, therefore, not only provide linguistic input but also help build a more dynamic and motivating classroom atmosphere.

Furthermore, mixed proficiency levels within a single classroom posed a significant challenge, as the teacher struggled to address the varying needs of both junior and senior high school students in the same class. This diversity demanded continuous adaptation and the implementation of differentiation strategies to ensure that all students could benefit from the lessons. Furthermore, issues with student engagement emerged when some learners were uncooperative or showed a lack of enthusiasm, which affected the overall classroom atmosphere. The teacher's reflections indicated that such situations not only hindered the effectiveness of the lesson but also had an emotional impact, prompting a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to improve future teaching practices. This highlights how NNESTs' commitment to student satisfaction encourages ongoing pedagogical development.

Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) face multifaceted challenges when implementing authentic materials in speaking instruction. Based on the findings from classroom observations and interviews, key challenges included adapting to mixed-level classes, managing technical limitations, ensuring student engagement, and coping with native-speaker standards. These align with broader issues raised by [Hashim et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Fitria \(2023\)](#), who highlight the identity tensions and professional barriers frequently encountered by NNESTs in EFL contexts. One prominent issue observed was the inconsistency in student proficiency, with teachers managing learners from both junior and senior high school levels within the same class. This heterogeneity complicated lesson planning and required the teacher to be flexible in adjusting the complexity of the materials. Similarly, [Munandar \(2023\)](#) notes that teachers often struggle to maintain a balance between intercultural authenticity and comprehensibility, especially when learners possess varying levels of linguistic competence.

Technical difficulties also posed significant challenges. Malfunctioning projectors and power outages frequently disrupted planned lessons, forcing teachers to improvise and adapt their instructional methods in real time. These logistical setbacks not only impacted the smooth delivery of multimedia-based authentic content but also placed additional stress on the teacher's ability to meet learning objectives. In addition, cultural expectations and the pervasive ideology of native-speakerism influenced classroom dynamics. As observed by [Harsanti and Manara \(2021\)](#), Indonesian NNESTs often feel compelled to emulate native-speaker norms particularly in pronunciation despite their own diverse linguistic identities. This pressure can contribute to feelings of inadequacy and self-censorship, further complicating the instructional process.

b. Strategies Employed by NNESTs to Overcome Challenges

To address these challenges, NNESTs demonstrated remarkable pedagogical adaptability through several strategic approaches. Thorough preparation and contingency planning formed the foundation of effective teaching, with teachers creating multiple backup plans (Plan A through Plan C) to handle unexpected situations. When technical issues arose, teachers seamlessly transitioned to alternative methods, such as writing PowerPoint content on whiteboards while utilizing textbooks as supplementary visual aids.

Before designing and implementing authentic materials, the teacher first considers the students' proficiency levels. This is crucial in classrooms where students may have different abilities. To address this, the teacher begins the learning process by conducting placement tests.

T Stated: "... So, to be on target, before learning there must be a placement test first so that what we convey to students is exactly what they need. Because sometimes in one class the levels aren't the same. So, we have to make sure that students are at the same level with the same needs. Even if there are disparities, they shouldn't be too extreme."

This approach reflects a learner-centered cognitive, where instruction is tailored to the actual needs of students. By identifying language levels early on, the teacher can reduce potential gaps between learners, allowing for more balanced participation and comprehension. It also helps ensure that the use of authentic materials is not overwhelming for some students while too basic for others. This strategy supports more equitable and effective learning experiences in a mixed-level classroom.

In teaching speaking skills, the teacher focuses not only on the content of the lesson but also on building emotional connections with students. The teacher believes that being personally accepted by the students is a key factor in successful learning. No matter how well-prepared the material is, it will be ineffective if the students do not positively accept the teacher's presence in the classroom. To elaborate on this approach, the teacher shared the following explanation during the interview:

T Stated: "...For the strategy, it's more about first getting to know the students' characters ... approach the students first, brainstorming, chitchat, then ice breaking, make it fun with them first ... We need to start with simple things first... Because if we immediately give them rather heavy material and they get stuck ... it might become a frightening specter for them, ...and creating a mental block."

This statement reveals that the teacher prioritizes emotional readiness and classroom rapport as foundational steps before delivering the actual content. By first engaging in light interactions and creating a relaxed environment, the teacher is able to lower students' affective filter helping them feel more comfortable, open, and motivated to learn. This method not only humanizes the learning process but also prevents students from developing anxiety or resistance toward difficult speaking tasks. The emphasis on emotional connection reflects a learner-centered approach where psychological comfort is viewed as equally important as academic content.

The teacher also included games, such as 'Guessing Letter' and 'Magnet Words' as part of the speaking activities, which specifically targeted the practice of certain expressions. For example, in the magnet words game, one student made a simple sentence, the next student made a new sentence that was not the same as the previous

one. From each word at the end of the previous sentence, it became the starting position of the word in the sentence. This game was made sequentially from student one to the student in the last position. This strategy proved effective, because it allowed students to practice pronunciation in a fun and communicative atmosphere. Before starting the game, the teacher made sure that students repeated the target phrase several times, even writing it on the board to strengthen their understanding. As a result, in the second round of the game, students appeared more fluent and confident in speaking. This shows how structured repetition in the context of gamification can support fluency in a stress-free environment.

Despite these challenges, the NNEST in this study demonstrated resilience and pedagogical adaptability through various strategic approaches. When faced with technical obstacles such as malfunctioning projectors, the teacher implemented well-prepared contingency plans, including using the whiteboard for manual explanations and incorporating realia and textbooks to substitute digital media. This adaptive behavior reflects Wang and Fang's (2020) findings, which emphasize NNESTs' capacity to mitigate resource constraints through creativity and improvisation.

Moreover, the teacher consciously challenged native-speakerist ideologies by focusing on intelligibility and communicative effectiveness rather than accent imitation. As suggested by Harmer (2001), the teacher addressed pronunciation issues through techniques such as modeling and repetition, rather than constant corrective feedback. This approach fostered a non-threatening classroom atmosphere, promoting student confidence and participation.

Several instructional strategies were employed to enhance speaking proficiency using authentic materials. These included the use of PowerPoint slides featuring interactive and culturally relevant content (e.g., real-life maps), educational games tailored to learners' interests, "repeat after me" drills for pronunciation practice, and structured pair presentations to promote fluency. Such strategies are consistent with Cenoz and Gorter's (2021) concept of translanguaging, whereby NNESTs draw on their multilingual competence and diverse resources to create engaging and accessible learning environments. Ultimately, the findings support Fitria's (2023) argument that NNESTs' effectiveness lies not in their native-like fluency, but in their cultural awareness, adaptability, and ability to design meaningful learning contexts. The NNEST in this study successfully navigated pedagogical and linguistic challenges through thoughtful preparation, reflective practice, and innovative strategy use qualities that are also highlighted by Hashim et al. (2023) as hallmarks of resilient and effective NNESTs.

3. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complex yet resourceful role of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in teaching speaking skills using authentic materials within the Indonesian EFL context. Despite facing challenges such as mixed student proficiency levels, technical limitations, engagement difficulties, and the pressure of native-speakerist ideologies, the NNEST in this study demonstrated resilience and pedagogical adaptability. Authentic materials—visuals, videos, games, and culturally relevant content proved effective in creating realistic and engaging learning environments that supported students' speaking development.

The teacher's learner-centered strategies, including placement tests, emotional connection-building, gamification, and contingency planning, reflected a nuanced understanding of student needs and classroom realities. Rather than striving for native-like perfection, the teacher emphasized intelligibility and communication, aligning with global perspectives on English as a pluricentric language. This approach helped reduce students' affective barriers and promoted confidence in speaking.

From students' perspective, these strategies were positively received. Authentic materials made lessons more enjoyable and easier to understand, while interactive activities like games and pair work boosted their confidence and fluency. They appreciated the relaxed classroom atmosphere and felt more motivated. This shows that the teacher's strategies effectively met students' needs, supporting the second research question on their perceptions of NNESTs' strategies.

The findings underscore the importance of equipping NNESTs with professional training that embraces their multilingual identity, encourages intercultural teaching, and fosters innovation in resource-limited settings. Furthermore, the study reveals a gap in current research and pedagogical frameworks, particularly in evaluating speaking competence beyond native-speaker norms and incorporating global English variations. Overall, this research reinforces the value of NNESTs' lived experiences and adaptive strategies in promoting effective and inclusive speaking instruction. Their ability to merge authenticity with accessibility plays a vital role in reshaping EFL classrooms to better serve diverse learners in real-world contexts.

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