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Exploring the Native English Teacher's Professional Competence at the Islamic School of An Namiroh Junior High School Pekanbaru

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kompetensi profesional Native English Teachers (NETs) dalam konteks pengajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah pertama dan atas di Indonesia, dengan fokus khusus pada SMP Islam An Namiroh di Pekanbaru. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan NET berpengalaman dan pemula. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dimensi utama dari kompetensi profesional yang melampaui kemahiran bahasa, termasuk penggunaan strategi pengajaran komunikatif dan berpusat pada siswa, kesadaran antarbudaya, serta dukungan emosional bagi siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun NETs membawa keahlian bahasa dan pendekatan pedagogis inovatif yang sejalan dengan Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), mereka juga menghadapi tantangan seperti keterbatasan dalam memahami kurikulum lokal dan perbedaan ekspektasi pendidikan. Guru yang berinteraksi dengan budaya dan bahasa lokal cenderung menunjukkan tingkat adaptabilitas dan efektivitas pengajaran yang lebih tinggi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kompetensi profesional NETs tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kefasihan berbahasa Inggris, tetapi juga oleh kemampuan antarbudaya, fleksibilitas pedagogis, dan kemauan untuk terus berkembang secara profesional. Rekomendasi penelitian mencakup pentingnya program orientasi yang terstruktur serta peluang kolaborasi dengan guru lokal untuk meningkatkan integrasi dan dampak NETs di sekolah-sekolah Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Guru Bahasa Inggris Penutur Asli, Kompetensi Profesional, Kompetensi Antarbudaya, Pengajaran Komunikatif, Pendidikan Indonesia, EF*

Abstract

This study explores the professional competence of Native English Teachers (NETs) in the context of Indonesian junior and senior high schools, with a specific focus on An Namiroh Junior High School in Pekanbaru. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with both experienced and novice NETs. The research identifies key dimensions of professional competence beyond linguistic proficiency, including the use of communicative and student-centred teaching strategies, intercultural awareness, and emotional support for students. The findings highlight that while NETs bring valuable language expertise and innovative pedagogical approaches aligned with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), they also face challenges such as limited familiarity with the local curriculum and differing educational expectations. Teachers who engage with the local culture and language tend to demonstrate greater adaptability and classroom effectiveness. The study concludes that NETs' professional competence is shaped not only by their native fluency but also by their intercultural competence, pedagogical adaptability, and willingness to engage in continuous professional development. Recommendations include the provision of structured orientation programs and collaborative opportunities with local educators to enhance NETs' integration and impact in Indonesian schools.

Keywords: Native English Teacher, Professional Competence, Intercultural Competence, Communicative Teaching, Indonesian Education, EFL

INTRODUCTION

As the highly rapid development of the world of education, the improvement of English Education is considered as a global need which is significantly impact to the demands of educational institution in Indonesia to pursue the internationalization to survive in this advanced era. Therefore, many private schools in Indonesia move faster and one step ahead to reach their goal as an international school which uses international curriculum and teacher for teaching English to their students. One of the aims of this program is to face the rivalry among the International curriculum schools to improve their English program. Nowadays, the number of International curriculum-based schools in Indonesia rise including in Pekanbaru. Moreover, these schools adopted International teachers who are well experienced in teaching English and International culture as they claimed. Therefore, in order to create their students as global citizens, these schools prepare them through their education started from primary, secondary, high school and university.

Because of their command of the language and the consequent scarcity of certified nonnative English teachers, native English teachers are being hired in large numbers all over the world. According to Alptekin (1991; 4), "the need for native speakers stems primarily

from the inadequacy both in quantity and quality of local English teachers to meet the rising demand for this 'lingua franca' of our age." Native speaker (of English) were people whose first language in English. They learned English when they were children, they think in English. They use it naturally, usually native speaker of English were people from English speaking countries like the USA, great Britain, Australia, Canada, Ireland, etc. Millennium progress necessitates that schools equip their kids to be fluent in English. As a result, several schools engage native English speakers as English experts. However, it is well known that not every native English speaker can teach English. They may be experts in using English, but they are not experts in teaching English due to a lack of professional competencies.

According to Article 1 of the Act No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, "Teachers are professional educators whose main task is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, judge, and evaluate school tuition in early childhood education, basic education, and secondary education." Then section 8 stated that "Professional teachers must have academic qualifications minimum scholars or a diploma four, the competence of teachers (pedagogical, professional, social and personality), having a certificate, physical and spiritual health, as well as the ability to realise national education targets".

Teachers' competence includes pedagogical competence, subject matter competence, social competence, and professional competence. The fourth competency included into teacher performance. Regardless, a teacher has an essential role in determining the success of students' learning. In order to achieve the goal of the study, The professional competences of the teacher are directly tied to the ideal language teacher (Al-Khairi: 2015). Thus, in order to meet educational goals, a teacher who guides students' success in learning the language should ideally be required to have professional competences which can be defined as the teachers' capability to master their subjects in-depth and the way to appropriately deliver it to the students. Subject matter competency is the broad and deep mastery of learning content, which includes the mastery of materials in English as indicated in the school curriculum. Meanwhile, pedagogical competence is defined as the ability to understand students, design and implement learning materials, assess learning results, and enhance students' potential. Then, personal competence is a teacher's ability to manage his or her emotional intelligence, which can affect students' motivation to learn and inspire them to be people like their teacher. The ability of a teacher to communicate and interact with the social environment, particularly with students, is referred to as social competency. Thus, teaching is a profession that cannot be replaced by a machine.

The Regulation regulates the qualification standards and competencies required to become formal and informal teachers, at Pre-School Education (PAUD), Kindergarten (TK), Primary Education (SD), Junior Secondary School (SMP), Senior Secondary School (SMA), and Vocational School (SMK). Qualifications and competencies in this Regulation are the minimum requirements or standards if someone wants to become a teacher. The teacher competency standard is comprehensively developed from four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. Here are the indicators of Teachers' Professional Competence based on the government regulation in Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007:

- 1) English teachers master the material, structure, concepts, and scientific mindset that support the subjects being taught.
- 2) English Teachers master the competency standards and basic competencies of the subjects being taught.
- 3) English Teachers develop the learning materials of the subjects taught creatively.
- 4) English Teachers develop professionalism continuously through reflective practice.
- 5) English Teachers utilize information and communication technology for self-development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted by using qualitative method to collect descriptive non-numerical data to gain insights into the phenomena of interest. Cresswell (2012) stated that qualitative research is typically used to establish the importance of the central idea and to explore the problem and develop an understanding of small individuals in social problems, which in this case is educational context. The data collection was largely determined by the nature of the problem (Gay, 2012) since the data that were collected in this study should contribute to understanding the phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims to explore the Native English Teacher's Professional Competence at the Islamic School of An Namiroh Junior High School Pekanbaru.

Moreover, this study focuses on exploring the Native English teacher's professional competence in teaching English to Junior High school students. The researcher explored the participants professionalism in teaching English to Indonesian students based on the government standard. The researcher collected the information to analyze the research questions and the researcher used a frame of reference to gain better understanding of this

study based on interpretations of participants' responses to the interview and classroom observation.

This study utilized the approach of phenomenological one. According to Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtler, K. H. (2010), If a researcher wants to understand human experience and how experiences are interpreted differently by different people would certainly be an appropriate reason to conduct a phenomenological study. In line with the statement Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. Asghar Razavieh (2010) also stated that A phenomenological study is designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it.

In this research, classroom observation helped uncover how NETs adapt their teaching strategies to the local junior high school context, manage linguistic and cultural barriers, and align their instruction with school goals. It also enabled the researcher to evaluate how NETs apply theoretical knowledge in practice, such as principles from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), formative assessment, or differentiated instruction (Brown, 2007). Classroom observation is an essential method for examining native English teachers' professional competence because it offers a direct lens into their classroom practices, instructional decision-making, and ability to meet student needs. When interpreted through the lens of expert theory, these observations contribute significantly to the understanding of teacher performance and professional growth in EFL contexts.

Besides, Interview was the major source of data collection in this study. This interview collected data from the respondents related to the way they teach the students. In this research the researcher used semi-structured interview because it is considered to be the most appropriate approach to interview the participant, so that the participants feel comfortable yet, the researcher still have the guidelines for the questions to be asked.

Research Tools: Native English Teachers' Professional Competence

1. Background Information
 - How long have you been teaching in Indonesia?
 - What grades/levels do you currently teach?
 - What teaching qualifications and experiences do you have?
2. Teaching Approach & Methods
 - How do you plan and deliver your English lessons?
 - What teaching strategies do you find most effective with Indonesian students?
 - How do you engage students who struggle with English?
3. Curriculum & Classroom Context
 - Are you familiar with the Indonesian English curriculum? How do you follow or adapt to it?

- What materials or resources do you use?
 - How do you incorporate local context or culture into your lessons?
4. Assessment & Feedback
 - How do you assess student understanding and progress?
 - How do you give feedback to students?
 5. Communication & Collaboration
 - How do you communicate with students and local teachers?
 - Do you feel supported by the school administration and your co-teachers?
 6. Challenges & Solutions
 - What are the main challenges you face in the classroom?
 - How do you overcome language or cultural barriers?
 7. Professional Growth
 - Have you participated in any teacher training in Indonesia?
 - What kind of support or training do you think would help you improve further?

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Language Proficiency and Communicative Focus

All participants demonstrated high English proficiency, which forms the foundation of their professional competence. However, their competence extended beyond language mastery. Most emphasized fluency, confidence, and accuracy in spoken English as the primary learning goals for their students. Mr. Ferry and Ms. Laila consistently focused on speaking skills, using real-life discussions, audio-visual materials, and interactive engagement to help students practice language in meaningful contexts. "I need to make sure every learner has to speak out something... my teaching method is interactive engagement." – Ms. Laila. This reflects a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which prioritizes real-world communication over textbook-based drills.

Teaching Strategies: Interactive and Student-Centred Approaches

A strong theme in the interviews was the use of student-centred, interactive methods. Teachers often used games, videos, discussions, and question-driven learning to engage students. "Instead of using textbook or teaching grammar, I want students to explore English more as practice." – Mr. Ferry

"I use gaming... in the first 20 minutes I ask students what they want me to do." – Mr. Hassan

This shows their inclination toward active learning and the use of multimodal resources, supporting theories of experiential and constructivist learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Mayer, 2009).

Awareness of Student Needs and Affective Support

Teachers showed empathy and sensitivity to students' emotional states and learning challenges. Many Indonesian students were described as shy, unfamiliar with English, and overly focused on grammar and memorization. To respond, the NETs used simplified instructions, repetition, and personal encouragement.

"I understand very well some students really struggle because they're too focused on the textbook... I try to break it." – Mr. Ferry

This aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes reducing student anxiety to improve language acquisition.

Intercultural Competence and Adaptability

Cultural understanding emerged as a crucial part of NETs' professional competence. Mr. Ferry, for example, had studied Indonesian language and culture at Leiden University, and this helped him bridge classroom expectations and cultural differences. "I feel the difference of the curriculum from where I am from... here, the focus is about drilling a lot." – Mr. Ferry

The findings reflect Byram's (1997) framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence, where cultural sensitivity and local adaptation enhance teaching effectiveness.

Curriculum Challenges and Contextual Limitations

Some NETs, especially newer teachers like Mr. Hassan and Ms. Laila, expressed unfamiliarity with the Indonesian curriculum. They perceived a mismatch between their communicative methods and the memorization-focused approach in local classrooms. "I'm not really knowledgeable about the Indonesian curriculum... students have to memorize everything." – Mr. Ferry

This highlights the need for orientation and professional support for NETs to understand the national education system and align their methods accordingly (Cross, 2012).

Commitment to Professional Development

Despite varying levels of teaching experience, all participants showed a willingness to grow professionally. Mr. Ferry in particular expressed appreciation for being involved in teacher training and workshops. "I think it's a good idea, and I really like to join it... I appreciate being involved with the training." – Mr. Ferry

This aligns with the concept of lifelong learning and the TESOL (2010) professional standards, which emphasize continuous development as a key component of teaching competence.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the professional competence of Native English Teachers (NETs) in teaching English to Indonesian junior and senior high school students. Based on in-depth interviews with selected NETs, including both experienced and novice teachers, the study identified several key dimensions of professional competence that contribute to their teaching effectiveness, as well as the challenges they face within the Indonesian educational context.

The findings indicate that NETs demonstrate a strong command of the English language, which serves as a foundational component of their professional competence. However, their effectiveness in the classroom goes beyond linguistic ability. Many of the NETs employ communicative and interactive teaching strategies, such as the use of audio-visual media, games, student-led discussions, and real-world topics to promote active language use. These approaches align with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and reflect an effort to move away from grammar- and textbook-centred instruction, which they noted as dominant in Indonesian schools.

Another significant aspect of their competence lies in intercultural understanding and their ability to adapt to the local learning environment. Teachers like Mr. Ferry, who studied the Indonesian language and culture, demonstrated greater awareness of students' learning habits, motivational factors, and classroom dynamics. This reflects elements of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), which is essential for effective teaching in a cross-cultural EFL context. Moreover, the study revealed that NETs, even those with limited prior experience, show a willingness to grow professionally, take part in local teacher training, and support students not only academically but also emotionally. They often attempt to lower students' affective filters by creating a safe, fun, and engaging environment—consistent with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Their use of student-centred methods also shows alignment with constructivist learning theory, highlighting the role of learners as active participants in their language development.

However, the research also uncovered challenges related to curriculum familiarity, particularly for newer teachers unfamiliar with the Indonesian educational system. Some

expressed concern over the emphasis on memorization and rule-based learning, which contrasts with their communicative approaches. This suggests a gap that could be addressed through structured orientation programs, ongoing professional development, and collaborative learning opportunities with local educators.

In conclusion, the professional competence of NETs in Indonesian schools is characterized not only by their native proficiency but also by their adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and commitment to student engagement. Their impact can be maximized when supported through effective institutional integration, curriculum alignment, and opportunities for continuous development. As English education in Indonesia continues to grow, the role of NETs remains a valuable complement to local teaching efforts, particularly in enhancing students' confidence and communicative abilities in English.

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