

My Teacher is like a mirror

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'My Teacher is Like a Mirror' as The Students' Perspectives on Their Non-Native English Teacher

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Abstract

This research is about the perspectives of the Sundanese students of their non-native language teachers (Medgyes, 1992) in teaching English. The data are taken from the 83 participants who give the responds based on the questions. Brown's theory (2000) of the good language teacher characteristics becomes the foundation for analysing the data. The result shows that the responses of the students realise the perspectives that the good language teacher is the person who has the technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. These perspectives arise idea to the teacher to determine their teaching styles that are suitable to the students who need to motivate to express their identity through the new language (Llurda,2004).

Keywords: non-native teacher, perspective

INTRODUCTION

The good English language teacher is someone who positions in the balance level of the knowledge and its realisation in teaching. This position is also for the non-native English teacher. He places at the topic of the discussion in teaching because he should teach the language which is not his mother tongue, but in the other sides his ways in it can appear the 'small talk' of teaching English. Medgyes, Peter (1992: 349) states, "The ideal non-NEST is the one who has achieved near native proficiency in English." On the other opinion, Rajagopalan, Kanavillil (2005: 283) "Non-native speaker teachers (NNSTs) are typically treated as second class citizens in the world of language teaching." However, Medgyes, Peter (1992:340) argues, "...natives and non-natives have an equal chance to become successful teachers, but the routes used by the two groups are not the same". Besides, Llurda, Enric (2005:16) finds, "...NNS English teachers were perceived as relying on textbooks, applying differences between the first and second languages, using the first language as a medium of instruction, being aware of negative transfer and psychological aspects of learning, being sensitive to the needs of students, being more efficient, knowing the students' background, and having exam preparation as the goal of their teaching. This supports that he is with his own way to reach the goal of teaching the students. Therefore, Murray & Christison (2011) ensures that identity and context, language awareness, learning, and professionalism are what English language teachers need to know. Ur, Penny (2002:389) supports, "Profesionalism means preparing oneself to do a competent job through learning." This statement is in the line that when someone wants to be a good teacher, he must fulfil some criteria. Braine, George (in Llurda, 2005: 11) [states](#), "Research on the self-perceptions of non-native speaker (NNS) English teachers, or the way they are perceived by their students is a fairly recent phenomenon. [This](#) may be due to the sensitive nature of these issues because NNS teachers were generally regarded as unequal in knowledge and performance to NS teachers of English, and issues relating to NNS teachers may have also been politically incorrect to be studied and discussed openly." This study focuses on how the Sundanese students have their perspectives on their non-native English teacher/lecturer.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities (Brown, 2000) are the good English teacher ideal attributes. Besides, the other characteristics are said by Allen, Harold B. (In Brown, H. Douglas, 2000: 429). ESL teachers should have competent pronunciation leading to a degree in TESL, a love of English language, critical thinking, the persistent urge to upgrade oneself, self subordination, readiness to go the extra mile, cultural adaptability, professional citizenship, and a feeling of excitement about one's group. These describe that a good language teacher should know what language English is, be able to do all language skills, know deeply of how to teach the language and its context, be always up grade his ability in language by learning or joining the related events (Technical knowledge). He also should be able to measure the students' abilities, applied many ways in teaching well, be a good manager, give what the students needed, arise the students to be 'full' to participate in teaching learning process, use the words in teaching that make the students easier to understand, and make the material interesting and not boring (pedagogical skills). The other points, he should realise that his students are not from the same background, pay attention to all the students without discrimination, give the students chance to convey their idea, and have the good relationship with others (interpersonal skills). The last, he is dynamic in facing the changing, and thinking and preparing before doing (personal qualities).

METHODOLOGY

The responses of the question of the good language teacher figure become the data taken from 83 Sundanese students. They are the students of English Department of a university in Tasikmalaya, who will be in the pre-service teaching.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The participants have the various point of views related to the consideration of the good English teacher. They emphasize that to be a teacher, it needs the certain criteria. These are realised in the written responses on their English lecturers. Their responses are related to the point of knowledge of way in teaching, pedagogical skill, ability in interaction, and personal values.

Technical knowledge

The students place their lecture as the person who know more about English by showing his abilities in all language skills, teach using the way to teach the language and its context, and progressively improve those ability by joining the forums. The respondents support that their lecturer:

[1] "...Can motivate the students to use the good language". (S 41)

[2] "...Have good pronunciation, can explain the subject clearly, having the high sense of humour, having a lot of knowledge." (S 6)

[3] "Use good language although the student does something wrong, give motivation to the students in order to not to be in boredom, like you. I love you, because since I study with you from Pronunciation, I always smile, not boring studying with you." (S 18)

Modiano, Marco (In Llorca2005:38-39) says, "... in order to assist the learner in the development of their own accent, one which is communicatively expedient, the ELT practitioner will need to have special knowledge of the pronunciation 'difficulties' that are particular to the language group of which the learner is a member." This states that in the real condition of teaching, the way used in teaching and its related elements help the students have the skills of language.

Pedagogical Skills

It means that he can know the level of capability of his students, so he can know what their needs. He is also able to manage the classroom by involving them in learning attractively and easily. This condition makes the class eager to join the atmosphere.

[1] "A good teacher is like a mirror. Can make the students to be active and creative. Make the student to have good attitude. The students can be able to a good student from the teacher. She come on time, more ways to teach , dicipline and more knowledge." (S 7)

[2] "Can give the material in other way, e.g by using the daily language in that place, never give punishment, but say wheather something is right or wrong." (S 40)

[3] "Not monoton". (S 21).

[4] "Can educate, give the students insiration, belief and perspective of language, increase the students' interest, become educator, motivator, inspirator, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator". (S 4)

[5] "...Have sufficient ability, encourage students to apply and use the language in dailly life." (S 27)

Interpersonal Skills

No discrimination in teaching and know the students background will be important in teaching. The availability of chance for the students to tell their idea or share their experience in learning are valuable to motivate them. McGoarty, Mary (in 1996:3) says, "For teachers, her words suggest that respect for all forms of language used in the communities in which they teach is essential. At the same time, in all school settings, language is always the medium and sometimes the object of formal study. Often, teachers have a particular responsibility for certain aspects of language instruction, whether they be acquisition of native language literacy skills or skills in a second language." The respondents comment to this:

[1] "He/she becomes an idol for their students. Their capability in language makes the students appreciate to study and join in their class. The student will think if they learn this subject, it will be interesting and understanding easily." (S 20)

[2] "Give the student 'study of life'." (S 29)

[3] "Explain about moral, norms, and the God's rule. No distance and judge the students." (S 37)

[4] "Great attitude and always give motivation, and attention, and appreciate the students' opinion." (S 26)

The other way support, Johnston, Bill (2003:1) states, "The teacher is a moral agent". And, Llurda, Enric (2004: 320) says, "No matter how covert this conflict may be, the acquisition of a new language poses a threat to the existing linguistic status quo of the learners, and therefore to the very foundations of their own identity. Teachers are responsible for presenting the multifaceted reality in which the new language is used and for helping the learner express their

own identity through this newly acquired voice.” These settles that the students need the figure who can be their ‘copy’ in real life. This is not easy work, but it is not impossible to do.

Personal Qualities

This emphasizes on the way in how the teacher can continuously improve the knowledge and how to make that to do in the real action. The respondents say:

[1] “His own way to teach, give some humourous or intersting stories connected to the material.” (S 39)

[2] “She has not only knowledge but also experience, because it makes the techer to share about anything.” (S 35)

[3] “... can guide the students to be a good person, always prepare all of the material and master it. “ (S 17)

The whole elements are for the teacher to be excellent. The non-native teacher, who uses the same language as the students, and teach the other language to the students, has the chance to use L1 in teaching. It is because of his responsibility that he ‘must understand the learner’s situation ‘ (S 30). Mcneill, Arthur (in Llurda, 2005: 123) concludes, “ESL teachers who speak the same L1 as their students are generally more accurate in identifying sources of lexical difficulty in reading texts than teachers whose mother tongue is English and who are not familiar with the students’ L1. In practice, most non-native speaker ESL teachers share their students’ L1 and therefore are more likely to be successful at focusing on areas of potential difficulty from their students’ perspective.” The other, Macaro, Ernesto (in Llurda, 2005:63) says, “In classroom discourse, by contrast, codeswitching is considered by many to be neither an asset nor a valuable addition. This may seem surprising given that so often, in modern approaches to language teaching and learning, teachers attempt to make the second language classroom a mirror of the outside world...”. The use of L1 will be helpful for the students to understand the material, but it should be with the use of the target language. It lets to facilitate the teaching L2.

The function of the use of L1 in L2 are as said by Macaro, Marco (in Llurda, 2005: 69), “1. building personal relationship with learners (the pastoral role that teachers take on requires high levels of discourse sophistication); 2. giving complex procedural instructions for carryng out an activity; 3. controlling pupils’ behaviour; 4. translating and chechnng understanding in order to speed things up because of time pressures (e.g. exams); 5. teaching grammar explicitly.” The description of the functions put the context to involve in teaching. Miller, Jennifer.(2009: 38), says, Regarding preservice teacher education, we can say that language teaching cannot be separated from social language use in classrooms, or from situated meanings within social practices, involving specific social and institutional contexts and memberships.” And she also emphasizes, “...all teachers have to maximise their linguistic repertoires and intercultural skills.”(Miller, Jennifer, 2009:53). Although, Llurda, Enric (2005: 14) emphasizes, “The hypotheses were that the NS and NNS teachers differ in terms of (1) language proficiency, and (2) teaching practice (behavior), that (3) most of the differences in teaching practice can be attributed to the discrepancy in language proficiency, and that (4) both types of teachers can be equally good teachers on their own terms.” From those, it means that the teacher has his own right to apply the teaching learning process in the classroom, no matter that he is non-native, although there are differences arising in this problem with the native one.

CONCLUSION

The non-native English teacher has the originally him in teaching the language. This way is based on the needs of the students who are in the same context as their teacher. The most important thing is that the teacher should have the characteristics of good language teacher including technical knowledge, pedagogical skill, interpersonal skill, and personal qualities.

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