Barriers to Teaching English to Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers in Indonesian Secondary Schools: Policy Recommendations

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Abstract: In the Indonesian context, English is considered a local subject and there is no mandated curriculum for English in elementary schools. Meanwhile, English has been a compulsory subject taught at the secondary school level. The present study aims to explore barriers to teaching English experienced by non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools and policy recommendations. The study employed a qualitative case study method. Concerning the data collection, the authors garnered the data through semi-structured interviews with six non-native English teachers teaching at private and public secondary schools in Indonesia. The findings of the study reveal that several barriers experienced by non-native English teachers include lack of training in English teaching and learning, academic literacy among non-native English teachers, school facilities, English-relevant materials, student motivation, and English exposure outside of school. Drawing on these results, some policy recommendations to improve English language teaching in the Indonesian context are discussed in this study.

Keywords: *Barriers, English language teaching, Indonesian secondary schools, non-native English teachers, policy recommendations.*

Introduction

English is classified as a foreign language in many countries, including Indonesia. In Thailand, for instance, English is also regarded as a foreign language. It is used to mediate global marketing areas to communicate with foreigners (Liyanage, 2021). Likewise, English is also considered a foreign language and is not widely used or spoken in Indonesia. Despite its global status as a lingua franca, English is not commonly used as an instruction medium in Indonesian educational institutions. Instead, Indonesian serves as the predominant language of instruction in classrooms across the country. While English has been introduced to students at the elementary school level, it is considered a local content subject that lacks mandated curriculum designs. As such, teachers are afforded the freedom to design English language courses in a manner that is largely contingent upon the availability of English teachers and resources (Dewi, 2017; Sulistiyo et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the English language teaching and learning process in Indonesian elementary schools has not been fully optimized due to the subject's lack of compulsory status at the elementary level. Interestingly, only public elementary schools in urban areas and public schools with English teachers can offer English language education.

Meanwhile, elementary schools in rural areas mostly do not provide English due to the limited staff to teach English (Kam, 1998). Thus, the lack of competent teachers has become a main challenge in education systems worldwide (Elyas & Al Grigi, 2014; Hawanti, 2014; Zein, 2016). Another main problem regarding English teaching in Indonesian elementary schools is the lack of appropriate and sufficient teaching facilities to enhance the teaching and learning process (Hawanti, 2014). Moreover, the lack of English proficiency among students in Indonesia is dealt with in the process of English teaching in which most students have low motivation in learning English and the lack of competent teachers in teaching English. This is in line with the study conducted by Ulla that the students in Thailand having poor English proficiency merely dealt with the English teaching and learning activities in the classrooms (Ulla, 2018). In the secondary school context, English has been a compulsory subject in Indonesia.

Therefore, English proficiency among Indonesian students may not be very high due to the lack of teaching and learning in elementary schools. In addition, it is not very easy for non-native English teachers to teach English to students in

secondary schools due to the lack of English proficiency among students in their previous schools. In other words, they have barriers to teaching English considering that English has been required as one of the compulsory subjects and it is examined at the secondary school level. One of the ways to enhance English teaching, particularly in secondary schools is by learning and understanding the students' languages and their culture (Daniel & Pray, 2017). In higher education, English is taught to students from various disciplines to enhance their English competence and develop their career development.

In Indonesian secondary schools, the process of teaching and learning certainly takes place through various efforts and challenges considering that English is a foreign language for Indonesian students. Further, in the learning process, learners and teachers experience hurdles and barriers that affect teaching or learning adversely (Hasanah & Utami, 2020; Liton, 2016; Septiani et al., 2019). The barriers include a lack of opportunities in using English outside the classroom, the competence of English teachers that needs to be improved, and so forth. In addition, they should acquire the language skills such as speaking skills particularly fluency and accuracy in the target language which are prerequisites for language teaching. Despite good planning, curriculum, textbooks, qualified teachers, and effective administration, the teaching-learning process sometimes seems to be futile when the actual skill development is not up to the mark (Khan, 2011; Sofiana et al., 2019).

Besides, teachers need motivation to improve their knowledge of using technology and pedagogical knowledge by joining some programs and training for enhancing their professional development (Alsolami, 2014; Lie et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2010). Considering the demand for qualified and professional English teachers, the roles of teachers are badly needed for learners in English acquisition. For instance, to enhance successful English language teaching, teachers need to acquire literacy and knowledge regarding the English curriculum (Gordon, 2012). Along with it, they are expected to have more training and experience in teaching English so that something up-to-date related to English teaching will help them modify their teaching potential, teaching readiness, and manner to deliver materials in the best possible ways. It is noticeable that learning English needs struggles for Indonesian students. They should strive to be accustomed to the diversities of English from their native language, Indonesian (Wahyuningsih, 2019).

Culture and environment are significant factors that influence English language learners' academic performance and teachers' pedagogical practices. Liton (2016) asserts that culture shapes the lifestyles and psychological sensitivities of people, which in turn impact their language learning abilities. Indonesia is a diverse nation characterized by numerous ethnic groups, languages, religions, and islands. As a result, Indonesian serves as the national language and symbol of national unity for the country. Regardless of the target variety, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, Batak, Bugis, and others, Indonesian language and culture are interrelated. In practice, most Indonesian learners primarily use their vernacular language when communicating with their community. Using the mother tongue or first language is perceived as a more effective means of communication, as emphasized by Helfrich and Bosh (2011). This limited use of English in Indonesian society may pose a challenge to learners seeking to learn and practice the language outside of formal education settings.

In this regard, Indonesia has a large population consisting of various ethnicities, languages, religions, and Islands. Therefore, Indonesian is highly considered a national language functioning as a symbol of the national unity used by the Indonesian people. In other words, whatever the target variety, for instance, Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, Batak, Bugis, and others, the Indonesian language cannot be dissociated from culture and society. Considering it, most Indonesian learners are merely using their vernacular language when they communicate with their community. Surprisingly, communication will be maintained easier when using the mother tongue or first language (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011; Makgato, 2015). Thus, the lack of using English in Indonesian society may hinder the learners to learn and practice English in society.

The role of policy in education is paramount, and policymakers worldwide have implemented various measures aimed at enhancing foreign language learning outcomes. For example, in China, regulations have been introduced to bolster the quality of foreign language education by explicating the roles of teachers and schools, developing resources, and optimizing conditions for the management of the teaching and learning process (Do & Le, 2020). Likewise, in Saudi Arabia, policymakers have recognized the pressing need for English education and have implemented measures to improve the quality of English instruction (Elyas & Al Grigi, 2014). In Indonesia, however, English instruction is curtailed in elementary schools owing to the government's prioritization of religion and Indonesian culture. Conversely, English is a compulsory subject in secondary schools, and it is included in the national examination. Nevertheless, the teaching of English in Indonesia is predominantly focused on writing, which could impede students' proficiency in speaking. Therefore, competent English teachers in secondary schools play a pivotal role in augmenting learners' English achievement by ensuring that English teaching standards are balanced between written and spoken English. Nonetheless, instructing English in Indonesian secondary schools is not bereft of challenges, as students' English skills are frequently insufficient, and there is a paucity of opportunities for exposure to the language. Policies supporting foreign language education are indispensable for augmenting the quality of education. Nevertheless, the efficacy of such policies hinges on their implementation and the support provided to teachers and learners. Consequently, policymakers should consider the significance of balancing written and spoken English in teaching and furnish adequate support to teachers to enhance students' English achievement.

Learning English as a foreign language can be challenging for many learners, as highlighted by previous studies. For instance, Makgato (2015) reported that students in higher education often struggle with expressing themselves in English. In addition, learners may encounter obstacles to becoming proficient in English, such as the perception that they must sacrifice their native language, which can result in a loss of cultural identity. Similarly, EFL students may struggle with English pronunciation due to differences between their first language and the English phonemic system (Liton, 2016). Such issues are also common in Sudan, where students often make serious syntactic errors when composing English passages (Khan, 2011).

Overall, learning English as a foreign language requires a supportive and well-structured learning environment. Learners often face difficulties with pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and cultural differences can also impact their ability to learn effectively. To overcome these barriers, learners need opportunities to practice speaking and writing in English without fear of making mistakes. Creating a safe and non-judgmental learning environment, as well as incorporating cultural aspects into the learning process, can help achieve this goal. In addition, providing access to quality resources such as language labs, audio-visual materials, and language exchange programs can be beneficial. In this matter, while learning English as a foreign language can be a challenging task, it is not insurmountable. With appropriate support, motivation, and resources, learners can overcome the obstacles they face and achieve proficiency in English.

The study of English language teaching has yielded valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators. For instance, Evans et al. (2020) conducted a study on the obstacles experienced by English teachers in teaching during lockdown in London. Meanwhile, Sofiana et al. (2019) investigated the implementation of the English language teaching 2013 curriculum in Indonesian secondary schools, finding that it was successfully executed across schools with varying national examination indexes and employment statuses. The significance of personal competence in English teaching was also emphasized by Kusumawardhani et al. (2017) reporting that the importance of teachers possessing good personality traits and serving as positive role models for their students. Moreover, Liakopoulou (2011) underlined the critical role of teachers in the context of English language teaching, citing their experience gained from actual practice.

Despite significant contributions to the study of English language teaching, a gap in the literature remains in the exploration of the barriers faced by non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools, and policy recommendations. This study aims to explore some barriers to teaching English experienced by non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools, and some policy recommendations to improve English language teaching in Indonesia.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study aims to report on the barriers to teaching English experienced by some English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools. In addition, it highlights possible solutions to overcome these barriers. A qualitative case study method was employed for this study because it focuses on investigating the phenomenon being studied. This is in line with the purpose of the study, which is to discover the experiences and barriers felt by non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools. Additionally, this study discusses some policy recommendations.

Sample and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was employed for this study, which involved six non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools. One male teacher, categorized as Teacher 1, taught at a public school, while five female teachers, categorized as Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6, taught at a private school. All participants were selected based on their willingness to share their experiences in teaching English and their existing relationship with the authors. To ensure confidentiality, the names of the participants were anonymized. Their ages ranged from 33 to 58 years old, and their teaching experience varied from 4 to 38 years. Teacher 1 had 38 years of teaching experience, while Teachers 2 and 3 had 16 and 7 years of teaching experience, respectively. Teachers 4 and 5 had 12 years of teaching experience, and Teacher 6 had been teaching for 4 years. Data were collected from February 1st to 5th, 2022.

In terms of data collection, we utilized a semi-structured interview approach to gather data from a cohort of six non-native English teachers teaching at private and public secondary schools in Central Java, Indonesia. These particular schools were selected due to their accessibility for data collection purposes. Before conducting the interviews, we asked for permission from the non-native English teachers and provided them with a clear explanation of our research objectives. Interview guides were employed as the study instrument to facilitate the collection of pertinent data related to the research questions. These guides were structured around central topics and questions that were pertinent to the research questions under investigation. Specifically, we prepared question lists validated by an expert in language teaching that focused on the implementation of English language teaching, including teaching methods, material design, the English curriculum, and barriers that the participants encountered in EFL classes in the secondary school context.

Analyzing of Data

In analysing the data, we transcribed the data from interviews to ensure the data reduction and coding processes. In the process of analysing the data, we read thoroughly the data from interviews to get meaningful results for the study. In addition, regarding the procedure of data analysis, we made use of the steps (Widodo, 2014). These cover listening to a recording data many times, transcribing the transcripts of an interview to capture the meaningful insight of experiences among the participants, interpreting the data, and getting better communication to ensure whether or not the data match with the participant's intention; and having data credibility by asking some feedback from participants. To ensure the reliability of the research data, we utilized source triangulation as a means of verifying the experiences, stories, and information shared by non-native English teachers regarding the barriers to teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools.

Findings

Based on the interviews, non-native English teachers had some barriers to teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools. For the sake of clarity, the following results explore several barriers experienced by non-native English teachers in teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools and some policy recommendations for English language teaching.

Barriers to Teaching English Experienced by Non-Native English Teachers in Indonesian Secondary Schools

The task of teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools presents a significant challenge, particularly for non-native English teachers. This is because English is not widely regarded as a second language for Indonesian learners, which presents a significant barrier to effective language acquisition. Furthermore, it is worth noting that English is not currently considered a compulsory subject within Indonesian elementary schools, but rather is introduced to students as either an additional subject or a local content. Therefore, the results of English teaching may not be optimal. Moreover, it is experienced that non-native English teachers in secondary schools face more barriers when teaching English since it has been made a compulsory subject and is examined at the Indonesian secondary school level. The barriers that have been identified by non-native English teachers include:

Lack of Training in English Teaching and learning

Based on the results of interviews with the six non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools. It was found that all of them pointed out that the main barrier to teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools is a lack of training in English teaching and learning. In addition, they added that they need to upgrade their knowledge of English language teaching to improve their competence and meet the literacy needs of their students. The lack of training in language development has been advocated by non-native English teachers through the following excerpts:

Teacher 1:

The main obstacle for me in teaching English is the lack of training in English development. As we have already known that everything has changed including English teaching methods. To respond to it, some training is considerably crucial for developing teacher's professionalism particularly non-native English teachers like me. I have joined the training like seminar once a year. I think it is not enough (February 1, 2022)

Teacher 2:

I participated in a workshop on English teaching once a year. It is held by the English tutors of the Indonesian Center Institution. I learn something new through the workshop. I learn teaching methods, media, English materials, Curriculum, and many others. I hope I can join some training in English teaching to upgrade my knowledge. Besides, the support from the school is also important to facilitate English teachers to improve their professionalism. Joining a workshop once a year is not enough to improve teachers' knowledge. The lack of training is becoming one of the barriers for teachers in developing their competence (February 2, 2022).

Teacher 3:

I join a workshop of English once a year and it is free. I don't have access to get more information regarding the workshop or seminar conducted freely. Many pieces of training are usually expensive. Therefore, I look for free training. In my opinion, lack of training in English teaching is one of the main barriers to improving professionalism in teaching English (February 1, 2022).

Teacher 4:

I think the main barrier to teaching English is the lack of training for English teachers. We need to improve our English competence and teaching professionalism. The development of technology has changed everything in the education world. We need to adjust it in teaching English. That's why some training like teaching methods, media, and technology are crucial and needed by English teachers (February 2, 2022).

Lack of Academic Literacy Among Non-Native English Teachers

Academic literacy acquisition has played a pivotal role in enhancing non-native English teachers' competence and professionalism. Surprisingly, most of them may not realize the ways how to develop literacy in numerous cultures in English language teaching. Therefore, they may be less effective and successful in delivering the English course among students in secondary schools due to their lack of or limited academic literacy of English and diverse cultures. Thus, it becomes one of the barriers to teaching English encountered by most non-native English teachers. Furthermore, non-native English teachers have identified a lack of academic literacy as a significant barrier to teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools as shown in the following excerpts:

Teacher 2:

We are more burdened by a lot of tasks in teacher's administration than the essential point of English teaching like developing academic literacy. The teachers' administration includes lesson plans, portfolios, meeting scheduling, and others. Developing teachers' competence and literacy. Less English sources and literacy among non-native teachers may become one of the barriers to teaching English to students in secondary schools (February 4, 2022).

Teacher 3:

In my opinion, developing academic literacy has been a central aspect of teaching English considering that English is not our first or second language in Indonesia. Indeed, it is a foreign language in Indonesia. Therefore, we need to upgrade academic literacy like culture, society, and language use of English to produce meaningful learning. Unfortunately, we lack academic literacy due to the business of task administration at school (February 4, 2022).

Teacher 5:

We have so many tasks to do especially school administrations like arranging lesson plans, meetings, arranging learning programs, arranging evaluation programs, and so on. We have to spend our time developing our knowledge outside of school. Besides, we need support from schools to increase teachers' literacy (February 4, 2022).

Lack of School Facilities

It is noticeable that schools have been considered one of the essential elements in enhancing successful English learning. Therefore, the needs for sufficient resources including teachers, staff, and facilities are badly crucial for supporting English teaching and learning activities, particularly in Indonesian secondary schools. The majority of facilities provided by private and public Indonesian secondary schools are insufficient to enhance meaningful English teaching and learning. As has been argued by non-native English teachers that the facilities provided by the schools cover a small library and limited sources of English books. Meanwhile, public schools have offered a language laboratory that private schools do not have to support English practices among teachers and students. The evidence supporting this need can be seen in the following excerpts.

Teacher 2:

I realize the need for providing support to teach English. My school just provides an English dictionary to support our teaching and learning activities. There are no supporting resources for English books. Besides, there is no English language laboratory. Therefore, the English teaching and learning process has not run very well (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 1:

Our school just provides a library in enhancing students' learning process. However, the collection of English books is very limited. Therefore, we cannot access any meaningful English resources to achieve successful English learning. In this matter, it needs to offer other facilities like an English language laboratory to support English practices among teachers and students, particularly in listening and speaking skills considering these are productive skills. Another facility like the availability of a projector is also needed to support English learning in the classroom (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 3:

One of the supports given by my school is motivating some English teachers to join the workshop held by the association of English teachers in secondary schools. However, I rarely join it since the business of teaching schedule at schools (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 4:

My school provides an English coursebook composed by the Association of English Teachers in Indonesia. However, the content of the materials has not met the student's needs. Indeed, students require more English resources from other countries to enrich their knowledge of both culture and language usage in practice (February 5, 2022).

Lack of Sufficient English Materials

As previously mentioned, English is considered a foreign language for Indonesian students, which necessitates the availability of adequate support facilities and relevant materials for effective English language instruction, particularly in secondary schools. Notably, non-native English teachers have identified the insufficiency of English-relevant materials as a critical issue impeding their teaching practices. This inadequacy of English supporting materials is evidenced by the following excerpts obtained during the interviews:

Teacher 2:

I realize that English is not our second language. In enhancing English language teaching, some English-relevant book is badly needed for us as non-native English teachers. We usually use an English book written by the team of the Indonesian government and a student's worksheet to help students' learning process. However, this is not enough. Indeed, we still need more English references representing English culture and its use in society (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 5:

I need more English-relevant references to improve qualified English teachers. The book that I used to teach has not met the student's needs in learning English. The culture of English and students' culture and identity and its use have not been portrayed in that book. Thus, students somehow feel difficulties in capturing the knowledge and English experienced in the book (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 6:

I need some English-relevant books containing the four skills of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some books that I used in teaching English in secondary schools have not represented all these skills. Thus, the students' need has not been achieved well (February 5, 2022).

Lack of Motivation in Learning English among Students

Motivation has been considered a crucial factor in determining students' success in learning the English language. After interviewing six non-native English teachers, it appears that many students in secondary schools lack the motivation to learn English. Furthermore, it has been observed that English is simply viewed as a local content subject that lacks a mandated curriculum design in elementary schools. Non-native English teachers have highlighted the lack of motivation among students in learning English through the following excerpts:

Teacher 1:

The majority of students in my secondary school exhibit a lack of motivation when it comes to learning English, citing difficulties in acquiring vocabulary, pronunciation of English words, and comprehension of spoken English. However, students who demonstrate a higher level of proficiency in English appear to be more motivated and interested in learning, often stemming from their graduation from a prestigious elementary school with a strong English language curriculum (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 3:

My students mostly have a lack of motivation in learning English. They have a lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in pronouncing English words, and so on. These deficiencies in English may be caused by insufficient English teaching, less availability of English teachers, and inappropriate English-relevant materials during studying in elementary schools (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 6:

The lack of motivation in English among my students in secondary schools is caused by several factors including the deficiency of acquiring English vocabulary, unfamiliar English words, difficulties in speaking English, and the lack of inputs in English at the elementary school level (February 5, 2022).

Lack of English Exposure among Teachers and Students

In terms of English language acquisition, sufficient exposure is a crucial component for encouraging students' success in learning the language. However, in Indonesian secondary schools, students often lack exposure to English language practices outside the classroom, which may impede their ability to acquire the language effectively. This paucity of exposure to English language use has also been identified as a challenge for non-native English teachers, who must expend greater effort to foster students' spoken and written English language skills in the classroom. The lack of exposure to speaking English among students has been remarked on by the following non-native English teachers:

Teacher 1:

One of the obstacles that I face in improving students' English proficiency is the insufficient exposure to the language among secondary school students. They do not utilize English in their day-to-day communication or within their environment. This lack of exposure can potentially impede their ability to acquire the language effectively (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 3:

Several secondary school students that I have taught exhibit a limited capacity for practicing English outside the classroom. Although they are provided with opportunities to speak English within the school environment, these initiatives have not yielded satisfactory results due to their infrequent use of the language outside of school. As a result, the acquisition of English among these students has been impeded (February 5, 2022).

Teacher 5:

The development of English language proficiency among secondary school students in Indonesia has been inadequate. One of the contributing factors is the insufficient emphasis placed on developing English-speaking skills during primary education, which can significantly impede students' motivation and ability to acquire English effectively in secondary schools. Additionally, it is noteworthy that some English textbooks used in secondary schools prioritize other aspects of language learning, such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing, with insufficient attention given to developing listening and speaking skills (February 5, 2022).

Policy Recommendations for Improving English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary Schools

Drawing on the findings, this study presents several policy recommendations for the enhancement of the quality of English language teaching in the Indonesian secondary school context. These recommendations include upgrading the quality of English language instruction, improving English literacy and local-national literacies among non-native English teachers, fostering the active participation of non-native English teachers in academic forums, and redesigning the English curriculum by redefining the status of English in the context of elementary schools. The implementation of these recommendations is expected to facilitate a more effective and comprehensive approach to English language instruction, thereby promoting the development of English proficiency among Indonesian secondary school students.

Discussion

In the context of Indonesian secondary schools, non-native English teachers face a range of challenges when it comes to teaching English, such as insufficient training in English teaching and learning, inadequate academic literacy among non-native English teachers, inadequate school facilities, insufficient English-relevant materials, low levels of student motivation to learn English and lack of English exposure among teachers and students. For the sake of clarity, barriers to teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools and policy recommendations are discussed below.

In terms of insufficient training in English teaching and learning, non-native teachers need training, workshops, seminars, and other programs that are crucial for developing their professionalism and competence in Indonesian secondary schools. In addition to training, teachers must also possess knowledge of their students and their linguistic abilities to enhance their professionalism (Chun, 2014). This finding is following Alsolami (2014) asserting that the lack of appropriate training in English has become one of the main barriers to teaching English, especially for non-native English teachers. In responding to this issue, the professionalism and competence of teachers are badly needed for developing English teaching quality in Indonesian secondary schools. This can be achieved by joining some training in English like seminars, workshops, and other programs related to English development. Surprisingly, the importance of sustainable appropriate training in language teaching is not only for non-native English teachers but also for native speakers for the sake of becoming qualified educators (Chun, 2014; Faez & Karas, 2019; Wahyuningsih, 2017). This finding is following the study conducted by Choi (2015) that the lack of pedagogic practice was advocated by teachers emerging from their English proficiency and other factors.

Teachers play a pivotal role in enhancing students' language acquisition (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). Therefore, to create successful English language teaching, teachers must provide students with the opportunity to learn English while maintaining their native language and literacy attitude. In this sense, non-native English teachers have a responsibility

to teach English while preserving the culture and literacy of their students' native language. This can be achieved by actively participating in English training programs, such as seminars and workshops, where they can share their teaching experiences with colleagues and mentors to increase their teaching professionalism.

In terms of the lack of academic literacy, it can be assumed that non-native English teachers are burdened with various administrative tasks such as arranging lesson plans, syllabi, meeting schedules, teaching programs and evaluation, curriculum, and annual programs, which leaves them with little time to focus on improving their teaching quality and professionalism, including developing academic literacy from various sources of English. Therefore, building awareness of academic literacy among non-native English teachers is crucial, and this can be achieved by encouraging them to read about English culture from various perspectives. Furthermore, school principals should provide facilities such as books, internet connection, and networking to support access to academic literacy. As Huang and Archer (2017) have pointed out, academic literacy emphasizes the importance of agency in providing students or teachers with resources to develop academic practices. Non-native English teachers, in particular, have an essential role in creating successful English learning environments. Ortaçtepe (2015) reported that educational settings play a critical role in fostering students' competence in English language learning, which may not be possible if teachers lack a comprehension of how they acquire English and how to appropriately implement that knowledge in the teaching and learning process (Gordon, 2012). Therefore, literacy development is beneficial for both teachers and students in English teaching.

The findings of this study were not in line with the study of Merga et al. (2021) emphasizing that public schools in Australia were considered to have insufficient resources including a lack of staff and material resourcing. In this sense, public secondary schools in Indonesia tend to have better-supporting facilities in enhancing English learning compared to general private schools. Briefly speaking, sufficient English sources like books have become essential needs both for teachers in public and private secondary schools in enriching their knowledge and experience regarding English culture and use. More importantly, they need adequate facilities and support for English language teaching.

Regarding the lack of school facilities, the previous elaborations have highlighted that facilities are essential to enhance English language teaching for students in secondary schools. Based on the interviews, most non-native English teachers have pointed out that they lack facilities to support the teaching and learning process. The majority of secondary schools do not possess a language laboratory. The English language laboratory plays a pivotal role in encouraging students' learning development in English. Public secondary schools in Indonesia mostly possess a language laboratory that private schools do not have, as stated by Teacher 5. However, certain private schools that have better financial management can provide a language laboratory to support English teaching and learning activities. As emphasized by Teacher 6, who teaches in a private secondary school, her school has offered a language laboratory due to the professional development and better financial management of the school.

In terms of the lack of English-relevant materials, non-native English teachers explain that they require sufficient English materials, appropriate literacy, and other relevant references to enhance students' English learning. This barrier has been also found by other scholars that the lack of English-relevant materials has been considered as one of the main problems in English teaching (Freire & Valdez, 2017). In addition, the non-native English teachers added that the government has provided English books. Nonetheless, the material contents of the book have not fully met the students' needs in English language teaching. Besides, their schools have provided an English works sheet for fostering students' teaching and learning process. Unfortunately, this has not met the students' needs since the content has not captured the representation of English culture, and knowledge as well as the sociocultural context of students. Thus, several English-relevant materials containing the portrait of English culture and students' identities and culture are considered essential in encouraging the process of English language teaching (Liton, 2016). In this respect, non-native English teachers need to implement some principles in language acquisition by considering the aspect of sociocultural and encouraging the awareness of students in making use of English through literacies of the local community so that these literacies can be used as media to design English relevant materials (Daniel & Pray, 2017).

 Consequently, teachers and policymakers need to give thorough consideration to the content of materials concerning English literacy when crafting appropriate curricula that utilize the culture and identity of students. This finding highlights that non-native English teachers need to connect literacy outside of school and make use of multimodal modes and materials design that enable students to communicate in English in their society (Villacañas de Castro et al., 2021). Furthermore, they need to increase awareness of adopting various teaching methods, English Materials, and evaluations to maintain content integrity (Newman et al., 2010). More importantly, non-native English teachers need to embrace cultural differences among students and involve student engagement in class (Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014).

In this regard, non-native English teachers must possess a comprehensive understanding of the various methods and approaches of English language teaching, while taking into consideration adequate resources of English materials and their own English proficiency levels (Christ & Makarani, 2009). Furthermore, this finding has significant implications for the use of high-quality English-relevant references in English language teaching and underscores the importance of building networks among English teachers, professors, and policymakers in developing effective English teaching curricula, particularly at the secondary school level. This is consistent with the study conducted by Lee (2020),

highlighting the need for English teachers to establish collaborative relationships with professors and policymakers in designing English teaching curricula that align with best practices in the field.

Additionally, it has been observed by non-native English teachers that a significant number of students in Indonesian secondary schools lack motivation in their English language classes, and often experience anxiety when learning a foreign language (Inagaki & Nakaya, 2022). Thus, it is evident that English language teachers play a crucial role in motivating their students, which can be achieved by encouraging them to learn and practice English while retaining their native language and identities. To achieve this, non-native English teachers should maintain acculturation while utilizing appropriate teaching methods, such as vocabulary, expression, grammar, and writing, that enable students to use English in their way, facilitating effective feedback provision (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). Furthermore, integrating English language teaching with technology is crucial to support meaningful learning (Farani, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2023; Yamauchi, 2009).

The lack of English exposure among teachers and students has become a significant barrier to improving the quality of English language teaching. Encouraging students to speak English at school is a possible remedy for this problem (Chou, 2018). However, given that primary and secondary schools in Indonesia seldom expose students to speaking English, developing self-assurance in speaking the language is often challenging. It is noteworthy that students' use of English for daily communication is also limited, and the predominance of Javanese as a vernacular language in Indonesian society further contributes to this phenomenon. As Javanese remains the principal language in most rural areas, students may have fewer opportunities to practice English outside the classroom (Quinn, 2011; Wahyuningsih, 2019). Prior studies have reported a lack of English language practice outside of school as a significant barrier for both students and teachers in English language teaching and learning (Liton, 2016; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

English exposure among teachers and students has become a significant barrier to improving the quality of English language teaching. Encouraging students to speak English at school is a possible remedy for this problem (Chou, 2018). However, given that primary and secondary schools in Indonesia seldom expose students to speaking English, developing self-assurance in speaking the language is challenging. It is noteworthy that students' use of English for daily communication is also limited, and the predominance of Javanese as a vernacular language in Indonesian society further contributes to this phenomenon. As Javanese remains the principal language in most rural areas, students may have fewer opportunities to practice English outside the classroom (Quinn, 2011; Wahyuningsih, 2019). Prior studies have reported a lack of English language practice outside of school as a significant barrier for both students and teachers in English language teaching and learning (Liton, 2016; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

Regarding the challenges, it is imperative to promote English language exposure outside the classroom to improve language learning outcomes. To this end, teachers may use various strategies and activities in the classroom to encourage students to use English more frequently. The government may also play a critical role in promoting English language use in business and tourism settings to incentivize students and the wider community to learn and use English more effectively. Ultimately, greater exposure to the language both in and outside the classroom can help to overcome barriers to successful English language acquisition.

The results of the study emphasize the importance of non-native English teachers engaging students in English language activities, providing explicit instructions, modelling, and clear reading to enhance their understanding. Furthermore, teachers should be aware of literacy in various cultures and maintain students' culture and knowledge. Previous research supports this finding (Anwar, 2019; Helfrich & Bosh, 2011; Karakas, 2016).

This study recommends several policy recommendations to improve the quality of English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools. These include upgrading the quality of English language teaching, improving English literacies and local-national literacies among non-native English teachers, fostering their active participation in academic forums, and redesigning the English curriculum by elevating the status of English in elementary school contexts. These policy recommendations aim to improve the quality of English language teaching and contribute to better educational outcomes for students in Indonesia.

The growing demand for English language acquisition necessitates serious consideration of English language teaching across various educational levels, despite the ongoing debate in Indonesia about providing English education for young learners. English is considered a local content subject taught in Indonesian elementary schools, where the curriculum for English language teaching remains unclear. As a local content subject, Indonesian elementary schools possess the autonomy to design their curriculum for English language instruction, leading to variations in the quality of English language education across schools, with schools in rural areas facing significant challenges in providing access to quality English language education. Consequently, the low quality of English language instruction in some elementary schools in rural areas has implications for the English proficiency levels of students in secondary schools. Non-native English teachers in secondary schools are particularly challenged in providing high-quality English language instruction due to the low proficiency levels of their students. It is important to note that English is a compulsory subject and is tested in the national examination.

Based on the findings, non-native English teachers face various challenges in providing high-quality English teaching. These challenges include limited training opportunities in English language teaching and learning, inadequate school facilities such as a lack of language laboratories and sufficient English books, and low English proficiency among students, among other factors. Furthermore, English language teaching in secondary schools tends to prioritize structure and writing practices that are tested in national examinations, often at the expense of developing students' listening and speaking skills.

Referring to these issues, it is essential to prioritize the provision of high-quality English teaching in secondary school contexts. This can be achieved by developing English language materials that comprehensively cover all language skills while also taking into account the local and national languages of the students. Teachers should ensure that learning activities are based on content knowledge and the importance of language so that students have ample opportunities to develop their language skills. Additionally, non-native English teachers can improve their teaching quality by actively participating in academic forums focused on material design, teaching methods, and media to enhance their knowledge and competence (Ernawati et al., 2022).

Designing effective English materials requires a thorough understanding of the linguistic and pedagogical demands of the subject matter. Based on the results of the study, non-native English teachers in Indonesia face numerous challenges in accessing appropriate English materials for teaching purposes. These challenges are further compounded by the need to develop English language skills in a comprehensive manner that respects the students' local and national languages. Therefore, non-native English teachers need to improve their English and local-national literacies to design and implement meaningful English teaching activities. Additionally, they must actively utilize technology to enhance student motivation and engagement in English language learning (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2022).

In the current era of digital transformation, teachers are expected to update their knowledge and skills to keep up with the evolving needs of their profession. However, the results of the study indicate that many non-native English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools lack the opportunity to participate in academic forums, such as training, seminars, and workshops. To address this, school stakeholders should support the professional development of teachers by providing adequate resources, encouraging regular participation in academic forums, and promoting continuous learning opportunities. By participating in such training, non-native English teachers can hone their English skills, develop appropriate materials, and improve their assessment practices.

As previously mentioned, English is considered a local content subject in Indonesian elementary schools, which can have a significant impact on student outcomes. However, the lack of a clear English curriculum, government support, qualified English language teachers, adequate time allocation for English instruction, and proper school facilities have all contributed to lower levels of English language proficiency among elementary school students. This, in turn, can affect their performance in secondary school, where English is a compulsory subject and is tested in national examinations. Additionally, non-native English teachers in secondary schools face significant challenges in teaching English due to the low level of English proficiency among their students. Therefore, policymakers and stakeholders in the field of English education should consider reclassifying English as a compulsory subject in elementary schools by designing appropriate curricula, providing qualified teachers, and integrating intercultural competence and literacy development into the curriculum.

Conclusion

The present study provides insights into the challenges faced by non-native English teachers in teaching English in Indonesian secondary schools. The study highlights the significant barriers that impede the provision of quality English language teaching for students in Indonesian secondary schools. These barriers include inadequate training in English teaching and learning, insufficient academic literacy among non-native English teachers, inadequate school facilities, a lack of English-relevant materials for teaching, low student motivation for learning English, and limited exposure to English outside the school environment. The findings offer several policy recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers in English language education in Indonesia, to enhance the quality of English language teaching. These recommendations encompass (a) enhancing the quality of English language teaching, (b) improving both English and local-national literacies among non-native English teachers, (c) fostering active participation of non-native English teachers in academic forums, and (d) redesigning the English curriculum by changing the status of English in the elementary school context. These recommendations serve as a valuable reference for future research and inform policy decisions to improve the quality of English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools.

Recommendations

It is suggested for future scholars undertake studies of English Language Teaching in the Indonesian context with a wider perspective and engage more participants in the study. Undertaking this study, some insightful information on English language teaching practices in the Indonesian context particularly in Indonesian secondary schools.

Limitations

It should be noted that this study has a limitation, particularly in dealing with generalizability and transferability. Further, this study has only recruited six non-native English teachers teaching in public and private secondary schools in Central Java, Indonesia. This may not be easy to generalize the findings. The large number of recruited participants from several schools tends to have various findings.

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Authorship Contribution Statement

Wahyuningsih: Conceptualization, design, analysis. Afandi: Writing/drafting the manuscript. Kasriyati: Editing/reviewing, supervision. Khoeroni: Material support, final approval

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