The English Department CCU Students’ Perceptions toward the Term of Best English

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ABSTRACT
In the era of World Englishes, the presence of various varieties of English starts to shift the Native speakers’ position as the central of learning English. As Kachru (1985:30) noted that the native speakers of English seem to have lost exclusive prerogative to control its standardization. Based on that claim, this study investigated the students’ perception toward the term of “The Best English” in order to find out more whether English learners still consider native speakers as the center of learning. This study surveyed 26 English Department, Satya Wacana Christian University students that attend Cross Culture Understanding course where they can learn various cultural perspectives in the era of World Englishes. All of participants were asked to answer open-ended questionnaire that consisted of 10 questions related to “The Best English” in 10 minutes. The finding showed that the English Department CCU students’ perception about the term of Best English is still related to the native English speaker. Native English speaker is the center of learning English where they can consider that native speaker is someone who speaks English fluently and also with correct grammar and pronunciation.

Key words: Students’ perception, Best English, World Englishes

INTRODUCTION
A. Background of the study
Based on the Kachru’ classification on three circle models (1985), those are three circle are Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. Indonesia can be considered to the Expanding circle, which means that English in Indonesia is used as a foreign language. In the era of World Englishes, many varieties of English occur and try to shift the native English position. It gives impact for English learners to find their best model competence in English language learning context. Each English learner has their own perception toward the term of Best English. They might think the Best English is native English speakers. Some of them also think that the Best English is a communicative language, which mean someone who uses English communicatively belongs to the Best English. The Best English can be in the form of person or model of Best English and the Best English of grammar and also pronunciation. This study also come up with the ideas related to the factors underlying the
term of Best English, those are Local Nativized, Monolithic Model and Homogeny Position, Polymodel and Heterogeny, and Standard English.

Local Nativized

Nowadays the number of English speakers is rapidly increasing as the consequence of English function as the International language. English has been growing worldwide and experienced nativized in the place where English is used as second language, such as Singapore, Malaysia, India, and so on. As claimed by Lowenberg (2002: 431), in certain international and regional domains of English use (e.g. Europe) English actually functions as a second language, and often develops nativized norms. The process of nativized itself has grown various variety of English. The existence of variety of English occur many debate among the linguists. Here two different perspective how English is seen as International language.

Monolithic Model and Homogeny Position

The first perspective is about English as monolithic model. As argued by Quirk (1985) for a monolithic model contends that native-speaker models should be promoted because they have been codified and have a degree of historical authority. Besides, the monolithic model is in keeping with one of the central tenets that Phillipson (1992) argues has traditionally informed English language teaching, namely, that ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. That argument in fact has become common perception among the English speakers. As like Kirkpatrick (2007) said in his book “World Englishes- Implications For International Communication and English Language Teaching”, In the context of World Englishes, the real problem is caused by many people believing that native speakers are necessarily better at speaking English than non-native speakers, and that native speakers are necessarily better at teaching English than non-native speaker.

The other perspective that strengthens the position of English as a single variety is that homogeny position, Pennycook (2003), which views the spread of English as leading to homogenization of world culture. Yet, Phillipson (1992) saw homogenous as essentially a negative feature of globalization, reflecting imperialism and colonization. In other words, the spread of English worldwide also invisibly brings the western culture to the users of English.

Polymodel and Heterogeny

The second perspective about English is polymodel which is placed English as characterized by variety and variation. As Kachru (1992) views that this approach ignores the incontrovertible fact that English is actually characterized by variety and variation. A polymodel approach, on the other hand, supposes variability.

According to Pennycook (2003) the polymodel is introduced by the heterogeny position in which individual. Similar idea is described by Kachru (1992) that the features of World Englishes as a sign of pluricentricism that has been brought by globalization. As like the goal of World Englishes paradigm has been to describe the manner in which English has become localized, creating different varieties of English around the world.
Which is better?

It is difficult to state which is better between monomodel and polymodel. They both have strong reason why they should be admitted. As claimed by Pennycook (2003) that the homogeneity argument tends to ignore all these local appropriation and adaptations, the heterogeneity argument tends to ignore the broader political context of the spread of English.

One of example that stated the superiority of monomodel is that (Bloomfield, 1933) native speakers provide the Best models, although he does say that, in rare instances, it is possible for a foreigner to speak as well as native. It simply shows that native speakers are the ideal model of learning English. Yet, in the era of World Englishes, the presence of various varieties of English starts to shift the Native speakers’ position as the central of learning English. As Kachru (1985) noted that the native speakers of English seem to have lost exclusive prerogative to control its standardization; in fact, if current statistics are any indication, they have become minority. Moreover the presence of English varieties can bring new paradigm and perspective for linguistic and pedagogical research and for understanding the linguistic creativity in multilingual situations across cultures (Kachru, 1985: 30).

Questioning the standard?

From those backgrounds, it comes to the question which English standard should be followed since there are various varieties of English with their own characteristic and rules. Should we need to follow the homogeneity model where the center of learning is native speakers or we can adopt other varieties which is more suitable to the culture and the characteristic of our own country? Whereas Standard English itself is believed to represent the most appropriate, ideal and correct varieties of English (see Quirk 1968; Claiborne 1983; Millward 1989). Here, it is interesting to know what are the English learners’ perception regarding the issue of which is ideal English for them since they are the people that used English, knowing the benefits and difficulties in it.

For those reason, this present study aimed to find out students perception toward term of Best English whether the development of varieties of English affect their perception about the center of learning or not. Moreover, we chose CCU (Cross Culture Understanding) student was because they have background knowledge toward the variety of English in the era of World Englishes and the controversy between homogeneity and heterogeneity position of English. Therefore, we intended to explore more about their perception on the term of Best English. The study aims at answering the question about the term of Best English: What is the English Department’ CCU students’ perceptions toward the term of Best English?

B. Significance of the study

It is important to study about the variety of English in order to find out the advantages and disadvantages of English varieties. By studying the variety of English, it can bring a new paradigm about the center of learning English. Furthermore; it does not need to focus only to the native speakers of English. However, it would be better to consider the non-native English speaker to bring the new paradigm in learning English.

For the teacher, understanding the students’ perception about their Best English can help the teacher to fulfill students’ need in learning English. Students’ perception can bring the teacher to the appropriate function as the facilitator of their learning. Besides, based on those students’
perception teacher can measure the students understanding about the Best English so that teacher
can help them to dig their knowledge deeper through giving more expert justification about which
language consider as Best or standard and also about the English varieties that color the
development of World Englishes.

For the students, their perception about the term of Best English can help them to get the
Best model of their learning. Besides, it can stimulate them to be the Best English learners as their
vision in adopting the Best English model directly or indirectly. Moreover, it can help them to find
new paradigm about other varieties that can be considered as Best English.

For the other researchers, this study will give them fundamental knowledge of the students’
perception of the term toward The Best English. Hopefully, from this study will give a guidance to
conduct the similar research about the Best English. Thus, there will be further research that can give
deeper analysis toward the term of Best English.

C. Definition of terms

CCU (Cross Culture Understanding) course: This course explores basic cultural concepts and
principles. It examines how perceptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social organizations help to
shape and create cultural differences. It also studies the way in which verbal and non-verbal
communication patterns and skills required to achieve intercultural competence. Besides the course
introduces ways of thinking and analytical skills that will enable students to function effectively in
any cultural context, and in particular; and also acquire experience dealing with the numerous
differences among the ethnic groups in Indonesia as well as around the world.

Perception: Perception is defined as the way of seeing and understanding something
(Sekuler & Blake, 2006, p. 7)

Students’ perception: Based on the definition of perception above, students’ perception is
students’ way of seeing and understanding something.

Standard English: is believed to represent the most appropriate, ideal and correct varieties
of English (see Quirk 1968; Claiborne 1983; Millward 1989).

Based on the definition of Standard English, we borrow that definition to the definition about
Best English: an English that reflects the most perfect, appropriate, ideal, and correct model of
English.

THE STUDY

Participant

This study surveyed 26 Satya Wacana Christian University students who took English
Department as their major study. All the students were attending Cross Culture Understanding
course that was taught in the sixth semester (2010/2011). The course introduced the students to
understand the various cultural perspectives in the era of World Englishes which explores basic
cultural concepts and the principles about World Englishes. It examined how perceptions, values,
beliefs, attitudes, and social organizations help to shape and create cultural differences. In CCU class
also studied the way in which verbal and non-verbal communication patterns and skills required to achieve intercultural competence.

The reason why we chose CCU (Cross Culture Understanding) student was because they have background knowledge toward the variety of English in the era of World Englishes and the controversy between homogeny and heterogeny position of English. Therefore, we intended to explore more about their perception on the term of best English.

Instrument of data collection

In attempting to answer the research question related to the English Department' CCU students perceptions toward the term of Best English, the methodology used one instrument that is open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A). We chose open-ended questionnaire because we wanted to explore more 26 students to write their open-ended responses to the question given, and allow the participants to voice their individual point of views toward the term of Best English. All of the students were given open-ended questionnaire that consisted of 10 questions related to the term of “The Best English”. The length of time to answer the questionnaire was 10 minutes for each participant. Besides, the questionnaire is written in English, and the participants' responses could be in English or Indonesian.

DISCUSSION

A. Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of open-ended questionnaire data involved descriptive of the participants' responses. To analyze the data, the first thing we did was that read and reread all participants’ responds. In order to catch the important points from participants' responds, we did note-taking. After that, we classify all the important points under each question. From those points, we proceed to develop tentative theme and found “Native, Perfect English, Understandable, Speak fluently, and Communicative” as the theme. Then, we did coding by putting participants' respond to the appropriate theme.

After finishing the coding, we reread again all the participants' data and theme. Considering some factors, such as the fit of data to the group of themes and the clearness of themes, we changed again the themes into the big one; those are language use, speaker performance, and language purpose. After we got the newest theme, we rearrange the coding and put the participants' responds in accordance with the newest themes. Besides, we also make the table of substantive categories and theoretical categories. Finish with those stuff, we formulated the finding and made a conclusion.

A thematic analysis based on the research question was done by generating categories and then themes from the answers given by the respondents. The responses were categorized as ‘communicative language’, ‘native English speaker’, ‘speak fluently’, and ‘correct grammar and pronunciation’. These below were the categorization of the English Department CCU students' perception toward the term of "The Best English".

B. Best English is Communicative Language

First of all, Communicative Language was categorized for the participants' responses toward the term of Best English are shown in their answers, such as; “English use for communication, so..."
people can understand what are you talking about”, “If we can use English as tool to communicate, it means that our English is good”, “language needs to be used as communication”. It is also supported by Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 7) argues that English as Lingua Franca is common language used by people of different language background to communicate with each other. Regarding to his theory, we want to focus on the words “English is used to communicates with each other”, so by combining the students’ responses and the theory, it can be said that the term of Best English means English take place as Communicative Language, because English is used as a tool of language to communicate with others. It related to the basic meaning of language according to Cambridge Advanced learner’s dictionary that said language is a system of communication consisting of sounds, words and grammar, or the system of communication used by the people of a particular country or profession. It simply shows that participants try to bring the issue of fundamental function of a language as the main requirement of the Best English. Whereas communicative according Oxford Dictionary online means that it is relating to the conveyance or exchange of information, so that if we combine those two definitions, communicative language is a system of communication that is used to convey or exchange information. Participant will consider English as the Best if it contributes to the way people communicate as well as convey or exchange information. I cannot be considered as a good language if it cannot be used as communication tool.

C. Best English is Native English Speaker

Several items in the questionnaire addresses the issue of the term of Best English related to the Native Speakers model of English. Bloomfield’s definition equate a native speaker with a mother tongue speaker assumes that native speakers provide the Best models (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 8). Based on the students’ responses regarding to the statement in the open-ended questionnaire “American or British English is the Best English”, the students give positive responses by choosing the checklist in “Strongly Agree or Agree part” and give their reason such as; They (American or British English) are the people who use the English fluently and in the correct English, The Best english speaker is Native (American/ British), and They own English”.

From those responses it shows that American and British English is the representative of native English in the student perception. They view native English as the Best English. It is like what Kirkpatrick (2007) said in his book “World Englishes- Implications For international Communication and English Language Teaching”, In the context of World Englishes, the real problem is caused by many people believing that native speakers are necessarily better at speaking English than non-native speakers, and that native speakers are necessarily better at teaching English than non-native speaker.

D. Best English is Speak Fluently

In this category of Speak Fluently, the students’ response view that the term of Best English is only for someone who can speak in English fluently as like the native speaker. As Kirkpatrick (2007) views that native speakers are necessarily better at speaking English than non-native speakers, and that native speakers are necessarily better at teaching English than non-native speaker. Some of the responses regarding to the one of the question “What do you think about the term of Best English” are “Someone who speak English fluently, speak as fluent as the native speaker did, and
someone who have to speak English fluently.”. So, it can be seen that the students responses of Best English is related to the model of English is that someone who can speak English fluently belongs to someone who has Best English which reflects the most perfect, appropriate, ideal, and correct model of English.

E. Best English is Correct Grammar and Pronunciation

In this section, students' response related to the term of Best English has positive support on the statement in the open-ended questionnaire “Someone who has correct grammar and pronunciation in oral or written English belong to the Best English speaker”, the students agree with the statement, and they also give reason such as: they know the rule of English, He / she can speak with correct ways, if someone has correct grammar and pronunciation, their English can be understood, the Best English speaker is someone who is her /his English can understand by other well at least correct grammar can be understand by other, it means that they are use English perfectly, They speak perfectly, Correct grammar, someone who speak English well without mistake. So it is clearly seen that speakers who consider as the Best should have ability both in producing correct grammar and pronunciation in oral or written English without any mistakes. These abilities are related to one of communication requirement where the language use can be understood by interlocutor, if the speaker using the correct grammar and pronunciation, However, if the speakers do not use the correct grammar and pronunciation, the interlocutor will not understand what they say, as mentioned in the previous that Best English reflects the most perfect, appropriate, and correct model of English.

CONCLUSION

Based on our data analysis, the results of this study reveal that CCU students' perceptions toward the term of Best English are Communicative Language, Native English Speaker, Speak Fluently, and Correct Grammar and Pronunciation. Both of the categorization has two relations in English Language Used and English speaker model, the first relation in English Language Use includes the Communicative Language and Correct Grammar and Pronunciation categorization, while in English speaker model includes Native English Speaker and Speak Fluently categorization.

The first students' perception is Communicative Language, the students responses are shown by using words, such as: English use for communication, so people can understand what you are talking about; can be used as communication tool”.

The second students' perception is Native English Speaker and they express it by responds like: The Best English speaker is Native,” The “Kiblat” of English comes from American/British English, and ..., the Bes~English is the one of British or American.

The next students' perception toward the term of the Best English is Speak Fluently by expressing it using: fluent, have to speak English fluently, speak fluently, English which is used well, people who use English well/fluently

The other students perception about the Best English is Correct grammar and Pronunciation -“Someone who has correct grammar and pronunciation in oral or written English belong to the Best English speaker” by expressing it using words like: can speak with correct way, someone has correct
As the conclusion, the English Department CCU students' perception about the term of Best English is still related to native English speaker. Native speaker is the center of learning English where they can consider that native speaker is someone who speaks English fluently and also with correct grammar and pronunciation. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out the students' perception toward the term of Best English in other English classes or different setting.

An exploration of this topic may help discover the students' perception toward the term of Best English. It can also help them to get the Best model of their learning, so that it can help them to find new paradigm about other varieties that can be considered as Best English. It is also hoped that this study can help the teacher in fulfilling students' need in learning English. In addition, from this study other researchers will give them fundamental knowledge of the students' perception of the term toward The Best English and will give them guidance to conduct the similar research about the Best English. Thus, there will be further research that can give deeper analysis toward the term of Best English.

REFERENCES
APPENDIX A

The Open-Ended Questionnaire form

Please answer these following questions briefly. Feel free to answer those questions with English or Indonesian. This will not affect your grade.

1. What do you think about the term of Best English?

2. What do you think of the following statement:
   “The Best English is English that can be used as a tool to communicate with others well”
   ___Strongly agree ___Agree ___Disagree ___Strongly disagree
   Explain your reason:

3. Who is the Best English speaker?

4. What do you think of the following statement:
   “American/British English is the Best English”
   ___Strongly agree, ___Agree, ___Disagree, ___Strongly disagree
   Explain your reason:

5. What do you think of the following statement:
   “Other variety of English outside American/British English such as Singapore English is as equal as American/British English”
   ___Strongly agree ___Agree ___Disagree ___Strongly disagree
   Explain your reason:

6. What do you think of the following statement:
   “Native speaker is the owner of English”
   ___strongly agree, ___agree, ___disagree, ___strongly disagree
   Explain your reason:

7. Do you think you own English?
   ___yes, I do ___no, I don’t
   Explain your reason:

8. What do you think of the following statement?
   “Someone who has correct grammar and pronunciation in oral or written English belong to the Best English speaker”
   ___strongly agree, ___agree, ___disagree, ___strongly disagree
   Explain your reason:

9. Do you think your English is the Best?
   ___yes, I do , ___no, I don’t
   Explain your reason:

Please mark the following questions, feel free to mark more than one.

10. Which English do you prefer?
    ___American English ___British English ___Indonesian English ___Javanese English
    ___others.

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