

PERCEPTIONS OF ‘PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH’: EXPLORING TEACHER-TRAINERS’ PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS IN AN ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

‘Proficiency in English’ has become a more complicated because there is no unitary concept underlying its frameworks. The existence and the ongoing development of English varieties around the world have also augmented the complexity of its meaning. This research explored the current insights of Indonesian teacher-trainers regarding their perceptions of the concept of ‘proficiency in English’. A modified Repertory Grid interview technique was employed to elicit a small number of teacher-trainers’ personal constructs. Data from the interviews revealed that participants perceived ‘proficiency in English’ as having a number of attributes which fell into two themes that covered knowledge and ability aspects, namely: knowledge of the English language, knowing how to use it and the abilities to execute that knowledge. In this research, the themes were identified based on the conceptualisation of participants’ comments into two components namely, ‘competence’ and ‘performance’. Despite various definitions of *competence* and *performance* existing in literature, these terms were adopted to differentiate attributes within the construct of ‘proficiency in English’.

1 Introduction

The notion of ‘English language proficiency’ as a learning outcome in a second language context has engaged the interest of teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, test constructors, researchers, parents and students for several decades now. The framing of ‘proficiency’ as a language learning outcome is required not only by language educators, but also by English language learners. However, any framework of ‘proficiency in English’ for non-L1 users is still questioned and debated by academics and linguists. Therefore no current consensus about this framework can be identified due to the different perspectives and different theoretical orientations held by English language educators.

The construct of ‘English language proficiency’ is complex, not only as to how well the language is used, but also given the variety of Englishes around the world. Confusion remains amongst English educators about what English norms need to be taught. Studies in sociolinguistics also have shown that English nowadays is not a single variety, leading to such terms as ‘World Englishes’. This complexity increases as World English researchers have proposed a view of the plurality of English. Thus, English language learners and users are currently able to choose which norms to use for their reference point.

In the Indonesian context, to be proficient in English is considered necessary in many aspects of life and particularly for people in the larger cities. For example, in order to secure good employment such as an office manager or administrator, many institutions and companies prefer applicants who are proficient in English. The high value that is placed on English language proficiency can be seen in the many job advertisements in the national newspapers that state proficiency in English as a requirement (Lamb & Coleman, 2008, p. 193). 'Proficiency in English' therefore has become a gate-keeper to ensuring the quality of Indonesian human resources. It is understandable that English language proficiency is in high demand in Indonesia.

Indonesians are being taught English in schools, universities and in other non-formal institutions. It is often assumed the English which is learnt and taught is an exonormative model of the major English varieties such as British or American English (Lauder, 2008, p. 15). However, different forms have entered the model of English in Indonesia given that many students are studying in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and elsewhere. In addition, there are many foreign teachers from Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines who have been recruited to teach English and other subjects at international and bilingual schools and universities in Indonesia, whose first language is not English (Siregar, 2010, p. 71).

Therefore teachers of English in Indonesian cannot be assumed to be using American or British English, in spite of the belief that the exonormative model is being taught in the Indonesian educational context. Alip (2004, p. 1), for example, argues that the English of the Indonesian speaker is influenced by the Indonesian language linguistically and culturally, so Indonesians will not speak and use English as their counterparts in English speaking countries.

English language users in Indonesia are comparable to many others living in Asian countries. Most are bilingual or even multilingual. As Bolton (2008, p. 11) explains, in many Asian contexts, individual language learning takes place in complex multilingual and functionally different settings. This means that English language learners in Asia face the challenge of using a code which accords with their context. In this situation, meeting the expected L1 English proficiency is the biggest challenge for those English learners in Asia. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, it is necessary to establish what level of proficiency in English should be achievable. This raises the question of what 'proficiency' means in the Indonesian context.

The need to formulate a stable definition of 'proficiency in English' is necessary, not only for Indonesian teachers of English, but also for Indonesian teacher-trainers who are in charge of training tertiary students to become the teachers of the future. The major task of teacher-trainers is to prepare English teachers who are proficient in English. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the attributes of 'proficiency in English' as understood and interpreted by Indonesian teacher-trainers. In this study, the participating teacher-trainers were required to describe their understanding of what it meant to be proficient in English, particularly in the Indonesian context. This covered what English norms were desirable.

2 Language proficiency from various linguistics theories

The notion of language proficiency has raised considerable attention in the field of linguistics. According to Butler and Hakuta (2005, p. 119), language proficiency has been conceptualized

and measured in various. Therefore no consensus on the definition of language proficiency exists.

According to Structural linguistics, language is comprised of *langue* as the underlying structure of a language, and *parole* is the product of *langue*. *Langue* is the abstract formal linguistic system in every individual's mind and which every member of a community shares through an identical homogenous *langue*. *Parole* is "the realisation of actual speech" (Clark, 2007, p. 2). However, Structural linguistics has its shortcomings in accommodating varieties in language since language systems, according to this theory, cannot be generalised to all languages. Krober (2010, p. 2) sees the weakness of Structural linguistics as its difficulty in describing the irregularity of language. Despite the limitations of Structural linguistics, its existence created an embryo of the notion of 'language proficiency'.

To address the weaknesses of Structural linguistics, Chomsky (1965, p. 4-20), proposed a new field of linguistics known as Generative linguistics. He argued for a more abstract system of language in the human brain called *competence*. Chomsky maintained that human beings are born with a language acquisition device (LAD) and that *competence* and *performance* are more distinct than the Structuralists proposed. *Competence* is a native speakers' knowledge of an abstract system of language (Llurda, 2000, p. 86) - a tacit knowledge of the structure of a language. *Performance* refers to the actual execution of this tacit knowledge. So while Saussure's *langue* refers predominantly to the sociolinguistic aspects of communicating within one's community, Chomsky's *competence* emphasizes one's psychological or psycholinguistic capacity (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). Moreover, the Structuralists held to a behaviourist perspective advocating that all language is learnt; while the Cognitivist view of Chomsky, claims that language is acquired. However, according to Lightbrown and Spada, (2006, p. 50), the argument as to whether language is learnt or acquired remains inconclusive as Structuralist and Cognitive views on language learning are similarly posited. That is, the relationship between *competence* (knowledge of language) and *performance* (language behaviour) and between *langue* and *parole* are similar in that the knowledge of language occurs before the production of language. This view influences the process of language teaching and learning. Since the work of these early linguists, the concepts of 'acquisition' and 'learning' have, in general, been separated to refer to first language acquisition and second language learning respectively.

However, the separation of *competence* and *performance* is rejected by Functionalists who claim that both *competence* and *performance* are required to achieve a further aim viz. communicative function. Thus, Hymes (1972), a leading anthropological linguist, proposed the notion of "communicative competence", as a substitute for language proficiency (Walcott, 2007, p. 7. He described *communicative competence* as "both the *knowledge* and the ability to use language that is socially acceptable in a given context (*ability for use*) (Butler & Hakuta, 2005, p. 122)". Therefore to understand and use linguistic forms in context, social and cultural knowledge is needed. Hence *performance* is a combination of knowing the language system and knowing how to use it in real life (Halliday, 1978). Similarly Newby (2011) asserts that *performance* not only means 'knowing what' and 'knowing how', but also the ability to perform in reality.

Functional linguists are therefore interested in Chomsky's idea of the "mental reality underlying actual behaviour" (1965, p. 4) which is understood by both camps as knowledge of

language. However the issue of *competence* has become more complex with arguments for separating linguistic and psychological aspects (see Chomsky e.g. 1965, 1981; Soames, 1984), while Cognitive linguists such as Heine (1997), Tomasello (2003), and Croft and Cruse (2004) maintain that language and cognition are inseparable.

This debate between cognitive and functional linguists has contributed to the development of conceptual frameworks for 'language proficiency'. Hymes (1972) enhanced Chomsky's notion of *competence* by including communicative ability (Kumaradivelu, 2012). According to Hymes (1972), there are two kinds of competence within 'communicative competence', *grammatical competence* and *sociolinguistic competence*, are needed to acquire a language. It is only the former which constituted Chomsky's concept of *competence* (Iyldyz, 2007, p. 90). However, the debate continues on the use of the term *competence* for describing the construct of 'language proficiency' (see also Krober, 2010; Adegbile & Alabi, 2005).

From the various perspectives of linguistic theories, it is clear that there is no consensus on a definition of 'language proficiency' across the different paradigms which lead to difficulty in constructing a unitary language proficiency framework. The complexity in defining its definition for a particular language such as English increases with the emergence of different perspectives within the English language.

2.1 English language proficiency from Standard English and World Englishes perspectives

Two broad perspectives. Standard English and World Englishes, have contributed to defining non-L1 English proficiency, not only in Outer but also in Expanding Circle countries (See Kachru, 1997, p. 213 for his Concentric Circles of how English is being acquired and used). The Standard English perspective supports native-like proficiency based on native English norms. Thus Inner Circle English varieties e.g. British and American English are considered appropriate for teaching and learning contexts because they have been codified and have well-established proficiency tests (Davies, 2002). By contrast, the World Englishes perspective claims that the Standard English view is monolithic and not suitable for the local contexts of Outer and Expanding Circle countries. The World Englishes perspective holds a pluralistic view of English and maintains that non-native varieties of English are suitable for teaching and learning in local cultural contexts.

Both these perspectives have their problems. Within the Standard English perspective, debates have emerged on determining a unified comprehensive definition of what Standard English means. Multiple understandings of Standard English have led linguists to define its meanings based on "... their interest in describing language; many would define Standard English much more prescriptively as an accepted norm - the 'correct' and historically legitimated version of English" (Myhill, 2011, p. 68). Linguists advocating the Standard English perspective, implicitly include language standardisation. However, standardising is not ideal because language itself is dynamic. With this view, the English varieties of Outer Circle countries can be perceived as deviations.

Within the World Englishes perspective, several issues arise, for example, the measurement of non-L1 English proficiency. According to Davies and Lyons (2008, p. 26), measuring 'non-native' English proficiency by using standard forms from Inner Circle countries only is biased. From the World Englishes point of view, the Outer and Expanding Circle countries where the

status of English is as a foreign language, they should not need to depend on the English from the Inner Circle countries. Furthermore, it has been unavoidable that both norms from Inner and Outer Circle countries have entered the Expanding Circle countries adding further complexity to the measurement of English language proficiency in such countries. To overcome this problem, Lowenberg (2002, p. 433) suggests that the examiners must be able to distinguish between acquisitional deficiencies and varietal differences in non-L1 English speakers' production. However, even this suggestion may not be feasible because a number of English varieties, particularly in the Expanding Circle countries, have not been codified yet.

The Inner Circle English, termed the exonormative form of English, has long been the guideline for measuring and determining the second and foreign English language learners' proficiency. According to Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 184-194), historically, the exonormative native speaker model has been chosen by the majority of Outer Circle and Expanding Circles countries because of its prestige and legitimacy, because these models have been codified, and because of the availability of resources that provide standards for measurement. These advantages often leave no room for other varieties of English, especially in Expanding Circle countries.

However, adherence to exonormative forms of English has its shortcomings. Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 8) notes, for example, that the advantage of being a non-L1 English speaker, who can speak the same L1 and has undergone the same language learning process as the students, may not accommodate the exonormative models of English. Moreover, English language learners in Expanding Circle countries are most likely presented with a model of English that even their teachers have not been able to attain.

The emergence of English varieties and the desire for 'Standard English' creates tensions amongst language teaching practitioners and linguists. Therefore, the issue for adopting exonormative and/or endonormative (localized) forms of English in Outer and Expanding Circle countries remains unresolved. World Englishes supporters claim that in the Outer Circle countries, the term English should refer to the endonormative form, especially in non-academic contexts in which the available pragmatic option derives from the indigenized endonormative model (Joshi, 2011, p. 7). Other reasons for this may be cultural, political or economic, such as a reluctance to promote Anglo-American values in classrooms or the economic benefits of hiring local teachers and using local resources (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 189).

Despite these opinions, the shortcomings of endonormative forms of English cannot be avoided, particularly in the Expanding Circle countries. Issues include codification of the variety in teaching materials such as grammar books and dictionaries, and the intelligibility of the variety when communicating with speakers of other varieties. The frustration with these shortcomings has led to 'standard' American or British English remaining as the norm in these ESL and EFL contexts (Bolton, 2002, p. 30). In the Indonesian context, adopting an endonormative model of English may not be supported by English language educators who have not shifted their view to a World Englishes perspective.

Inevitably, the paradigms of Standard English and World Englishes have influenced the conceptualisation of English proficiency. The dispute regarding the most 'appropriate' model for the contrasting range of L2 English teaching and learning contexts remains unresolved.

Linguists and language practitioners in Expanding Circle countries, such as Indonesia, will also have formulated their own conceptions of ‘proficiency in English’ based on their practical experience. The disputes on which English norms should be followed by L2 English learners particularly in the Indonesian context, present further challenges for Indonesian teachers of English.

3 Research method

The theoretical debates over the construct of English language proficiency underpin this study’s Research Question: What are the teacher-trainers’ perceptions of ‘proficiency in English’? This question was designed to identify the prevalent perceptions which refer to the conceptual understanding of the construct ‘proficiency in English’ amongst multiple interpretations of this construct by Indonesian teacher-trainers.

A review of the literature was conducted to enable the design of an appropriate instrument for eliciting teacher-trainers’ personal constructs of the concept under study – ‘proficiency in English’. The instrument for collecting qualitative data adopted the principles of Repertory Grid technique. While originally developed within the field of clinical psychology, Repertory Grid technique (Kelly, 1955) has long been recognised as a flexible method for eliciting personal constructs (see Fransella & Bannister, 1977; Terrill & Flitman, 2002) and has been included in different methodologies for a diverse range of research purposes, for example, investigations of student assessment (Elander, 2003), examinations of environmental cognition (Downs, 1976), and attitudes towards technological developments in mathematics software (Kurz, 2011).

Two interview trials were conducted to refine the interview instrument which was finally developed into a set of worksheets within an interview protocol. Twelve participating teacher-trainers in the English Teacher Education Program at universities and teachers’ colleges in West Sumatra, Indonesia, were recruited for the interviews. Qualitative data collection involved two sessions. Firstly, twelve teacher-trainers were each asked to complete a worksheet. In the second session, the participants were interviewed focussing on their responses provided in the worksheets. The follow-up interview provided an opportunity for participants to clarify their responses to the worksheet. For this purpose, participants were asked why they had preferred one construct over another.

The interview process took approximately 15 to 25 minutes for each participant. Participants were free to use either Indonesian or English and to code mix and code-switch if they so wished. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The content was analysed inductively by a constant comparison method and key-word in context identification.

4 Findings

The following examples of original quotes illustrate the impetus for a thematic division based on the English language norms considered appropriate for a construct of ‘proficiency in English’. As the interview data was in Indonesian, a literal translation or gloss was not provided because this would not encompass connotative meanings. Instead, an English translation is provided.

4.1 Proficiency involves exonormative ‘competence’

The following construct refers to a need for exonormative (the English of Inner Circle countries) knowledge and native speaker ability rather than endonormative forms:

...untuk cakap dalam berbahasa Inggris itu kita tidak hanya sekedar menguasai struktur, arti struktur Bahasa itu sendiri, tapi kan kita juga harus mengetahui bagaimana masyarakat pengguna Bahasa itu menggunakan bahasanya,...

(To be proficient in English, we do not only master the structure of English language but also have to know how the English speakers use their language)

(Participant E, Transcript 5, p. 16, lines 21-23)

In contrast, this next construct of proficiency takes into consideration the context of language use:

...proficiency dalam Bahasa, saya rasa dibahasa mana saja tidak hanya berpatok tatanan Bahasa betul, tapi kita harus melihat dimana situasi, situasi tempatnya seperti apa

(I think language proficiency does not only refer to grammatical rules but also we have to consider the contexts)

(Participant L, Transcript 12, p. 37, lines 23-25)

For others, the construct of proficiency contained further interrelated components with ‘knowledge of’ and ‘knowledge of how to’ viewed as necessary prerequisites to applying language. This relationship is exemplified in the following quote and suggests a division between competence and proficiency (Chomsky, 1965):

Apabila seseorang menguasai kompetensi linguistik maka dia juga akan mudah melakukan atau menerapkan keterampilan dalam berbahasa Inggris.

(When someone has mastered linguistic ‘competence’ [knowledge of language], it will be easier for him/ her to do or to apply English language skills)

(Participant J, Transcript 10, p. 31, lines 27-29)

a) Proficiency Requires ‘Performance’ Using Prescribed Exonormative Forms of English

The data showed a strong bias towards the view of proficiency as having ‘competence’ in the exonormative rules of English. Three main skills were evident in the ‘performance’ of this construct of proficiency: a) Adhering to the prescribed grammatical rules in writing; b) Using prescribed academic English in academic contexts; c) Speaking like L1 English speakers.

i) Adhering to the prescribed grammatical rules of writing

The following quote shows evidence of the strong bias towards ‘correctness’ or mastering the English of Inner Circle countries, that is, learners must write English based on the rules of American or British English.

...Secara tertulis mengikuti kaidah-kaidah yang benar...

(In writing, accurate norms or rules of language should be followed)
(Participant A, Transcript 1, p. 3, line 15)

ii) Using prescribed academic English in academic contexts.

The content of this construct of proficiency drew strongly on prescribed academic English involving the exonormative rules in particular:

...profisiensi dalam bahasa Inggris, atau saya lebih *menekankan* ke tes profisiensinya, itu lebih untuk ke *akademik proporsi* atau academic setting

(Proficiency in English’, I would like to focus its meaning on English proficiency tests for academic purposes...)
(Participant C, Transcript 3, p. 9, lines 16-18)

...ketika kita diuji tentang kemampuan Bahasa Inggris untuk akademik, latar belakang akademik, memang kita tidak apa artinya apa artinya kita tidak bisa lepas dari struktur yang baku...

(When our ability is being tested in academic context, we are strictly relating to prescribed norms)
(Participant B, Transcript 2, p. 7, lines 21-23)

For some participants this involved an explicit rejection of local variants of English:

Saya tidak memilih menggunakan Bahasa Inggris yang berdasarkan kaedah-kaedah lokal, karena untuk kaedah-kaedah lokal barangkali, tidak terkait dengan kajian tentang linguistic dalam kontek akademis.

(I do not choose to use English based on local norms because it is not related to academic context)
(Participant F, transcript 6, p. 20, lines 44-46)

As seen in the previous quotes and here, the English of the native speaking educated classes appeared continually in constructs of proficiency:

...untuk penggunaan Bahasa Inggris penutur asli yang terpelajar ni memang untuk mempelajarinya itu agak kesannya bisa dikategorikan sebagai Bahasa yang agak tinggi gitu.

(English of the educated native speakers is regarded as ‘Standard English’ language)

(Participant G, Transcript 7, p. 24, lines 3-5)

It is a common assumption amongst English language educators in Indonesia that only scholars or highly educated people have the ability to use the prescribed forms in academic contexts. Moreover, by achieving this standard, one is marked as an educated person.

iii) Speaking like L1 English speakers

With regard to oral language, a preference for the exonormative models of spoken British or American English was also evident:

...menggunakan Englishnya versi British... berkiblat pada satu version, satu versi, satu accent mungkin American accent atau British accent

(Modelling our English on one accent either American accent or British accent)

(Participant K, Transcript 11, p. 32, lines 36-37)

4.2 Proficiency involves endonormative ‘competence’

The second theme among the constructs of ‘proficiency in English’ included accommodation of the society and context in which English is being used. Therefore a proficient speaker of English would have the ‘competence’ to successfully communicate with the English speakers of Outer and Expanding Circle countries due to an understanding of language variation. Theme 2 consists of four ‘competence’ (knowledge) components:

- a) Knowing that English varies depending on the situation and context
- b) Knowing how to communicate with English speakers from different cultures
- c) Knowing how to accommodate different levels of intelligibility
- d) Knowing how to recognise L2 English speakers’ identities

a) Knowing that English varies depending on the situation and context

In this construct a proficient speaker’s performance attributes require using standardised or formal English in formal situations and non-formal or non-standardised English in informal situations. The proficient speaker therefore has the skills to adapt their language depending on when and how the situation deems it is used. This informant however implies that endonormative forms of English are ‘ungrammatical’:

... *melihat konteks*... kapan harus menggunakan yang kaidah [bahasa formal/resmi/ terstandar], kapan yang ndak... dilihat konteksnya...fleksibel...

(It depends on the contexts when we have to use grammatical language and when not to use it, it is based on the context, and it is flexible...)

(Participant A, Transcript 1, p. 3, lines 25-26)

Therefore, this variability still includes formal academic norms along with other informal communicative situations:

...bukan berarti kita meremehkan akademik, ndak ya, Cuma kadang-kadang dalam berbahasa itu kan istilahnya kan apanya, kayak fleksibel bahasanya tidak harus gramatikal, kalau akademis ini kan memang agak kental, harus kayaknya seperti itu...

(It doesn't mean that we underestimate academics, but sometimes in speaking English, it is flexible. It is not necessary to be grammatical, but in academics, it is necessary)

(Participant A, Transcript 1, p. 2, lines 36-38)

...jadi tidak hanya tata bahasa, penggunaan, tapi juga harus mengetahui kapan bahasa itu ditempatkan

(It is not only grammar, its usage but also we have to know when to use it)

(Participant G, Transcript 7, p. 22, lines 28-29)

...sifatnya penggunaan Bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi itu sangat situasional

(The feature of using English in communication is situasional)

(Participant B, Transcript 2, p. 6, lines 31-32)

b) Knowing how to communicate with English speakers from different cultures

This component included two 'performance' attributes: i) communicating with L1 and non-L1 English speakers and ii) adapting to different varieties of English from different countries.

i) Communicating with L1 and non-L1 English speakers

Responses within this performance component focussed very much on communicating with both native and non-native speakers of English:

...mampunya kita berkomunikasi antar pribadi atau pun dengan orang lain baik yang berasal dari em...penutur lokal ataupun dari penutur asing ...

(It is an ability to communicate interpersonally with others who are native speakers and non-native speakers...)

(Participant H, Transcript 8, p. 24 lines 1-7)

...Kita juga perlu berbahasa Inggris dengan negara-negara yang sudah menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua ...

(We need to use English with people in non-English speaking countries who use English as a second language)

(Participant E, Transcript 5, p. 13, lines 13-15)

ii) Adapting to different varieties of English from different countries

The previous skill was taken further by some speakers who went so far as to express the construct of ‘proficiency in English’ as including the use of local norms, thus broadening the scope of this construct to include intercultural communication:

... mampu menggunakan bahasa Inggris berdasarkan kaidah-kaidah lokal yang bukan penutur asli...

(It is an ability to use English based on the local norms of those non-native speakers...)

(Participant B, Transcript 2, p. 6, lines 45-46)

c) Knowing how to accommodate different levels of intelligibility

This competency was conceptualised with two ‘performance’ attributes: i) Accepting non-standard sentence structure in spoken English, and ii) Understanding explicit and implicit meanings in spoken English language. The first ‘performance’ attribute was expressed in opinions quite removed from the retention of exonormative rules.

i) Accepting non-standard sentence structure in spoken English

Comments categorised under the endonormative theme even suggested little need for Inner Circle language rules for proficiency in oral communication:

... tapi kalau hanya untuk sekedar berkomunikasi, mungkin, tidak perlu kita mengetahui hal-hal yang lebih spesifik [aturan penyusunan kata dan frase dalam membuat kalimat]...

(If it is only for communication, maybe we do not need to know specific things [prescribed syntactic rules or the syntax of grammatical utterances in speaking])

(Participant E, Transcript 5, p. 15, lines 26-26).

This ‘performance’ attribute appeared to be informed by an understanding of the difference between written and spoken English. It also supports the notion that the underlying aim of speech is to make meaning and that correctness may be secondary:

...secara lisan kan kaidah-kaidah itu kadang-kadang kelihatan terlanggar, padahal tidak terlanggar sebetulnya...jadi kemampuan Bahasa Inggris itu bagaimana kita bisa mengekspresikan ide kita dan itu meaningful...

(In speaking, it seems that it does not follow accurate grammar [the prescribed rules of how to arrange words into sentences] but actually it isn't like that....so the ability of using English language is how we express our ideas meaningfully)\

(Participant A, Transcript 1, p. 3, lines 16-19)

ii) Understanding both explicit and implicit meanings in spoken English language.

While the ability to understand explicit meanings in spoken English is clearly a basic requirement in any construct of ‘proficiency in English’, understanding implicit meaning is a high level skill, particularly in cross-cultural communication.

... makna percakapan itu akan tergantung pada pragmatik-nya ya, discourse-nya yang lebih, .. apa, konteksnya yang lebih dalam [tersirat]...

(The meanings of utterances in conversation depend on its pragmatics and its discourse...it’s the deeper context [implicit meaning]...)

(Participant I, Transcript 9, p. 26, lines 32-33)

d) Knowing how to recognise L2 English speakers’ identities

This ‘competence’ encompassed two ‘performance’ components: i) Recognising the influences of different local cultures on English forms, and ii) Accepting first language norms and speech in English usage.

i) Recognizing the influences of different local cultures on English forms

Broadly speaking, this attribute involves the recognition of cultural and linguistic influences that serve to create local variants of English. For an L2 speaker this may require a high level of proficiency if they lack familiarity with the particular variant. However in the Indonesian context, English spoken, for example with a Chinese accent would be clearly recognisable, especially among teacher-trainers:

...pengucapannya, pasti akan terbawa ya, lokal kita ini, dialek atau seperti Bahasa Inggris disini seperti Bahasa Inggris Cina ya, mereka masih terlihat Chinese nya gitu...

(In pronunciation, local dialect such as the English of the Chinese will be noticed)

(Participant D, Transcript 4, p. 14, lines 15-17)

ii) Incorporating first language norms and speech in English usage

This ‘performance’ attribute suggests that proficiency in English actually includes the ability to use local forms, that is, to code-switch or change register as required.

...bagaimana pun juga ya, kalau seseorang itu mempelajari Bahasa Inggris pastilah kaedah lokalnya [tata bahasa lokal] terbawa ya, ke dalam bahasa inggrisnya itu...

(It cannot be avoided, if someone learns English, their local norms will be carried into their English usage...)

(Participant D, Transcript 4 p. 11 lines 9-10)

However beyond the L1 forms that influence a second language speaker’s proficiency, was recognition of the importance of the local pragmatics of language use:

...penggunaan Bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi lebih bagus mungkin kompetensinya itu lebih memiliki dimensi yang lebih luas, misalnya dengan memasukkan, pragmatis [pemakaian bahasa dalam kontek social]... latar belakang kultur...

(Using English for communication is much better to include a broader dimension for example incorporating 'pragmatics' [the use of language in social context] cultural background)

(Participant B, Transcript 2, p. 5, lines 12-14)

...menggunakan bahasa inggris tapi tidak sama sekali menghilangkan unsur lokal [tata karma] dari masing-masing negara yang menggunakan, yang mempelajari bahasa inggris tersebut...

(Using English without eliminating local norms of the countries in which English is used and learnt)

(Participant D, Transcript 4, p. 12, lines 25-17)

To summarise the key findings from this study, teacher-trainers' construct of 'proficiency in English' evoked the following ideas:

1. Structural knowledge of English and how to apply it in accord with the norms of Inner Circle countries such as Britain and the United States.
2. The application of these exonormative L1 norms in writing and in speaking, particularly in academic contexts.
3. Accommodating and adopting register variation depending on the formality of the context.
4. Accommodating and adopting linguistic variation depending on the L1 background of interlocutors who are involved in the interactions.
5. Being able to understand English second language speakers and identify their backgrounds in teacher-trainer contexts.

5 Conclusion

The qualitative data from interviews and worksheets demonstrated two recurrent themes: those reflecting the importance of exonormative models of English and those accommodating endonormative models of English. Within these themes, responses could be further categorised into constructs of proficiency that emphasised linguistic knowledge, i.e., 'knowing what' and 'knowing how to'. The 'knowing what' is the knowledge that underlies the speaker's intention when using the language, such as knowledge of the syntactic and pragmatic rules of English, while the 'knowing how to' is the knowledge of when and how to use them appropriately, i.e., 'competence' (Hymes, 1972). A further component of proficiency was the actual application of this knowledge, that is, the practical abilities or skills of English users or the linguistic actions that are performed after internalising the linguistic and pragmatic knowledge, referred to as 'performance' (Chomsky, 1965). Participants'

responses also provided descriptions of these components which in this study were considered to be attributes of proficiency. From these teacher-trainers' personal constructs, the model of 'proficiency in English' for the Indonesian context could be established. A large study was undertaken to validate the proposed model of a large cohort of teacher-trainers by a way of a questionnaire.

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