

Am I Irrelevant?

Does the Finnish business community prefer native or
non-native speaking English teachers?

Bachelor's Thesis
Graham Burns

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Languages
English
May 2009

HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA
KIELTEN LAITOS

Graham Burns

AM I IRRELEVANT?

Does the Finnish business community prefer native or non-native speaking English teachers?

Kandidaatintutkielma
Englannin kieli
Toukokuu 2009

17 sivua + 3 liitettä

Tämä laadullinen tutkimus tuo yhden näkökulman globaaliin keskusteluun siitä ovatko englantia äidinkielenään puhuvat opettajat, omilla ääntämis- ja kielenkäyttötavoillaan, tarpeellisia opiskeltaessa englantia vieraana kielenä (EFL). Tutkimus keskittyi suomalaisten yritysmaailmassa olevien aikuisten mielipiteisiin, käsityksiin ja kokemuksiin englanninkielen opiskelusta sekä suomalaisten (ei-natiiven) että englantia äidinkielenään puhuvien opettajien (natiivien) johdolla. Tutkimukseen osallistujat edustivat sekä eri ammattikuntia että eri maantieteellisiä alueita ympäri Suomea.

Tutkimuksella oli kolme selkeää tavoitetta. Ensiksi tavoitteena oli tutkia, kokivatko osallistujat saavansa enemmän kilpailuetua yrityksensä englanninkielisten asioiden hoitamiseen natiivikielenopettajien johdolla. Tutkimuksen toisena tavoitteena oli selvittää osallistujien näkemyksiä siitä kuinka hyvin ei-natiivit kielenopettajat pystyivät tarjoamaan tietoa englanninkieleen liittyvistä kulttuurisista nyansseista. Kolmantena tavoitteena oli selvittää osallistujien mielipiteitä ja syitä siihen, kumpi opettajaryhmä tarjoaisi parempaa tukea oppijoiden kielioppi- ja ääntämisongelmiin. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin strukturoitujen kyselylomakkeiden (N=25) ja viiden puoli-strukturoidun henkilöhaastattelun avulla.

Tulokset osoittivat, että osallistujat kokivat saavansa enemmän kilpailuetua englanninkielellä tapahtuvaan yritystoimintaansa, kun opettajana oli alkuperäiskielenpuhujia. Selvästi merkityksellisempänä osallistujat kuitenkin kokivat itseluottamuksen kasvamisen, kun opetus oli tapahtunut natiivikielenopettajan johdolla. Osallistujat kokivat vahvasti, että alkuperäiskielenpuhujat pystyivät parhaiten tarjoamaan syvempää tietoa englanninkieleen liittyvistä kulttuurisista nyansseista, mikä koettiin painavimmaksi syyksi hakeutua natiivikielenopettajan koulutettavaksi. Osallistujien näkemykset siitä kumpi opettajaryhmä pystyisi paremmin tukemaan opiskelijaa kielioppi- ja ääntämisongelmissa oli varsin selkeä. Kielioppiongelmissa ei-natiivit kielenopettajat koettiin selkeästi tehokkaampana, koska oppijat pystyivät vahvistamaan ymmärryksensä kielioppiongelmissa omalla äidinkielellään. Sitä vastoin ääntämiskysymyksissä natiivikielenopettajat koettiin tehokkaampana, sillä vastaajat kokivat omaavansa vahvan suomalaisaksentin, jota pystyttiin vähentämään toistamalla natiiviohjaajien ääntämistä.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että tutkimukseen osallistuneet suomalaisen yritysmaailman edustajat kokivat molempien sekä natiivien että ei-natiivien kieltenopettajien tarpeellisuuden englantia vieraana kielenä opiskeltaessa.

Asiasanat: native and non-native speaking teachers, EFL vs ELF, cultural nuances

List of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Introduction	2
2	Communicative English or standard native forms?	3
3	Thesis questions and hypothesis	7
4	Phenomenography, methodology and data analysis	8
4.1	Phenomenography	8
4.2	Methodology	9
4.3	Data analysis	11
5	Results	12
6	Conclusions	16
6.1	Broad analysis	16
6.2	Limitations and further research proposals	18
	References	19
	Annexes:	
A.	Interview schedule.	20
B.	Questionnaire.	22
C.	Certificate of Agreement to Participate and Authority to Publish Findings.	26

1. INTRODUCTION

Am I irrelevant? One would be forgiven for thinking that this question is more apt to begin a paper concerning a deep-seated Freudian problem written for the Department of Psychology and yet it has relevance to a debate which concerns the English section of the Department of Languages just as much. As a native speaking teacher of the English language this researcher was intrigued by an ongoing debate which throws up this very question. The debate in the teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) community concerns the idea that the native speaking teacher is somewhat redundant in EFL classrooms in general around the world. The debate seemingly has two main aspects: which variety of English should be taught (Seidlhofer 2005), and who should be teaching it (Kuo 2006).

This study will add to the debate primarily concerning the latter point. It will take into account the views and experiences of Finnish adult students who have studied English as part of their jobs within different disciplines of the business community. It is my belief that native speaking teachers have more to offer adult students in the target area than their non-native speaking counterparts. While the latter can learn to understand the nuances of communication culture through many years of study and prolonged immersion within a community that uses the target language as its mother tongue, native speakers acquire the same throughout their lives. It could indeed be argued that such a phenomenon is innate for the native speaker. At the very least it can be said to be acquired implicitly over many years. This is not only true for speakers of English, of course. This researcher believe the same can be said to be true about native speakers of any language. Given that, one could argue that the native speaking teachers of any language have a distinct advantage over their non-native speaking counter-parts.

All the previous studies unearthed relating to this debate were centred on teaching children not adult learners. Most studies had been conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom or in Asia, certainly not in Finland. It was with those aspects of the debate in mind that the researcher chose to look at the issue from point of view of the business community in Finland. Hopefully it will provide a further avenue for thought and research on the issue and therefore widen the debate accordingly. This paper will now continue by describing the background to this argument before laying out some thesis questions and framing a hypothesis in Chapter 3.

2. COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH OR STANDARD NATIVE FORMS?

Among the myriad varieties and specialities to be found within EFL, the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is considered to be a variety in its own right, has played a central part in this debate for some years and in recent times the emphasis has been on two particular related aspects: whether or not non-standard forms should be taught in EFL classrooms, and, in common with the wider debate, the relevance of native speakers, their norms and structures. Should EFL teachers strive to model standard-native English or does the intelligibility-driven ELF provide an adequate target for students to attain? Seidlhofer (2001, 135) discusses this issue by intimating that while attitudes about EFL have changed: there is now more emphasis on intelligibility than correctness, the acceptable target language has remained native English. Furthermore, she asserts that ELF, with a number of variations, has spread around the world and is stable enough to be 'viable for lingua franca communication'. (ibid, 138)

In a number of different papers on this subject (for example, Seidlhofer (ibid) and Matsuda 2003), one can find the idea that the native speaker and, indeed, native English has become irrelevant to the wider world of EFL teaching. While it is certainly true that in the modern world the majority of English is spoken by people from outside the inner circle (for a detailed description of inner, outer and expanding circles, see Kachru 1985) to other non-native speakers, the suggestion seems to be that such communities are happy to simply get by with being understood.

Although a little theatrical, the problem with using an intelligibility model can be found in a recent commercial for the Berlitz language training company aired on the Internet video sharing site, YouTube, whereby a young German coastguard misinterprets the word 'sinking' during a mayday emergency message from a ship and responds with the question, "And what are you thinking /sɪŋkɪŋ / about?" It is believed that this emphasizes the point that while an intelligibility-based model may suffice to begin with, the quality of utterance can often be of insufficient quality to communicate clearly and unambiguously.

It is a generally accepted fact of life that all languages are dynamic entities and as such are subject to constant change and evolution as new words and phrases are added while others become out-dated, and meanings amended. In this respect there would seem to be little difference between ELF and native English. Constant change is seen each year with new words being added to the language with every new edition of popular dictionaries. Furthermore, difference can be witnessed in the many varieties of native English and indeed within any given variety the citizenry of, for example, northern England can have somewhat different terminology for certain things than their compatriots in the south with neither group conceding ground to the other on which

form is correct. Additionally, a great many grammatical and phonological differences exist between native Englishes. These have been widely documented elsewhere (see for example, Crystal (2009)) and are in fact beyond the scope of this research.

Considering ELF though, the debate becomes more complex as Seidlhofer (2001) further suggests that if, when compiling a set of corpus data, a common error occurs with a high degree of frequency that it should be included and thereby become an accepted and by definition, therefore, a correct form. While it is acknowledged that this phenomenon can be also be found in the more established and therefore stable native varieties, within ELF at this stage of it's development it would arguably be akin to the children's party game of Chinese Whispers whereby a child whispers a message into the ear of a second who then repeats the message into the ear of a third child and so on. Eventually the message passes around the room and is revealed by the final child in the chain and is totally unrecognisable from the original. As Kuo (2006) comments, such a description of ELF would be a simplified and reduced version of native English, a point which is agreed by Seidlhofer (op. cit. 147) seemingly in contrast with the main thrust of her paper.

Moreover, Kuo (op.cit.) states that the paucity of forms such as the past perfect progressive and question tags in the ELF communication of non-native-speakers leaves those individuals with less descriptive tools at their disposal. Not to use such forms would seem to leave the speaker disadvantaged when trying to communicate intention or politeness (ibid, 216) whether to native or indeed non-native speaking interlocutors.

The academic philosophy of the debate aside, Kuo (2006) provides some valid counterpoints to those who advocate ELF for consideration. In her interviews with

young adult English learners conducted at an EFL facility in the United Kingdom she reveals that at the beginning of their programme her respondent students found it difficult to understand each other because of 'a combination of strong accent, inaccurate pronunciation, and incorrect use of vocabulary or grammar' (op.cit., 218). In other words, they were using intelligibility-driven models of ELF. Kuo continues by stressing that although such students were able to begin to communicate effectively, they preferred to emulate what they considered to be the correct forms and structures of native speakers rather than those of their fellow students. This was found to be the preferred model for communicating with both native speakers and non-native speakers. (ibid, 217) Kuo is not alone in her assertions as her findings concur entirely with Timmis' (2002) conclusions. The choice of whether a student chooses to learn ELF or, for example, British English, American English or Australian English may be decided by three important factors; the location of the student's study programme, the availability of native or non-native speaking teachers and, perhaps most importantly, the reason why they are studying English. For example, if Finnish students are studying English in Finland in order to carry out business activities in the United Kingdom, do they choose to learn British English or ELF? And do they prefer a native or a non-native speaking teacher? It was interesting to discover which side of the debate the findings of this study would support.

3. THESIS QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

In order to find out the answers to the preceding questions the following three thesis questions and hypothesis were framed.

1. Are native speaking teachers of English thought to be more beneficial to adult students from the Finnish business community than their non-native speaking counterparts?
2. Do the participants believe that non-native speaking teachers can provide the necessary understanding of communication cultural nuances in order to benefit the Finnish business community?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using either native speaking or non-native speaking teachers for the target group?

The researcher's hypothesis was that the Finnish business community believe that using native speaking English teachers provides them with particular benefits, for example, better pronunciation and register models to aim for, and detailed knowledge about communication language culture. These elements, which are difficult for a non-native teacher to match, enable the students to achieve a more competitive edge in business than they would otherwise have.

4. PHENOMENOGRAPHY, METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Having identified and formulated the thesis questions, this paper will now proceed by discussing the theoretical framework around which this study was conducted. This had a bearing on the methodology employed in the data collection phase and also the way in which the data was analysed.

4.1 Phenomenography

This study was grounded using a theoretical framework called phenomenography. This method was chosen because it allows a researcher to conduct an empirical study that is centred on how participants interpret their experiences of any particular phenomena rather than the researcher's own views. According to Terian (2003) it seeks to identify the many different interpretations and highlight similarities and indeed discrepancies that any given group may have about the same phenomena. Terian (ibid, 11-12) suggests that researchers cannot get away from the subjective nature of qualitative studies yet this framework allows for subjective points of view to be dealt with in an objective manner. The main aim of phenomenography is to provide a description of participant's thoughts and understanding of any given phenomenon. It does not seek to understand the phenomenon itself, rather the beliefs of those who experience it. Therefore, the assumption of the framework is seen to be that such beliefs are produced by individuals participating in the experience in accordance with their own view of the world around them (ibid, 133).

4.2 Methodology

The methodology employed by using this framework involved three separate yet supporting elements; semi-structured interviews, observations of those interviews and a structured questionnaire. The primary method of data collection was the semi-structured interviews which followed a list of points to be covered. The nature of the semi-structured interview was preferred primarily because while the researcher could manipulate the direction of the interview, it gave the participants the freedom to express themselves fully on each and every point. Other interview techniques seem to lack this

flexibility and were therefore discounted. The semi-structured nature also gave the researcher the freedom to follow up any unanticipated lines of enquiry that may have cropped up. Furthermore, it provided a means of achieving inter-subjectivity whereby both researcher and participant arrived at a mutual understanding of the meaning of an experience. Observational notes were also taken during each of the interviews and this went some way to providing triangulation of the data as did the information gained from the completed structured questionnaires that contained a number of questions along similar lines. Copies of the interview schedule and the questionnaire can be seen at Annexes A and B respectively.

The questions that formed both the interview schedule and the structured questionnaire were derived from the background reading. As mentioned earlier, it proved quite difficult to find similar studies that had been conducted with adult learners from which the questions could be adapted. They therefore became those which the researcher deemed necessary to discover the validity of the hypothesis framed in Chapter 3. The questionnaire and indeed the interview schedule were piloted prior to the data gathering phase with three adult Finnish learners of English, all of whom were totally independent from the study. As a result of this piloting minor changes were made to both documents accordingly.

Interviews were conducted with five adults who held senior positions of responsibility in different disciplines within the business community in Finland. The disciplines they represented were: the pulp and paper industry, renewable energy resource harvesting, chemical additive production, hospitality and tourism, and commercial language solution provision. Three of the five respondents had been studying English with the researcher during the previous three years. One of the remaining two was a former

colleague, and the other was previously unknown and interviewed purely because the opportunity arose to do so. During the planning stage of this study the researcher was concerned about the issue of false reporting; participants reporting what they think the researcher wanted to hear in the misguided belief that they were being helpful. This was combated in two ways. Firstly, the questionnaires were mainly sent to individuals who had had little or no previous contact with the researcher, and secondly, those interviewed were told of the researcher's concerns before the interview began and reminded that only their own honest opinions and feelings were sought after.

All the interviews were conducted at a place of the respondent's choice, which was usually at their place of employment, in order that they should feel as relaxed as possible and therefore able to speak freely. In line with common accepted ethical practice, before each interview commenced the right to withhold permission and the guarantee of anonymity was explained. Each participant was then asked to sign a certificate to acknowledge this explanation which also contained a statement of agreement to record the interview. A copy of this certificate is at Annex C.

The questionnaire at Annex B was distributed to 25 respondents either by hand, email or post. Of that number 12 were returned sufficiently completed to enable them to be analysed although one or two questions on a small number of returns had been left unanswered. The respondents represented an equally varied section of the Finnish business community as did the interviewees. In order to achieve as independent a return as possible, therefore again attempting to minimise the risk of false reporting, a few individuals previously known to the researcher were contacted and asked to pass the questionnaires to colleagues who had had no previous contact with the researcher. As the questionnaires were anonymous, the researcher had no influence on who completed

them or how they were completed. It is accepted though, that those known individuals who were contacted could have completed a questionnaire themselves. As can be seen by the example at Annex B, it too contained a statement concerning the ethical question of withdrawal of authority to use the data.

4.3 Data analysis

Once the data collection phase had been completed, all the information gathered was analysed. Each interview had been digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The analysis involved listening to the recorded interviews a number of times, reading and re-reading the transcripts and the notes made during the interviews and examining the completed questionnaires. The aim was to discover any similarities and/or differences that each participant may have experienced. These similarities and differences were coded or categorised before the process of analysis began again. This cycle continued until the categories had been refined. At this point, these qualitatively distinct differences should, in theory, have illustrated how the same phenomenon had been experienced by different participants thus allowing comparisons to be made and conclusions to be drawn. (Terian 2003, 126-138)

5. RESULTS

The results discovered fall into four categories: background, pronunciation and language learning, teachers and teaching, and English teaching and the Finnish business community and each will be discussed in turn. To begin with the background category will be discussed because it will help to contextualise the participants' position with regard to their studies at the time. The majority of participants (11 out of 12

questionnaire respondents and all 5 interviewees) reported that they used English mainly in a work-related environment. All respondents revealed that they have had experience with both non-native and native speaking teachers although training with the latter group tended to be during their respective careers. Ten out of 12 respondents and all interviewees reported mostly communicating with other non-native speakers although three of the interviewees reported having to attend regular meetings with native speakers as part of their duties at work.

Secondly, within the pronunciation and language learning category all interviewees revealed that they were unsatisfied with their level of pronunciation and wished it could have less traces of their own Finnish accent. Ten of the 12 respondents reported a desire to improve the clarity of their pronunciation to be more native-like. This issue was linked to a perceived importance by 11 out of 12 respondents and four out of five interviewees to hearing their teacher produce accurate standard forms and register. Yet the respondents were equally divided when asked if they believed that non-native speaking teachers could provide accurate grammatical forms sufficient for their development. However, they reported 11 to one that they did not believe non-native speaking teachers could provide accurate enough models of standard English register for their development as language students. All of the interviewees echoed this point, for example:

(1) I think it's more beneficial for me when I can speak like normal, not slowly or too clearly like some teachers do. (Interviewee 2)

An issue related to the question of pronunciation and the use of standard register provided a link to the third category. It was revealed that 10 of the respondents harboured the belief that only native speaking teachers could enable them to achieve the levels of pronunciation and enunciation that they strove for. Seven out of 12

respondents and four out of five interviewees said that if their teachers used a strong Finnish accent or did not have a near native-like accent it affected the teacher's credibility and ultimately had a negative effect on their studies. Interviewee 5 explained this as follows:

(2) I'm not able to evaluate how good a teacher he or she is if there's a Finnish accent. So what kind of training can he offer me? (Interviewee 5)

In the third category of teachers and teaching, the culture of communication; both explicit and implicit nuances in the English language was thought by three quarters of respondents and all five interviewees to be an important issue. This importance was contextualised in relation to his own business situation by Interviewee 3 as can be seen below:

(3) We often translate brochures of products and services we offer our clients and very often it's a Finnish person who translates those into English. OK, the words are there but the message isn't right. I send them to my English friends ... they always change some little things to make the message clearer. (Interviewee 5)

This aspect was described by Interviewee 3 as being "very important" when doing business with companies from countries where English was the mother tongue but of lesser importance otherwise. Interviewee 5, on the other hand, said, "I think it's not the most important thing". Nevertheless, it was felt that native speaking teachers had a better overall knowledge of the cultural nuances contained in the language to meet the needs of the business community in Finland by two thirds of respondents. Furthermore the idea that a non-native speaking teacher would require many years of living and studying in a native speaking country in order to acquire sufficient knowledge about cultural nuances to be of any benefit to the students became apparent and culminated during one interview with the following comment:

(4) So you have to have some kind of deeper background or history of the language so that you can understand them before you can teach them. (Interviewee 2)

When considering the question of which group of teachers would be able to provide better help with pronunciation or grammar issues the interviewees all believed that in Finland grammar issues were dealt with more adequately during compulsory schooling by non-native speaking teachers because as Interviewee 4, for example, reported:

(5) We can discuss in our language about these rules and maybe it's easier to learn when you can hear these basics in your own language. (Interviewee4)

Pronunciation was reportedly better taught by native speaking teachers by all respondents, as previously mentioned, but was linked to other “deeper issues” by Interviewee 3 for example, who returned to the point about culture within the language. The point he made concerned the fact the receiver will always be the judge of what is said, and what is said, is not always what is meant. This line of thinking was also revealed by Interviewee 1:

*(6) If I have a native speaking teacher, he/she would be able to provide some cultural aspects to the language. To provide some background explanation of **why** something is said or done, for example with idioms. Not only that but sometimes the way of thinking and so on. (emphasis added) (Interviewee 1)*

Moving on to the final category of English teaching and the Finnish business community, the interviewees were asked whether they thought that having lesson with a native speaking teacher had given them an competitive edge in business that they wouldn't have otherwise had. Four of the interviewees reported experiencing increased levels of self-confidence in their English skill levels. This, they thought, was the most important thing they gained from such training although two did stated they believed it had definitely given them an edge. The remaining interviewee remarked that the time spent with a native speaking teacher had been insufficient to evaluate in such terms.

Two thirds of respondents and all interviewees reported that they believed native speaking teachers were needed by the Finnish business community in general. Once again the interviewees returned to the issues of pronunciation and cultural nuances to justify their opinions. Interviewee 2 reported that after gaining a firm understanding of grammar in school, as was reported previously, in business a student “*can get more*” from a native speaking teacher. He went on to define ‘get more’ as “*the culture and history of the language*” and how as a native speaker, “*you use the language*” practically. The additional point that was he was forced to use English skills rather than Finnish when thing became difficult was raised by Interviewee 1. This, he understood, had an associated benefit:

(7) It's not just a matter of not speaking Finnish, you don't think in the Finnish way and that again forces me to think in an English way. You know, when a Finnish colleague comes into my office my behaviour is totally different from when an Englishman comes in. That knowledge is really needed in the business community here in Finland. (Interviewee 1)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions will now be drawn and in doing so, they will be related to the background of the debate as discussed in Chapter 2. The chapter will then go on to consider the limitations of this study and make some recommendations for further study in this area.

6.1 Broad analysis

In line with the findings of Kachru (1985) the majority of participants were found to use English to communicate with other non-native speakers yet there were reported occasions when individuals need, for example, to attend meetings and conferences where they must communicate directly with native speakers.

In contradiction to the findings of Seidlhofer (2001) and Matsuda (2003) amongst others, the idea that the native speaking teacher, along with native English norms are somehow irrelevant in today's EFL classroom was found not to be supported by this study. In a similar way that Kuo's (2006) data revealed students' preference to aim for and learn from native English models as mentioned in Chapter 2, this study suggests that adult students in Finland are indeed actively seeking native English teachers in preference over non-native speaking teachers because of the students' perceived belief that standard English forms of the language would best suit their needs in business. The cultural aspects of learning any target language would seem to be far more powerful than Seidlhofer (ibid.) and others are willing to admit. This is evidenced by the reported belief that a native speaking teacher is better placed to deliver such valued lessons to this group of business professionals. Additionally this single point to which all interviewees returned on many occasions to justify their remarks seems to be contrary to Seidlhofer's (op.cit) assertion concerning compiling a set of corpus data for ELF. It would seem that being able to communicate using a simplified variety of English is insufficient for their needs as they consciously chose to use native speaking teachers in order to emulate their standard forms. It was also discovered that the target group of this study felt strongly about grammar being taught by non-native speaking teachers in preference over native speakers. That they could ask questions and confirm their own understanding of English grammar in Finnish was seen to be of paramount importance in gaining a good understanding of the rules before moving on to more profession-specific language later in life with a native speaking teacher.

These findings lead the researcher to agree with Timmis (2002, 249) who concludes that it would seem that academia is moving to distance itself from the native speaker and the norms of native English forms and structures faster than the body of students. At least,

it seems, in the United Kingdom, according to Timmis (ibid.), and Finland as demonstrated by this study, there remains a desire within the student body to actively seek out native speaking teachers. Therefore, in the light of the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn above, the researcher considers that the hypothesis set out in Chapter 3 is supported. Students from the Finnish business community seem to value the norms and cultural nuances that the native speaker can provide. Given that English is taught to students for their use, for them to communicate in a clear and unambiguous manner, should we the teachers and academics not be taking notice of their needs and wants instead of attempting to design variations of the language which, in the opinion of this researcher, will inevitably prove inadequate because of their limited descriptive value? Are native speakers and native English norms and structures irrelevant in EFL teaching today? It seems not. Are native speaking teachers valued and needed by the Finnish business community? It certainly seems so.

6.2 Limitations and further research proposals

Given the extremely small scale of this research project, the findings cannot logically be extrapolated with any authority to generalise about opinions in the wider business community in Finland or indeed anywhere else. What can be said, though, is that these interesting findings offer the opportunity for further study. This study was conducted in Finland entirely in English as the researchers knowledge of Finnish was inadequate for the purposes. That, and the fact that the most important, revealing data was gathered through interviews with members of the Finnish business community personally known to the researcher, may well have resulted in unavoidable false reporting despite the best efforts of the researcher. It is thus recommended that a further identical and comparative study be conducted using only Finnish in order to validate or discount the findings of this study. Such research could be conducted to determine whether or not

the results of both studies can be seen to be academically reliable and therefore used authoritatively to suggest the value, either positive or negative, that using native speaking teachers brings to the Finnish business community and why.

References

Berlitz's www advertisement We are sinking (German coastguard). (n.d.) Retrieved 23 April 2008, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSdxqIBfEAw>

Crystal, D. 2009. New words for old. *Editing Matters*. Jan/Feb, 3-4.

Kachru, B. 1985. 'Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle' in R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (eds.). *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuo, I-C. 2006. Addressing the issue of teaching English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal* 60 (3), 213- 221.

Matsuda, A. 2003. Incorporating world Englishes in teaching English as an international language. *TESOL Quarterly* 37 (4), 719-729.

Seidlhofer, B. 2005. English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal* 59 (4), 339-341.

Terian, S.K. 2003 *Basic Guidelines for Qualitative Research in Education*. Espoo: IMDL.

Timmis, I. 2002. Native speaker norms and international English: a classroom view. *ELT Journal* 56 (3), 240-249.

Annex A

Interview schedule

Introduction and background

Where, why and with whom?

English language tuition - Formal lessons, self-taught, school/college

Native or non-native teachers

Other language input TV/movies, internet

Pronunciation and language learning

Do you consider that your pronunciation is native-like or has strong traces of your Finnish accent?

Have you ever experienced either extreme negative or positive reactions from native speakers because of your pronunciation in business situations? Why do you believe that happened?

To what extent is knowledge of Finnish language by the teacher an advantage in helping you learn English?

How important is it to you to hear your teacher produce accurate standard forms and register?

From your point of view, how much does having a Finnish accent affect the credibility of an English teacher?

In your opinion how important is it to achieve a near-native understanding of idiomatic expressions and their usage?

Teachers and teaching

Can a NNS teacher provide students with valuable lessons about the cultural understanding (nuances) that is implicit in the English language? How and why or why not?

Can the models of models of standard English pronunciation and register (speed and intonation) used by NNS teachers at the same level as a NS teacher?

In your opinion which group of teachers (NS or NNS) would provide more help with pronunciation and grammar difficulties and why?

Do NNS teachers have sufficient overall knowledge of the English language, its culture nuances to meet your needs in business here in Finland?

English teaching and the Finnish business community

Do you consider that learning from an NS teacher has given you a competitive edge in business that you might not have achieved with a NNS teacher? How? Why/why not?

Are NS English teachers needed by the business community here in Finland and why or why not?

Annex B

Questionnaire

By completing and returning this questionnaire you are authorising the researcher to use the information you provide for academic purposes which may include publishing the findings as part of academic papers.

So that your anonymity will be maintained, please do not mark this questionnaire in any way that might identify you.

Please answer **all** questions by underlining all relevant answers.

For example,

a. home, work or other (please explain)

on holiday

1. Where do you mainly use your English?
 - a. home
work
other (please explain)
 - b. Finland
abroad
(please specify which countries)
2. With whom do you mainly use your English?
 - native speakers
 - or
 - other non-native speakers
3. Is it important for you to be able to use standard English grammatical forms in order to communicate effectively?
 - Yes or No
4. Which group of teachers have you had experience learning English with?
 - Native speaking teachers (e.g. British or American),
 - non-native speaking teachers (e.g. Finnish)
 - or both
5. What English language input have you learned from?
 - Formal lessons

self-taught study

TV/movies

internet

others (please explain)

6. Is it important for you to hear your teacher produce accurate standard forms and register (speed and intonation)? Yes or No
7. Do you believe that language models provided by a non-native speaking teacher are accurate enough for your development as a student of English? Yes or No
8. Is a non-native speaking teacher able to provide students with accurate models of standard English register (speed and intonation) to same level as a native speaking teacher? Yes or No
9. Consider the following two examples of how cultural understanding (nuances) is implicit in English:

By using understatement you can try to minimise the effect of a mistake. For example, if you arrive at work 2 hours late, you might say to your boss, "Sorry I'm a *few minutes late*".

The idiom *to have a finger in every pie* means that someone is involved in every aspect of a business's operation. For example, you might say, "That's the new CEO. He likes *to have his finger in every pie*".

- Is it important to you to be able to understand these common cultural nuances of English? Yes or No
10. Do non-native speaking teachers have sufficient overall knowledge of the cultural nuances, for example, the way understatement and idioms are used in the English language to meet your needs in business here in Finland? Yes or No
11. Has learning from a native speaking teacher given you a competitive edge in business that you might not have achieved with a non-native speaking teacher? Yes or No

12. How would you rate your English pronunciation on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 representing 'Has strong traces of my Finnish accent' and 5 being 'near native-like'?
- 1 2 3 4 5
13. Using the same scale, where would you like it to be?
- 1 2 3 4 5
14. Which group of teachers do you believe would be the best for you in order to reach the target you stated at question 13.
- Native speaking teachers
or
Non-native speaking teachers
15. Have you ever experienced negative responses from native speakers because of your pronunciation in business situations?
- Yes or No
16. Do you believe this was because you have learned English from:
- native speaking teachers
non-native speaking teachers
other methods and/or reasons (please explain)
17. Have you ever experienced particularly positive responses from native speakers because of your pronunciation in business situations?
- Yes or No
18. Do you believe this was because you have learned English from:
- native speaking teachers
non-native speaking teachers
other methods and/or reasons (please explain)
19. Has a knowledge of Finnish language by the teacher an advantage in helping you learn English?
- Yes , No or sometimes (please specify)
20. If your teacher speaks English with a Finnish accent, do you think that it affects your learning?
- Yes or No
21. Do you believe that native speaking English teachers are needed by the
- Yes or No

Finnish business community?

Please return the completed form to:

Graham Burns
Address

Please rest assured that your anonymity will be preserved.

Thank you very much for taking the time to help me with this.

Annex C

Certificate of Agreement to Participate and Authority to Publish Findings

I willingly agree to take part in an interview conducted by GRAHAM BURNS as a part of his studies in the English section of the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä. I am aware and agree that this interview will be recorded and that the researcher will make written notes.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that this interview forms part of a small-scale university research project and agree that whatever I say may be published for academic purposes at some point in the future.

I have also been informed that I can terminate this interview at any time and even after it has been completed I can withdraw my consent without explanation and my contribution will not be used.

Furthermore, I have been assured that except for the purposes of this document my anonymity will be preserved by the researcher.

Signature:

Printed name:

Date: