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## 13 “I know that the natives must suffer every now and then”: Native/non-native indexing language ideologies in Finnish higher education

**Abstract:** This article examines the construction of “native” and “non-native” English use in Finnish higher education. Previous studies on the Finnish situation implicate not just language ideological but political hierarchies which favour students from the traditional, hegemonic “Inner circle” countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Anglophone Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. This hegemonic position of the inner circle variants is being challenged by an emerging normative ELF ideology. Our article tackles the meeting point of these ideological positions. We aim to understand how native English speaker ideologies might be changing as a result of globalization. We have combined data from our individual research projects, based on interviews with students and staff with a variety of L1 backgrounds at two Finnish universities and one university of applied sciences, and using particularly the data extracts where constructions of native/non-native appear regarding English. Our results indicate that while there are strong norms still in favour of native-like English, different political and pedagogical factors are challenging the native norm. We conclude by discussing the potential implications of this development to language policies in the internationalization of (Finnish) higher education.

**Keywords:** nativeness, non-nativeness, higher education internationalization, English, ideology

### 1 Introduction

In recent decades, English seems to have strengthened its role as a de facto lingua franca of higher education (see, for instance, Wilkinson 2013). The apparent linguistic homogenization in higher education contexts runs contrary to the development of (super)diversified (Vertovec 2007) forms of immigration and the array of languages that has resulted. In higher education contexts, it has been

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assumed (and with good reason; see Phillipson 2009; Hughes 2008), that native speakers of English have benefited from the hegemonic position of their mother tongue. The work of Lillis and Curry (2010) demonstrates critically the struggle of non-Anglophone scholars in Anglo-American publishing contexts. Nativeness has been seen as a norm and a desired ideal (see Jenkins 2011). With diversifying forms of international communication and interaction, however, we may be witnessing increasing controversies in how people use English and how they relate to “native” English (Leppänen et al. 2011). Therefore, the position of English as spoken globally by natives and non-natives calls for problematization and reconceptualization. In this article, we examine constructions and ideologies of nativeness and non-nativeness in English in the context of Finnish higher education.

## 2 English and internationalization of higher education

English-speaking countries have asymmetrically dominated the internationalization market of higher education over the decades following the Second World War. Non-Anglophone institutions (like Finnish universities) typically and increasingly resort to producing English language teaching at universities and universities of applied sciences (the latter being the Finnish equivalent of polytechnics or *Fachhochschule*) to overcome the asymmetry in the increasingly international student markets. The OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries alone hosted approximately 1.6 million foreign students in 2001, one third of whom in the USA and an additional 25 per cent in the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Marginson 2006: 17). The focus on these major flows should not hide the fact, however, that the heterogeneous group of international students is mobile for a multitude of reasons, and not all students have the same possibilities for mobility. Murphy-Lejeune (2008: 20–22) has categorized international students particularly in the European context in four ways:

1. permanent residents vs. internationally mobile students
2. Europeans vs. non-Europeans
3. institutional exchange students vs. free movers, and
4. the different schemes within the intra-European mobility.

Murphy-Lejeune suggests that the institutional European movers are the beneficiaries in this scheme, while the non-European free movers and those who cannot be mobile are the more unlucky contenders.

The fact that the English-speaking countries also charge relatively high fees for international students makes international study an economic commodity – and a huge global business. The reasons for offering English-medium study programmes for international students may be allocated, according to Coleman (2006) to seven categories: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), internationalization, student exchanges, teaching and research materials, staff mobility, graduate employability and the market in international students. As Coleman points out, this “rainbow of motives ranges from the ethical and pedagogical through the pragmatic to the commercial” (Coleman 2006: 4).

While the Anglophone countries dominate the markets in international (in most cases, English-medium) study, non-Anglophone countries have strongly increased their supply of English medium programmes over the past decade. Bernd Wächter and Friedhelm Maiworm have studied the development in consecutive surveys since early 2000s. In their 2002 survey, based on ‘positive’ estimates, 4 per cent of all degree programmes were taught through English and 30 per cent of all institutions reported offering English taught programmes. In their 2008 study, these percentages had risen to 7 and 47 respectively. In another study, Brenn-White and Faethe (2013) further report that the number of English-medium Master’s programmes in Europe has again increased by 38 per cent between 2011 and 2013, with the largest growth occurring in courses taught entirely in English. Of the approximately 21,000 Master’s programmes in Europe, 6,407 programmes are taught either entirely (5,258) or partially (1,149) in English. The Netherlands and Germany offer the greatest number of English-medium programmes, with Sweden reaching the third place after a 73 per cent increase in the last two years. Finland, which already featured highly in Wächter and Maiworm’s statistics (2002, 2008), has also increased its English-medium Master’s programmes by 52 per cent (from 172 to 261) in the last two years (Brenn-White and Faethe 2013).

It seems that the three-tier degree systems, introduced in European countries following the Bologna Process, have further accelerated the adoption of English-medium Master’s programmes in non-Anglophone countries. It thus seems that the trend for English speaking countries might be turning. One indication of this is a survey of site traffic on programme websites, which showed that the percentage of total page views is still highest in the UK, but the views have gone down from 31 per cent to 24 per cent, with a corresponding rise in Continental website views (Brenn-White and Faethe 2013). While this may be the result of different kinds of political issues (not least the increasing study fees in England), it is also possible that greater interest in Continental Europe is a result of an increased offer in English taught programmes in those countries (Brenn-White and Faethe 2013).

The traditional scenery of non-Anglophone students heading for Anglophone countries has thus become more diversified, increasing the different kinds of constellations of native – non-native English speaker encounters, and making the hierarchization of native/non-native visible. Language ideologies linked with understandings of English spoken as native/non-native are thus highly relevant and they need to be studied.

### 3 English in Finnish higher education

Finland is officially bilingual, with Finnish and Swedish having equal constitutional status. Consequently, Finnish institutions of higher education (both universities and universities of applied sciences) are by legislation either Finnish, Swedish, or bilingual. Since the 1990s, English has been increasingly used as a language of tuition in Finnish higher education, but only the University Law of 2004 gave universities, for the first time, the right to grant degrees (in addition to providing tuition) also in languages other than Finnish or Swedish (Saarinen 2012a).

While English is not among the biggest immigrant languages in Finland, it is without doubt the biggest foreign language studied in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The position of English is such that it has been termed the “third domestic” language (after Finnish and Swedish) because of its wide usage and popularity (Leppänen, Nikula, and Kääntä 2008). Finns appear to have positive feelings towards English in general: 90 per cent of Finns think that English is necessary for international communication and 89 per cent of Finns have a rather or very positive attitude towards English-medium schools in Finland. Fifty-four per cent of respondents in Leppänen et al. (2011) reported that they feel admiration towards Finns who can speak English fluently with a native-like accent. The most admired varieties appeared to be the British and North American varieties, while the least admired varieties of English were Indian and Finnish English. Interestingly, 55 per cent of respondents felt that their English skills were inadequate when they spoke with native English speakers, but only 30 per cent when they spoke with non-native English speakers (Leppänen et al. 2011). These results suggest that native-like English skills are respected, but that at the same time, nativeness (or native-speakers) is perceived a somewhat intimidating as well.

In Finnish higher education, English has the traditional functions as a medium of teaching; as a means of archiving knowledge in different text repositories like books and libraries; and as an object of theoretical study (see Brumfit

2004: 164 for the categorization). The data of this article focuses on situations of English as a medium of teaching and as an object of (theoretical) study.

The use of English as a medium of teaching started to increase as systematic internationalization of Finnish higher education began to take shape in the 1980s. Together with the policies, foreign language study programmes have been initiated since the turn of the 1990s. Exchange programmes, supported by the then European Communities both for students and staff, started to grow, and the universities were rewarded as a part of the so-called management by results steering frame among other things for internationalization, operationalized mainly as mobility of students and staff (Saarinen 1997). The new funding allocation system for Finnish universities, effective from 2015, emphasizes internationalization even more clearly (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014).

As a consequence of this systematic policy, international degree programmes were initiated both to attract international students and to foster “internationalization at home” (Nilsson 2000) for Finnish students. The term *internationalization at home* was coined in the 1990s, as it became obvious that the Erasmus mobility goal of 10 per cent left 90 per cent of the students outside mobility schemes. The question “*what to do for the remaining 90%*” (Wächter 2000: 6) was answered with the idea that any international contacts, also those outside formal mobility schemes, were, in fact, forms of internationalization. As a consequence, more attention was paid to what universities (as opposed to mobile students) could do to advance internationalization. Particularly, the new polytechnic (later university of applied sciences) sector was active in internationalization by “foreign language” (i.e. English) study programmes. In the 1990s, German and French language degree programmes still existed to some extent alongside their English language counterparts. Gradually, however, English became in practice the only language in international degree programmes in Finland (Saarinen 2012a). As Anita Lehtikoinen, a long-time Ministry of Education official and current Permanent Secretary quipped (2004), discussing the euphemistic usage of “foreign” for “English”: “We always say foreign-language education, and everyone knows that in practice it means English, only English” (Lehtikoinen 2004: 44).

In December 2013, approximately 291 Master’s degree level programmes are offered in English at Finnish higher education institutions, with 257 at universities and the remaining 34 at universities of applied sciences (Study in Finland 2013). Regardless of this, the position of English has not really been questioned until quite recently, as languages have been fairly invisible in Finnish higher education internationalization policies (Saarinen 2012b). Since the latest university reform of 2010, English language programmes have undergone an increase of approximately 50 per cent in Finland (Brenn-White and Faethe 2013), and only now a

more critical public eye has been turned towards the increasing use of English. The development is exemplified by Aalto University's recent language policy guidelines, where English has been made the *de facto* third official language of the university alongside Finnish and Swedish; similar decisions have been made in other universities as well. This development is witnessed most recently by three decisions by the Chancellor of Justice's office in November 2013, where the complaints dealt specifically with the students' right to use Finnish also in English medium degree programmes. The Chancellor of Justice's Office ruled that while the universities in question were entitled by University Law to teach also in English, they would have to be more specific about the use of English and the student's right to answer exams and essays in Finnish (Chancellor of Justice's Office 2013a; Chancellor of Justice's Office 2013b; Chancellor of Justice's Office 2013c).

English as a subject discipline (in Brumfit's 2004: 164 terms "object of theoretical study"), on the other hand, is located in departments of English and English translation, and in university Language Centres. English can be studied as a major subject in 8 universities Finnish universities, and it has the biggest yearly intakes in language departments (Pyykkö et al. 2006; Opetushallitus 2013). The Language Centres, in turn, provide the language and communication studies for higher education degrees. Only Finnish and Swedish studies are compulsory for all Finnish students, and the number of required foreign languages varies between universities and study programmes. However, judging at least by statistics at the University of Jyväskylä (2012), English is in practice the most widely studied foreign language in Language Centres as well.

## 4 The concept of the native vs. non-native English speaker

The native speaker versus non-native speaker dichotomy has been central within many branches of linguistics. In language learning and teaching, the native speaker has been positioned as an ideal model, being someone who has acquired the language as a child, uses it in "authentic" contexts and therefore has ownership over how the language is used correctly. In linguistic theory, the native speaker has been viewed as someone with an ideal, instinctive understanding of a language's grammatical system, with that language having developed in the native's mind as a child alongside other physical development (cf. Paikeday, 1985: 40, 71). The concept is also strongly connected to ideological

constructions of national and cultural identity, with one's native language being the language of one's home country and/or family, as suggested also by its often interchangeable use with the term "mother tongue".

What constitutes nativeness in practice, however, is more ambiguous. According to Doerr (2009), the idea of the native speaker as an ideal model in language teaching is linked to three conceptual premises: the association of one nation with one language, the assumption of native speakers as a homogeneous linguistic group (often juxtaposed with "non-natives" as another homogeneous group), and the assumption of a native speaker's complete competence in the native language. All three of these premises are clearly problematic. Particularly in the case of English, the link between the language and any one nation-state is wearing thin, and globalization has led to its still increasing use in international and multicultural settings – such as within international higher education. This diversification of contexts and communities in which English is used has in turn led to diversification in the ways in which it is used. The illusion of a linguistically homogeneous English native-speaking group becomes impossible to maintain. And with such diversification, it also becomes more obvious that no one speaker, native or otherwise, could achieve a "complete competence" in 'the English language'.

With this ambiguity, the use of the term native-speaker, particularly concerning English, typically becomes ideologically loaded. If a native speaker model is to be maintained, but not all native speakers use the language in the same way, some must then be deemed "more native" than others. Likewise, while some of the contexts in which English is used internationally and intranationally are viewed as "authentic" and therefore native, some are in turn viewed as less authentic. Traditionally, "inner circle" contexts, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Anglophone Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand (Kachru 1997), have been favored over outer circle contexts, such as former colonies. This can be seen in Finnish higher education both in language testing for international programmes (Saarinen and Nikula 2013) and in attempts to officially define nativeness in English for application purposes.

Holliday (2006) terms the pervasive ideology surrounding the native speaker in English language teaching as "native-speakerism". Native-speakerism, he argues, encompasses more than simply the concept of the English native speaker as having acquired English as a child, but has rather become associated with "Westernism" – i.e. with the idea that native speakers of English represent Western culture. Western culture is in turn often constructed as active, assertive and individualistic, and juxtaposed with non-native cultures as conformist, indirect and docile (Holliday 2006). The native speaker teacher in academia, for example, is thus implicitly perceived not only as teaching English vocabulary and grammar,



but also the perceived conventions of “English-speaking” academic discourse, such as having a strong point of view and linear analytic thought.

Lillis and Curry (2010) discuss the position of non-English speaking scholars in the Anglo-American dominated publishing scene, not just from the point of view of having the linguistic resources to access publishing and funding, but also from the point of view of having access to the evaluation of what counts as relevant knowledge for the global academic audience. In their words, this is not just a question of a distinction between the local (i.e. taking place in the national language) and global (i.e. Anglophone) publishing practices. This “raises questions about the *boundaries* rather than the *distinctions* [emphasis in original] between the two contexts, particularly in scholars’ attempts to cross these” (Lillis and Curry 2010: 137).

The spread of English and increase in contexts in which English is used by “non-native” speakers has also given rise to theory that challenges native ownership over the language. Literature on English as a lingua franca (ELF) – often defined as the use of English between non-native speakers, although more recently seen simply as the use of English between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins 2009) – has claimed that ELF, particularly spoken ELF, is emerging as a form (or forms) of English with its own norms or at least principles of use (see Seidlhofer 2003). Non-native speakers of English are seen to be shaping the language in ELF contexts as much as native speakers (Seidlhofer 2005).

The most visible reconceptualization of the native versus non-native dichotomy in English has nevertheless been on an academic level, with linguists in the field describing the functions and norms of ELF and theoretically dissociating these from English as a native language (ENL). Much of this has been politically related, in response to the power divide that can result in international communication where some are using “their own” language, whereas others are using a “foreign” language. Indeed the support in ELF literature for reconceptualising English is often constructed on the basis of non-native speakers now outnumbering native speakers (e.g. Seidlhofer 2003; Jenkins 2006), giving the sense that through this strength in numbers, such ideological power relations must be reversed. If English is no longer owned by natives but rather adapted and shaped to meet the needs and identities of its non-native users, a possible threat of cultural and linguistic imperialism can be dispelled.

Whether non-linguists perceive ELF as a valid alternative to ENL is less clear. Jenkins’ (2007) overview of attitudes towards ELF concluded that standard language ideology is pervasive in English internationally and native speaker norms are still viewed as the model for standards. However, some discrepancy could be seen in attitudes towards different NNS accents. In line with Holliday’s

concept of Westernism, Northern and Western-European accents seemed to be less stigmatized than “Asian” and “Pacific” accents (see Jenkins 2007: 81–82, 219–220). Jenkins stresses the role of identity in this ideology, i.e. that non-native speakers’ attitudes towards nativeness is shaped by the communities or labels they wish to identify with through their English use.

Recent research has also indicated that attitudes towards ELF may be changing. Kalocsai (2009) examined language socialization into two Erasmus communities in Prague and found that students developed new norms for English use which they felt positively towards. Although NS English remained “real” English in these students’ perceptions, they nevertheless considered their own English use to be an important aspect of their identities and they valued efficient communication over correctness. Cogo (2010), reporting on data gathered in the UK, the Czech Republic and Hungary, similarly found that although “perfect” English was equated with NS English and NNS English was therefore imperfect by comparison, participants generally had positive perceptions of NNS English, based on their experiences with using English in international contexts. Finally, Hynninen (2013), in a study of norm regulation in ELF at the University of Helsinki, found that although speakers’ beliefs about correctness in English were primarily based on concepts of NS ownership, they nevertheless also drew on alternative sources for constructing norms. Native speaker ideology seems therefore still to underpin non-linguists’ attitudes, but the role of English as an international lingua franca in practice has led to more ambiguity in these perceptions.

## 5 Present study: Questions, data and analysis

This article takes as its starting point the apparent clash between two ideological tendencies in the use of English in Finnish higher education. On the one hand, explicit language proficiency requirements in Finnish international study programmes implicate political hierarchies which favour students from the traditional, hegemonic “Inner circle” (Kachru 1997), rather than the former colonies where outer circle variants are spoken, regardless of the fact that students may have used English throughout their whole study career (Saarinen and Nikula 2013). On the other hand, this hegemonic position of the inner circle variants is being challenged by an emerging (explicit) normative ELF ideology (see discussion in previous section).

Our article tackles the meeting point of these ideological positions. We aim to understand how native speaker ideologies might be changing in English as a result of globalization. We are looking particularly at higher education where

English is increasingly being used as a lingua franca both on global and local levels.

Our questions are:

- How is the concept of nativeness versus non-nativeness in English construed in our data?
- What kinds of language ideologies do these constructions reflect? What are the (higher education) political implications; in other words, what kinds of dynamics and power relations become visible in the situations where native/non-native are touched upon?

In this article, we have combined data from our individual research projects, using particularly the data extracts where constructions of native/non-native appear regarding English. The data for this article was, in other words, collected for different purposes. What the projects have in common is an interest in internationalization of higher education and the position of English in it.

One set of data is taken from a PhD project investigating norms and ideologies of English writing on an international Master's Programme at a medium-sized university in Finland (McCambridge forthcoming). The project followed four to six students with varied linguistics and cultural backgrounds through three years of their studies, as well as gathering more general ethnographic data from the programme. The data analyzed for this article consists of fourteen individual semi-structured interviews with the students and five individual semi-structured interviews with teachers on the programme. Students' interviews focussed on their perceptions and experiences of writing in English on the programme. Teachers' interviews focussed on their perceptions of writing on the programme, as well as expectations for and evaluations of students' texts. Students from this data set are referred to in the analysis using the following pseudonyms: Mei (Chinese), Stephanie (German), and Kimiko (Japanese). Teachers are referred to as: Mikko (Finnish), Megan (from the US), Matti (Finnish), and Anita (a Swedish speaking Finn)

The data on internationalization of higher education is part of a three year project "Internationalization and invisible language" (Saarinen 2011–2013), funded by the Academy of Finland. The data used for this article includes eight individual semi-structured interviews with Finnish university and university of applied sciences staff (both academic, administrative and other staff) and international students, and one semi-structured group interview with four international students in a Finnish university of applied sciences. The interviews are part of a larger set of interviews in Finland and Denmark (N = 22). The interviews focussed on internationalization of higher education institutions from the point of view of various staff and student groups; *language* was not an explicit focus of the interviews, but it was brought up by the interviewer if not otherwise mentioned.

Interestingly, while it might have been expected that the role of language – particularly either English or the national language(s) – would come up in discussions on internationalization, this was not always the case.

We analysed our data qualitatively, using content and discourse analytical tools and focussing on explicit and implicit references to *native/non-native*. We focussed on the explicit or implicit constructions of *nativeness* versus *non-nativeness* based on the kinds of meanings and connotations that were attached to the terms by our informants. Investigating constructions of native/non-native was not the specific focus of either project, but in both sets of interviews, the observation of issues linked to nativeness prompted the co-operation for this article. Additionally, we looked specifically into references to “English” and the (ideological) connotations attached to the language. We approach *ideologies* as sets of beliefs about the position of a language or its speakers in a society (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994), which, in turn, may turn into political hierarchizations about the (political, cultural and social) value of the language and its speakers (see Nikula et al. 2012; Saarinen and Nikula 2013).

## 6 Analysis: The “not” and the “but” in native / non-native ideologies

Next, we present the results of our analysis. Two major categories emerged from the data; we have named these *non-nativeness as not* and *non-nativeness as but*.

The *non-nativeness as not* category reflects mainly on the native speaker ideal: nativeness as something that is difficult to achieve or as something that the speaker does not identify with. The *non-nativeness as but* category, in turn, presents challenges to the ideal, showing nativeness and non-nativeness as “separate but equal” categories. The categories not only overlap but are intertwined, as “but” emerges as a possibility of challenging the “not”, which represents the traditional understanding of the (linguistic, educational and social) superiority of the native speaker norm. Just as non-native is not construed explicitly but in relation to native, “non-nativeness as but” requires an understanding of the position of the native speaker in the social hierarchy.

### 6.1 Non-nativeness as “not”: Reproducing the native ideal

Most of the participants in our data construed nativeness on the one hand as correctness and on the other hand in terms of negation. They made it clear

that they were not natives, and implied that they therefore lacked a certain native authority in determining correct English practices. In this sense they reproduced nativeness as an ideal.

For Mei, a Chinese student on the international Master's programme, not being a native-speaker meant that she could never be sure whether her use of English was "right". She explained, "it's not my mother language, so I don't know if I'm right ... you are using the language you've been taught and you think it's the right English I mean... but still there are differences compared to the natives expect so yeah". Here, she clearly positions nativeness as correctness and her own English as being something different to this ideal. Even if she uses the language in the way she has been taught and believes is right, "the natives" know better.

In the next passage, the interviewee, a German exchange student studying in a Finnish university of applied sciences, seems to conceptualize "native English" as creating something of a threshold for entering a native English speaking country, assuming that natives might be more inclined to pay attention to "mistakes" made by non-natives, implying an expectation of natives as gate-keepers:

I So you came here, because you thought that lang-... the English language was of high quality here?

A yeah... that's because I applied, because I knew that Finland was quite successful at PISA, that they have the television programmes in English, that they have early contact with English, and that's what I guessed that they would have a high quality of English... but it's still not their mother tongue, so it's OK to make mistakes as a student [...]

Nativeness is, in other words, construed as creating a challenge, or pressure even, as something demanding that the non-natives may have difficulty reaching. This links with the assumption, discussed above, of natives representing the "right" usage of English: The interviewee also implies that it might be "less OK" to make mistakes in an English speaking country, thus strengthening the assumption of the natives speakers as guardians of the "right" English.

Stephanie, a German student on the Master's programme, also positioned nativeness as authoritative in contrast to non-nativeness. When asked about her experiences of studying English in a German university, she challenged her German professors' authority concerning her use of English due to their not being "real native speakers":

S the only feedback I got in regard to my English was, well it was quite funny and was surprising. After a while I stopped wondering. I wrote two essays for

two major classes and a friend from Ireland corrected them for me and for those two essays... I got the comment that I should seriously work on my English so hhheh

- L from the teachers or from the friend?  
 S from the teachers no from the teachers, but the problem is like none of none was a real native English speaker, they were all Germans  
 L okay  
 S well they've been living abroad and everything but

For Stephanie, the authority of her Irish friend over English clearly overrides the authority of her German English professors. “Real” nativeness is here construed as being from an inner circle English speaking country, and despite her teachers’ expertise in English and experiences of living abroad, their German origin is a “problem” in the validity of their feedback.

The following excerpt presents a layered construction of stereotyping native North American English speakers as demanding a native-like accent (“American accent”) from Finns, and another one where a non-native English speaking Finn assumes that Finns have “excellent skills”. The interviewee is a faculty level administrator at a university:

Well maybe these cultural differences have appeared that, some feedback that for instance Americans who speak their mother tongue so they kind of expect Finns to use the same accent, and then even if your language skills are excellent but the accent is different then they feel that he she doesn't know any English. (T: so did I understand this correctly, the mother tongue speakers complain that...) yeah yeah, students complain that it's not in their own accent [Our translation].

While the interviewee reports that “Americans” expect Finns to speak in their own accent, this is not elaborated in detail. The interviewee does imply that “the Americans” expect a North American accent, but we do not know why this might be the case: is it perhaps easier to comprehend one's own (even if not a native) accent, or is it a question of “the Americans” expecting the Finnish staff to have a native-like accent?

As the phrase “real native English speaker” exemplifies, nativeness seemed to exist in the data on a continuum. Although the participants mostly positioned nativeness as something they were “not”, some “non-natives” were nevertheless more native than others. This continuum often seemed to mirror Holliday's description of native-speakerism as a cultural construct with Western culture positioned as native and “non-Western” cultures as the non-native other. On the Master's programme, non-Western students' writing was described by several of the teachers as more problematic and East Asian students in particular were

characterized as lacking strong individual voices in their texts. For example, Kimiko, a Japanese student, was described by Mikko, a Finnish teacher, as having made great progress, learning to write with more assertive language, after having begun as a “shy uh shy not self- not that self-assured, lost Japanese woman“. Ironically perhaps, Kimiko had actually acquired English and completed her undergraduate degree in the US, rather than in Japan.

This continuum of non-nativeness to nativeness as a continuum of non-Western to Western culture could also be found in the responses of the students themselves. In explaining why she chose to come to Finland to study, Mei stated that she wished to go somewhere where “they use the language“. Interestingly, in her construction the place where English is used includes Finland and the “they” who use English includes Finns. Similarly, when asked what advice she would give to other Chinese students in learning academic English, she suggested:

I think at first you should read read more the original version... I'm not saying that that Chinese people that Chinese version of English is not good, but if you want to be like more professional, you should read the maybe most of it you should try the original one. So how maybe this culture or people in the West who use this language, to see how they write this kind of uh thing.

Her construction of those “who use this language” groups together “people in the West” as a contrast to her own Chinese group. The disclaimer that she does not mean that Chinese English “is not good” reflects an awareness of the ideological implications of her advice, but she nevertheless perceives Western culture as having the more original, more professional English, and therefore as having the more appropriate model for learning to write.

The continuum of correctness from non-Western to Western culture was most explicit in Megan’s discourse. Megan, a language teacher from the US was teaching a compulsory course for students on the Master’s programme on the conventions of English academic communication. Whereas for the Finnish teachers interviewed, correct English was usually positioned as something that “they” use “there”, Megan frequently used words such as “we” and “here” to contrast correct English use with the problematic English use of some international students. When asked who “we” referred to, she replied:

M me myself and I... the royal we... no well I guess when I'm saying we I'm thinking of a Western a Western writer in academia, so we of course all know who we are and what we mean. So I'm I'm thinking of how to write for the Western standpoint because Northern and yeah middle Northern Europe, oh and Southern Europe too to an extent as far as the how you

- know linear thought this type of thing. North America Australia, sort of these traditional English speaking countries in that sense. Now I'm not talking about South Africa or India, I'm not talking about other places where English is a lingua franca, but I'm thinking of typical how we would categorize the West that we that's what I'm talking about as far as
- L so kind of English speaking West
- M yeah and publications for English journal and then journals in English even if it's a European environment. The concept is either Great Britain or the US which is somewhat similar
- L yeah okay so Great Britain and the US are kind of in a way the standards
- M yeah

For Megan, correct English was “here” in the West and associated with “Western thinking”, but the kaleidoscope of appropriate practices and places eventually centred on Great Britain and the US.

Some kind of a Western bias can also be seen in the following example. The non-nativeness of students and staff equally was first construed as a problem by the interviewee (a Finnish university administrator, faculty level). However, the discussion quickly continued towards a direction of the (implicitly international) student's language skills not being adequate:

Weeeel... It shows in that most of us ... teachers, me, students... none of us speak... or there are maybe one or two native English speakers . But that all of us speak English as... non-native. (T: mmmmh). And eh .. I don't know if it shows... well some teachers find it problematic that the students' English skills are not good enough ... but I think that's just something we have to be prepared for. That it's a part of the package. That the English skills they have, well of course we have set limits for test scores [...] [Our translation].

The passage hierarchizes non-natives in different categories, where first all non-natives potentially present a problem, but then different sub-categories emerge, where “their” (the students') English skills do not match “our” (the Finnish staff and teachers) English. This links with the previous discussion on “Western” vs “non-Western” preferences, but with a national twist: “our” refers to the Finnish staff (both administrative and teaching staff), whose English, while not native, is superior to that of the (international) students. In other words, not only is a clear divide between natives and non-natives observed, but also within the (heterogeneous) group of non-natives different hierarchies emerge, as “our” non-native is better than “theirs”.

As well as being correct, original, authoritative, and Western, nativeness was perceived in the data as being somehow “strict” and demanding. Natives



were frequently described as “suffering” from non-natives’ less rigid use of English. Again this concept of nativeness as strict was positioned by most participants as a contrast to their own use of English. They did not themselves have strict expectations and did not view themselves as able to fulfill such strict demands. Mikko, a Finnish teacher on the Master’s programme, put it that “I just learned to communicate and I’m fine. I know that the natives must suffer every now and then”. Similarly Anita, in discussing the evaluation of a student’s thesis, remarked that native speakers would probably suffer having to read its incorrect use of English, though she herself did not mind the language at all.

Interestingly these demanding native standards, as Mikko’s remark suggests, were not perceived as being necessary for communication on the programme, but rather as a matter of style and therefore as a potential symbol of quality or prestige. For this reason, texts written for a local level, such as for courses on the programme and for Finnish teachers, were not seen as having to conform to strict standards of language correctness, whereas texts written for a more global level, such as Master’s theses which would be published online, were seen as more subject to native demands.

## 6.2 Non-nativeness as “but”: Challenging the native ideal

While nativeness was often construed in the data as correctness, there were nevertheless many cases in which the assumption of native authority over English use was challenged. This challenge was typically hedged, with participants making it clear again that they were *not* natives, *but* explaining that they nevertheless had sufficient expertise or experience to determine appropriate language practices. The phrase “I am not a native speaker, but”, as in the following extract, neatly summarizes this sentiment. Here, Matti, a Finnish professor teaching on the programme, was asked whether he sees himself as being at a disadvantage to English speakers in publishing internationally:

- M I’m not in anyway bilingual, so I mean of course you are at a disadvantage, but I don’t I don’t think it’s kind of it doesn’t bother me very much. I don’t think it’s a real problem because I mean when you write this kind of stuff, it is you know a certain kind of language, a certain terminology that I know et cetera et cetera and then if there are things to improve in you know language as such, I mean uh I don’t think there’s very much, I write better than I speak, so I think that they can then very easily do those things that are necessary
- L okay

M one problem is that because I'm a referee for certain journals and I get articles in English and I'm not a native speaker and then sometimes you wonder I mean and it's a bit difficult because you you feel like commenting on the language as well and still it may be that it's a it's a native speaker who has written that, I mean you can kind of and still you think that this is not very well put in terms of language either and and you are not a native speaker yourself, so I usually say that I'm not a native speaker, but I do think that he should consider these things

As in Matti's explanation, the challenge to native authority was commonly based on a claim to expertise in a particular topic area and genre. Matti's professional experience in his field gives him the authority (albeit hedged authority) to correct a native speaker's use of language.

Mikko, on the other hand, challenged the idea that an Irish student on the programme might have an advantage as a native speaker of English. Again the argument was based on differences between disciplinary and professional backgrounds, which were in turn compared to differences between journalistic and academic genres:

M the native uh native Irish guys, he has a full career in IT, both in studies but then also doing designs and some kind of service supply and then we are discussing different kind of challenges in tuition. It's quite close to a fact that if you get if you get a journalist and you start to support journalist writing a thesis because journalist naturally is so fluent and confident in their writing, producing thinking on writing and then we cannot accept journalistic text

L okay

M we need to slowly turn them to the direction of academic writing, to accept the kind of a formal aspect of it

The underlying challenge here is to the construct of natives as a homogeneous group and the concept that there is one native standard that pervades all disciplines and genres. A native English speaker, it is implied, can have as much difficulty in learning to fulfil disciplinary expectations on the programme as a non-native speaker, and a non-native speaker can in fact have the linguistic advantage. This challenge to the notion of native speakers as a homogeneous group, particularly in regards to written language, could also be found in Kimiko's descriptions, based on her experience completing an associate degree at a community college in the US. She explained that she took language courses which were intended "for even Americans, because I have seen many Americans

who don't write. They don't know how to write". Kimiko was also surprised to find that some of her classmates from the US were unfamiliar with expectations for essay writing which she herself took for granted from academic writing in Japan (such as having an introduction, main body, and conclusion).

A similar kind of situation was described by a German exchange student at a Finnish university of applied sciences who had at an earlier stage of the interview stated that s/he had come to Finland particularly because the non-native nature of the English spoken there was less face-threatening than the native English in an English speaking country (see previous chapter). S/he also found non-nativeness explicitly as something inviting from the point of view of teaching practises, which also had to be accommodated to suit the needs of an international student:

It's a difference, you know, my study colleagues who went to America, they have troubles with many terms who are normal for the native speakers, but here they are explained in business English, everything is explained, because they are teaching foreigners, not in their mother tongue but in a foreign language, that is one reason why I went to Finland.

While s/he had discussed choosing Finland over an English speaking country specifically because Finland was not English speaking, s/he now provides supporting arguments: entering Finland is not only practical because of linguistic, but also because of pedagogical reasons.

If differences were perceived within native practices and native abilities, it easily followed that non-natives as well as natives might negotiate between possible practices. This could be seen even in Mei's discourse, despite her clear perception of the native speaker as an authoritative "other". Having written a research plan with a page-long introduction, she received feedback from Megan that although long sentences and paragraphs were acceptable in China, they were not used in English. In interview, however, Mei explained that she had written the introduction in this way not because it is acceptable in China, but rather because she had used a model of an English research plan she found online. When asked why she did not explain this to Megan, she replied, "because yeah she is native then she says that, we think oh yeah that's that's the authority and we have to follow that. But still are there like maybe there are different aspect from different teachers". This sentiment might be summarized by the statement "she is native [...] but still". Although nativeness is viewed as an authoritative model to be followed, "but still are there like maybe there are different aspect from different teachers". The challenge is hedged, but nevertheless clear.

Another challenge to nativeness as an ideal was based on a contrast between correctness and practicality. Although, as explained in the previous section, many participants assumed that the natives (and thus “correct English”) would suffer, they often also emphasized that non-native use of English in these contexts was adequate and sometimes even preferable. Again, there was a sense of native-like correctness as not actually being necessary for successful communication, as Mikko implies below:

- M but I don't have any fear for using English and neither do I have any fear for making mistakes. That's because of working in a camping site during the high school years so that you just communicated
- L so you were speaking English quite a lot there?
- M yeah and Swedish and German and all that was this kind of a school education level of language
- L okay okay
- M so so so I just learned to communicate and I'm I'm fine I know that the natives must suffer every now and then

In Mikko's answers there was a sense that because he felt he had learned English in a practical way – he “just communicated” – he need not “fear” having to use the language in a native-like correct way. He has acquired the language practically, rather than having to study the language using a native speaker model.

This contrast could also be seen in the divide between expectations on Megan's language course and expectations on content courses on the programme. While students perceived it as important to take part in the English course in order to learn or revise how the language “should” be used, they were happy to leave these strict expectations on the rest of their courses. Reflecting on the English course, Mei explained:

- M although I know I have to pay more attention about like the grammar and formal structures and everything, but I think the teachers they are more interested in your idea
- L mm mm yeah
- M which means I mean at least I feel a little bit better because I know and
- L was it something you were nervous about before?
- M yeah because after like /Megan's/ course a little bit it really you know kind of make all of us nervous

Mei's attitude towards these more relaxed expectations of Finnish teachers was positive (“[. . .] I feel a little bit better”). As in Mikko's answer, there is the sense that in focusing on communicating content, one need not be afraid

of using the language. Mei's perception of these contrasting expectations is validated by the teachers' own explanations. Mikko, for example, explained that he sees a lot of improvement in students' writing "content wise" during the programme. When asked whether he sees a similar improvement in the language, he remarked "yeah but then who am I to evaluate that because my own language is so so so lazy. So I don't bother, I really don't bother".

## 7 Native/non-native as ideological constructs

Next, we will focus on our second research question: namely the language ideologies that these constructions of nativeness reflect and the political implications of the ideologies for language hierarchies and hegemonies.

Our "non-nativeness as not" construct reflects the traditional understanding of nativeness as something that is difficult to attain, something that the non-native speakers are "not". Similarly, native speakers of English are construed by non-native speakers as guardians of the "right" kind of English. The ideal of nativeness is linked to an understanding of language as a codified system, the knowledge of which is prestigious to the natives and puts pressure on the non-natives. Moreover, the North American language teacher's discourse in particular reflects the prevalent standard (NS) language ideology (cf. Jenkins 2007) in English, which assumes that English speakers from the expanding circle or outer circle ought to be taught a particular standard language model, with the UK or the USA at the centre of its norms.

When the native ideal is challenged ("non-nativeness as but"), it is based not so much on linguistic but broadly speaking political arguments. Professional or topical expertise seems to provide one such argument that overrides native speaker authority. In a different kind of situation, pedagogical reasons seemed to support non-native use of English as opposed to native use. In other words, particularly in educational contexts, a native environment may not always present an ideal context. This seems to lead to conflicting constructions of language, as in actual language use the native speaker ideal is challenged and a relaxed, non-native use of language was seen as even preferable by some of the students. Indeed, part of the attraction in studying through English in Finland for some was its non-native rather than native environment. These sentiments are similar to Seidlhofer's (2003) concept of ELF as a move from "real English" to "realistic English" and do also indicate a move away in practice from standard language ideology, with participants not always viewing native English as providing one standard and natives as one homogeneous group.

Another interesting source of friction in the native speaker ideal were hierarchies based on “Western” or “national” hegemonic positions. Clear hierarchies also appeared particularly within the category of “non-native”, which were based on a construction of “us” and “them” on the one hand, and on Western hegemonies on the other. English as such was not questioned, but particularly in NNS–NNS situations, cracks in the ideal English seemed to appear. This could be described as “national speakerism” or “Western speakerism”, which highlights the assumption that “our” students’ English is better than that of the “others” (regardless of the origin of the “others” English). The teachers and other staff interviewed appeared to hierarchize international students based on their own “national standard” as opposed to “international standards”. This made the issues embedded in “nativeness” and “native speakerism” visible in a new way. The view of “us” and “them” had been hidden behind the self-evident conceptualization of language skills or comprehensibility as something linked with “nativeness”, but the situation turned more complicated in NNS-NNS situations. “We” usually had good language skills, whereas “they” were more problematic, and the whole issue of native speaker skills collapsed into something fluid and porous that still needs more analysis.

While the policy documentation on internationalization seems to promote idealistic understandings of “international” as something homogeneous, inclusive, open and free, the reality seems heterogeneous, layered, hierarchized and Western-centered.

Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of our two categories of *not* and *but*. We would like to stress, as we have done earlier, that the categories are indicative rather than conclusive. However, they do provide one perspective into the problematic position of native vs. non-native use of English in academic contexts.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of non-nativeness as *not* and non-nativeness as *but*

	non-nativeness as <i>not</i>	non-nativeness as <i>but</i>
Language	“Ideal” English out of reach, demanding	Adequate knowledge of English for successful communication
Natives	... as superior gatekeepers	... as equal colleagues
Authority	... based on native-like language knowledge	... based on subject expertise
Language and internationalization	Relatively homogeneous view of English	Relatively heterogeneous view of English

## 8 What next? Implications for internationalization policy

In 2010, the University of Jyväskylä's language centre placed an advert for a proofreading position which stated that "*the successful candidate will be a native speaker of English... A university degree from an English-speaking country is a must*". Another advert for a new opening in 2012 simply stated that the applicant "*must have native-like proficiency*". While this reflects the changes in the legislative position of universities as employers since the new University Act of 2010, it is also indicative of the changing position of native English speakers in Finnish higher education.

It seems that the native English ideal is challenged in Finnish higher education from several directions. Professional or topic expertise may overrun language skills in some situations, challenging the native authority. We also saw indications of the pedagogical pressures put on the teaching practices by an international (and implicitly non-native English speaking) student body breaking into the native ideal. This may lead to conflicting constructions of language either as a codified system or as actual language usage, as non/nativeness is sometimes treated as a linguistic category and in other times as a professional or social category.

The potential significance of English in international communication is not questioned, but cracks seem to appear in the understanding of "who owns English", as native authority is questioned. Even though we focus on Finnish higher education, the results of the study can be tentatively extended to any context where English is used as the medium of higher education tuition although it does not have any official status in the community.

Current student mobility flows still favour English-speaking countries, but the trend seems to be turning as others regions in Asia and continental Europe are increasingly offering English medium programmes. The changes in mobility flows can historically be explained by linguistic, geographic, cultural and historical "push" and "pull" factors, which are still very much in place, producing a very diverse and heterogeneous body of students so easily labelled as homogeneously "international" (see Murphy-Lejeune 2008). The linguistic factors of native or non-native English operate, in other words, in a field of multiple overlapping and intertwined other factors.

The whole dynamics of international study is changing, and we do not know what kind of a balance the market will hit. Also Nordic countries are beginning to enter a new kind of mobility market, where non-native English providers offer English language study programmes. Some Nordic countries,

like Denmark and Sweden, have introduced fees for international students, while others, such as Finland or Norway, offer international programmes free of charges. It is quite possible that one of the divides in the new market of international study will go along the lines of native – non-native English provision, which might eventually have an impact on the position of Anglophone vs. non-Anglophone higher education institutions in the global education markets.

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